SIMILARITY AND FAMILIARITY: REFLECTIONS ON INDIGENOUS ETHNOGRAPHY WITH MOTHERS, DAUGHTERS AND SCHOOL TEACHERS ON THE MARGINS OF CONTEMPORARY WALES

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – *This chapter reflects on the process of conducting qualitative research as an indigenous researcher, drawing from two studies based in south Wales (the United Kingdom). The chapter not only explores the advantages of similarity in relation to trust, access, gender and understandings of locality, but it also complicates this position by examining the problem of familiarity.*

Methodology/approach – *The studies, one doctoral research and one an undergraduate dissertation project, both took a qualitative approach and introduced visual methods of data production including collages,*

Gender Identity and Research Relationships
Studies in Qualitative Methodology, Volume 14, 85–103

ISSN: 1042-3192/doi:10.1108/S1042-319220160000014017

maps, photographs and timelines. These activities were followed by individual elicitation interviews.

Findings – *The chapter argues that the insider outsider binary is unable capture the complexity of research relationships; however, these distinctions remain central in challenging the researcher's preconceptions and the propensity for their research to be clouded by their subjective assumptions of class, gender, locality and community.*

Originality – *The chapter presents strategies to fight familiarity in fieldwork and considers the ethical issues that arise when research is conducted from the competing perspectives of both insider and academic.*

Value – *The authors focus on uncertainties and reservations in the fieldwork process and move beyond notions of fighting familiarity to consider the unforeseen circumstances of acquaintance and novel positionings within established social networks.*

Keywords: Familiarity; fieldwork; gender; insider research; reflexivity; visual methods

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INTRODUCTION

The centrality of the researcher and their position in relation to the research setting has been subject to controversy and long-standing debates threaded with the narratives of insider and outsider myths (Collins, 1998; Humphrey, 2007; Merton, 1972). Outsider myths assert that only researchers who possess the necessary objectivity and emotional distance from the field are able to conduct valid research on a given group. Conversely, according to insider myths, the attributes of objectivity and emotional distance render outsiders inherently incapable of appreciating the true character of a group's life (Mannay, 2010). The notion of being an insider or an outsider is inadequate in an absolute sense. However, to ignore questions of proximity is to assume that knowledge comes from nowhere allowing researchers to become an abstract concept rather than a site of accountability. It may be misguided to privilege a particular type of knowledge but as Skeggs (2004, p. 14) argues it is imperative to acknowledge that 'perspective is always premised upon access to knowledge', and the ways in which we

access knowledge and our identifications and dis-identifications with the research site are fundamental to the research journey (see Morris, 2016).

Arguably, being completely immersed within the discourse you are studying can be detrimental to the aims of the research, as Hunter Thompson's study of the motor cycle gang the Hells Angels illustrates. Thompson (2009, p. 283) describes the process of 'going native', commenting 'by the middle of summer I became so involved in the outlaw scene that I was no longer sure whether I was doing research on the Hell's Angels or being slowly absorbed by them'; this absorption is problematic across ethnographic research (Delamont & Atkinson, 1995; Gans, 1982; Hammersley, 2006; Hobbs, 1988; Miller, 1952; Morris, 2012). As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 90) argue, 'the comfortable sense of being "at home" is a danger signal' because it threatens the space of distance where the analytic work of the ethnographer gets done. For Thompson (2009), this immersion was incremental, but indigenous researchers are often 'native' before the research process even begins (Mannay, 2011).

Indigenous insiders may find it less problematic to gain access to communities but they are frequently charged with the tendency to present their group in an unrealistically favourable light, and their work is often considered to be clouded by the impacts of shared similarities. As Casey (cited in Feld, 1996, p. 93) contends, 'the body imprints its own emplaced past into its present experience' and when we consider the idea of resonances between classed, professional and gendered bodies, the issue of researcher nearness can be problematic in relation to issues of familiarity. Researcher nearness speaks about similarities between researcher and participant, a sharing of locality, gender, class, institutions and histories, and familiarity impacts not only on what the researcher can see, but also how the researcher is seen in acquainted spaces (see Stahl, 2016).

