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"We Don't See Things as They Are, We See Things as We Are": Questioning the "Outsider" in Polish Migration Research

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Abstract: This article offers a reflexive account of conducting research on Polish migration to Scotland from the perspective of the "outsider." The contribution argues for a revision to the insider/outsider dichotomy viewing it as inadequately nuanced in relation to the multiple intersectionalities performed through the research encounter. It is based on data collected from biographical-narrative interviews with Polish young people living in Edinburgh, Scotland. The article explores the interview encounter between an English researcher and Polish young people about the experience of EU mobility and argues that as migration narratives unfold the distinctions between the "researcher" and the "researched" blur. In particular, I focus on the intersections of gender, class and nationality to show how different positionalities are negotiated and confronted through reflexivity. The interview is a creative process involving co-construction of narratives through dialogue, embodied performances and non-cognitive associations that draw out the multiple intersectionalities of both parties. Through this process the binary of insider/outsider is called into question and this article examines the usefulness of this dichotomy as a framework for understanding the research relationship.

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1. Introduction

This article disrupts the notion of insider/outsider status through an intersectional analysis of Polish young people's narratives of migration to Scotland and the research encounter between an English researcher and Polish young people in this context. It is argued that as migration narratives unfold the distinctions between the "researcher" and the "researched" blur as the different positionalities of each individual are negotiated and confronted. This process is intersectional in that rigid categories of class, gender, sexuality and nationality are destabilized in the dynamic space of the research encounter. I focus particularly on the practice of biographical-narrative interviewing and the use of psychoanalytical questioning techniques suggesting that these methods trouble the dichotomy of the

insider/outsider in migration research. By adopting these techniques the research interview is a space where knowledge is co-created through dynamic interactions between interviewer and interviewee and their overlapping and shifting positionalities. This explicit focus on the use of biographical narrative research methods responds to critiques of intersectionality as methodologically ambiguous (NASH, 2008) and explores the way that particular methods can be utilized to reveal intersectional identities in Polish migration research. [1]

1.1 Intersectionality and the co-construction of research narratives

Intersectionality is a feminist analytic that emerged out of critical race theory to challenge essentialist and oppressive categorizations of race, class and gender and explore the interdependencies of these categories in understanding marginalization and disadvantage (CRENSHAW, 1991). Latterly, critics have called into question the emphasis on marginality of intersectional subjects arguing for intersectionality as a more general theory of identity (ZACK, 2005) that can be applied to all groups whether privileged or marginalized (ANTHIAS, 2002; YUVAL-DAVIS, 2006). In this sense, intersectionality is an approach that "recognize(s) that gender, class and race are not just constitutive of disadvantage, oppression and subordination but also the means through which some people acquire and maintain positions of privilege" (BASTIA, 2014, p.244). ANTHIAS (2012) stresses that subjectivities are relational and dynamic and argues for intersectionality be viewed as a "translocational" process rather than a set of essentialized identity characteristics. Similarly, NASH (2008) warns that the "additive tendency" in early approaches to intersectionality reproduces uncritical binaries about certain marginalized groups. The use of intersectionality as a lens of inquiry has been central to work on gender and migration over the past few decades (for a review see ANTHIAS, 2012 and BASTIA 2014). Migration scholars using an intersectional approach have demonstrated the complexity of the identities of individuals who migrate, recognizing intra-group difference in migrant communities and the way in which public narratives of migration shape identities (BASTIA, 2014). What is integral to these studies is the acknowledgment that gendered identities are also classed, racialized and ethnicized and that intersectional frameworks pay attention to the ways in which these categories intersect to reveal power asymmetries between and across groups. Importantly, this extends to research praxis itself and this article takes due cognizance of the multiple intersectionalities in the methodological spaces of migration research between researcher and research participants. [2]

Incorporating intersectionality in migration research praxis follows post-positivist traditions that emphasize the value-laden nature of research praxis, the partiality of the researcher and the influence of subjectivities and positionalities (CLIFFORD & MARCUS, 1986; ROSE, 1997). Researchers are themselves involved in an ongoing process of meaning-making and interpretation as we conduct, analyze, write and produce research. This process instigates hierarchies and power differentials that must be recognized, confronted and negotiated. It has been argued that a possible way to mitigate against power imbalances is to undertake "insider" research, justified on the basis that the common experience

