

**Men and violence: life hi/stories of male sex offenders**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study is a study of men who have been convicted of sexual offences. However, unlike many studies of this group of men this research seeks to understand them as men. The chosen method of inquiry is the life hi/story approach.

Nine men imprisoned for sex offences agreed to tell their life hi/stories. All of the interviews took place in prison. The interviews were semi-structured and allowed the men to tell their stories from their earliest memories to their current situation, using transitions (e.g. entry to school, work) as prompts for memories. Additionally the emotional responses to life events were explored in depth.

The transcripts of the interviews were analysed initially looking for common themes and links in the stories, and latterly using the tripartite structure (power relations, production relations, and cathexis) developed by Connell (1995). The analytical process produced a massive amount of material. In this study one aspect of the life hi/stories is presented in detail; deriving from both power relations within the family and close emotional relations implied by cathexis, this study focuses on what the men said about their relationships with their fathers and also what they said about being fathers.

The study is located in traditions of Social Science research, particularly both psychology and sociology. Ontological and epistemological issues are reviewed in depth and related to hermeneutic approaches to

understanding/interpreting the life hi/stories of men. Within the context of hermeneutical interpretation and feminist standpoint theory the study is undertaken from an explicitly pro-feminist orientation. The values, gender and standpoint of the researcher and how they relate to the study are critically examined and explored. These issues are starkly brought into focus given the area of the study: sexually abusive men. The impacts of undertaking research in this area are also considered.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

This study emerges out of my previous employment and my knowledge of sexual violence. I have worked extensively with male perpetrators of sexual violence and young victims of sexual assault. In this chapter, I briefly outline the development of my interests in the men and sexual violence. I then describe the aims and objectives of the study and conclude the chapter by providing an overview of the thesis.

#### Background to the Study

During the twelve years I was a probation officer, I developed ways of working with men who had committed sexual offences. Accounts of some of this work were published (Cowburn 1986; Cowburn 1988; Cowburn 1989; Cowburn 1990; Cowburn and Nicholson 1990; Cowburn, Wilson et al. 1992). In 1990, I undertook study for an M.Phil. on therapeutic work with male sex offenders in the prisons of England and Wales (Cowburn 1991). In this study, I noted, at the time to my surprise, that most convicted sex offenders had no previous convictions for sexual offences. This started me thinking about sexual violence beyond the convicted population and increasingly I focused on the relationship of 'ordinary' masculinities to the group of men who had been marked as different by being convicted of a sex offence.

In 1991, I jointly edited and contributed to a practice manual for probation officers working with sex offenders. The title of this manual indicated the way I viewed male sexual violence – *Changing Men* (Cowburn, Wilson et al. 1992) – in

that it drew attention to the fact that the sex offenders were *men*. There was discussion in this manual of the importance of locating convicted male sex offenders within a continuum of male sexual behaviours (Kelly 1988). I particularly remember writing the following words in the conclusion to this manual:

As we write, men in different parts of the world are spending vast amounts of money trying to kill each other, whilst a large proportion of the world's population (mostly, but not exclusively, women and children) are allowed to starve to death. *Amnesty International* reports the increasing use of rape of women and children throughout the world as a common instrument of political oppression:

*In countries around the world, government agents persistently use rape and sexual abuse to coerce, humiliate, punish and intimidate women. ... Yet many governments persistently refuse to recognise that rape and sexual abuse by government agents are serious human rights violations. (Amnesty International 1991; p. 1)*

Male violence, sexual or otherwise, is not the unusual behaviour of a few "odd" individuals, neither is it an expression of overpowering urges: it is a product of the social world in which we live. Our practice with male sex offenders cannot ignore this wider context. (Cowburn, Wilson et al. 1992; pp 281-282)

The present study seeks to pursue some of the wider issues highlighted in the above quotation. The trajectory of the study is however, slightly odd; I have chosen to look at the life hi/stories<sup>1</sup> of some men convicted of sexual offences, in the context of the literatures about men and masculinities.

### Understandings of sex offences and sex offenders

With the notable exception of feminist discourse (for example Brownmiller 1975; Kelly 1988; Scully 1990), men who have been convicted of offences of sexual violence are seen in both popular and "scientific" discourse to be different from

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this thesis, I use this graphological effect to reflect both the perspectives embodied in the words 'story' and 'history'. Issues surrounding this debate are discussed in Chapter Three.

men who have not been convicted of sexual offences. The press has tended to characterise the “sex offender” as someone not human. Until recently, the main stereotype was of the rapist as “beast” whose “urges” could not be controlled (Soothill and Walby 1991). More recently, the tendency has been to use the word “paedophile” to separate out and stigmatise the convicted sex offender (Kitzinger 1999; Cowburn and Dominelli 2001).

The “scientific” community involved with the convicted sex offender is largely made up of psychologists and psychiatrists (probation officers and social workers are also involved in work with sex offenders but neither of these professions assumes an explicit identity as a “science”). These professions have developed their own language and structures for separating out and understanding the male sex offender outside of the context of his gender (Karpman 1957; Gebhard, Gagnon et al. 1965; Rosenberg and Knight 1988; Ellis 1989). Therapeutic approaches to the male sex offender are, and for the last 15 years or so have been, dominated by cognitive behavioural perspectives (Perkins 1987; Marshall and Barbaree 1990; Marshall, Laws et al. 1990; Hollin and Howells 1991; Thornton 1991; Barker and Morgan 1993; Morrison 1994; Nagayama Hall 1995). Such approaches have concentrated, in part, on helping the offender identify “thinking errors” or “cognitive distortions” that have enabled him to commit sexual offences.

Generally, these approaches have been resistant to being viewed as social constructions fixed in a particular time and culture, embodying particular attitudes and values. Attempts to highlight the cultural specificity of these approaches have been few (Ford 1993; Ford and Robinson 1993; Cowburn and



Modi 1995; Cowburn 1996; Cowburn and Dominelli 2001) and generally have not significantly altered the theoretical and political thrust of the therapeutic approach. Within this forensic framework, consideration of the fact that most sex offenders are men and behave in ways similar to most other men, most of the time has not been considered. Thus, popular and scientific discourses have perpetuated the view that sexual violence is the behaviour of an atypical minority of men.

### Methodological considerations

A side effect of the dominance of cognitive-behavioural psychology in understanding (male) sexual violence has been that it has concentrated upon 'offending behaviours' and has developed classification systems based on statistical techniques focussing on offence related issues (see Chapter Four). This has, perhaps, contributed to the ignoring of gender in understandings of male sexual violence. As a way of counter balancing this, I have chosen a life hi/story approach in this study.

Life story research aims to investigate the subjective meanings of lives as they are told in the narratives of participants (Plummer 1995; p.50)

This particular method is particularly relevant for this group of men; Plummer (1995a; p. 51) states that life story research tends to focus on three types of person - "the marginal person, the great person, and the common man (sic)". I would suggest that the adult male sex offender belongs in the first category. Plummer (1995a; p. 51), describing this group, writes:

Classically, the marginal person is one whom 'fate has condemned to live in two societies, and in two, not merely different but antagonistic cultures' (Stonequist 1961): the participant lives at a cultural cross-roads. Experiencing contrasting expectations as to how he or she should live, the participant becomes aware of the essentially and socially constructed

nature of social life - how potentially fragile are the realities that people make for themselves. In this awareness the participant throws a much broader light on the cultural order, the 'OK world' that is routinely taken for granted by most.

The 'OK world' for the male sex offender is the world dominated by hegemonic masculinity, the world of adult heterosexual relationships. This thesis places the stories of the men in the context of both what is known about male sex offenders and also more general theorising about men and masculinities.

### **Aim of study**

The aim of this study is to consider the relationship between social constructions of (i) masculinities and (ii) sexual violence through exploring the life histories of convicted sex offenders.

I obtained access to men convicted of sex offences who were imprisoned in England and Wales. The material that I gathered was substantial in quantity; I spent over forty hours interviewing the men. Table 1. below, shows the number of words in each interview.

<b>Man interviewed</b>	<b>Number of words in transcript of interview</b>
Jack	29,949
Brian	18,846
Roger	33,377
Martin	37,711
Wayne	34,007
Andrew	22,615
Dennis	37937
Michael	25202
Darren	54,810

**Table 1. Word length of interviews**

In total, these interviews comprise 329,165 words on over 1,000 pages of single spaced A4 paper. The sheer amount of material posed me substantial problems with presentation. I have narrowed the focus and explored two principal

themes: 'sons and fathers', and the 'language games' of men both of which were present throughout the study.

### **Structure of Thesis**

The thesis is divided into four parts. Part One addresses 'Epistemological issues'; it considers general issues relating to social science research and specifically addresses matters related to the use of life hi/story as a way of understanding men who have committed sex offences. The second part of the study, 'Men and male sexual violences', looks at the forensic literatures relating to sexual violence and considers approaches to studying men, masculinity and masculinities. In Part Three of the thesis I focus on 'Methodological Issues'; this section is underpinned by the content of the two previous sections and it considers ethical issues and the theoretical and practical issues related to the interviews. Part Four presents the findings of the study. It first briefly outlines the 'stories' that each man told, and it then considers in more detail one of the many themes that emerged strongly in the interviews: 'Sons and Fathers' explores the men's experience of their own fathers and of being fathers or father figures to children. In the final chapter in this section I reflect on a range of issues relating to me as the researcher in this research project. The Fifth and final part of the thesis considers the wider implications of this piece of research.

**Part One**  
**Epistemological Issues**

## Chapter Two

### Approaches to Social Science Research

#### Introduction

This chapter addresses issues related to the study of human beings by human beings, or more specifically, in this case, the study of men by a man. Language and terminology in this area embody ontological, epistemological and ideological standpoints, which in turn carry implications about how the world is viewed and how it is to be studied. In this chapter, I consider concepts of the human self and approaches to studying human beings. The first third of this chapter is concerned with issues of ontology; the second third addresses issues that are primarily epistemological; and the final section addresses methodological issues relating to this study.

#### The problem of the individual (ontology)

Underpinning any study of the human life course there are inevitably fundamental ontological assumptions about identity and selfhood. It is not within the scope of this study to undertake an in depth, historical exposition of ontologies. However, a brief overview illuminates certain issues that recur throughout this study.

In early Christian thought, 'being' was inseparable from the Christian doctrine: the word of Christ embodied in the gospels of the New Testament and interpreted by institutionalised forms of Christianity prescribed all aspects of the human condition and located them within a spiritual and moral framework. Human nature was construed as essentially evil, redeemable only through belief

in and practice of Christian doctrine. The human 'identity' was of no significance and the human being would only become of (limited) significance after the 'end of the world' and the establishment of god's kingdom on earth. Human identity was therefore, defined in moral terms and highlighted only for its transitional nature.

It is not easy to identify accurately when changes in dominant conceptions of the 'self' occur in any culture. Generally, commentators (Lyons 1979, cited in Gergen; 2000 p. 6) highlight the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as being the time when, in Europe, the individual as a non-distinct part of a religious community whose identity was prescribed and sustained by the religion changed to a notion of the individual as a rational, autonomous being able to make choices about his (deliberate use of male pronoun) religion and to use his 'reason' to understand his environment. This period is known as 'the Enlightenment'. Gergen (2000; p. 7) provides a summary of this process:

The Judaeo-Christian tradition [had] already endowed individuals with souls, a connection to the spiritual father. Enlightenment thinkers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – philosophers, statesmen, scientists among them – added important elements to this conception of the individual. Most particularly they gave intelligibility to the idea that each individual is capable of observing the world for what it is, and deliberating about the best course of action – that is, the capacities to *observe* for oneself, to *think*, *evaluate*, and then to *choose* one's actions.

One might wish to take issue with a somewhat naïve egalitarian account of the impact of the Enlightenment, which ignores the differential effects of class, race and gender. Indeed the very 'rationalism' that emerged in this period became a vehicle for ensuring the ascendancy and supremacy of a particular social group – the white, middle-class, intellectually, and physically able, heterosexual man – by denigrating others outside of this grouping (Harding, 1991; Henriques,

Hollway et al. 1998). However, it is clear that there emerged during these centuries a very different conception of the individual. Biggs (1999; p. 15) has noted the following aspects of:

... the 'modern' tradition, arising from the Enlightenment, which includes a belief in progress, the power of rationality and the positive value of individual autonomy.

Thus, within Western societies since the eighteenth century there has developed a notion of the individual as a 'unified, monolithic, reified, essentialized subject capable of fully conscious, fully rational action, a subject assumed in most liberal and emancipatory discourse' (Lather 1992; p. 103).

Apart from the strong strand of 'reason' identified and developed as a key feature in Enlightenment ontology, two other features need to be considered:

(i) The work of Charles Darwin in developing an evolutionist perspective for *The Origin of the Species* and Carl Linnaeus' work on developing a classification system of species added an additional dimension to Enlightenment ontological thinking. This dimension was biology. 'Man' (sic) was construed as part of the 'natural' order that could be understood biologically and classified using biological criteria. Thus 'human nature' increasingly became to be understood as being rooted in human biology. In its turn this led to the development of what has more recently become known as 'essentialist' thought. Burr (1995; p. 19) has noted that:

'Essentialism' is a way of understanding the world that sees things (including human beings) as having their own particular essence or nature, something which can be said to belong to them and which explains how they behave ...

[The] 'essentialist' view of personality, then, bids us think of ourselves as having a particular nature, both as individuals and as a species (i.e. 'human nature'), and this determines what people can and cannot do. ...

This view of personality, then, suggests that the kind of person you are is in some degree the result of your biology (perhaps inherited through your genetic make-up, through the balance of chemicals operating in the brain, or through hormones and so on).

This 'particular essence' is something that is often considered to be immutable and consistent across circumstances and time.

(ii) As 'rational' thinkers developed notions of the autonomous individual they were also, inevitably, developing ways of theorising and studying self and others. Herein lies the origin of the 'subject/object' dualism, which has become characteristic of much/most Western thought since the Enlightenment. The 'subject', the 'rational' individual, was considered, in certain circumstances, to be capable of studying and 'knowing' objects outside of 'himself' (sic). However, it is important to note two aspects of this ontology and developing epistemology: namely that the individual is construed as being unitary and capable of independent rational knowledge of him/herself and the environment in which he/she lives. This conception of the individual contrasts sharply with both post-modern (Lather 1992; Burr 1995; Gergen and Davis 1997; Gergen 2000) and non-western (Owusu-Bempah and Howitt 2000) concepts of the individual. Both post-modern and non-western approaches consider the individual as part of a wider community/context whose 'identity' may differ according to his/her particular social location.