Connections to place and people always engender some form of familiarity and for Becker (1971, p. 10) working in familiar territory was like 'pulling teeth' to stop seeing only the things that are conventionally 'there' to be seen. Although, the problem of familiarity has been recognised in the social sciences for some time (see Delamont & Atkinson, 1995; Geer, 1964), it remains a problematic element of contemporary research. For example, as a social work group member interviewing social workers, Morriss (2015, p. 3) describes how this similarity created an instant rapport and when undertaking the interviews 'everything seemed wonderfully familiar'. In the field Morriss felt comfortable and the participants' stories had seemed to her to show the 'natural' order of things, the conventional, the expected and a shared understanding. It was only at the stage of analysis that she

was able to unpick this familiarity by applying ethnomethodology (Morriss, 2015). In considering her membership of the social work community, Morriss (2015, p. 3) was able to explore the 'ongoing accomplishment of the concerted activities of daily life, with the ordinary, artful ways of that accomplishment being by members known, used, and taken for granted'. Consequently, the adoption of this analytic approach allowed Morriss to fight familiarity (Geer, 1964).

It is also important to consider gender and place (see Morris, 2016), and, as a man researching men and masculinities, Richardson (2015) was also concerned with familiarity and the impact of his own background and embodied physical presence. Richardson worked with 38 men from Tyneside, in the North East of England, across three generations within 19 families of Irish descent to discuss masculinity, intergenerationality and place. The particular context of Tyneside Irish masculinities resonated with Richardson's individual genealogy:

> born of a family of Irish ancestry who had lived and worked on Tyneside since the nineteenth century, my Dad and his twin sister, former world champion Irish dancers, my Gran's maiden name, Monaghan, and I myself having performed as a 9-year-old Irish dancer. (Richardson, 2015, p. 159)

Consequently, he was interested in how to disrupt both perceived privilege and 'researcher nearness', and to create distance he asked participants to work with images. This visual activity, accompanied with elicitation interviews allowed Richardson and his participants to move beyond the everyday commonalities of their connections and engender a space of defamiliarisation, where issues of identity, masculinity and emotion could be articulated in a form that moved beyond the purely verbal communication of the mundane.

In this way, researchers can engender strategies to resist and move beyond familiarity, in both their fieldwork and their analysis, and such strategies were adopted in the studies discussed in this chapter. However, familiarity is a two-way process, experienced by both participants and researchers and one that is too powerful to be completely eradicated despite our attempts to move beyond the 'enclosed, self-contained world of common understanding' (Mannay, 2010, p. 91). Moreover, even common understandings can be highly differentiated and how we see others, and how we are seen by others, impacts on relationships in the field, the direction of the data produced and our own sense of selves as researchers. Consequently, this chapter explores the ways in which gender, class and shared localities impact on what is spoken, what becomes silenced and how we present ourselves in sites of familiarity and within the embodiment of the 'transient insider' (Roberts, 2014).

THE STUDIES

The data discussed here were drawn from two research projects that employed visual and narrative methods of data production to explore the subjective experiences of participants. In both studies, research was conducted in Hystryd,[1] a predominantly white urban area, which ranks as one of the most deprived communities in Wales, the United Kingdom (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008). Dawn's doctoral study[2] was conducted between 2008 and 2012, with nine mothers and their daughters residing on the marginalised housing estate (Mannay, 2011, 2013a, 2014, 2015). The research focused on the ways in which the boundaries of the immediate culture and memories of the past mediate mothers and their daughters educational and employment histories and futures. Dawn, had previously lived in Hystryd and this shared sense of geography positioned her as 'experience near' (Anderson, 2002, p. 23).

The second study, conducted by Jordon, was based in a secondary school (aged 11–18) in Hystryd and it formed the dissertation element of an undergraduate degree in Sociology. At the time of the fieldwork, in 2014, there were 581 students on role, 43 per cent[3] of whom were entitled to free school meals, compared with 19.1 per cent[4] nationally, across pupils of compulsory school age in Wales (Welsh Government, 2015). In its Estyn inspection during 2009, the school was found to be 'in need of significant improvement' and only 23 per cent of students achieved five A*–C General Certificate of Secondary Education[5] grades and 9 per cent of pupils achieving this distinction including English and Mathematics (Estyn, 2013). By 2014, the school had undergone significant changes in staffing and procedures, as part of project of school improvement, which had contributed to the reclassification of the school out of the failing category and a substantial rise in levels of academic attainment.[6] The research sought to understand the process and impact of school improvement from the perspectives of 12 teachers who had retained their positions in the transformation. Like Dawn, Jordon had also previously lived in Hystryd and been a past student at the school, positioning him as a 'transient insider' (Roberts, 2014).