implies a shared understanding (MERTON, 1972). There are important contributions written as "insiders" in Polish migration research in various migratory contexts (GARAPICH, 2008; GRZYMALA-KOZLOWSKA, 2005; SZEWCZYK, 2014; TREVENA, 2011). There are also, however, non-Polish scholars contributing to this knowledge base (BOTTERILL, 2014; BURRELL, 2009; DATTA, 2009; RYAN, 2010; WHITE, 2010). Increasingly, the insider/outsider dichotomy has received critical attention by those who acknowledge the multiple positionalities of both researchers and research participants (RYAN, KOFMAN & AARON, 2011), the possibility of occupying and negotiating both insider and outsider status at different times (SHERIF, 2001), or the ambiguous "space between" being inside and out (DWYER & BUCKLE, 2009). An intersectional analysis of research narratives attends to these critiques by accepting that commonality and difference is fluid and dynamic. [3]

Navigating the "space between" requires reflexivity to discover and make explicit the subjective assumptions that form the value judgments of the researcher in order to break down hierarchies and acknowledge difference and uncertainty in the construction of knowledge (ROSE, 1997). Such a process extends beyond self-examination in the field to recognition of the consequences of the interactions between researcher and the researched, their shifting positionalities and multiple intersectionalities. ROWLING (1999) sees the researcher as neither in nor out of the research encounter but in "mutual research collaboration," navigating alongside the participant (see also BREEN, 2007; OIKONOMIDOY, 2009). The research interview is then, arguably, a space of narrative co-construction as the interviewer and interviewee negotiate and confront intersections of gender, class, nationality and sexuality and the attendant power relations these produce. Trying to break down power imbalances whilst also retaining boundaries involves ethical practice to ensure that "the core ingredient is not insider or outsider status but an ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one's research participants, and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience" (DWYER & BUCKLE, 2009, p.59). Going further, GAIR (2012, p.134) argues that the goals of qualitative research are similar to that of empathetic counseling in the quest to "hear, feel, understand and value the stories of others and to convey that felt empathy and understanding back to the client/storyteller/participant." She emphasizes the role of empathy in cultivating more insightful qualitative research and overcoming the binary of insider/outsider. In the following section I trouble the notion of the "outsider" in Polish migration research using examples from an empirical study of Polish youth migration to Scotland. Through these examples I show the ambiguity of outsider status in relation to particular research participants and the multiple intersectionalities that disrupt this straightforward binary. I discuss the impact of using particular interviewing methods and techniques that cultivate empathy and reflexive practice and contribute to the co-construction of research narratives of Polish migration. [4]

2. Researching Polish Migration as an "Outsider"

2.1 Polish youth mobility in the European Union

This article is based on a doctoral study that explored the socio-spatial mobilities of young post-accession Polish migrants living in Edinburgh and return migrants living in Krakow. The research was conducted between 2010 and 2011 during which time I spent 4 months living in Krakow, and six months living in Edinburgh. This contribution focuses almost entirely on a small sample of interviews with current migrants in Edinburgh rather than return migrants in Krakow. This is to allow a more in depth exploration of intersectionality in migrant identities for whom migration is a present experience, with particular focus on the shifting class positions of those who have experience downward social mobility. The study is underpinned by a feminist epistemological framework that is anti-foundationalist, and interpretative. I employed a mixed-method qualitative approach involving biographical-narrative interviews, photo elicitation, participant observation, interactive blogging and semi-structured interviews. This combination of methods enlivened the research relationship, allowing a textured examination of subjectivities and of the research dynamic itself. In particular the combination of biographical narrative and photo elicitation was valuable in stimulating visual memories of migration, home and youth transitions and encouraging reflection on how identities had changed through mobility. This article, however, focuses explicitly on the practice of biographical-narrative interviewing to explore in greater depth how the research relationship unfolds as a result of particular questioning techniques and how narratives are co-constructed within this setting. [5]

Alongside this, I reflexively discuss my positionality as an English researcher investigating Polish migration. Following NOWICKA and CIESLIK (2013) I argue against methodological nationalism in deriving commonality and difference in research sites and view categories of gender, class and nationality are unstable. While my Englishness was an obvious difference in these encounters, my age, gender, middle classness and racial white identity were shared with some interviewees and these became explicit mechanisms to point out difference with other Poles. The multiple positionalities present in the interview encounter brought about unintended connections and dissonances that complicated my position as "outsider." While much critical work has addressed the limitations of the "insider" perspective in Polish migration research, less focus has been on perceived outsiders in this research setting. [6]