Conceptions of 'self' and how we can know 'self' and that which is 'other' are of fundamental importance when considering life hi/stories. Many questions arise – such as “does the narrative reflect the 'true' self?”; is the story teller “telling the truth?”; or “is only one life history per person possible?” – from considering how



the self is conceived and construed, and also from how the process of 'knowing' is characterised. This process is underpinned and embodied in approaches to epistemology. The main issues are considered below.

### The problem of 'knowing' (epistemology)

Assumptions about the constitution or construction of the individual underpin theories of how knowledge comes to be constructed. In Medieval Western Europe, knowledge of 'mankind' was located firmly within Christian theological frameworks and the focus of attention was, perhaps, how life on earth related to the future life in a celestial or diabolical location (Van Langenhove 1995). Knowledge of the human condition was 'revealed' through study of the scriptures and observation religious ritual. The Enlightenment challenged the authority of religious revelation. The various philosophical texts consistently emphasised the power of man's (sic) reason (see Gergen 2000, pp 6-13; Henriques, Hollway et al. 1998, pp 125-152 for fuller expositions of this dimension).

Illustrating the nature of this change in focus, Gergen (2000; p. 7) comments on the impact of the work of a number of key thinkers:

... As [Descartes] reasoned in *Discourse on Method* (1637), he could doubt all authority and public opinion, and even the senses; but in the end he could not doubt the process of doubting itself. Thought is at the center of what it is to be human. *Cogito ergo sum*. Likewise, when John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) laid out the foundations of human knowledge, his central concern was with the way in which observations of the world were recorded in the mind. Knowledge was thus defined as private and personal, and not dictated by decree from on high ... There is no authority that is not reduced to the minds of individual citizens. It is this legacy that stoked the fires of the French Revolution, and formed the basis of what has come to be called cultural Modernism.

What Gergen highlights here is the ostensible separation of rational thought from theological discourse that was inextricably interwoven with political power. Thus, it can be argued that the word and authority of god was merely replaced by the word and authority of the white middle-class man. It is now, however, important to consider the *methods* that developed for employing to maximum effect the newly recognised capacity for rational thought.

Whilst Enlightenment thought may have liberated 'knowledge' from the decree of the 'almighty', it grounded thought and knowledge in the processes and methods of the 'natural sciences', particularly physics and mathematics.

Auguste Comte (1798-1857) suggested that societies go through three stages of development: the *theological/religious*, the *metaphysical* and the *positive* stages. The final stage of development is characterised by the predominance of rational thought and scientific method. He suggested that eventually scientific method would develop and be applicable to all areas of study (the study of the science of humanity being the final stage of development). The key feature of scientific method is that by its rigour and 'objectivity' human problems could be studied and resolved (and of course it is from Comte's terminology that the word 'positivist' is derived). From the mid-nineteenth century onwards the two principal disciplines involved in studying humanity were sociology and psychology. Theorists within each discipline became increasingly preoccupied with developing 'scientific' methodologies that replicated those developed in the natural sciences.

Natural science approaches to social science were developed at three levels: ontological, which links both the self as observer with the self of the 'other' being

studied; causal/epistemological which provides an understanding/explanation of phenomena; and methodological, which prescribes a means of conducting the enquiry. Issues relating to the ontological level have been dealt with above.

The framework for understanding the social world and people within that world was essentially construed as being the same as within the natural sciences: the object of study was observed and from these observations general 'laws' were derived. Proponents of a natural science approach to social data have suggested that empirically-validated data can be 'discovered' through systematic observation, measurement and collection of facts representing laws that indicate truths about the physical and social world (Van Langenhove, 1995). These laws formed the basis of predicting future events: personal behaviours, social movements and so on. Van Langenhove (1995; p. 14), speaking specifically of psychology, notes:

Within the natural sciences model for social sciences, the idea of explanation is copied from the models of explanation used in the classical physical sciences such as inorganic chemistry and Newtonian physics. These models are aimed at generating law-like predictions based on causal relations.

Within this approach, no distinction is made between human and non-human subjects of study. All are seen as part of the physical world and thus amenable to the same methods of study. In the course of achieving this objective, the physical world and social domain become conflated and the significance of the differences between these two spheres becomes lost, as does the fact that the social sphere involves human beings who take action on their own behalf (Giddens 1990).

Inextricably linked to the epistemological foundation of the 'scientific' approach is methodology. The most important feature of this is the manner of conducting enquiry is 'objectivity'. It is not necessary to describe in any detail the debates surrounding the possibility or not of value-free, objective research (see Bhaskar 1989; Harding 1991). However, 'scientific' approaches construe the researcher abstracted from any social contexts. They become construed as apolitical beings that have no personal attributes relating to identity (particularly gender, race, class and culture) that impact on their work. This makes it possible to characterise them as 'neutral', 'objective' professionals who act outside of their own epistemological and ontological frameworks.

Furthermore, this approach assumes a particular relationship between the researcher as knower or the subject that creates knowledge and the objects that are to be researched (Stanley and Wise 1993). This approach presupposes a passive world upon which the researcher acts to uncover the truth about that object. This is achieved by positing hypotheses that are then tested through data collection involving empirical observation and questioning. These hypotheses are ideas that the researcher formulates on the basis of observed experience detached from the social context. The feelings and subjectivity of the researcher him or herself, therefore, are not considered part of the knowledge creation process.

Harding (1991) has highlighted the importance of identifying the source of the natural science or positivist approach to intellectual inquiry. Additionally, she notes that by creating a 'scientific method' that is apparently 'value-free' and 'objective' and yet only considers objects of study from the standpoint of the

dominant group, the voices of women, children, black people, gay men and lesbians, and disabled people are obscured and ignored. She notes that the conventional approach in natural science:

...fails to grasp that modern science has been constructed by and within power relations in society, not apart from them. The issue is not how one scientist or another used or abused social power in doing his (sic) science but rather where the sciences and their agendas, concepts, and consequences have been located within particular currents of politics. How have their ideas and practices advanced some groups at the expense of others? (Harding 1991, p. 81)

Similarly, writing specifically of psychology, Nicolson (1995, p. 123) points out:

Traditional academic experimental psychology employs reductionist methods, which set out to exclude both the social context and the structural/power relations between individuals as inherent 'bias'.

Thus, a critical perspective of the 'scientific objectivity' adopted by mainstream social science is that it is merely the unacknowledged 'standpoint' of white middle class heterosexual men and consequently that 'scientific objectivity' merely (re)produces 'knowledge' or a world view that advances the interests of this particular group and ignores or dismisses the experiences of others (Harding 1991; Lennon and Whitford 1994; Nicolson 1995; Hearn 1998).

This critique of the dominant epistemology of social science does not necessarily throw research adrift without any foundation. Harding (1991) has suggested that the alternative to a natural science or positivist approach is not mere relativism. Instead, she argues for what she calls 'strong objectivity' or a pluralist approach to knowledge building. 'Strong objectivity' requires the researcher to state the ideological and political position from which they make their inquiries and explore the relationship of these to the matter being

researched, the method whereby it has been researched, the resultant findings and what others have published (Harding, 1991, p. 152). 'Strong objectivity' requires that the knower, the researcher explicitly theorise his/her effect – as an involved party - in the creation of knowledge.

### **'Strong objectivity': implications for research methodologies**

In this section, I consider the implications of 'strong objectivity' for undertaking qualitative research. By explicitly recognising the role and active involvement of the researcher in the production of research material, I am also required to reflect on this process. In addressing these issues, I focus on issues particularly pertinent to the interview and in particular to life hi/story research.

Much of the discussion above has questioned the feasibility of the 'scientific' researcher discovering 'objective facts' about whatever is being researched.

Linked to the expectation of 'objective fact' is the underlying assumption that the diligent researcher who maintains a 'value-free' position will be able to discover an ultimate 'truth' about the research subject. This approach is particularly problematic and untenable when we consider the quest for a 'true' life history.

Freeman (1993; p. 226) has noted:

... the utter slipperiness of the project of arriving at the truth of one's history, particularly to the extent that one imagines this truth simply to be there, like a piece of crystal, hard and sharp, awaiting discovery.

However, he adds:

Far from implying that truth is out of the question, however, all that is implied ... is that it is precisely this crystalline notion of truth, based as it is upon the apparent split between subject and object, that is being rendered suspect. The fact that there is no historical truth outside the

narrative imagination ... hardly renders the idea of truth itself suspect. What it means instead, quite simply, is that the project of arriving at the truth of one's history must be re-thought in a more fully hermeneutical way. (p. 226)

Freeman is reflecting on his work with 'life history' texts – published autobiographies – but the point that he makes is pertinent to the present project. And yet the process of reflection in this project is different because it must, inevitably, consider the nature of the 'truth' arrived at through the process of the life history interview (this is discussed more fully in Chapters Ten and Eleven). Thus, both the process and the product of life history research must be 're-thought in a more fully hermeneutical way.'

For the remainder of this chapter, I consider issues relating to the process of interviewing and how this relates to the data produced.

### The nature of the research interview

The way in which an interview is conceived and construed by a researcher is fundamentally linked to how he/she construes ontological and epistemological issues. The dominant model of interviewing is located within a 'natural science' paradigm that construes the individual as unitary and separate from the social and cultural environment. It construes the research endeavour within an uncritical framework of value-free social science. Franklin (1997; p. 100-101) has described this approach to interviewing as 'the information extraction model'.

She describes it thus:

... the *information extraction model*, construes the interview as a situation in which the interviewer extracts from the interviewee an articulation of feelings, ideas and/or knowledge. It is assumed that these feelings, ideas, and/or knowledge reside in the person and come forth in the interview with varying degrees of completeness and veracity – depending in part

on the “openness” and “articulateness” of the interviewee, and in part on the skill of the interviewer in creating an appropriate environment. The interviewer always takes the active role of question-asker and the interviewee the passive role of respondent. The model involves a set of prescriptions that characterize the traditional approach to research interviewing in the social sciences. ... The prescriptions can be summarised as follows: (1) Use a standardized set of questions and ask them in a predetermined order; (2) don't respond substantively to what your interviewee says (this might “bias” subsequent responses); (3) be friendly enough to facilitate the information-extraction process but not more so; (4) do not express your own views, even if you think this would lead your “subject” to say more. The aim is to insure “scientific objectivity” and to obtain comparable material from different interviewees in a form that lends itself readily to coding and so to quantification. ...

In this model, the interviewer is construed as a catalyst for the emergence of the truth from the person being interviewed and as such, the interviewer is not affected by the process.

However, approaches to interviewing, and dialogues in general reveal that the situation is far more complex and that the ‘interviewer’ and his/her conduct in the interview cannot be considered to be the same as data collection in the natural sciences if for no other reason than both parties are human (Van Langenhove 1995). Therefore, they are inevitably inextricably bound up in issues related to culture and power: theorising of such issues produces a very different understanding of what emerges from an interview. The work of John Shotter (1993; 1995), the later work of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953) and the work of the symbolic interactionists (Cooley 1902; Mead 1934; Blumer 1968; Denzin 1995), forms a basis for re-conceptualising the interview, taking more fully into account consideration of the interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Each of these theorists is briefly considered in turn focusing particularly on implications for qualitative approaches to social research.



## Dialogical approaches

Traditional 'mainstream' approaches to social science research and in particular, psychology, are 'monological' in their perspective and their practices (Shotter 1993; 1995). These are embodied in the natural science paradigm wherein the researcher interrogates the research 'subject' and extracts data. The research subject and the researcher do not engage in any form of reciprocal exchange, that is to say they do not engage in any dialogue. However, a shift from the ontology and epistemology of modernism (Enlightenment based thought) requires a shift in how social science research is construed and conducted. Shotter (1992; p. 58) captures this well, noting:

... a movement away from *modern* toward *post-modern* sciences ... among the many changes involved, is a shift in the character of both standpoint and investigatory activity: 1. From the standpoint of the detached, theory-testing onlooker, to the interested, interpretive, procedure-testing participant observer; and 2. From one-way style of investigation to two way interactive mode.

Later within the same chapter, he neatly summarises the changes required in methodological orientation and practice:

We thus move away from the individual, third person, external, contemplative observer stance, the investigator who collects *fragmented* data from a position socially 'outside' of the activity observed, and who bridges the 'gaps' between the fragments by the imaginative invention of theoretical entities, toward a more interpretive approach; away from the use of *inference* – the *assertion* ... that essentially unobservable, subjective entities, supposedly 'inside' individuals, nonetheless exist, toward a concern with modes of *hermeneutical* inquiry... (Shotter, 1992; p. 60)

By recognising that two or more people are engaged in the interview process, a dialogical approach recognises the necessity to theorise the role of the interviewer in the interview and in the subsequent creation of knowledge (Shotter 1993; Gergen 1999; Hearn 1998). It rejects the dominant psychological

paradigm wherein the researcher is seeking to discover what is *inside* the head of the researched and prefers to focus on the process of creation that occurs within, for example, research interviews (Harré, Clarke et al. 1985; Shotter 1993; Harré 1995; Shotter 1995).

Central to this shift is the way in which language use is understood. In the modernist, natural science epistemology, language is one of the means whereby the researcher describes the object of study. With care, precision, and avoidance of the many forms of bias, it is assumed that the researcher is able to provide an objective account of what is studied. In this paradigm, language serves, what Shotter (1993; p. 8) has termed, a 'representational-referential' function: that is, the description is deemed to represent and refer to something 'outside' the researcher. However, within a perspective of interviewing that recognises the 'dialogical' nature of the exchange between interviewer and interviewee, language is construed very differently: the dynamics between the parties *create* what is being discussed. Shotter (1993; p. 8) terms this version of language in action as 'rhetorical-responsive'. There is no longer an assumption that language represents something outside of the speakers; the dialogic exchange is creative rather than 'representational-referential'. And, of course, this process occurs within the context of living social and cultural influences. The work of Wittgenstein and the symbolic interactionists has greatly influenced and continues to influence the thinking of writers who adopt a dialogical and social constructionist perspective in their work. I now briefly consider each of these in turn.