Consequently, in both studies it was important to address our positions as indigenous researchers and make a deliberate cognitive effort to question our taken-for-granted assumptions of that which we had thought familiar (Delamont & Atkinson, 1995). With the mothers and daughters, participant-directed visual data production techniques of photo-elicitation, mapping, written narratives and collage were selected to limit the propensity for participants' accounts to be overshadowed by the 'enclosed, self-contained world of

common understanding' (Mannay, 2010, p. 91). Participants took photographs, drew maps and made collages depicting meaningful places, spaces and activities and created narratives about their hopes and fears for the future.

In the school-based study, the problem of familiarity was addressed by introducing timelines to facilitate a recollection and sequencing of personal events denoting the 'lived through life', which was directed by the participants (Adriansen, 2012; Berends, 2011; Sheridan, Chamberlain, & Dupuis, 2011). Timelines aid the exploration of data as they do not constrain the participants to a set of questions, which can often produce a narrow set of answers and are constrained by the familiarity of the researcher (Iantaffi, 2011). In both cases the visual and narrative data was produced by participants in their own homes, away from the intrusive presence of the researcher (Mannay, 2013b).

All of the data was polysemic[7] because of the ambiguous and multiple meanings that could be generated. Therefore, the data production was always followed by elicitation interviews to acknowledge the polysemic nature of the participants' creations. As Reavey (2011, p. 5) contends 'the interpretation of an image cannot always be fixed' and it was important that our own interpretations of the visual and narrative productions did not act to frame and fix the data in a way that silenced the meaning making of the participants. Accordingly, the interviews were not so much about an understanding of the data produced, as an understanding with the data produced about the lives of the participants (Mannay, 2016; Radley, 2011).

The visual and narrative data was discussed with participants in digitally recorded interviews to ensure that we understood what they intended to communicate (Rose, 2001). Both studies generated a rich stream of data and the visual and narrative activities acted to disrupt familiarity. However, although familiarity was disrupted it remained a problematic aspect of the fieldwork as it engendered assumptions about who we were as researchers, how we should act as 'insiders' and whether to challenge or accept the expectations set out in the assumed reciprocity and shared values that characterise familiar relationships. The following sections chart these elements of our separate research journeys, reflecting on the tensions related to our insider status that we experienced in our fieldwork.

BEING ONE OF THE GIRLS: SEEING AND BEING SEEN

As I (Dawn) have discussed elsewhere, beyond the pen and paper statistics of place that engender familiarity, social networks also characterised my

research relationships; for example our extended families had 'shared weddings, birthdays, football matches as well as fallouts, accidents and misfortunes. Our children [had] shared playgroups, schools, and packets of crisps' (Mannay, 2010, p. 93). The introduction of visual methods did act to disrupt familiarity to an extent as participants led the elicitation discussions, rather than them being guided by my own subjective interpretations about the participants and the area, and their visual productions introduced topics that I would not have asked about. In this way:

> the application of self-directed visual data production provided a gateway to destinations that lay beyond my repertoire of preconceived understandings of place and space; unravelling the diversity of urban experience and making the familiar strange and interesting again. (Mannay, 2010, p. 108)

However, as Ball and Smith (2001, p. 313) contend, the use of visual methods 'is not a panacea for all ethnography's ills' and circumstances of acquaintance continue to engender difficulties for the 'transient insider' (Roberts, 2014). Familiarity is always a two-way process (Mannay, 2016) and whilst I was concerned about my own assumptions overshadowing the research, my participants also has assumptions about me, as a local, a researcher, a mother and a representative of the world of academia (see also Lozano-Neira & Marchbank, 2016). As Ward (2014, p. 710) contends 'gender comes into being through socially constructed performances which are understood (consciously and unconsciously) as publicly acceptable in a given situation, setting or community' and participants viewed me differentially as particular types of 'insider', woman and mother.

The body is important because it 'imprints its own emplaced past into its present experience' (Casey cited in Feld, 1996, p. 93) and the body may be read in its immediacy, but also be intimately linked to individual biographies. As Rock (2007) maintains one descends as a researcher upon a society that is already interpretively at work, actively pre-structured by its occupants. However, we are often unaware of the discourses that influence us and 'we may also be unaware that we are positioned or placed in certain positions by such discourses' (Towns & Adams, 2000, p. 563). Merlau Pointy (2002, p. 81) describes how our bodies are both our point of view upon the world and one of the objects of that world, so to understand our body in the vicarious imagination of the other requires a form of 'active transcendence of the subject in relation to the world'. This form of 'active transcendence' forces an examination of our position as the interviewee, how we are positioned by participants, how we present ourselves and what this means for the data that is generated and also for the possible conversations that become silenced.