2.2 Biographical narrative methods

The study comprised of over 30 biographical narrative interviews with young Polish migrants living in Edinburgh and return migrants living in Krakow. Narrative approaches have historically been adopted by those seeking to explore individual personhood and agency, raising questions about selfhood and promoting the "counter-narratives" of "marginalized voices" (MAYNES, PIERCE & LASLETT, 2008, p.1). The method not only reveals what people have experienced, but also how they construct and confirm their own subject positions through the telling of

stories about their life (TEMPLE, 2001). In essence, people make sense of the world through narrative because "social life is itself storied" (SOMERS & GIBSON, 1994, p.38). This contribution focuses on a small subset of individuals selected to highlight examples of shifting intersectionalities of the research encounter. The aim of the interviews was to elicit the personal meanings of EU mobility for young Poles who had engaged in some form of post-accession migration, exploring their experiences through open-ended questions about growing up, family, mobility strategies and pathways. It was, therefore, important for the interview to be an enabling space whereby the interviewee constructed their biography in their own terms. To do this I drew on questioning techniques grounded in psychoanalytical theory. [7]

Psychoanalytical methods have been drawn upon in social sciences to take account of the emotional processes involved in research encounters (BONDI, SMITH & DAVIDSON, 2005; WALKERDINE, LUCEY & MELODY, 2002). I drew on HOLLWAY and JEFFERSON's (2000, p.37) free association narrative interview method to elicit the "meaningful episodes" of individual experience and take seriously the "incoherences" and ambiguities of the narrative. Drawing on MULLINGS (1999), it could be argued that the narrative interview setting in which psychoanalytical techniques are drawn upon and ethically managed can lead to the dynamic co-creation of knowledge. The research relationship evolves through embodied performances and interactions where multiple positionalities are on display and shift throughout the intersubjective exchange. In this sense the insider/outsider dichotomy is less obvious and a blunt explanation for how we negotiate commonality and difference in the interview setting. Drawing on GAIR (2012), engaging with empathy is of value in this moment, and such engagement is an "unfolding relationship" not one based on prior shared experience. [8]

2.3 Reflecting on positionalities

Before embarking on this research project I was initially embarrassed and nervous about my "outsider" position as an English rather than Polish researcher, particularly since I had only basic Polish language training. Writing a fieldwork diary was an effective reflexive tool to make sense of my own subjective interpretations and feelings about the interview dynamic. Exposing the dynamics of the relational space produced through the process of research involves a self-conscious analysis of one's position as researcher and a consideration of the power relations in the production of knowledge. In my fieldwork diary I made explicit my positioning as a young, white, female, middle class and, importantly, English researcher. Being English in Scotland designated me as an "outsider" in that many participants acknowledged that England and Scotland are different nations with distinct cultural specificities. As the research evolved, I would often describe myself as an English person living in Scotland, out with the borders of my home, rather than a British person living in the UK. This inadvertently became a way to connect with participants in discussions of home, belonging and national identity and elicited disclosures about Scotland and Scottishness that may have been omitted in discussions with a Scottish researcher. [9]

My not being Polish was met with different assumptions by different people. All of the interviews were conducted in English with the option of an interpreter if requested by the interviewee. Interestingly, none of the interviewees requested this as most participants felt they had competent levels of English language skills to complete the interview without an interpreter. Some felt less comfortable discussing personal situations in a second language and I felt conscious of my interpretations of their experiences given the lack of a shared experience of Polishness or of migrancy. For others, the interview was viewed as a space to practice English and this became as a bonding mechanism between me and the participant. As TEMPLE and KOTERBA (2009) suggest the link between language and meaning is not straightforward and all linguistic communities are differentiated. As such, issues of representation and interpretation are the concern of English and Polish speakers alike and should be scrutinized in equal measure. A further unexpected benefit of being perceived as an outsider was the way in which participants took ownership of the narrative and script the experiences of migration and post-socialist transitions in Poland alongside assumptions about my lack of knowledge about such topics. This scripting revealed the everyday, foundational contexts of migration experience that may have been less explicit to an "insider" whose "common ground" is taken for granted (cf. BOULTON, 2000). A byproduct of this was an opportunity to explore nostalgia, myth and emotion through a deep engagement with how people "relate trajectories ... to transitions ... and the spaces and times they flow through" (BAILEY, 2009, p.408). [10]