## Language games and forms of life

In this section, I outline Wittgenstein's concepts, 'language game' and 'form of life'. Both of these inter-linked concepts have greatly influenced the development of dialogic theorising. They are particularly important for the present study in that they provide a key part of the critical framework used for reflecting on and analysing the life history interviews. For Wittgenstein, in his later works (especially *Philosophical Investigations*), language was not a system of symbols representing an outer world; it was an active and changing system in use in social encounters between people. Within dialogical interaction both participants are inevitably engaged in a variety of 'language games', which emanate from a variety of 'forms of life' (Wittgenstein 1953). McGinn (1997; p. 44) has noted that Wittgenstein uses the phrase 'language game' in two different ways within his work. In his earlier writing (*Brown Book*) he uses it in the context of how children learn language, but in the *Philosophical Investigations* he uses it to describe 'the activity of using language within the context of purposive activity' (McGinn 1997; p. 44). The aphoristic nature of *Philosophical Investigations* makes it difficult to find a succinct 'definition' of a 'language game' from Wittgenstein's own words; in fact, had Wittgenstein provided such a definition he would have undermined the very nature of his concept. Dialogue in all contexts follows a number of unexpressed but implicitly followed rules/conventions. These conventions are specific to the context of the conversation. Gergen (2000; p. 34-35) has usefully described and illustrated a language game:

To say "good morning" gains its meaning from a game-like relationship called a greeting. There are implicit rules for carrying out greetings: each participant takes a turn, typically there is an exchange of mutual glances, and there are only a limited number of moves that one can legitimately make after the other has said "good morning." You may respond

identically, or ask “how are you,” for example, but you would be considered “out of the game,” if you responded by screaming or cuffing the other on the head. Further, the words “good morning” are generally meaningless outside the game of greeting. If we are in the midst of a heated argument on unemployment, and I suddenly say, “good morning”, you would be puzzled. Have I lost my mind? Wittgenstein termed the “language and the actions into which it is woven, the ‘language game’”. Or for Wittgenstein, “the meaning of the a word is in its use in the language.”

However, ‘language games’ are not free-floating ‘rules for the conduct of conversation’. They are rooted in various contexts within cultures. Wittgenstein called these contexts ‘forms of life’. Language and language games are embodiments of various ‘forms of life’. McGinn (1997; p. 51) clarifies that Wittgenstein’s conception of language is in direct opposition to the representational-referential notions discussed above:

The idea of language as a form of life, like the idea of a language game, is to be set over and against the idea of language as an abstract system of signs; it again serves to bring into prominence the fact that language is embedded within a horizon of non-linguistic behaviour.

And develops the following refined understanding of a ‘form of life’:

... the term ‘form of life’ is intended to evoke the idea that language and linguistic exchange are embedded in the significantly structured lives of groups of active human agents. The concept of life as Wittgenstein uses it here, is not biological life, nor is it an ahistorical idea of a life of a particular species. The idea of a form of life applies rather to historical groups of individuals who are bound together into a community by a shared set of language-involving practices. These practices are grounded in biological needs and capacities, but insofar as these are mediated and transformed by a set of intricate, historically-specific language-games, our human life is fundamentally *cultural* (rather than biological) in nature. Coming to share, or understand the form of life of a group of human beings means mastering, or coming to understand, the intricate language games that are essential to its characteristic practices. It is this vital connection between language and the complex system of practices and activities binding a community together that Wittgenstein intends to emphasize in the concept ‘form of life’.

Thus in thinking about and analysing the transcripts of the present study, a Wittgensteinian perspective drew my attention to certain ‘forms of life’ and

various 'language games' – masculinities and male conversations, prison life and prison parlance, and the sex offender programmes and therapy speak - and my part in them. These are discussed further in Chapters Seven and Eleven.

Dialogical approaches have highlighted a 'constructive' approach to understanding what is happening in an interview; Wittgensteinian perspectives have narrowed the focus onto 'language games' and emphasised the cultural context of any interview by highlighting that all dialogue embodies various 'forms of life'. The contribution of symbolic interactionist thought to this study is similarly in the area of language and meanings in use within an (inevitably) pre-existing social context.

### **Symbolic interactionism**

Symbolic interactionism has many features in common with the two previous perspectives. Explicitly underpinning this approach is a rejection of the dualist ontology of natural sciences – the self and other. The individual is born into pre-existing social settings and develops identit(ies) (see Denzin, 1995; p. 45 for a fuller account of the multi-layered selves) within these settings. It is not appropriate to develop a detailed history of this approach, Plummer (1995; p. 185) has succinctly summarised the intellectual traditions that influence and comprise symbolic interactionism - pragmatism, humanism, relationism, formalism and empiricism. Three basic premises underpin interactionist approaches (Meltzer, Petras et al. 1975; Denzin 1995):

- Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them.
- These meanings are a product of social interaction in human society.

- These meanings are modified and handled through an interpretive process that is used by each individual in dealing with the signs he/she encounters.

With regard to gender, for example, an interactionist perspective distinguishes between sex –biologically determined – and gender (Denzin 1995; p. 54).

Gender is the product of a variety of culturally specific class and ethnic attributes and behaviours (see, for example, Collins 1991; p. 164-166). It is enacted and developed in a variety of settings and may change and vary according to the socio-historical setting. Denzin (1995; pp 54-55) notes:

The gendered identity is an interactional production. It is embedded in those interactional places (home, work) that give recurring meaning to ordinary experience. These are sites where emotional experiences, including sexual practices, occur. In them concrete individuals are constituted as gendered subjects who have emotions, beliefs and social relationships with others. ... It must be understood that an interactional, dialectical relationship connects these material practices to the worlds of experience where gendered identities are produced. Specific systems of discourse and meaning operate within specific sites to create particularly gendered versions of the human being ... The sexually gendered human being in late twentieth-century America is a social, economic and historical construction, built up out of the patriarchal cultural myths which have circulated in American popular culture for the last 200 years.

Symbolic interactionist research concentrates on specific circumstances and endeavours to describe, and by describing understand, what is happening. The researcher is not outside of and apart from what is being studied but is very much a part of it. In thinking about stories and story-telling Plummer (1995; p. 20) has commented:

Story telling can be placed at the heart of symbolic interactions. The focus here is neither on the solitary individual life (which is in principle unknown and unknowable), or on the text (which means nothing standing on its own), but on *the interactions which emerge around story telling*. Stories can be seen as *joint actions*. 'Everywhere we look in a human society we see people engaging in forms of joint action'. People may be seen as engaged in fitting together lines of activity around stories; they are engaged in *story actions*.

And this has been the salient feature of the three approaches outlined above – the research enterprise as a *joint action* in describing and understanding. The researcher is inevitably part of the process, not the ‘objective scientist’ standing apart from that which is being studied.

### Summary

This chapter follows two lines of thought – the ontological and the epistemological. It highlights and problematises the notion of the unitary individual and the individual/society dualism. Following from this it records and highlights difficulties with the predominant approach within social sciences – the natural science paradigm. In particular, the notion of ‘scientific objectivity’ is subjected to critical scrutiny. This leads onto consideration of how the research interview is construed and conducted. Key to understanding the processes involved is the work of Wittgenstein, Shotter and the Symbolic Interactionists. Emerging from this exploration is a construing of the interview as a ‘joint action’. This contrasts strongly with the model of the interview within traditional social science where the researcher is seen to be the ‘objective’ scientist *extracting* information from research ‘subjects’. This forms a basis to consider in greater detail how life history research originated and how it relates to the key issues of ontology and epistemology, and in particular the problem of ‘truth’.

## Chapter Three

### Producing Life Hi/stories as a way of studying male sex offenders

#### Introduction

The trouble with 'natural scientific' approaches is that in claiming to offer general theories, they claim ahead of time to be able to speak in debates, correctly, on behalf of all those they study. But in doing so, they silence them. They deny them their own voice, their opportunity to speak on the nature of their own unique circumstances. They deny them their citizenship in their society. (Shotter 1993; p. 15)

... When people are deprived of the capacity to narrate, identity is annihilated and human comprehension is threatened. (Josselson 1993; p. xiv)

The above quotations point directions and they indicate problems. This chapter is about the direction away from the 'natural scientific' study of the male sex offender. It is also about the threat to understanding male sexual aggression that is embodied in forensic approaches that minimise the social context and ignore the wider social construction of masculinities. And, finally it is about conceptions of the self and alternative ways of studying the lives of men who have been convicted of sexual offences – ways which respect stories of lives without minimising the harm of sexual violence.

The notion of 'life history' provokes many questions relating to ontology, epistemology and 'identity'. These issues were introduced and developed in the previous chapter. This chapter builds on these themes, but primarily, reviews approaches to life history research. However, before considering these issues I explain why I decided to use a life history approach in this study.



## Life hi/stories and men convicted of sexual offences

The selection of any research technique should always be contingent upon the research problems and theories at hand; different theories bring different methodologies (Faraday and Plummer 1979; p. 775).

There are a number of background influences that shaped my selection of life hi/story for this research project. These can be summarised as a concern with the 'story' that cognitive-behavioural psychology was telling about sexual violence. I was particularly concerned about how cognitive approaches:

- Assume that a flawed rational template underlies all sex offending. Revealing 'thinking errors' can form the basis of successfully treating sex offending and sex offenders.
- Take the position of 'knowing' the 'true' story of the offender's crimes, and have little interest in wider personal and social contextual issues. Thus, the treatment orientation is focused on deconstruction and reconstruction of the 'offence account' and less on listening and trying to understand the offender within a wider context.
- Ignore the dialogical dynamics of interviews and group processes, and particularly how power operates and shapes what is said and how it is said.
- Largely ignore the fact that most perpetrators of sexual violence are male.

I now address each of these points in turn.

### Cognitive behavioural hegemony: offending behaviour and 'truth'

In my work, both as a practitioner within the criminal justice field and as an academic researching and writing about sexual violence and community safety, I

became aware of a number of problems with dominant endeavours to understand and respond to sexual violence. The principal framework for understanding sexual violence was framed within the terms of cognitive-behavioural psychology (see Chapter One). The 'story' that cognitive psychology tells of sexual violence is (largely) that it is committed by people who have faulty cognitive processing. Inevitably, therefore, central to the cognitivist understanding of the aetiology and execution of an act of sexual abuse is an underlying belief that human beings, generally, conduct themselves in a rational and explicable manner. Every feeling, thought and action has an antecedent and they also have consequences. The objective of cognitive-behavioral programmes is to identify 'cognitive distortions' and 'thinking errors' and to re-educate offenders into 'normal rational' thinking (see for example most of the programmes described in Marshall, Fernandez et al. 1998).

As a practitioner working with sex offenders, this model had a great appeal. Where a man convicted of offences told a story that did not recognise his responsibility for and planning of the offence(s), he was known as being 'in denial'. It became relatively easy to identify various forms of 'denial' (Salter 1988; and Cowburn, Wilson et al. 1992) and to devise ways of challenging it. Cognitive-behavioural approaches knew the 'truth' behind the sex offenders' denial and challenged the stories before the offender had told the story. And yet, doubts about the epistemological and ethical validity of this approach are largely ignored.

As early as 1972, Tony Crowle (1990) raised questions about the whole enterprise of working with offenders from a perspective that (a) believed that

offenders really knew why they committed offences on every occasion and that they (b) deliberately concealed this information from clinicians and researchers. In his paper, provocatively entitled 'I don't know why I did it' (IDKWIDI), he sets out his position by citing two studies where the claims of those being researched, that they did not understand the reasons why they had committed offences were rejected by the researchers. He notes:

In both cases the social researcher claims that the deviants really did know why they did what they did, and supplies a motive which explains why they deny their knowledge. I believe that the deviants were telling the truth, and wish to argue two points:

- Some deviants don't know why they do things – what the deviants said was true; they really did not know why they did it.
- Researchers don't know why some deviants do things – the social analyst is no better able to figure out why deviants did things than the deviants are (Crowle 1972; pp 154-155).

Crowle uses statistical models, focusing on deviance-inhibiting and deviance-promoting factors (both of which he considers to be in 'our culture') to show the absurdity of anyone being able to describe fully why he/she did a particular action. Faraday and Plummer (1979; pp 776-777) have also highlighted this problem with mainstream, positivist dominated, social science:

Most social science in its quest for generalizability imposes order and rationality upon experiences and worlds that are more ambiguous, more problematic and more chaotic in reality. If we check our own experiences we know that our lives are flooded with moments of indecision, turning points, confusions, contradictions and ironies. Most social science glosses over this interstitial but central region of our lives. Questionnaires, experiments, attitudes scales, and even the perusal of existing social science literature and historical documents, give form and order to the world that it does not have. Researchers seek for consistency in subjects' responses when subjects' lives are often inconsistent.

Although the cognitive-behavioural approach does not directly ask the offender 'why' he committed an offence, it asks him to explain 'how' he committed it; this still requires him to 'select' factors that are congruent with the story that the

cognitive therapist wishes hear and to discount the many variables that are considered to be irrelevant from a cognitive standpoint. Concluding his paper, Crowle (1972; p. 163) notes:

We began with the fact that many deviants say 'I don't know why I did it'. If saying why he did what he did implies assigning weights to a large number of variables then ... there are many possible different patterns that lead to the conclusion that the doer cannot in truth say why he did what he did. ... It seems more plausible to suppose that at least some the persons who offer reasons why they did (particularly those who offer different reasons at different times) ought to be saying IDKWIDI, but instead are offering a story that seems appropriate to them in their circumstances.

This draws attention to the circumstances in which a story is told and to the 'dialogical' nature of the 'therapeutic' process and suggests that what emerges from such is not the objective 'truth' but rather the product of a 'joint action'. However, 'joint actions' within the context of cognitive behavioural work with sex offenders are not the joint actions of equal partners. There are serious power differentials and it is to the possible effects of these differentials that I now turn.

