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Good research methods are supposed to be culture free, value free. But feminist scholars realised that this standard had not been and could not be met in practice. In their opinion it's not only unachievable but is also as a matter of fact, undesirable. The (controversial) feminist researchers' notion that research itself can contribute to producing a liberatory, transformative subjectivity in an oppressed or marginalized group, was the subject of a special issue of *Signs*, edited by Sandra Harding and Kathryn Norberg.

Feminist theory includes in particular concerns about how to understand the intersectionality of race, class, gender, and other structural features of societies. But feminist scholars also understand the impossibility of accurate interpretation, translation, and representation among radically different cultures. The notion that gender patterns are socially constructed and thus closely knit to knowledge and power makes it complex. This is, furthermore, the major theme of the ten articles in this issue of *Signs*. More precisely, they are occupied with on the one hand the issue of power in methodology, and on the other power between researchers and the researched.

If participation is a form of power, then power cannot be avoided in doing research, realizes Mike Kesby in his article. Here, Kesby gives a good example of the impact of power on feminist methodology in the search for a more reciprocal exchange between participation and post structuralism. The difficulty lies in the notion that power is not concentrated and 'not inherent within powerful subjects but is dispersed throughout the complex networks of discourse, practises, and relationships that position subjects as powerful that justify and facilitate their authority in relation to others' (Clegg, 1989, 207). In his article, Kesby reformulates the conception of empowerment as a reaction to some recent pointed criticism of participatory action research, in which the issue of power is not possible to avoid. So, he states, in return: '...I suggest that it must be worked with'.

From another perspective, Christine Halse and Anne Honey reflect on some of the sticky moral questions as they work to transform a research proposal into an application for an ethics committee approval. Seeing that researchers can be placed in an awkward moral

space between compliance and defiance, legal and transgressive action, instrumentality and sensibility to others, they suggest an ongoing collaborative process shaped by dialogue and responsive relationships that are guided by principles of justice.

In 1991, Mary Margaret Fonow and Judith Cook published one of the most widely used feminist methodology texts, *Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research*. Now, they reflect on changes since that collection was published, in an article that is worthwhile reading in this special issue of *Signs*.

The laborious attempt to eliminate power differences between the researcher and the researched, furthermore, is described by Shahnaz Kahn. She reflects on her double identity, as being a Pakistani Canadian and realizes that hierarchies among women frequently are dismissed. Her ambivalent position makes her an outsider: 'I am an outsider to marginalized feminist debates in Canada because I am not white, and in Pakistan because I do not live there.' Some Pakistani argue that Kahn is not one of them because she is not sharing their risk. As a native informant, furthermore, she may not be authentic enough to be taken seriously. Kahn reacts to this by situating herself within a multilayered process, able to identify the contradictory and contested location from which she informs the west. That position gave her a possibility to nuance the stereotype of third-world woman, often presented as oppressed and voiceless. Kahn started an empowerment group with fourteen women in prison in which she gathered data for her research, simultaneously as her work could offer some benefits for the women. The participation of these veiled women convinced her that the conventional views regarding this group had to be rethought.

Moreover, the intersections between power relations between men and women and power relations between researcher and the researched, are explored in this special issue of *Signs*, by Sabine Grenz in her interview study of clients of prostitutes. Her study aims to unravel the secrecy around that surrounds these men and to investigate the ways in which masculine identity is discursively reproduced through commercial sex. In addition, her article also gives a bright example of how the power relation between researcher and researched may be reversed. In her study, all participants were white men and native Germans, some of them asking her if she would be able to tolerate it if he masturbated during the interview. Or: 'May I also show you my penis then?' Another man called for a 'little punishment' as a reward for the interview. 'However', Grenz concludes 'these requests also show that men feel they are allowed to ask for such favours, which again marks their position of power.'

Lois Presser reports a similar negotiation process, studying violent criminals. In his article, Presser demonstrates a systematic investigation of how relations of power between interviewer and participant may become part of the interview data. ‘The researcher’s goal’, he writes, ‘is not to emancipate the authentic story of the narrator – none exists – but rather to expose, as much as she can, of the relations that influence the construction of the story that is told.’

The standard of culture and value free research could not be met in practice. According to feminist scholars it is likewise undesirable. A fruitful (and therefore necessary) example of participatory feminist research is described by Verta Taylor and Leila J. Rupp in their study of drag queens. . ‘[t]he experience also led us to reflect on the complex gender and sexual dynamics at play in such a project.’ The contradiction they encountered proved to be productive for their thinking about how the drag queens play with and deconstruct gender and sexual categories in their performances and the way this makes gender and sexual fluidity oppression visible ‘

The research projects in this issue deal with specific research problems in particular social surroundings. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to apply these careful ‘solutions’ to the readers own research situation. In addition, the goal of this volume is to be useful for the scholars in their own search for effective and progressive ways of thinking about and practising feminist social research. And as such, this is an inspiring and powerful start, thinking about the definition and the formulation of how to do good social research.