The value of this method then is in the *perceived* truths of the narrator and what people remember to be important so as to illuminate their personal subjectivities; the affective geographies of migration at particular points in people's lives. The interview became a space to examine how individual narratives are socially and culturally constituted as part of an ongoing explanatory and relational process that connect to broad social narratives (JACKSON & RUSSELL, 2010, p.175). As an "outsider" who has not lived through post-socialist transformation in Poland my potential for understanding the meaning of this upheaval and social change is limited to what I infer through texts and the voices of those I interview. However, what emerged through the narratives of my participants were rich descriptions of the personal experiences of transition, with many re-telling the story of post-socialist change and how this related to their decisions for migration to someone unfamiliar with the process. The creation of this narrative differed from person to person; revealing subjective and nostalgic sentiments about socialism and post-socialism (cf. TODOROVA & GILLE, 2010). These differences highlighted to me the benefits of the narrative approach as a way of gaining an insight into how individuals make meaning of a particular juncture in their life. [11]

Having reflected on how I felt my subjectivity was interpreted by participants, it is also necessary to be aware of my own position of power and of vulnerability in the research dynamic, and the embedded "defenses and fantasies" which influence the production of subjectivities through research (WALKERDINE et al., 2002, p.179). The narration of the interview in English, a second or third language option for all participants in the study, demonstrates an underlying power

imbalance. There will inevitably be things left unsaid in a narrative spoken in a second language and moments where listening and interpreting what is said falls short of expectation. However, this is arguably a limitation for all researchers whatever language we employ. MULLINGS (1999) emphasizes the need to recognize uncertainty in the research process and name the more difficult moments in navigating shared positional spaces. In this sense it is an ethical responsibility of all researchers to recognize that silencing operates through the research encounter (TUHIWAI-SMITH, 2005) and it is important to continually analyze not only what we hear but how we listen to participants, nurturing empathy with their experiences whilst also guarding against imposing a logic of sameness on experience. In Section 2.3 I provide empirical examples of how class, gender and nationality intersect during discussions about migration and work and the ways both I and the participant negotiate the power relations that emanate from these discussions. [12]

In the research encounter power shifts as narratives unfold and researchers occupy multiple positionalities. While there are obvious privileges about being white, middle class and English and I occupy a position of power in the research relationships as a result, there are also vulnerabilities associated with marginalized identity positions I occupy. The following reflection on positionality was written in my fieldwork diary after I had conducted two interviews. It reveals the expectations and anxieties about self-disclosure and openness in formal research settings.

> "I have been reflecting on my position as a young looking, white female researcher and my interview manner ... My aim is to try and facilitate a situation in which the narrator is representing themselves to me as they wish to be seen. However, I am aware that their sense of self is related to my presence and their perceptions of me and what I want them to say. I want them to trust me, and show that I respect their stories and the exchange by offering some of my story too ... I am slightly anxious that in order to facilitate openness I should give some of myself away, however, I am reluctant to give too much personal information in case it affects the interview. For example, in both interviews I have done so far each interviewee has delved into personal issues, relationships and family situations—I have in both cases felt the need to disclose some personal information about myself in response to directed questions from the interviewee. In both cases, my personal life has been shared so I do not come across closed or untrustworthy. I think this is reasoned on a case by case basis—for example, by sharing information about personal relationships my sexuality is made evident—this may cause some issues with interviewees who have certain beliefs about same sex relationships based in Christian faith, or it may not and I may be pre judging such an encounter because of my personal experiences." [13]

This extract exposes my own insecurities about my position as non-Polish researcher and I reflect on a number of concerns relating to how I affect the interview. I am preoccupied with being open whilst at the same time being reticent to reveal my lesbian identity fearing retribution of some sort. My apprehensions about the treatment and attitudes towards LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) people in Poland were based upon what I had read and seen in