### Cognitive behavioural hegemony: dialogical processes and power

Foucault (1984; p. 63) has noted that, in western societies, discussion about sexual behaviour has generally taken the form of "confession". Initially this form of discourse was directed and controlled by the church but, from the mid-nineteenth century onward, it came to be dominated by "scientific" investigators and particularly by the medical profession.

The notion of confession has implicit within it the relationship of confessor and confessee: an unequal relationship in which the person confessing is judged within the terms of the value-framework of the person receiving the confession. In the late nineteenth and for most of the twentieth century this framework has

been that of medical science. Medicine has asserted its authority by emphasising its "objectivity", its dispassionate "scientific" method, being interested only in "the truth." Foucault (1984; p. 53-73) highlights the role of medical science in providing an intellectual structure of justification for the attitudes and values of the dominant class in a society:

... It thus became associated with an insistent and indiscreet medical practice, glibly proclaiming its aversions, quick to run to the rescue of the law and public opinion, more servile with respect to the powers of order than amenable to the requirements of truth ... it claimed to ensure the physical vigour and the moral cleanliness of the social body; it promised to eliminate defective individuals, degenerate and bastardized populations. (Foucault 1984; p.54)

The issues raised here are similar to those raised in the previous chapter, namely that the natural science method gave power to one group to categorise and treat other groups within a society. The truth regarding sexual violence identified by the scientific method is predominantly the truth of cognitive- behavioural psychology. The sex offender is seen to be 'deviant' (cf. 'degenerate' above) and therefore separate and different from the 'moral cleanliness of the social body'. The medicalised, in this case psychology-dominated, discourse concerning the offender assumes prior knowledge of the individual (embodied in diagnostic manuals and classification systems – see Chapter Four). By claiming prior knowledge, this leads to the construction of a therapeutic method that is potentially oppressive in its original conception and in the manner in which it is subsequently delivered.

As early as 1990, Sheath raised concerns about the methods employed by some cognitive programmes. He suggested that some workers were guilty of 'nonce bashing'. By this, he meant that sex offenders were verbally coerced into

admitting to and agreeing with the workers' (sex offender programme's) version of how the offence occurred. Sheath's paper is a rare example of an attempt to theorise the operation of power *within* a therapeutic programme and specifically within the dialogical context of direct work with offenders. Overall, however, this is an area that appears not to have concerned theorists and programme developers. In three relatively recent publications (Morrison, Erooga et al. 1994; Briggs, Doyle et al. 1998; Marshall, Fernandez et al. 1998), where the issue of power is addressed it is always in the context of the power that the offender used in committing his offences. There is no direct consideration of how the power of the therapist affects the process and outcome of the therapy.

The nature of the relationship between sex offender and sex offender therapist is very different relationship to that found in psychodynamic therapeutic relationships, and the presence and operation of power seem to be obvious. The person (offender) no longer *chooses* to engage in therapy, they are *mandated* to do so (Salter 1988; pp 85-87). The right to consent to treatment whilst on probation in England and Wales was withdrawn in the 1991 Criminal Justice Act, and whilst the debate over mandated or voluntary treatment occurred during the 1980s and early 1990s (see for example Cowburn, Wilson et al. 1992 pp 26-30), it is now no longer an issue to be discussed. The 'Sourcebook of Treatment Programs for Sexual Offenders' (Marshall, Fernandez et al. 1998) contains accounts of cognitive-behavioural programmes worldwide; neither 'mandated treatment' nor 'voluntarism' is mentioned in the index of the book. The therapist no longer views her/his client with 'unconditional positive regard', as stipulated by Carl Rogers for example (Rogers 1959), but with suspicion and mistrust (Salter 1988; pp 84-95). Along with the assumption that the offender

frequently lies is the recognition that he may lie about how the programme has affected their attitudes and behaviours. The purpose of this lying is generally considered to be to convince the leaders of the therapy programme that lessons have been learned and that the individual concerned no longer poses a risk and therefore can be allowed to return safely to their community/family.

It is when discussing the problems of programme evaluation that commentators come closest to recognising the existence of therapist or programme power. The opinion of the offender as to the effectiveness of the therapy is always treated with suspicion (see, for example Salter 1989; p. 85) and possibly dismissed. It is acknowledged that the offender recognises the power of the programme to control key parts of his life and consequently to be free of this control he may learn to say whatever the programme requires them to say. Briggs et al (1998; p. 56) describe the problem:

Many workers become concerned when assessing sexual abusers that what their clients say might be different to what their clients think, feel and do. Indeed the phrases 'talk the talk' and 'walk the walk' have entered the vernacular to capture this dilemma.

The positivist response to this dilemma has been to devise methods of evaluation that seek to outwit the offender by the complexity and wide ranging nature of design. For example, Beech et al (1999; pp 44-51) employed twenty-five different psychometric tests in evaluating the effectiveness of the English Prison Service's Sex Offender Treatment Programme (SOTP). By using a large number of tests, it is hoped offenders will not be able to lie consistently and successfully across all dimensions:

As sex offenders are notorious for lying about their offending and trying to present themselves in the best possible light ( a process generally referred to as 'faking good' and used in this sense in the rest of this

report) it was considered vital to include measures which would indicate this. Thus a number of 'lie scales' and social desirability measures were inserted in some of the scales used. In addition to indicating where subjects were faking good the repetition of these measures indicated how reliable and consistent the subjects were in their responses across pre- and post-testing (Beech et al 1999; p. 45)

Obviously underpinning this endeavour is the belief that the objective 'truth' concerning the effectiveness of treatment can be obtained.

To date there does not appear to have been any attempt to theorise the operation of power in sex offender programmes within the dialogical context of the therapeutic setting and in particular, how this 'joint action' produces certain 'stories.'

#### Cognitive behavioural hegemony: masculinities and the social context

Apart from the doubts about the nature of the cognitivist programmes with sex offenders highlighted above, there is also the issue that these programmes fail to conceptualise sexual violence in anything other than an individualised framework. Therefore, the social context of sexual violence is ignored. This, in turn, helps to explain why the cognitive-behavioural paradigm fails to theorise masculinities and male behaviours in its understanding of male sexual violence. A Foucauldian perspective adds a further dimension to this critique. Whilst part of the power of the medicalised discourses is to identify and control a 'deviant' population, the other effect of the discourse is to support and reinforce the dominant group: 'to ensure the physical vigour and the moral cleanliness of the social body' (Foucault 1984; p.54). This social body is created out of the hegemony of white, middle class, heterosexual men. To problematise masculinities would be to problematise the nature and power of this group.



In 'Sourcebook of Treatment Programs for Sexual Offenders'.(Marshall, Fernandez et al. 1998) there are no references in the index to 'men' or 'masculinity'. There are however, nineteen one-page references to gender. Most of these appear to have been triggered by a gender denoting word (e.g. 'man', 'woman', 'female' and 'male'). There are a couple of brief references to issues related to 'therapist' gender issues. Beckett (1998; p. 134) for example, whilst observing that programmes endeavoured to take a non-sexist stance, notes:

Female co-leadership was also seen as particularly valuable in helping maintain a sensitivity to victim issues and to help ensure that male therapists did not get inadvertently drawn into collusive attitudes with male clients.

Gender issues are also discussed in relation to whether aboriginal men find it difficult to talk about sexual matters to women workers (Cull and Wehner 1998; p. 437). There is also one very brief consideration of the differences between male and female sex offenders (Matthews 1998; p. 262). Nowhere within this text however, is male sexual offending behaviour linked to hegemonic masculinity and neither, therefore, is it problematised.

Thus, it appears that the cognitive-behavioural hegemony asserts a particular story of male sex offending. It locates the male sex offender as the rational offender who has failed to identify his 'thinking errors'. It sets up a theoretical and therapeutic approach that prescribes what is relevant and ignores many other issues, not least being that the vast majority of convicted sex offenders are male.

## Why life histories?

In order, therefore, to study male sex offenders and relate the study to dominant discourses on men and masculinity, I wanted a methodology that enabled the voice of the man to be heard without it disappearing into prescribed cognitivist forensic frameworks. But I did not want a voice disconnected from social, historical and cultural contexts. Speaking of a life history approach Plummer (1995 b; p. 69) notes:

This is a particularly useful contribution in the field of deviancy study, where much work has disconnected the deviant from his or her total life experience and the wider social formations. Through the use of life history, the deviant is seen to be much more than a deviant; following him or her over their different life experiences generally shows that deviancy constitutes only a small fragment of any one individual's life. It can help put the deviancy in its wider place.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the how the notion of a unitary self emerged during the 'Enlightenment'. Plummer (1985; pp8-10) has detailed the development of life history 'personal documents', and has noted, that with very few exceptions (for example, Augustine's *Confessions*), documents that have the common characteristic of embodying a 'search for self' begin to appear in the seventeenth century. However, it is through the work of Mayhew in England, Le Play in France and Freud in Vienna that a social scientific perspective on the individual human life within their familial and social context began to develop (Plummer 1985; p. 10).

Although life history approaches in social sciences have a long pedigree, they are not homogenous. Researchers come from a range of academic disciplines and accordingly their interests, or rather the emphases of their studies, can be very different. Although sometimes the division between academic disciplines

can appear arbitrary and difficult to discern, some differences of emphasis can be identified. Researchers who consider life history from a psychological viewpoint (for example, Freud; 1955; Erikson; 1959; McAdams; 1985) may be more interested in considering how a person's early (and later) life experiences have contributed to and shaped the development of their 'personality' or identity. Sociological perspectives (for example, Thomas and Znaniecki, 1958; Sutherland, 1937; and Plummer, 1983; 1995 b) are often more concerned with how a person's history relates to other sociological concerns. For example many of the earlier texts, in this tradition, focused on the atypical person (Polish immigrant, the criminal, the sexually deviant) in order both to understand the subject of the research, but also by locating the individual within their social setting, their life story also casts a light on the dominant culture. Similarly social anthropologists and oral historians who use life history methods (Watson 1976; Okely and Callaway 1992; Watson 1992) use the life history to provide additional perspectives on cultures and social history. The research respondent is seen very much as part of something bigger than the unitary dislocated individual personality.

### **Life histories or life stories?**

The terms *life history* and *life story* are largely used interchangeably, but some authors have attempted to clarify definitions. Atkinson (1998; p. 8) notes that:

There is very little difference between a life story and a life history. They are usually different terms for the same thing. The difference between a life story and an oral history is usually emphasis and scope. An oral history most often focuses on a specific aspect of a person's life, such as work life or a special role in some part of the life a community. An oral history most often focuses on the community or what someone remembers about a specific event, issue, time, or place. When an oral

interview focuses on a person's entire life, it is usually referred to as a life story or a life history.

And he adds:

*A life story is the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived, told as completely honestly as possible, what is remembered of it, and what the teller wants others to know of it, usually as a result of a guided interview by another (Atkinson 1998; p. 8)[Italics in original].*

Plummer emphasises the term *life history* in his earlier work (Faraday and Plummer 1979; Plummer 1983), while in his later work *life story* has become the predominant term (Plummer 1995a; Plummer 1995b). He uses the terms almost interchangeably, perhaps using the word 'story' in cases where a particular aspect of a person's life is focussed upon.

Approaching the issue from a psychological perspective, McAdams (1985) uses the term *life story* and ties it into concepts such as 'personality' and 'identity' and their development through the life course:

... identity is a life story which individuals begin constructing, consciously and unconsciously, in late adolescence. As such, identities may be understood in terms directly relevant to stories. Like stories, identities may assume a "good" form – a narrative coherence and consistency – or they may be ill-formed ... (McAdams 1985; p. 57)

Iwaschkin (2001; p. 315) has highlighted some of the main aspects of narrative psychology in the following manner:

The narrative psychology approach is interested in the self, subjective experience and the interrelationship of self and society. It gives a central role to narratives, or stories, in self-construction. Narrative is viewed as an organising, and reorganising, factor in a person's life – having and telling one's story provides the individual with a sense of personal coherence, meaning and place in time.

In his review of literature pertinent to life hi/story approaches Miller (2000; p. 19), offers this note in clarification and explanation:

Originally, *life story* referred to the account given by an individual about his or her life. When this personal account was backed up by additional external sources ... the validated life story was called a life history. This concern with triangulation – the validation of narrated life stories through information from additional, preferably quantified, sources has not remained central to most current biographical practice. Nowadays, reflecting the influence of the narrative viewpoint, the meanings of the terms have altered. 'Life history' refers to a series of substantive events arranged around a chronological order. Confirmation or validation by external sources is no longer a necessary requirement for a life history. 'Life story' still refers to the account given by an individual, only with emphasis upon the ordering into themes or topics that the individual chooses to adopt or omit as s/he tells the story

At this stage, it is not necessary to seek an absolute definition. This study is probably more concerned with *life stories* rather than histories but the men's stories are to some extent shaped by an understanding of past events in their lives and as such it could be said that there is an historical perspective to what they say and how they say it. However, what is of greater concern is the intellectual framework in which the life hi/story endeavour is construed.

Miller (2000) has suggested that there are three main approaches to studying life histories. Each of these approaches embodies particular ontological and epistemological assumptions. The *realist* and the *neo-positivist* approaches assume that there is a unitary individual whose history merely needs telling and then explaining. Although the two approaches differ in how they construe the investigative process (the realist being inductive and the neo-positivist being deductive in their starting points), they both assume that there is a constituted individual whose narrative tale can be elicited by the diligent researcher.

The third approach outlined by Miller is the *narrative* focus on life histories. Whereas the two former approaches assume that there is an individual's (fixed) story waiting discovery and explanation 'out there' beyond the researcher, those who approach the life story from a narrative perspective do not assume that there is a unified individual whose history merely awaits disclosure and interpretation. Rather, with this approach, the focus is on how the interview or other means of accounting constructs a particular story of a person's life. Attention is paid to the joint action of the interviewer and interviewee in *producing* the story. Here the influence of Wittgenstein (1953), and more recently Shotter (1993, 1995), is clearly noticeable.

In all of the approaches and their underlying assumptions about life events and the narrative of life events, there is, however, an ongoing process of interpretation. The story told about events in a life is, in the telling, being interpreted shaped in a particular way by both the teller and the listener/reader. The nature of the interpretative activity is given closer scrutiny in the next section

### **Hermeneutics and Life hi/story research**

A number of commentators (Watson 1976; Watson 1992; Widdershoven 1993) have paid great attention to the processes of interpretation (hermeneutics) in life hi/story research. The aim of hermeneutics is to make clear an object of study or area of enquiry that is currently unclear and requires further clarification.