This positioning will be examined by exploring my relationships and interactions with two participants residing in Hystryd, Adele,[8] a full-time university student living at home, and Mally, an unemployed single mother of two. Previously, I drew on the data produced with Adele and her mother, Mary (Mannay, 2013a, 2014), to explore the contradictory nature of remaining geographically close, living within the family home in a marginalised housing area and commuting to a local university. Adele was in a precarious hybrid position where she was continually moving between two qualitatively different worlds and negotiating her loyalty to her family, the stigma of the area and her evolving academic identity (see Ingram, 2011). As part of this process of negotiation, Adele was active in the splitting the good from the bad (Klein, 1975), assigning negative, contaminating characteristics to others, to protect the goodness of self and that of significant others and to defend against threats to carefully constructed but fragile creations of unity (see Mannay, 2013a). In this splitting process, it is useful to reflect on how Adele positioned me as a researcher within the good or bad dichotomy.

For Adele, the widening of social worlds, in terms of entering higher education, erode the old certainties of the self and these shifts engendered a reconceptualisation of home. In our interviews, Adele, stressed that she would not want to live in Hystryd when she was older and that she would not want to bring her children up in Hystryd. However, as Walkerdine, Lucey, and Melody (2001) contend, rejecting one's culture is a rejection of the self. Consequently, to negotiate some consensus with her mother and family, it was important for Adele to create a series of distinctions within Hystryd to locate and differentiate between the good and the bad, as illustrated in the following interview extract.

> Adele: It depends what the person was like, they might fit in (laughs) (both laugh) you know, I'm not saying everyone in (the council estate) is like, benefit person.
>
> Dawn: Yeah.
>
> Adele: But the people who are, spoil it for the people who aren't … Like, people spoil it for …
>
> Dawn: … Yeah …
>
> Adele: The good people who live in Hystryd.

As Evans (2006, p. 28) contends, relationships between the social classes rest on a 'segregation that is emotionally structured through mutual disdain'; and in Kleinian terms we see the splitting of the good and the bad. The 'benefit person' fails to engage with working-class respectability and comes to represent the destruction of the community, 'spoil it for

the people'. By utilising discourses of 'them and us' Adele is able to identify with her families idyll of Hystryd, for the space can exist in this 'good' form at a time when it was unspoiled. Hystryd, or more importantly her family's connectedness to Hystryd, can be justified and supported by Adele as long as the bad can be placed with individual others.

Adele had further stories of the 'bad' that are living off the state, drinking, taking drugs and buying stolen goods that resonate with wider stereotypical mediated images of the working-class (Hayward & Yar, 2006; Lomax & Fink, 2014; Tyler, 2008). For Adele, situating the 'benefit person', as 'bad', charges these 'others' not only with metaphorically killing the community but of creating a division between her and her family in terms of connectedness to Hystryd. These narratives are shared with me as an embodied representation of 'us' not 'them', positioning me as 'good' not 'bad'. Perhaps, I represented a form of working-class respectability as I was working, had mortgage and I also had a degree and was studying for a doctorate. This education trajectory set me apart from the majority of residents in Hystryd, but, at the same time, forged a closer alliance with Adele. Consequently, when Adele talked to this educated person, me, about those 'others' who represent the 'bad', I was implicitly placed on the side of the 'good', but I am not sure that this was where I belonged or where I wanted to be placed. Perhaps, because this positioning was based on Adele's partial knowledge of the present, rather than a more complex interpretation of my biography, as I will return to later in the section.