Poland. During my fieldwork in Poland I traveled to Warsaw to participate in the first "tolerance" march for LGBT rights in Poland. There was an armed police presence lining the streets to protect the marchers from the small pockets of protesters who expressed their opposition with placards and throwing eggs at the marchers. That the event took place demonstrates a degree of will to campaign for greater acceptance and visibility for LGBT groups and people, and the event was, apart from the aforementioned opposition, overwhelmingly peaceful. However, the feeling of unease of being "out" in an unfamiliar context affected how willing I subsequently became about disclosing my sexual orientation to those involved in my research. As I continued the research it became clearer that, on the whole, my concerns that young migrants would harness a Polish catholic suspicion of same-sex relationships were largely unfounded and that my own prejudices were interfering. None of the participants in Scotland or Poland expressed any outward intolerance to LGBT groups and while I rarely brought up my sexual orientation to interviewees, my sense of unease about potential judgments softened as people shared with me their own frustrations about perceived intolerances in Polish society. For example, some interviewees referred to having friendships with gay or lesbian Poles who had migrated to Scotland because of negative experiences in Poland and the perception that Scottish society would be more accepting of same-sex partnerships. More generally, the critical engagements with aspects of Polish society that were perceived to cultivate intolerant attitudes towards difference demonstrated to me that I had quite rigid notions of what it means to be a white Polish heterosexual with a Catholic upbringing. The interviews thus became an exploratory space for me to unbound and re-think categories of difference in dialogue with those exploring their own ideas about difference. This also occurred in relation to race, ethnicity and body difference, as Julia[1], a 25 year old return migrant living in Krakow, remarks:

> "I didn't realize there would be so many people from so many countries. In Poland if you see someone who is different you keep looking at this person and it is so normal in Scotland that there are other people with tattoos on their faces and all over their skin, nobody has a problem with that and it was different because in Poland we still have a problem with tolerance and I wasn't sure if I was fully tolerant because I didn't have contact with people from different countries and now I know that I am because I worked with them and I didn't have any problems with their nationalities, I think you have to check yourself." [14]

The need to "check yourself" is as relevant for my interviewees as it is for me as we are exposed to new interactions we dynamically navigate multiple positionalities. As demonstrated above, there are both benefits and limits of reflexivity. If we over-indulge in our own reflections we can get caught in a reflexive loop that distracts and disguises our eventual aims. However, it also highlights the place of emotions in conducting research, acknowledging the emotional in research is a vital stage in the process of analysis and understanding how subjectivities are being produced and deconstructed throughout. Rather than deny these attachments and disturbances, I have tried

1 The names of all the interviewees have been changed to assure anonymity. The interviews were conducted in English.

to, as WALKERDINE et al. (2002, p.194) suggest, "find some way to take seriously a subjectivity that always intrudes, no matter what one's best intentions." [15]

2.4 Analyzing migrant narratives intersectionally

This section presents four empirical examples—two men and two women—to highlight the ways that narratives are co-constructed as positionalities interact and shift through the research encounter. I discuss the negotiation of identities within the interview, with a particular focus on the intersections of gender, class and nationality and how these shift in relation to each other. Parallels can be drawn here with RYAN's (2010) work on negotiating ethnicity through migration where she discusses ethnicity as a dynamic category, one that evolves and mutates in encounters with "others" through migration. In this article, I see the research encounter itself as a dynamic space of negotiation where supposedly fixed identity categories of gender, nationality and class shift in relation to each other and the encounter between the interviewer and interviewee (cf. RYAN, 2015). [16]

2.4.1 Tomek and Łukasz

Tomek is a 30 year old man who has lived in Edinburgh since 2006. He works as a junior architect and is heavily involved in Polish cultural activities in Edinburgh. In his interview he shared his memories of growing up on a housing estate in the west of Poland during the later stages of communism in Poland and the friendships he cultivated there to illuminate to me the absence of social class during this period.

> "In Poland because of the communism everything was flattened and so a person working on site and person like my father for example, they had the same money so there was nothing like 'right this guy is a tutor in the University, he is smart and has great car, and this guy is working class and has no car'—No, no-one had car! So the fact that my friends were from highly educated parents wasn't dictated by what our parents told us to do or what we were suggested by national status because there was no visual association with social class or social group, it was just people who you feel better with, you are with and I think it was really interesting ... So in Poland everyone was equal—it wasn't good that everyone was poor but at least we were equal and actually no-one felt the poverty that much at the time, except that poverty is subjective—I didn't realize we were poor." [17]

Tomek's description of a classless society under communism is a nostalgic representation of neighborhood relations. He chooses to talk about his friendships, the absence of material wealth and implies simplicity of life, associated with early childhood. There are also contradictions and ambiguities in his narrative, whilst he admits that most of his friends were from highly educated parents he doesn't see this as denoting a class position. He remarks on the absence of visible markers of class and the belief that everyone was equal through universal experiences of poverty. Interpreting this narration of social

class in Poland was a difficult endeavor since my own understanding of class has been formed through a British class perspective. [18]