Originally, hermeneutics was primarily concerned with the interpretation of texts, principally Biblical texts. The process of interpretation was characterised as being circular (hermeneutic circle). The researcher begins with a general hypothesis and then examines fine details of the text, the consideration of which changes the original hypothesis. From the changed general hypothesis, the researcher returns to the detail of the text and again change in interpretation of the detail, and consequently of the whole, occurs. This process of continual change through critique and counter-critique points to the extent to which interpretations and identities are constructed dialogically.

Moving beyond narrow definitions of 'text' based on the written word, Taylor (1985) has suggested that notions of interpretation are intimately connected with the need of human beings to make *sense* of their experience. Consequently, human beings need to position their experiences in narratives, to reflect on the kind of persons that they want to be and to form understandings of their relationships with nature and history. A successful interpretation, for Taylor, is one that clarifies a meaning that was originally present in a confused or an unclear form. Given the recursive nature of interpretation, it is obvious that, logically speaking, the process of interpretation is never completed.

Hermeneutics, therefore, offers a vision of the academic project as always incomplete and uncertain, responding to new questions and problems in the quest for sense.

However, within hermeneutics, consideration has been given to the relationship between the historical account and the event(s) that it narrates. The transmutation of events and actions into narratives about events and actions

raises a number of questions. Do events, in themselves, have a coherent structure? How can we know whether an account is 'true' and how can we know whether one account is 'truer' than any other account? Whilst it is not the intention of this study to explore the earlier question in any depth, the issues of truth and validity are of relevance to understanding and, more particularly, interpreting life hi/stories. Widdershoven (1993; p. 3-4) has usefully highlighted the key issues. He has noted that there are two positions within the philosophy of history concerning the relationship between life and history: the continuity thesis and the discontinuity thesis. Adherents of the continuity thesis consider that the historical past and the accounts told about it are, essentially, of the same (narrative) character. The telling of the story or stories of the life is primarily an uncovering of these stories. For MacIntyre (1981) the unity of a person's life is dependent on being a character in an enacted script. This secures their actions as part of a meaningful totality. Human actions are organized in such a way that we can give an account of them; justify them by telling an intelligible story about them.

The opposing philosophical position to the relationship between life and narrative identified by Widdershoven (1993) – the discontinuity thesis – considers that the past and the account produced about it are fundamentally different; one having no structure and the other, the account being carefully structured. He points to the work of Ricoeur (1984), for whom life had a pre-narrative structure that has implicit meaning; this is changed into a narrative structure, with explicit meaning, by the plot of a story told about it. Thus, the stories told about life change our experience of it and give it a more specific form.



From an hermeneutic point of view, there are a number of ways of interpreting hi/stories. I now consider, briefly, the work of, the, 'romantic hermeneutics', Gadamer, Habermas, Geertz, and Giddens.

### 'Romantic Hermeneutics'

Within post-enlightenment hermeneutic thought, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is considered to be the founder of modern hermeneutics (Honderich 1995), and particularly the school known as romantic hermeneutics or empathy theory hermeneutics (Baumann 1978). In this approach, it is suggested that the person engaged in interpretation (particularly of a text) should attempt to put him or herself into the position of the author(s) of the text being investigated.

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) widened the brief of the interpreter to include cultural and social phenomena but the orientation and aim of the interpreter (to develop a strong empathic relationship to the text) remained unchanged. This was to understand the author better than he/she understood him/herself. This interpretative stance is congruent with both the *realist* and *neo-positivist* approaches to life hi/stories, in that there is an assumption that there is a real past that can be uncovered by the diligent work of the interpretative researcher. The British historian, Collingwood (1946, cited in Widdershoven 1993), suggests that the historian can understand the past by re-thinking the thoughts of historical actors. He even says that the historian can understand the past better because s/he lives in the present, which enables her/him to see things from a distance. Thus, from this hermeneutical position it is assumed that that life hi/stories replicate and re-enact past experiences. This process of re-enactment

is, however, not a simple return to the past. It is a revival of the past in the context of the present. Widdershoven (1993; pp11-12) notes:

When a story is told about something that happened in the past, the event is revived, together with the thoughts and feelings surrounded by it. A story makes my past actions understandable by a re-enactment of the deliberations by which they were motivated. A story is a *reconstruction* of life, by which past experiences survive in a more pure way because the inessential is removed, so that only the essential remains.

From this perspective, the 'truthfulness' of an account will be a central consideration. The role of the researcher is very similar to that of the objective scientist in that their task is to immerse themselves neutrally in the data and reconstruct material in a purer form. The part that the researcher, as interpreter, plays in creating the final version of the past is not problematised. The relationship of the researcher to the material is construed positively and without difficulty; time and distance enable the researcher to remain detached and to see more clearly and thus to uncover the pre-existing story.

### Gadamer

Gadamer (1974) has highlighted shortcomings in the approaches of romantic hermeneutics. In particular, he has focused on its failure to examine critically the part played by the interpreter in shaping interpretation. Gadamer considers that prejudices are foundational in forming an understanding. By prejudice, he means the cultural horizons through which an interpreter understands. The narrator/researcher/interpreter, he suggests, recognises and sees through the horizons of their cultural tradition in such a way as to reveal, draw comparisons with, and reflect critically upon, past historical periods and other cultures.

Whereas the romantic hermeneutic perspective retains the notion of the original

meaning of the thoughts of an actor, a meaning that can be understood by re-enactment, Gadamer suggests that there is no original meaning.

Telling stories about our past experiences, according to Gadamer, requires the narrator/researcher/interpreter to try to see how the experience relates to his/her present situation. Widdershoven (1993) has suggested that within Gadamer's perspective there is an assumption of a dialectical relationship between the actual events and the narrator/researcher/interpreter. During this process, the meaning of the experience is changed, as the worldview that is constitutive for the experience is fused with the perspective that is presented in the story. Gadamer states that the interpretative process leads to a *fusion of horizons*, in which the perspective of the text and the reader are combined into a new and more encompassing horizon. The meaning of a 'text' is never fixed, but always changing in and through its interpretations. The meaning of a work is created in the history of its interpretations. Different generations and different authors will necessarily ask different questions of history and culture.

### Habermas

Habermas' (1990) version, along with most other versions of hermeneutics, is clear that the process of interpretation is inevitably tied to the horizons or value judgements of the interpreter. He (Habermas) has similarly argued that understanding requires what he calls 'communicative action'. For Habermas, the very fact that we are language users means that we are communicatively able to reach an understanding of one another. In his 'ideal speech' setting, all parties share equal power and ability and are thus able to come to an agreed interpretation. However, he does recognise that this ideal setting is not

generally one in which we work and acknowledges that differences in power may 'distort' the interpretation. This raises questions regarding the objectivity or validity of findings. He suggests that the interpreter has to grapple with the 'context' within which interpretations are offered as should not assume in advance that background assumptions are necessarily understood.

### Geertz

The anthropological work of Geertz (1973) adds an extra dimension in that he suggests that such is nature of culture that it retains an openness to further interpretations by participants within the culture. Thus, he highlights the need to distinguish between first and second order interpretations. First order interpretations come from within the culture and second order being produced by researchers. This leads to the notion of the 'knowing subject' and to the work of Anthony Giddens.

### Giddens

Giddens (1984) has further explicated Geertz's first and second order of interpretation with the notion of the 'double hermeneutic'. He suggests that the interpretative worlds and frameworks of the social sciences are not as separate from those of lay actors as many have traditionally assumed. He gives the example of marriage, noting that people choose to marry whilst being aware of social research relating to divorce rates and studies of marriage and the family. According to Giddens' later work (1990), this produces a situation of radicalised reflexivity within the modern era. 'Expert' cultures are not only the property of

academic communities but are continually finding their way into popular discourses through mechanisms such as the mass media and institutionalisation. An example in this study is the way a number of the men that I spoke with used the technical language of cognitive psychology to describe aspects of their life history (see Chapter Eleven).

### **Presenting life hi/stories, within a hermeneutic perspective**

Apart from conceptualising the nature of 'interpretation' in life hi/stories, there is also the more practical issue in writing up life hi/story research of how many of the original words of the 'subject' are used in the final account. This, of course, bears some relation to Gadamer's notion of the *fusion of horizons*: in the account are horizons equally fused or is one voice predominant?

According to how a life hi/story is construed as, more or less accurately recapturing the past, or as a current narrative it will, generally, be subject to some form of interpretation. Plummer (1983; 1995a) considers that there are two principal parties involved in the production of life story research: the person who is telling the story and the person listening to the story (the researcher). He suggests that interpretation is primarily the province of the researcher. He identifies a five-point continuum, somewhat provocatively called 'A continuum of contamination' (Plummer 1995a; p. 61):

The continuum locates the extent to which the researcher imposes his or her own analytic devices upon the participant, or the extent to which the participant's own world is allowed to stand uncontaminated.

At one end of the continuum, he places the 'Participant's 'pure account'' and in between this and (at the other end of the continuum) the 'Researcher's account',

he respectively places 'Edited personal documents', 'Systematic thematic analysis', and 'Verification by anecdote (exemplifying)'. Examples of the 'Participant's 'pure account'' are diaries, letters and other similar materials.

In the 'Edited personal documents' category Plummer (1995a; p. 61) notes that 'the researcher tries to intervene as little as possible. Some intervention, however, is usually necessary, if only to delete the (boring) repetition and stammering found in all people's accounts.' As an example of this category, he cites Tony Parker's (1969) work with sex offenders. Yet it is not clear from Parker's work what criteria guided his editing of the transcripts. Parker notes that he omitted most of his questions (1969; Introductory note on an unnumbered page) but it is clear that the transcripts are also edited.

Additionally, Parker introduces each transcript, with, in some cases, a somewhat romantic preamble (for example see the life story of 'Russell George': Parker 1969; pp 3-5). Thus, the process of editing and introducing 'uncontaminated' material in itself, constitutes a form of covert interpretation.

The next point on the continuum is 'Systematic thematic analysis'; Plummer (1995; p. 61) characterises this as the:

... point when the participant is more or less allowed to speak for him – or herself but where the researcher slowly accumulates a series of themes – partly derived from the participant's account and partly derived from social scientific theory.

This is the position taken by the present study and is discussed in detail in Part Four.

'Verification by anecdote (exemplification)' sees the presence of the researcher loom much larger here; the words of the participant are only used to illustrate points that the researcher has previously identified as pertinent to his/her argument. Plummer (1995a; p. 61) notes that 'the researcher provides little justification or accounting as to why he or she selects some quotations and not others.'

The position of most 'contamination' on Plummer's continuum is what he calls the 'researcher's account'. Here the researcher rarely uses participant's own words and merely refers to them as proofs of a pre-existing theory (the work of Freud is an example of this position). However, as with virtually all classification systems the boundaries between one type and another are permeable and Plummer (1995; p. 62) notes that researchers can move across the continuum during their work – as long as they publicly recognise how much they are 'contaminating' the original material collected.

In connection with this study, I present the material from a 'Systematic thematic analysis' position. I have, however, a number of difficulties. I have already referred to the vast amount of material that I have obtained as this inevitably presents practical difficulties. Additionally I wish to present the material in such a way that the voice of each man is not totally lost in sociological analysis.

'Systematic thematic analysis' allows me to present the material in a way that allows both the men to have some presence, but also allows me to explore a range of themes and to locate the stories within a social context. In doing this, I recognise that I am not a value-free 'objective' researcher and it is therefore important for me to outline briefly the standpoint from which I approach this material.

## **Standpoint of the Present Study**

In line with Gadamer's suggestion that the prejudices of the interpreter be made explicit and Harding's requirements of 'strong objectivity', I describe the standpoint from which I have approached this study. I have undertaken this study from a pro-feminist standpoint (Pease 1997, Hearn 1998) that perceives sexual violence to be a wider problem than is reflected in current crime statistics (see Chapter Four). I also, following Hearn (1998), approach the data collection and analysis self-consciously as a male researcher. In Chapters Ten and Eleven, I theorise how both my standpoint and my gender are incorporated within my hermeneutic position and approach.

## **Summary**

The quotations that start this chapter appear to raise controversial issues about the rights of sex offenders to be listened to, to be heard. Currently the sex offender is the ultimate pariah who appears to have achieved such demonic status that he has become the target of vigilante act and of calls for him to have fewer civil liberties (Cowburn and Dominelli 2001). In the midst of the media cries for retribution and the 'scientific' voice of cognitive behaviourism, it would appear that there is little space for the sex offender to be heard. This is unfortunate, for in denying the sex offender a space to be heard there is also the rejection of an opportunity to try to understand how his life hi/story is constructed by and relates to the wider culture. This chapter outlines my reasons for choosing life hi/story as a method to explore the phenomenological world of the convicted male sex offender. It also reviews hermeneutical approaches to life histories and suggests that (following Gadamer) reflecting on



the 'prejudice' of the researcher is akin to explicitly identifying the 'standpoint' (Harding 1991) of the researcher to his/her subject. It considers the problematic area of 'what is truth?' in a life hi/story; along with this issue it has addressed the area of the 'knowing subject' in life hi/story research and has offered insights from Giddens on 'the double hermeneutic'. Finally, I briefly outline the standpoint and hermeneutical position that I adopt throughout this study.

## **Part Two**

### **Men and male sexual violences**

## Chapter Four<sup>2</sup>

### Forensic approaches to male sexual violence: where is the social context?

#### Where are the men?

#### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to review forensic perspectives on male sexual violence. By forensic perspectives, I am referring particularly to the endeavours of clinical psychology (and to a lesser extent psychiatry) to understand sexual violence within a 'natural science paradigm' that largely ignores social context and the gender of the majority of the perpetrators of this violence.