Adele's position-taking may be a conscious calculation or may operate at the level of the sub-conscious. In either case, Adele is not entirely mistaken in her understanding, and there is a significant likeness in my relation to Adele by virtue of shared knowledge, shared hopes and shared social networks. Despite the age difference, with Adele moving from A-levels directly to university and me entering as a mature student, we have shared a similar journey into higher education negotiated by commuting from a marginalised locale. This is evident throughout the interview:

> Dawn: When, when you go to (university) and all that, if people ask you where you're from does it ever cause a problem, d'you say like Hystryd, do people say that's rough or …
>
> Adele: No they don't even know 'cause their not from here (laughs) (both laugh)
>
> Dawn: So they don't even know where it is so they don't?
>
> Adele: I think they'd probably, if they drove through here I think they'd probably have a heart attack (laughs) (both laugh)

My initial question is an illustration of my assumed knowledge directing the interview, despite my introduction of visual methods to allow participants to lead the conversation and prevent discussions being overshadowed by my own familiarity with the area (Mannay, 2016). Furthermore, my question contributes to the process of positioning and frames the conversation so that both the interviewee and interviewer become 'respectable insiders'. The shared laughter here is a feature of paralanguage (Winstanley, 2005) that illustrates a complicity in the account, a shared understanding of Hystryd and views 'outsiders' hold about this geographical space. However, people do not and cannot fully know others completely, rather, selves are understood inferentially and much must be conventionalised. I may fall within the conventions of working-class respectability in Adele's reading, but this is the present me, if Adele had been looking at me as I was at her age, her gaze would rest on the 'bad', because I would be Adele's 'benefit person'.

So as Adele spoke, I thought about my past self and also about other participants in the study such as Mally, an unemployed single mother of two. In her interviews, Mally communicated the everyday inconveniences and the small miseries that make up the reality of living on a low income, and I reflected on Mally having holes in her only pair of shoes on the rainy day of our first interview. When Adele spoke vehemently about the 'type of people' who sell and buy stolen goods I thought of Mally, who buys from the local shoplifters, but only when her children are asleep.

> Mally: I do if they're asleep, I do
>
> Dawn: Yeah (laughs)
>
> Mally: If someone's stupid enough to knock my door when they're awake, then I got to do the (action of slamming door) you know
>
> Dawn: (laughs)
>
> Mally: Like I'm going to look now she's standing there (laughs) (both laugh) like what am I gonna say, I can't now can I (laughs) (both laugh)

Again there is complicity in the laughter, however whereas Adele positioned me as an upwardly-mobile accomplice, Mally enlisted me as complicit in the illegal underworld of Hystryd. Unlike Adele's reading of respectability lost, I applied a sociological reading of lack of resources. Nevertheless, I made no challenge to Adele's account, instead I said 'Mmm' and 'Yeah'. Understandably, it can be a methodologically intelligent choice not to distance yourself from your participants and openly challenge their views. However, a surface agreement is also preserved because I wanted to maintain

the 'good' identity but more importantly because I recognised the importance of maintaining such distinctions.

I may silently have evoked what Williamson (2004, p. 97) refers to as 'vocabularies of motive' and 'techniques of neutralisation' in response to some of Adele's comments, but in other cases I was also eager to make distinctions and distance between an 'us' and 'them', and indulge in the strategic splitting that guards from anxieties of becoming, being or having been, 'bad'. A sense of belonging can be preserved through strategic splitting. However, as this section has argued, the process of negotiating research relationships, and an acceptable sense of self, is a socially and emotionally challenging endeavour to undertake. It is also one that predicates particular forms of interaction, silences and research data, themes that are revisited in relation to Jordon's study in the following section.

BEING ONE OF THE BOYS: SHARING AND KEEPING SECRETS

In the school study, levels of trust varied in relation to previous relationships and two women staff who had not had such a close relationship with me (Jordon), as a student, refused to have their interviews recorded. Conversely, some male staff who had worked closely with me when I was a pupil, particularly in relation to sports, were more than happy to have their, often controversial, accounts recorded. As Ward (2015, p. 10) argues 'in any given setting a form of masculinity exists which is associated with authority and power' and hegemonic masculinity can be found in different forms at the local, national and global levels; and within the micro society of the school (see also Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Although the traditional divides of the 'home corner girls and superhero boys' (Davies, 2003) have become more fluid, football remains a signifier of heterosexual masculinity (Clarke & Paechter, 2007; Renold, 2005; Tucker & Matthews, 2001). In many schools in working-class areas of Wales, the focus on sports is high and for many young men playing football or rugby are ways to project a successful heterosexual masculine image (Ward, 2014). As a former pupil at the school, I was in the football team and considered 'one of the boys'.