In our subsequent exchange, Tomek and I found connections between our class positions as educated, professional people living in Edinburgh, in one sense blurring my position as an "outsider"; however my acute awareness of being middle-class was not a significant identity marker for Tomek which highlighted our different histories and perspectives. As a consequence, the absence of reference to social class in narratives of Polish young people led to a reconfiguration of my own understanding of class, how it operates unseen and the less acute manifestations of hierarchy that are present in such contexts. These nuances were only possible through a privileging of the storied: that which is narrated through memory and nostalgia, and the intersubjective exchange that troubled our own positionalities. Conversely, when talking about his initial work experiences in Edinburgh as a kitchen porter Tomek did imply a class ascription by his employers. He said he felt like a "second class citizen" in this position and suggested that portrayals of Polish "migrant workers" reified unhelpful stereotypes and led to downward social mobility (cf. FIHEL & KACZMARCZYK, 2009; TREVENA, 2011). This again demonstrates the fluidity of classed identity ascription in relation to certain contexts and dialogue with others. Interestingly, Tomek didn't see his gender or nationality as inhibiting personal disclosures to me, an English woman, about his experiences of discrimination in Scotland and perceptions of his social status there. Instead, when I asked him to reflect on how he felt the interview went he described it as "a process of learning about myself," a space of self-construction with potential to disrupt identity categories that are assumed to be fixed. [19]

For others too, the label of "migrant worker" was a problematic trope that many disassociated with. Łukasz, a 28 year old man who lives and works in Edinburgh as an IT tutor, used the interview to explore this. Expressing criticism of Poland and "other Poles" is common among post-accession migrants, particularly relating to the label of migrant worker and has been discussed in myriad contexts (DATTA & BRICKELL, 2009; LOPEZ RODRIGUEZ, 2010; RYAN, 2010). In the the interview with Łukasz I read the "othering" of Polish migrant workers as a vehicle for expressing his outsiderness to problematic and often racialized stereotypes, looking for recognition from me as a middle class professional to validate his position.

> "I never thought of myself as a migrant worker, a lot of them actually are migrant workers because they allow themselves to be classified like that whereas they don't necessarily have to do. Again I guess it depends on the definition of worker ... I have two degrees and I work in education—am I an intelligent class?" [20]

In this extract Łukasz emphasizes a distinction between himself and a "migrant worker," suggesting that other Poles "allow themselves" to be ascribed in this way. He rejects more the label of "worker" than "migrant" and identifies as an educated professional with individual agency that excludes him from this label. However, Łukasz is not entirely fixed in ascribing himself a middle class position

either, yet his reference to education aligns him to a generation of meritocratic young people with high levels of cultural capital who grew up during the 1990s during the transition years in Poland (LOPEZ RODRIGUEZ, 2010). Similarly to Tomek, there is reluctance to self-ascribe a class position unsure of how they translate these notions into the British class system or perhaps, as LOPEZ RODRIGUEZ (p.352) found in her study of Polish mothers, it is a strategy to situate oneself beyond stigmatization in a "comfort zone" outside of stereotypical representations of Polish migrant workers. My position as an English middle class professional working in education also affects how rigid this ascription can become—Łukasz is questioning his status, arguably in relation to what I am and expect him to be. His very question to me exposes a power asymmetry between us in that he looks for recognition or an answer from me about his own identity. On the other hand, my middle classness enables him to "other" those he perceives to have lower social and cultural capital, those who potentially "allow themselves to be classified." [21]

Overall, both interviews with Tomek and Łukasz became a space to process the hidden or guarded sensibilities around social class, enabling us to process dynamically our understanding of particular histories and disrupt simplistic notions of insider/outsider-ness. GIBSON, LAW and McKAY (2006) suggest that migrants are engaged in class transformations and assert the need for an analysis of 'class becoming'—as performative and processual rather than static and structurally fixed. Similarly, EADE, DRINKWATER and GARAPICH's (2007) claim that through mobility Polish migrants are constructing a transnational class identity, which is de-localized and dynamically interpreted with reference to several stratification systems. The classed subjectivities of young Polish people like Tomek and Łukasz are relational to particular migratory contexts and multicultural encounters, and importantly to the research interview itself where they are reflexively co-constructed and attendant to particular power relations in that space. [22]

2.4.2 Kasia and Dorota

Kasia is a 29 year old woman living in Edinburgh. She works as a carer and had been in Scotland for around 3 years at the time of interview. In Kasia's interview she talked a lot about the relationships she has with the women in her life: her grandmother—"an amazing woman," and her mother for whom she feels an increasing obligation to return to in order to provide the later life care expected of her. At the end of her interview I asked Kasia if she had any questions for me[2]. She subsequently reflected on this approach in relation to the interview experience picking out gender as a key variable in determining openness.