In a paper entitled 'How dangerous are rapists to children?' Richard Laws reviews both self-report surveys and physiological assessments relating to male sexual response (known as 'phallometric testing') to accounts of coercive sexual behaviour. He was unable to distinguish clearly and consistently the convicted rapist from the so-called 'normal' male. He notes (Laws; 1994; p. 8):

... more alarming, perhaps, are the findings from self-reports and phallometric testing of so-called normal males. Here we find patterns of behaviour and sexual response that are strikingly similar to those of sexual offenders suggesting considerable overlap in their developmental histories. Those who proceed to become adult sex offenders apparently fail to develop the inhibitions that constrain normals. For their part, normals appear to harbour many of the same feelings, have the same fantasies, but fail to act upon them.

The bi-polar division ('normals' and 'sex offenders') outlined by Laws troubles me for a number of reasons. It is noteworthy that Laws' non-sex offending category is identified as 'normals', clearly a group without a gender that

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<sup>2</sup> This chapter draws on a paper given to Chester College Conference: 19th-20th November 2001.

conforms to some unidentified, but absolute, standard of behaviour. It is equally important to note that Laws describes 'sex offenders' and 'normals' in a way that ignores that they are men. The literatures that he reviewed concerned the attitudes and behaviours of *men*, whether or not they were convicted of a sexual offence.

In this chapter, I consider 'scientific' / forensic understandings of male heterosexuality and the nature of the sex offence, and I review current sex offender classification systems. One effect of the discourse in this area is to minimise understanding of the extent and nature of sexual violence. To counteract this picture, I refer to three particular bodies of literature: recidivism studies, prevalence studies and self-report studies. Recidivism studies have examined the patterns of reconviction – including nature of offence and length of time before a fresh offence is committed – of a variety of sex offender populations. A popular assumption relating to sex offenders is that they are a small group with a high rate of reconviction: this is manifestly not the case. Prevalence studies provide a picture of the general extent of sexual violence in society. Self-report studies of 'proclivities' to commit sex offences provide a picture of the proportion of men who would, in certain circumstances, commit acts of sexual aggression. I conclude the chapter by suggesting that sex offender classification systems do not contribute to a social understanding of male sexual violence because they focus exclusively on convicted men and in the aetiology of sex offending underlying these systems, gender is irrelevant. I suggest that an examination of the forms of masculinities, particularly hegemonic masculinity

may provide a more productive key to understanding and possibly reducing the prevalence of sexual violence.

### **The gendered nature of scientific discourse**

In a useful paper concerning the invisibility of male theorists in social theory, Hearn (1998) has pointed out that what often stands as objective social science is in effect the worldview of a socially and economically dominant group of men. This group asserts its hegemonic power through scientific discourse in which their worldview masquerades as the objective truth. Whilst it is, merely, the unacknowledged standpoint of white middle class heterosexual men. Consequently, it (re)produces knowledge or a world view that advances the interests of this particular group and ignores or dismisses the experiences of others (Harding 1991; Lennon and Whitford 1994; Nicolson 1995). This perspective is particularly important when considering the nature of scientific discourse about sexual violence, for it may be that the interests of most men are served by the creation of a classified group of sex offenders, the study of whom conveniently deflects attention from problematic aspects of hegemonic masculinity.

### **Scientific discourse – the construction of the ‘natural’ heterosexual man**

In considering the scientific discourse surrounding the construction of the ‘natural’ man, it is important to note the essentialist assumptions that underpin the approach. Burr (1995; pp 19-20) has characterised essentialism as:

... a way of understanding the world that sees things (including human beings) as having their own particular essence or nature, something which is said to belong to them and which explains how they behave ... The ‘essentialist’ view of personality, then, bids us think of ourselves as having a particular nature, both as individuals and as a species (i.e. ‘human nature’), and this nature determines what people can and cannot do.

As mentioned earlier, Foucault (1984) has drawn attention to the fact that, in western societies, discussion about sexual behaviour has generally taken the form of confession. Since the mid-nineteenth century, this has been dominated by scientific investigators and particularly by the medical profession. In this section, I review the influence of Havelock Ellis and later sexologists, including the work of the Kinsey Institute, in developing scientific approaches to male heterosexuality which at the same time assert the normality of male aggression and coercion in heterosexual activity and minimise the extent and affect of sexual violence.

The work of Havelock Ellis is of key importance in the development of essentialist perspectives of male heterosexuality. Jeffrey Weeks (2000; pp17-48) has highlighted a tension in Ellis' work between a conservative and uncritical acceptance of the biological basis of sexual behaviour and a more radical use of evidence from a range of different times and cultures. It is, however, his uncritical acceptance of predetermined heterosexual roles for men and women that is of particular concern here. In *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, (Ellis 1900; 1901; 1903; 1905; 1906; 1910), Ellis articulates his understanding of the basis of heterosexual behaviour:

Force is the foundation of virility and its psychic manifestation is courage. In the struggles for life, violence is the first virtue. The modesty of women - in its primordial form consisting in physical resistance, active or passive, to the assaults of the male - aided selection by putting to the test man's most important quality, force. Thus, it is that when choosing among rivals for her favours a woman attributes value to violence (Ellis 1903; p.33 cited by Jackson 1984; p 57)

And:

The infliction of pain must inevitably be a frequent indirect result of the exertion of power (i.e. in courtship). It is even more than this; the infliction of pain by the male on the female may itself be a gratification of the impulse to exert force (Ellis 1903; p. 67 cited by Jackson 1984; p. 58)

This essentialist understanding of heterosexual behaviours and the predetermined nature of male and female roles within this framework has been, and remains, influential.

For example, Van de Velde, in his book, *Ideal Marriage*, which was first published in English in 1928, and was been reprinted over thirty-eight times in the following fifty years, states:

What both man and woman, driven by obscure primitive urges, wish to feel in the act, is the essential force of maleness, which expresses itself in a sort of violent and absolute possession of the woman. And so both of them can and do exult in a certain degree of male aggression and dominance, whether actual or apparent - which proclaims this actual force (Van de Velde 1977; p. 153 cited in Jackson 1984; p. 65).

The work of Alfred Kinsey and subsequently that of the Kinsey Institute continued and developed this understanding of human (hetero) sexuality. Throughout their work, the façade of objectivity is both asserted and maintained. The works of the Kinsey Institute (Kinsey, Pomeroy et al. 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy et al. 1953; Gebhard, Gagnon et al. 1965) are 'scientific' investigations into human sexual behaviours. All of the works, however, clearly reveal the value base and ideological orientation of the authors. Addressing the male context of sexual behaviours in which sexual 'offences' have to be identified Gebhard et al (1965; p. 177) note:

... the phenomenon of force or threat in sexual relations between adults is beclouded by various things. In the first place, there may be the ambivalence of the female who is sexually aroused but who for moral or other reasons does not wish to have coitus. She is struggling not only against the male but against herself, and in retrospect it is exceedingly easy for her to convince herself that she yielded to force, rather than to persuasion. This delusion is facilitated by the socially approved pattern for feminine behaviour, according to which the woman is supposed to put up at least token resistance, murmuring "No, no" or "We mustn't". Any reasonably experienced male has learned to disregard such minor protestations, and the naive male who obeys his partner's injunction to cease and desist is often puzzled when she seems inexplicably irritated by his compliance.

Similar perspectives are to be found in two more recent reviews of essentialist understandings of rape (Ellis 1989; Thornhill and Palmer 2001).

Emerging from essentialist perspectives of human sexuality is a view of male heterosexuality in which aggression and dominance are both normal and ineluctable. The distinction between normal male behaviour and true sex offences is, therefore, difficult to articulate. Thus, the extent of offending behaviour is difficult to estimate and male academics and clinicians have erred on the side of extreme caution.

Salter (1988; p. 22) notes that in the United States:

Clinicians trained as late as the 70s were instructed that sexual abuse was rare and cited figures for incest as low as one in a million ...

Similar viewpoints have been noted during the 1980s from some members of the British Medical profession (for example see Campbell 1988; pp. 55-60). The implication emerging strongly from this male dominated discourse is that there is only a small minority of men whose sexual behaviour is problematic. It is, therefore, appropriate to consider the nature of the classification systems of sex offenders emerging from this perspective in detail.



## Classification systems of men convicted of sex offences

Convicted sex offenders are classified through two main types of typology – medical and psychological. Additionally, there have been sociological attempts to systematise understanding of male sex offenders. I consider all of these in turn.

### Medical approaches

Medical classification of sex offending behaviour is guided and prescribed by two diagnostic manuals: the International Classification of Diseases, Injuries and Causes of Death (ICD) (WHO 1993) and The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) (American Psychiatric Association (APA) 1995). The terminologies used to describe a variety of deviant sexual behaviours are complex and esoteric. There is little or no relating of the behaviours to a criminal justice context and there is a conspicuous absence of criminal justice terminology: the behaviours are categorised using medical language without concern to the legal status of the behaviours. For example, in the current ICD, ICD-10 (WHO 1993), deviant sexual behaviours are described in a section entitled 'Disorders of adult personality and behaviours'. Some of the behaviours identified are: fetishism, fetishistic transvestism, exhibitionism, voyeurism, paedophilia, sadomasochism, and multiple disorders of sexual preference. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV)*, (American Psychiatric Association; 1995) is very similar in its orientation and focus. Interestingly, however, 'Deviant sexual behaviours' are included in the section on 'Gender identity disorders' in a sub-section entitled 'Paraphilias'. Men and masculinity(ies) are however, not referred to.

The 'deviant' behaviours are labelled with Latinate descriptors and although the use of force and the effect on others is noted ('humiliation or suffering') it is solely as a phenomenological aspect of the paraphilia. There are no explicit links to legal definitions, and no consideration of the wider social context and the dynamics of power in relationships.

### Psychological Approaches

Psychological Classification systems are based on knowledge about convicted men. All of the systems separate offenders who have abused (the more common North American word is 'molested') children from offenders who have raped adults (women). I review the main characteristics of these systems; however, for a more comprehensive exploration see Fisher and Mair (1998).

#### *Child Molesters*

A common feature of psychological classification of men convicted of sex offences against children is a tripartite division of the different types of offender, commonly referred to as 'paedophiles' (Knight, Rosenberg et al. 1985; Knight 1988; Knight, Carter et al. 1989). The systems highlight the following types:

- 'Fixated paedophiles' who have a specific and often longstanding sexual preference for children (Cohen, Boucher et al. 1979; Groth, Longo et al. 1982);
- 'Regressed paedophiles' who engage in sexual activity with children particularly in family settings, as a result of external pressures, and
- 'Unskilled psychopaths' who may have an identifiable psychiatric disorder, and who are generally unskilled socially and who choose children, as they are easier to exploit.

Although the above forms the basic infrastructure for classification systems of 'child molesters' more elaborate systems have been developed that take into account both offence demographics (that is, the nature of the offence and the age and sex of the victim) and the meaning of the behaviour of the offender (Knight 1988; Knight, Carter et al. 1989; Knight and Prentky 1990).

### *Rapists*

Classification systems of rapists originate in the 1950s. However, most systems have similar groupings. They primarily consider the underlying motivation for rape and the personality characteristics of the rapists.

Groth, Burgess et al.(1977) identified two main categories of rape: power rape and anger rape. They further divided each category into the power-reassurance rapist, and the rapist who rapes to express his potency. The anger-rapist uses rape to humiliate and degrade his victim; this category is further sub-divided into anger-retaliation and anger-excitement rapists. In later work, Groth (1979) appears to have refined his typologies and suggests three main groups of rapists, which comprise anger, power and sadistic rapists.

Cohen, Garofolo et al. (1971) suggest the following taxonomy: Compensatory, Impulsive, Displaced Aggressive and Sex-Aggression Defusion. They consider that it is likely individuals will be distributed along the discriminating dimensions rather than fall into discrete categories

Knight and Prentky (1990) describe the development of the Massachusetts Treatment Center (Rapists 3) typology (MTC:R3). The typology has four motivational categories: opportunistic; pervasively angry; sexual; and vindictive, but, taking account of explicitly stated levels and degrees of expressive aggression, juvenile and adult unsocialised behaviour, social competence, sexualisation, undifferentiated anger, sadism, and offence planning, it identifies nine sub-groupings.

Fisher and Mair (1998; p. 27) note:

The fact that there is such consistency of types identified by different studies suggests that these types are both valid and stable. ... Specific data on the reliability, homogeneity and coverage of these systems is not reported ... In addition, it is of note that at the time of these studies the phenomenon of rape in marriage and date rape was not particularly recognised. Whilst it is likely that such acts would be classed as being sexually motivated they do not easily fit the subgroups identified ... and as such represent an important omission.

And, possibly, many other 'unreported' sex crimes similarly fail to fit into the classification systems.

### Sociological perspectives

Diana Scully (1990) studied men convicted of rape who were imprisoned in a maximum-security prison in the United States. Rather than use the psychological classification systems, she developed a different system 'Based on their versions of their crimes, and the information contained in their records' (Scully, 1990; p. 27). The categories that she identified are 'admitters', 'deniers' and those who claimed no knowledge of the offence(s). She omitted the third grouping from her discussion. 'Admitters' admitted that they had committed the offence(s) with which they were charged, although their accounts of their

offences minimised their use of violence. The second group, the 'deniers', admitted that they had been sexually involved with their victim(s) but denied the coercive nature of the activity. Scully notes that there are a number of ways in which their denial could be interpreted, but adds:

... denials can also be taken at face value, and the content analyzed as a statement on the cultural learning and socially derived perspective of sexually violent men (p. 28).

Summarising the issues emerging from analysing the deniers accounts, Scully (1990; p. 115) comments:

To justify their behavior, deniers drew on the stereotypes of women in our rape-supportive culture to present their victims as both precipitating and to blame for the rapes ... Six themes run through denier's accounts, each constructed so that the victim and her behavior is presented in such a way that the man's behavior seemed situationally appropriate or justified – even if not quite right: (1) women as seductresses, (2) women mean yes when they say no, (3) women eventually "relax and enjoy it," (4) nice girls don't get raped, (5) guilty of minor wrong doing, and (6) macho man.

With the exception of Scully's study, none of the systems reviewed pay particular attention to the gender of the offenders and how this relates to the patriarchal structure of the societies in which the offences were committed. Generally, they focus on a relatively small group of convicted men. This can have the unfortunate effect of creating the illusion that sexual violence is a relatively insignificant feature of social life and it is the activity of a prolific but small group of men. Consideration of statistics related to sexual offending and the experience of being victimised seriously undermines this false security.