For, Goffman (1956) the dividing lines, between what occurs in the front stage of any given social performance and in the backstage area, are everywhere in society. In school sports the front stage takes place on the football pitch, local media and social media (Farrington, Hall, Kilvington,

Price, & Saeed, 2015). In relation to the backstage, these are areas such as the changing rooms or practice facilities, but also the ongoing social networks and relationships that form between pupils and staff who are part of the team, and 'one of the boys'. Within football the backstage offers a private staging area that has been defined as a 'quintessential male space for the performance of male identities' (Birrell & Donnelly, 2004, p. 53). Backstage interaction can include reciprocal name calling, cooperative decision making, profanity, open sexual remarks, use of dialect or substandard speech, mumbling and joking (Goffman, 1959 [1956]). Consequently, the backstage is a place where individuals can act in certain ways that would not be appropriate whilst on the front stage, and engender more informal relationships between pupils and the teachers involved in sports teams.

Backstage environments in football provide an arena for a multiplicity of this face-to-face contact between players and other members of the organisation. In each of these contacts, it may be suggested that the players act out what Goffman (1967, p. 5) defines as a line; 'a pattern of verbal or non-verbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through his evaluation of the participants, especially himself'. Resulting from the line that the individual takes is the impression that others have formed of him. These impressions, combined with the individuals impression of himself, become what Goffman (1967, p. 5) defines as an individual's 'face'; an image which is self-delineated in terms of the approved situational attributes. My 'face' as one of the boys engendered a legacy that on my return to the school as a researcher enabled a particular type of trust and camaraderie, which was useful as a researcher, but at the same time problematic.

My use of timelines was not simply to fight familiarity, for myself and my participants, but also like Richardson (2015), to create distance. My body, resonant of past pupil and football player, imprinted its 'own emplaced past into its present experience' (Casey cited in Feld, 1996, p. 93) in the research site. Therefore, in using the timelines, I hoped that they would help me to perform a certain professionalism, that the methodological tool, coupled with the audio recorder and notebook would position me as a researcher and establish this new identity. In many interviews and pre-interview discussions, this was achieved but with staff who were also 'one of the boys', there remained a legacy of 'face' that compromised the new 'face' of professional, ethical, serious researcher that I was trying to perform in the school. A poignant example in which my former 'face' (Goffman, 1959 [1956]) influenced the line of discussions was with Mr. Brown, a former teacher involved in sports teams. Many

of the conversation topics raised by Mr. Brown were centralised around what could be considered as backstage banter. For example, Mr. Brown talked about the appointment of new, attractive, female staff and the appearance of other existing staff members, as illustrated in the following field note.

> Mr. Brown: Who have you interviewed so far, have you interviewed Mrs. Blue?
>
> Jordon: No I've not asked her
>
> Mr. Brown: Good, look at her face she's miserable, I think she's miserable because when she wakes up and looks in the mirror all she sees is her ugly face.

These comments were part of a longer discussion between me and Mr. Brown the day before the timeline-based interview took place. The field note demonstrates the high level of familiarity between us, which is in part, the legacy of me being 'one of the boys' who had previously played football under his guidance. In these situations my former 'face' (Goffman, 1959 [1956]), influenced the possible interaction outcomes. To some extent, in the field I felt that I had to be an active member of this discussion, or at least go along with and not challenge any of this performative banter, in order to confirm my membership to the group, and to show that I was still 'one of the boys'. However, I was no longer a school pupil or member of the football team, and I needed to remember that my impartiality concerning other members of staff was required.

As Birrell and Donnelly (2004, p. 53) put it the 'quintessential … performance of male identities' was enacted by Mr. Brown and other male staff through humour in the relation to jokes about other staff members, innuendos about female staff 'taking a shine' to me and the sharing of more controversial topics that were not often raised in other interviews. On the one hand, it could be argued that my positioning as 'one of the boys' enabled me to access a rich seam of data that would not have been available to an outside researcher. On the other hand, however, the level of disclosure about other staff, albeit delivered with a humorous undertone, made it difficult to respond in the interview situation. In my new position of researcher, the old backstage rules no longer applied, for me, and my reluctance to engage in banter around controversial topics proved a problematic negotiation. Furthermore, staff who could be defined as 'one of the boys' often expected some sort of quit pro quo, asking about what other teachers had said and being disappointed when my answer was based on maintaining participant confidentiality. Drawing on discourses of the past relationship, this refusal to share information was often seen as me

not being a 'team player', and not acting like 'one of the boys', as illustrated in the field note below:

> Today Mr. Brown and Mr. Red kept pushing me to discuss what people had said during their interviews. I repeatedly had to state that it was confidential, and therefore could not be discussed. This was met by the two participants laughing and saying things such as 'don't be daft', and 'come on Wendy' (a nickname given to myself during a former school trip), 'we won't tell anyone'.