2 A technique I employed to facilitate reciprocity was to give all participants the opportunity to ask me any questions about myself at the end of the interview. This strategy intentionally disrupts the idea of the professionalized and emotionally distant researcher by introducing my subjectivity into the encounter (cf. MULLINGS, 1999). In doing so I became active and present in the interview, which worked better for some participants than other. While many saw this as an opportunity to ask questions and cultivate more of a dialogue, others didn't want to ask me anything suggesting that some felt more comfortable upholding barriers of anonymity.

> "When you asked if I have any questions for you, you didn't expect me to give everything myself and not give anything in return. I don't think I've ever met a man who would say that—I find it easier to talk to women because they are more open and it's easier to get into honest and real conversation" (Kasia). [23]

Kasia sees both my openness and hers as a gendered characteristic that shapes how easy the conversation is. Kasia assigns me a gendered identity and sees our shared femaleness as enabling, particularly in sharing personal information about relationships. There is an assumed commonality through gender, which is actively brought to attention by Kasia and is given presence in the interaction between us. In this instance Kasia seems to have quite fixed notions about gender and about being a woman. However, at different points in the interview she contradicts this position when talking about the fluidity of her own gendered identity. When talking of the personal transitions in her life, such as relationship breakups, Kasia referred to moments of embodied gender subversion in order to express herself. She shaved her head as a form of self-expression in the context of single life, to counterbalance gender stereotypes and rebel against popular imaginations of femininity. This was particularly against what she perceived to be the stereotypes of Polish women, showing the intersection of national identity and gender. However, as Kasia reflected upon these distinctions she was also troubled by them.

> "When it comes to roles of women, stereotypes that was and is definitely towards the Polish culture and my upbringing. It's funny to think about it because at that time, when I was actually rebelling, I wasn't so aware of it. Now I can clearly see what is what but it's also thanks to the fact that I moved away and in a way evolved past my culture. My cultural identity is now so much more complex and describing it as only Polish wouldn't work anymore." [24]

Kasia uses the term cultural identity as a marker for national identity, but also acknowledges its complexity suggesting that there are gendered, classed and cultural intersections that formulate this category. These categories are also made unstable through migration. Kasia stories the embodied changes in her life in retrospect, talking about shaving her head as a "chapter" in her life. At the end of this discussion she said "I'm still kind of looking for the next chapter," which evokes her sense of uncertainty and the way in which she processed these personal transitions as our discussion developed. [25]

The dynamic of a female-female interview gave way to a range of intimate disclosures about personal relationships and some women shared with me their attitudes and experiences towards men. Dorota is a woman in her thirties living in Edinburgh with her Spanish husband. Here she expresses her thoughts about Polish men in the context of her relationship with her husband.

> "... And Polish guys ... I got loads of comments from Polish guys, like 'such a nice girl but went with a foreigner', it's ... especially with Polish guys, they're just so traditional. The woman is the main driving force and the guys are part of the family together with children." [26]

In this extract Dorota is also making personal disclosures that relate to her national identity and her understanding of gender relations in Poland. Dorota makes an explicit link between gender and nationality in this extract, expressing frustration about what it means to be a "Polish woman" as a fixed category. The fixing of this category and the subsequent negotiation around it reveals that the interview encounter is a process of disentangling this normative construction. My role as a non-Polish researcher arguably allows her to express negative associations with Poland and Polish men in relation to her choice for bi-national marriage that she may have otherwise guarded against. The fact that I am a woman also contributes to a perception that I might share an understanding of gender inequality issues that are universally felt. One the one hand there are similarities between Dorota and Kasia's narrative in that they both express opposition to a constructed notion of Polish femininity, but while they both speak to me as a woman Kasia is more direct in the way she ascribes me a shared gendered position bypassing national difference. [27]

Returning to the narrative of Łukasz, it is possible to see parallels in how both men and women represent Polish gendered identities, contributing to existing work on Polish gender identities and masculinities (DATTA, 2009; DATTA & BRICKELL, 2009; LOPEZ RODRIGUEZ, 2010; RYAN, 2010). Łukasz rarely talked about his family, his parents are divorced and he is not in much contact with his father. He talks of his migration as a necessary step away from his hometown in Poland, reflecting on the potential life he would have had if he had stayed in Poland.