#### **Statistics relating to sex offending: the number and patterns of convictions**

Given that classification systems are generally derived from statistics relating to convicted sex offenders, it is important to review some of this literature. This is

not to revert to a natural science perspective on quantitative data, that it represents the truth. Plummer (1995a; p. 19) has noted that '... all factual representation of empirical reality, even statistics, are narratively constructed.' Generally, official crime statistics relating to sexual violence tell an understated story of (a) increasing numbers of sex crimes reported and (b) some (few) persistent offenders. In citing this body of work, I am seeking to disturb the conventional representation of the prolific 'deviant', and highlight an alternative tale, one that problematises, more generally, male heterosexuality. It is also important to recognise, that by referring to official statistics, the information provided is constrained by official definitions of sex crimes. To some extent, I compensate for this when I consider the literature relating to prevalence studies where different definitions of sex crimes are used.

Features that are of particular importance to the alternative tale are (i) the continual increase in the number of reported sex offences; (ii) rates of recidivism for sex offenders; (iii) rates of recidivism for sex offenders with no previous convictions; and (iv) the proportion of sex offenders without convictions cited in the literature.

(i) The continual increase in the number of reported sex offences

Official statistics over the last twenty years have revealed a slow but marked increase in the number of convictions for sexual offences. In Britain, the number of sexual offences has increased from 17,954 in 1981 to 28,245 in 1991 (Marshall, 1994). Colton and Vanstone, (1998) also demonstrate a similar increase in numbers of reported sex offences. This does not necessarily indicate an increase in the amount of sex offences being committed, rather, it may show that

increased public awareness and reporting procedures have brought more offences to public attention.

(ii) Rates of recidivism for sex offenders

The popular view that sex offenders invariably re-offend is, however contradicted by research findings. In a review of sixty-one studies undertaken in Europe and North America between 1943-1995, Hanson and Bussiere (1998; p. 357) noted that, as a group, sex offenders have a low rate of recidivism:

Only a minority of the total sample (13.4% of 23,393) were known to have committed a new sexual offense within the average 4-5 year follow-up ... even in studies with thorough record searches and long follow-up periods (15-20 years), the recidivism rates almost never exceed 40%.

Recidivism rates also vary when the type of offence is considered: incest offenders 4-10 per cent; rapists 7-35 per cent; non-familial child abusers 10-29 per cent against girls and 13-40 per cent against boys (Marshall and Barbaree 1990, cited in Fisher 1994; p. 12). Additionally, the number of previous convictions appears to affect the rate at which offenders are subsequently reconvicted (Furby, Weinrott et al 1989). Hanson and Bussiere (1998) point out that offenders may be re-offending and not being caught, but this is an unknown. However, Soothill and colleagues (1998) have suggested that given the length of time of follow-up in many recidivism studies (10-20 years), it is unlikely that the re-offences of a known sex offender would remain concealed.

(iii) Rates of recidivism for sex offenders with no previous convictions

The statistic which is of particular interest in the present context relates to men convicted of sex offences for the first time. Soothill and Gibbens (1978) found that 12 per cent of the first offenders were reconvicted within ten years.

Phillpotts and Lancucki (1979) noted that within a six year follow-up period, only 1.5 per cent of sex offenders with no previous convictions were convicted of a further sexual offence. West (1987) notes that:

It is a common misapprehension that sex offenders are very liable to repeated convictions. Certainly some of them are, but that is not the general rule. The typical sex offender appears in court once only and never again.

Many other commentators (Furby et al 1989, Quinsey 1984, 1986, Howard League 1985) have also drawn attention to this feature of sex offender recidivism. The Howard League Working Party (1985) note:

Although sex offenders are often credited with being particularly persistent in their misbehaviour, in fact, it is only a small minority who reappear repeatedly in court on sex charges; the vast majority have only one conviction for a sex offence in the whole of their lives.

(iv) The proportion of sex offenders without convictions cited in the literature

Apart from the relatively low recidivism rates of convicted sex offenders, a rarely commented upon feature in these studies is that the majority of sex offenders in each sample *do not* have previous convictions for sexual offences. This finding has been consistently noted in a number of studies over a long period of time. For example, Radzinowicz' (1957) study revealed that 83 per cent had no previous convictions for sexual offences. Fitch (1962) found that 79 per cent of the 77 heterosexual offenders had no previous convictions for sexual offending; but 48 per cent of the 62 homosexual offenders had no prior sexual convictions. Gibbens et al's (1978) work showed that 87 per cent of their sample had no previous convictions for sexual offences. In Gibbens et al. (1981), 89 per cent of the sample had no previous convictions for sexual offences. My own research on 233 male sex offenders in prison confirmed that 64 per cent had no previous conviction for sexual offences (Cowburn 1991). Marshall's (1994) study



of sex offenders discharged from the prisons of England and Wales indicated that 73 per cent had no previous convictions.

To summarise, this data offers a picture of low re-conviction rates for convicted sex offenders, and very low rates of offenders with no previous convictions. In the studies cited above, the vast majority of offenders have no previous convictions and are not subsequently re-convicted. Yet the number of reported sex crimes is increasing. This may be due to an increase in the numbers of people reporting crimes or an increase in sexually coercive behaviour. Official statistics relating to sexual crimes, based on the number of convictions for sex offences, significantly under-represent the both the incidence and the prevalence of acts of sexual abuse (see for example Quinsey 1984; Finkelhor 1986; Quinsey 1986; Kelly 1988; Kelly 1991; Glaser and Frosh 1993; Fisher 1994). However Percy and Mayhew (1997), as mentioned above, note the very definitions used by 'official' sources may inhibit or prevent behaviours being reported (see also Kelly, et al 1991). I now consider studies that have examined other sources of information.

### **Prevalence studies**

It is almost a truism to state that the number of convictions for sexual offences represents the tip of the iceberg of sexual offending behaviour. Salter (1988) reviews both recent, (1979-1989) and older (1929-1965) prevalence studies with regard to child sexual abuse. She excludes from the review studies of sexual abuse in clinical settings, because they (inevitably) reveal artificially high prevalence rates. She found that the recent studies revealed that between 11 and 39 per cent of the women had

been abused, whilst the range for men was between 5 and 11 per cent. The older prevalence studies, Salter (1988 p.21) acknowledges, "... lack the sophisticated methodology and the careful definitions of more recent research." However, they reveal rates of sexual abuse of female children ranging from 24-37 per cent, and although only two of the studies include the disclosure rate of abuse for boys these rates are 27 and 30 per cent. Salter states that sexual abuse, and particularly child sexual abuse, is *not* a recent discovery. Various surveys conducted with sample populations, both in Britain and in the United States, have revealed that the prevalence of people who have been sexually attacked at some point in their lives is significantly higher than the recorded number of convictions for sexual offences populations (see the following literature reviews: Quinsey 1984; 1986, Finkelhor; 1986, Birchall; 1989, Stermac, Segal, and Gillis; 1990 and Conte;1991).

In their study of the prevalence of sexual abuse in a sample of British 16-21 year olds, Kelly et al (1991) found that one in two females and one in four males had experienced at least one unwanted sexual event/interaction before they were eighteen. Having taken 'less serious'; incidents out of their analysis, they found that one in five women and one in fourteen males reported having experienced 'serious' abuse. The prevalence rates were the same for both black and white young people. Only 5% of the incidents were reported to any agency and of these (1,051) only 10 resulted in prosecution.

On the basis of their extensive review of the literature, Percy and Mayhew (1997) estimate that there are fifteen times more unreported sex offenders than reported

ones: the bulk of sex offenders have not been brought to public notice and their offences remain unacknowledged in the private domain.

This prompts consideration of other studies that relate to 'the private domain'. The area that is most fertile is studies where men have been asked, in conditions of total confidentiality, about their attitudes relating to sexual violence and their proclivities to committing such acts.

### **Proclivities to sexual violence: Men self-reporting**

The difference between 'normals' and sex offenders becomes less clear when we consider research that examines the attitudes about and proclivities towards sexual violence in populations of 'normal' adult men. Most of these studies, conducted in the last thirty years, use samples of white middle-class college students in the United States. Although they cannot be regarded as representative of the general population, this research reveals that a significant proportion of 'normal' men have pro-rape attitudes and proclivities.

Kanin (1969) found that approximately 25% of university males admitted using force in attempted intercourse, even when they knew it was unwelcome and hurtful. Malamuth (1981) estimated that 35% of college males reported the likelihood of rape if assured of not being caught or punished. Rapaport and Burkhart (1984) found that 28% of college males had engaged in coercive sexual activity. Kanin (1985) revealed that 13% of men studying a variety of subjects, reported using force or threats to obtain sexual intercourse with a female.

Muehlenhard and Linton (1987) reported that over 77% of college females had been involved as victims and 50% of college males had been perpetrators of

sexually abusive acts. The male subjects in Petty and Dawson's (1989) study reported that they considered it unlikely that they would be caught and punished if they did carry out a rape. Stermac and her colleagues (1990; p.146), reviewing this literature, noted:

A fairly consistent finding of approximately 30-35% of the males across the studies indicated that there was some likelihood they would rape under these conditions.

Regarding attitudes towards acceptability of rape, Goodchilds and Zellman (1984) found that the majority of males in their high school sample reported that date rape was acceptable under a variety of circumstances.

A significant number of studies also reveal that similar attitudes prevail with regards to male arousal towards and abuse of children. For example, Briere and Runtz (1989) found that 21 percent of college males reported having some sexual attraction to children and 7 percent reported some likelihood of having sex with a child if they could ensure not being detected or punished. Finkelhor and Lewis (1988) estimated that 10 percent of males from a sample of their telephone survey had admitted having sexually abused a child.

These studies, cumulatively, raise serious concerns about hegemonic masculinity. Most of them were undertaken in white dominated, middle class universities. Yet, cloaked in the language of scientific discourse, they have remained largely uncommented on, outside of the scientific community. Other voices have, albeit briefly, reached a wider audience.

## Feminist critiques of male heterosexuality

Both the first and second waves of feminism in the twentieth century highlighted problems with male heterosexual behaviour. Whilst Ellis was writing of the natural predatory nature of male heterosexuality, Jackson (1984; p. 50) states that:

Women such as Josephine Butler, Elizabeth Wollstenholme, Jane Ellice Hopkins, Frances Swiney, and later Cicely Hamilton and Christabel Pankhurst, challenged the myth that the sexual abuse and exploitation of women and girls was an unfortunate but inevitable result of men's natural sexual urges. They clearly saw male sexuality as a consequence of male power, not male biology, and they demanded that men exercise self-control.

Similarly, writers in the second wave also were critical of perspectives that minimised the extent and the effect of sexual violence, and cast serious doubt on the validity of the distinction between normal men and deviant men (Brownmiller 1975; Davis 1981; Hanmer and Saunders 1984; Dworkin 1988; Dworkin 1988; Dominelli 1991; Hanmer 1994).

Feminist critiques of male violence have remained constant during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and yet they have largely been excluded from forensic approaches to male sexual violence.

## Summary

Thus, modern Western science was construed within and by political agendas that contained both liberatory and oppressive possibilities. Present-day science too contains these conflicting impulses. The anti-democratic impulses are not only morally and politically problematic; *they also deteriorate the ability of the sciences to provide objective, empirically defensible descriptions and explanations of the regularities and underlying causal tendencies in nature and social relations.* One way to focus on this problem is to discover that we have no conception of objectivity that enables us to distinguish the scientifically "best descriptions and explanations" from those that fit most closely (intentionally or not) with the assumptions that elites in the West do not want critically examined. (Harding 1991; p. 97 – emphasis added)

This chapter has shown how the scientific study of male heterosexuality and male sex offenders potentially produces descriptions and explanations that fit most closely with the assumptions of the dominant grouping in Western society – white, middle class, able-bodied, heterosexual men. In writing of convicted rapists and the ways in which they minimise their behaviour, Scully (1990; p. 116) highlights the difficulties for patriarchal societies in combating sexual violence:

... patriarchal societies produce men whose frame of reference excludes women's perspectives. Men are able to ignore sexual violence, especially since their culture provides them with such a convenient array of justifications.

This points to a re-consideration the notion of male hegemony in western societies. Pringle (2001; p. 44), highlighting the complex nature of sexual violence within any society, pointedly comments on forensic attempts to classify and profile convicted perpetrators of sexual violence:

... the sheer complexity of potential variables involved in the generation of sexual violences makes the possibility of ever developing valid screening profiles of abusers nothing more than simplistic fantasy of policy-makers who are looking for a 'quick fix' to this horrendous problem.

To address some of this complexity more fully, I now turn to studies and theorising about the wider populations of men.

## Chapter Five

### Men, masculinity and masculinities

#### Introduction

Gender, as we define it denotes a hierarchical division between women and men embedded in both social institutions and social practices. Gender is thus a social structural phenomenon but it is also produced, negotiated and sustained at the level of everyday interaction. The world we inhabit is always already ordered by gender, yet gender is also embodied and lived by men and women, in local, specific, biographical contexts and is experienced as central to individual identities. (Jackson and Scott 2002; pp 1-2)

To begin to understand meanings and usage of the terms men, masculinity, and masculinities it is necessary to consider briefly theoretical approaches to sex and gender. Technical (primarily sociological) terminology in this area lies uneasily alongside commonplace and vernacular usage. As (some) theorists strive for clarity of expression and precision in definition, the ambiguity of common terminologies are highlighted and words become reconfigured in ways that (sometimes) further confuse and conflate issues. In this chapter I review understandings of gender and then consider more specifically approaches to understanding men, masculinity and masculinities. However, as this chapter is focusing on ways of understanding and conceptualising men and their behaviours, I begin by considering issues relating language and terminology in this area.

#### Terminology: sex, gender, men, masculinity and masculinities

In his book, *Masculinities*, Robert Connell (1995; p. 67) notes that all societies have cultural accounts of gender, but not all of them have a separate understanding of masculinity. It is important, however, to note the relatively

recent use of the term gender. Jackson and Scott (2002; p.1) note that it began to be used within sociology in the early 1970s and quickly became a key concept for the discipline. The second wave of feminism is partly credited for this. In her seminal text *The Second Sex*, which greatly influenced feminist thinkers, Simone de Beauvoir (1972), cited in (Jackson and Scott 2002; p. 9) proclaimed that 'one is not born a woman, but rather becomes, a woman'. She effectively formed the basis for future explorations of how social forces shape expectations and behaviours of women. It is noteworthy, that partly due to feminist theory, thinking about gender remained, until the 1970s, largely thinking about women.