Goffman (1967, p. 12) contends that maintaining face is a 'condition of interaction, not its objective' and maintaining face is imperative within face-to-face interaction as it is governed by consequences. Failure to maintain face, or performing the 'wrong face' (Goffman, 1956, p. 267), can mean that the individual is likely to feel ashamed because what has happened to the interaction he is a part of and the failure to maintain the correct face may lead an individual to become embarrassed. Consequently, if the maintenance of face is so crucial to the successful outcome of interaction, then the ways in which certain players act will be restrained by the particular face they possess. As a researcher, I was unable to work within the 'game face' of my past football player and school pupil self. However, despite the use of timelines to engender professionally and fight familiarity, this past face guided the way that these teachers recognised me and their interactional work. This seeing by others, its potential for misrecognition and the impacts that this has on interactions in the field, will be considered in the final section.

LESSONS LEARNT AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Although our position as quasi-insiders may have been problematic, it was also essential to the research production. Participants discussed sensitive issues, which may not have been discussed with individuals they did not have a previous rapport, connection or shared social history. The problem of familiarity, for the researchers was addressed to some extent by the introduction of visual-based, participant-directed pre-tasks, which meant that the data generated in the accompanying elicitation interviews was not overshadowed by our preconceptions as much as it may have been in a more traditional interview framework.

However, the problem of familiarity rests not just on the researchers seeing, but also with how they are seen, and our previous relationships with participants engendered differential readings and positionings, which proved difficult to negotiate. Our participants spoke to us in relation to

their assumptions linked to previous selves, selves that had never been and present selves that were clouded by past biographies or linked to associative positionings about locality, gender and class. In this way, the vicarious imagination of others often departed from our own sense and understanding of ourselves and the research identity that we aimed to perform and embody.

Consequently, the key lesson learnt in the fieldwork was how it remains vitally important to interrogate our interactions and explore the processes of maintaining face (Goffman, 1959 [1956]) and also engage with a form of 'active transcendence' (Merlau Pointy, 2002), which allows us to question our position and positioning by participants. This reflexively can move beyond the familiar and engender a more differentiated understanding of both data that is generated and that which remains silenced. Therefore, rather than glossing over the everyday and the mundane nature of micro interactions, we need to be sensitive in the fieldwork process and consider our uncertainties, uncomfortable moments and reservations; sharing these in our writing to contribute to more nuanced accounts that can help to refine future fieldwork.

NOTES

1. The place name Hystryd employed in this chapter is fictitious and it was chosen as pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. The pseudonym, Hystryd, was created to reflect my interest in the everyday salience of home and locality by drawing on the Welsh word for the street, y stryd. Y stryd appreciated the focus at this level of the local but the study was specifically interested in the lives of women and girls, of mothers and their daughters, and to incorporate this lens a feminisation was engendered drawing from the Welsh word for she, hi, and taking the first letter to form the amalgamated 'Hystryd'.

2. The doctoral research project, titled 'Mothers and Daughters on the Margins: Gender, Generation and Education', was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

3. Figures for number of pupils and pupils entitled to free school meals provided from the School records.

4. The percentage of pupils of compulsory school age in Local Authority maintained schools known to be eligible for free school meals in 2015 was 18.8 per cent – down from 19.1 per cent in 2014 (Welsh Government, 2015).

5. The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) is a qualification in a specific subject typically taken by school students aged 14–16.

6. In the United Kingdom GCSE outcomes for 2014, 98 per cent of pupils achieved five A*–C grades and 60 per cent of pupils achieved 5 A*–C grades including English and Mathematics (figures provided from the School records).

7. Polysemy is the capacity for a sign (such as a word, phrase, symbol or image) to have multiple meanings, interpretations or understandings.
8. The names employed in this chapter are fictitious and were chosen as pseudonyms to maintain participants' anonymity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the participants who made this chapter possible and also Professor John Fitz, Professor Emma Renold and Professor Bella Dicks for supervising Dawn's research project and Dr. Peter Hemming for supervising Jordon's research project. We are grateful to Dr. Michael Ward and the reviewers for their encouragement and invaluable comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.

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