> "I'm very happy with what I became here and I think my migration was necessary for that. Because I suppose in Poland I would have just stayed mediocre guy settling for mediocre stuff, not really wanting to do too much with his life ... I think myself very successful as well starting from small town in Poland where I could have easily just knocked a girl up and become early dad with receding hairline and a bigger belly than I have now." [28]

The imagery of poor health and early fatherhood are suggestive of a view of small town Poland that is mired in provincialism and immobility, one that Łukasz represents as his alternative life path if emigration had not been an option. Similar to Dorota, he represents Polish masculinity as limited and family-oriented. At later points in the interview, however, Łukasz explores his feelings of national pride for Polish heritage, his involvement with medieval re-enactment groups in Poland that reify traditions of Polish masculinity through which national and gender identities intersect.

> "The more I get into Polish history, the more I think I maybe want to go back to this country and change it but being just me on my own I'm not going to do anything at all so there is this sort of struggle between staying here because it's easy and it's easier than over there and it's safe and I've got things building up over here and I'm at an age where I need to start seriously thinking about getting a family of my own ... Ultimately the goal I would like is to sit in front of my house on a rocking chair, my wife bringing me beers from the fridge, little grand mini me's running around so that I

> could pass on all my books to them and I could teach my son how to sword fight and possible, if I should be unfortunate to get a daughter, how to shoot with a bow ... I know I'm sorry (laughing)." [29]

This extract demonstrates that despite an earlier disavowal of Polish masculinity, Łukasz constructs a vision of his future that is steeped in national and gender stereotypes. The two positions are not mutually exclusive by any means. The later imagery of a wife, bringing him beer is a re-imagining of his masculinity with reference to achievement, success and autonomy rather than ill health, failure and inevitability. My being a woman did not appear to affect or censor Łukasz's imaginary. After the interview I discovered that Łukasz's friend, who I had previously interviewed, had disclosed to him my sexual orientation. Upon reflection I considered that perhaps my position as a lesbian woman was yet another subject position that affected how comfortable Łukasz was in sharing his thoughts about his masculinity and the women in his life. While I might have disagreed with some of the gendered representations of Polish men and women, as the facilitator of these narratives my role was to run with it and expose the inherent "defenses and fantasies" of interviewees, their reflexive position as they story their experience (WALKERDINE et al., 2002, p.179). [30]

3. Conclusion

As social researchers we are continually challenged to strike a balance between and across positions. We adopt the position of authority as facilitator and expert of certain knowledges, whilst also positioning ourselves as a learner who asks questions and records the knowledges of others. In this sense we are always outsiders occupying an uncertain space in relation to the populations we study. In recognizing our multiple positionalities, however, we can find common ground, engage empathetically and secure an ethical space in which to conduct research that does not necessarily proscribe to an insider/outsider dichotomy. This article has presented a reflexive account of my positionality as an English researcher conducting interviews with Polish migrants in Scotland and the ways in which I and my respondents discursively negotiated our differences and found common ground through shifting and overlapping intersectionalities. I have focused particularly on the biographical narrative method of interviewing, and the use of psychoanalytical questioning to highlight the potential of these methods to explore the intersections of class, gender, nationality and sexuality in the research encounter. [31]

There are inevitable complexities to finding shared positional spaces. Individual identities are fluid and complex and claiming insider status based on shared characteristics, such as national identity, race and gender is too simplistic (PRATT & HANSON, 1995). Conversely, the research interview is itself a relational space where intersubjective understanding is developed and knowledge is co-created through the interview dynamic—in this sense we are never fully outsiders either. The multiple intersectionalities at work in this dynamic are constantly in process and demonstrate the always intruding subjectivities in the

research encounter. As Ania, a photographer in her 30s living in Edinburgh reflected to me when we were talking about the act of photographing things:

> "Yeah, you've got something real you know, it is up to you to what extent. That's why I wanted to choose photography because ... I started to see images and it's like a pattern I'm looking for ... I don't know if you heard of the author Anais Nin—I love her, I read by accident a sentence of her and I think it's the conclusion of this—'We don't see things how they are, we see them how we are'." [32]

Ania's narrative encapsulates to me both the value and limitations of using biographical-narrative methods to explore how people make sense of the world and represent themselves in it. They can capture various subject positions that inform or construct different visions of the world and also remind us that as researchers we have our own way of seeing that shapes whether we feel inside or outside. [33]

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