The use of the term gender was an attempt to distinguish between biological sex and socially constructed identity. Gendered identities are considered to be *socially constructed*, that is they are socially, geographically and historically contingent and, therefore, changeable (Oakley 1972; Rubin 1975). The predominant social force shaping gendered identities is patriarchy and this ensures the dominance of men and the subordination of women. Later theorists look more closely at aspects of this gender division that include consideration of race and sexualities (Jackson and Scott 2002; pp 10-11), thus challenging the monolithic bi-polar construct of gender. It is not appropriate, here, to provide a detailed account of the development feminist and sociological thinking about sex and gender (see the various contributions in Jackson and Scott (2002) for a fuller account). However, it is important to explore a little further the distinction made by many theorists, between sex and gender.

Jackson and Scott (2002; pp 15-17) suggest the dichotomy of natural-social implicit in much feminist thought about gender in the 1970s, was not seriously



challenged until the late 1970s/early 1980s. However, they note that the work of ethnomethodologists, particularly Garfinkel's (1967) study of 'Agnes', a male to female transsexual, problematised the simple biological basis of sex.

Biologically, Agnes was male, but s/he describes how s/he learned to 'pass' as a 'real' woman whilst (pre-operatively) having the biological make up of a man.

Jackson and Scott (2002; p. 16) note:

Garfinkel's point ... is that the production of a sexed persona is always a performance. Agnes simply makes visible what is usually invisible and her practices teach us how the normally sexed make sexuality – or what we would now call gender – happen ... This requires not only a performance of gender, but a reading of that performance through which we attribute gender to others.

Jackson and Scott (2002) also highlight two other theoretical approaches that have undermined the ostensible nature-nurture dichotomy underpinning of the terms gender and sexuality. These are material feminist and postmodern feminism approaches. Briefly, the material feminist approach sees sex (biological differences) as also being socially constructed through scientific discourse. Christine Delphy (1984) highlights the intertwined relationship of the two terms and suggests that the term gender inevitably creates the meanings of the term sex. Although this work is important in that it further problematises absolute and rigid definitions of gender and sex and, by implication, masculinity/ies, the work of Judith Butler (1989; 1993) is of greater relevance to the present study. Having accepted that sex, as well as gender, is a social construct, Butler suggests that performing in ways that are identifiable as being female or male, genders individual bodies. In her later work, Butler (1993) develops the notion of 'performativity' using linguistic theory. Jackson and Scott (2002; p. 19) summarise this well:

Rather than thinking of the 'performative' as a performance, in *Bodies that Matter* (1993) Butler turns to the notion of 'performativity' deriving from linguistics. Linguistic performatives are forms of speech which, by their utterance, bring what they name into being.

However, the emphasis is not on naming but, as the term suggests, *doing*. . The term refers to a kind of linguistic enactment, where the action and the verbal expression of the action coincide (e.g. 'I promise'). All performatives are always in the first person and gender is does not pre-exist the doing of gender. Butler (1989) notes:

... gender is not a performance that a prior subject elects to do, but gender is *performative*, in the sense that it constitutes as an effect the very subject it appears to express ... To claim that there is no performer prior to the performed, that the performance is performative, that the performance constitutes the appearance of a "subject" as its effect is difficult to accept. This difficulty is the result of a predisposition to think of sexuality and gender as "expressing" in some indirect or direct way a psychic reality that precedes it. The denial of the *priority* of the subject, however, is not the denial of the subject; in fact, the refusal to conflate the subject with the psyche marks the psychic as that which exceeds the domain of the conscious subject. (Butler in Rivkin and Ryan 1998; p. 725)

There are links here with the later work of Wittgenstein (1953) that was discussed in Chapter Two. Language games and performatives are comprehensible within specific contexts (forms of life). Gender and, in the context of this study, masculinity/ies, is enacted in a context that both prescribes and interprets language and behaviour. These notions are developed further later in this chapter and in chapter eleven.

In summary, the concept of gender was originally developed within sociological thinking. Initially, it was construed as a social division and a distinction between gender, as a social construction and sex as a biological given featured in much feminist writing of the 1970s and early 1980s. However, the essential

nature of the category sex is problematised in ethnomethodological research and by materialist and post-modern feminists. Both sex and gender are increasingly understood as social processes (constructions) rather than fixed categories. Much thinking about men and masculinities has been influenced by these approaches.

### *Men, masculinity and masculinities*

In writing of men, masculinity and masculinities one could be considering the study of the individual, a social grouping, or aspects of a particular culture. Defining terms and justifying usages has pre-occupied many authors. Hearn and Collinson (1994) have usefully unpicked the relationship between the terms. They recognise the need to link conceptually men's material practices to notions of masculinities. They make the following suggestion.

One powerful [of linking material practice to notions of masculinity] way is to see men as existing and persisting in the material bases of society, in relation to particular social relations of production and reproduction; in comparison, masculinities exist and persist as ideology, often in their surface form in terms of elements of production and reproduction (Hearn 1987), p. 98). Particular masculinities are not fixed formulas but rather they are combinations of actions and signs, part powerful, part arbitrary, performed in reaction and relation to complex material relations and emotional demands; these signify that this is a man. Masculinities are thus ideological signs of particular men of the gender class of men, particularly in relation to reproduction broadly defined (Hearn and Collinson 1994; p. 105).

Within the 'material bases of society', men exist as individuals and relate to others. As a gender class men:

benefit from material relations around reproduction, housework, sexuality, violence, or emotional/care work beyond early child work. Thus, men may be seen as simply the class that benefits from particular relations over women ...The notion of class highlights the question of structural relations (Hearn and Collinson 1994; p. 106).

It is within this context that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is important.

Connell (1995; p. 77) has described hegemonic masculinity as:

... the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.

This is a useful concept in that it highlights the dominant form of male practices and experience. However, it is Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985) who first suggest that the monolithic term 'masculinity' failed to recognise the diversity of male social practices and how these relate to each man.

Masculinities/male identities do not exist in a social vacuum but dynamically inter-relate with other aspects of identity (such as race, age, sexuality and abilities). Thus, at the level of the individual man, a wide range of competing and conflicting identities are often present. Again Hearn and Collinson (1994; p. 112) note:

These different references to forms of masculinities exist and interrelate at the different levels of personal biography. As the Men, Masculinities and Socialism Group (1990) puts it, "There is the daily antagonistic clashing between diverse masculine identities – like child-carer, authoritarian father, loving, supportive friend, single parent father, 'macho' manager, depressed unemployed worker, strong leader – struggling for overall supremacy" (p. 18).

However, the abstraction of masculinity and masculinities from men and what men do has caused problems for some commentators. For example,

Clatterbaugh (1998; p. 42) notes:

... talking about masculinities, simpliciter and unexplicated, simply imposes a layer, a very confused layer, between ourselves and the social reality that we want to discuss.

He goes on to argue that the terms have, at times, been used in an unclear and often tautological fashion: for instance, masculinity/ies is/are what men do and is recognizable because men do it/them. He suggests that, in the short term, at least, the terms masculinity and masculinities should be avoided and focus should be, more simply, on what men do:

My argument in this article is that, given the current conceptual tangle around masculinities, we are more likely to maintain our bearings by flagging this troublesome concept and, at least for the present, talking about men, male behaviors, attitudes, and abilities, on the one hand, and images, stereotypes, norms and discourses, on the other. If our goal is to change reality, we can at least guard against the further mystification of it. (Clatterbaugh 1998; p. 43)

Perhaps a way forward, short of a complete avoidance of the terms, is the cautious and clearly defined use of them. In exploring issues related to men as a social class, both Connell (1995) and Hearn and Collinson (1994) suggest that biography and autobiography may be ways in which individual social practice can be located within wider understandings men masculinity and masculinities.

Connell (1995; p. 89) makes the following observation:

A life-history is a project, a unification of practice through time ... The project that is documented in life-history is itself the relation between the social conditions that determine practice and the future social world that practice brings into being.

Hearn and Collinson (1994; p. 112) note:

The interrogation of biography and autobiography is an important and necessary aspect of the interrogation of social divisions, in this case with respect to men and masculinities. Examples of this approach are David Morgan's (1987) autobiographically based analysis of life in the air force, drawing together divisions by age, class, manhood, and so on; and David Jackson's critical autobiography that retells stories of the interconnections of nation, boyhood, ethnicity and sexuality.

However, there has been a wide range of approaches to studying men as individuals and as examples of 'types' and as a social class. In the next section, these are briefly considered.

### **Approaches to understanding men: from essentialism to performativity**

Whilst there has been debate about what is appropriate terminology when studying men, there has also been a wide range of methodological approaches to undertaking studies. Obviously, these approaches embody different perspectives on ontology and epistemology, which were explored in Chapter Two. Suffice it to say, differences in standpoint are clearly apparent in the range of approaches.

A number of writers (Coleman 1990; Edley and Wetherell 1995), however, have highlighted that the key question considered in addressing issues relating to men, masculinity and masculinities is *what sustains masculinity/ies?* Coleman (1990; p. 197) has noted:

Once asked, there are but two ways of answering that question: either masculinity is constructed and sustained by hidden but discoverable forces, discourses, ideologies, structures and the like (in which case its contingent and moment-to-moment accomplishment is unconscious, the actor being unaware, and necessarily unaware, of all that he does), or else it is constructed *bricoleur* fashion, by the actor, and sustained by conscious monitoring and impression-management.

Here, of course, the ontological problem is laid bare: either 'being' has deep and hidden causes that predetermine and shape the nature of identity/ies or identities occur and are maintained moment by moment in a social and cultural context.

In their overview of theoretical approaches to studying men, Edley and Wetherell (1995) identify the following approaches to studying men: biological, psychoanalytical, role theory, social relations, cultural and feminist. These approaches are, in effect, sequentially set out along a continuum from the innate, to the hidden, to the more socially and culturally located. They are, inevitably, characterised by differing ontological and epistemological assumptions. In struggling with approaches to defining masculinity/ies, Connell (1995) identified four perspectives that influence definitions: *essentialist*, *positivist*, *normative* and *semiotic*. These positions represent different ontological positions with regard to men and masculinity/ies. And it is, perhaps the way in which *being*, more generally, is construed that shapes the different approaches to studying masculinity/ies and men. Essentialist and positivist approaches to study in this area start from an assumption that there is something fixed (essential) that can be identified, defined and studied. The sequencing of the words – identified, defined and studied - in the previous sentence, highlights the problems of circularity referred to by Clatterbaugh (1998). Connell (1995) has highlighted, for example, that much research into sex roles (which he locates within the positivist tradition) starts by prescribing male and female attributes and then goes on to 'prove' that men have male attributes and women have female attributes.

Rather than seek to resolve these various positions, Coleman (1990) suggests that it may be helpful to consider the 'occasions' when theoretical issues related to masculinity occur. By doing such he proposes that the focus of consideration will have to return to what men do:

More generally [I suggest] that we attend to the 'grammar' of the terms 'masculine' and 'masculinity'. I use 'grammar' in the Wittgensteinian sense ... such that we attend to the occasions of the *use* of these terms. In so doing we shall see that one of the ways they are used is to render the doings of men visible and analysable as topics of inquiry – and to render them visible and analysable as *problematic*. (Coleman, 1990; p. 193).

He suggests that it is only on certain occasions that men have an awareness of being 'masculine'. He cites the example of a man being asked to hold a handbag for a woman – the man may hold it in a certain way to avoid any close association being made with him and the woman's bag. This may have some truth in it, but it is fraught with many conceptual problems: (i) it assumes that all men start from the same standpoint in relation to both what is masculine and what holding a woman's bag may represent in relation to that masculinity; (ii) it does not locate this absence of ongoing awareness in any particular context. Hearn (1998), for example explicitly locates both the presence and absence of male gender-awareness within the context of patriarchy; (iii) it does not consider awareness as a dynamic force that may precipitate change; it assumes that men move in and out of awareness of their masculinity according to circumstances and it does not consider any linkages between these circumstances (see for example Prochaska and Di Clemente 's 1982 model of change). However, the notion of 'occasioned' activities that may critically highlight what men do is useful. Coleman (1990; p. 198) suggests that attention to these activities may reveal more than causal theorising:

... I suggest that we are in error if we consider that we have need of a *theory* of masculinity at all. The sociologist has no need to discover what is hidden or unknown and to adumbrate it in theory. For, following Wittgenstein, we can say that everything lies before us. What lies before us is the skilled gender-producing work of persons-in-the-society, of whom the theorist is one. It is this gender-producing work that requires, I suggest, a 'perspicuous representation' (Wittgenstein 1958, p. 122). This, I suggest, is the proper task of the sociologist of gender.



There are linkages between 'occasioned' activities, Butler's interest in 'performatives' and Wittgenstein's 'forms of life' and 'language games' – particularly if we construe what some men do in some circumstances to be located within various forms of life. All approaches consider language and behaviour in action and do not seek to theorise causal explanations based around either essence, agency or structure. As Coleman (1990) suggests, study of masculinity/ies is generally focused on 'occasioned activities'. Connell's (1995; pp 90-91) study of three groups of men uses a life history approach but keeps the focus on significant transitions (such as changing schools) or contexts (like family, relationships and work) in the men's lives where their awareness of being men and masculine may have been heightened. Additionally, not only is there particular focus in the life hi/stories on the contexts where various masculinities are enacted, or to put it another way, where men behave within (or beyond) the constraints of what they felt was 'manly', Connell (1995) also uses these foci for his analytical framework and the presentation of his data. Thus, his presentation of masculinities is partly based in a study of occasioned activities.

### Summary

The study of gender is fraught with ontological, epistemological, definitional and methodological problems. This chapter outlines understandings of gender masculinity/ies and men. I highlight approaches to studying masculinity – from essentialist to social constructionist. More importantly, this chapter begins to develop connections between Wittgenstein, Butler and Coleman in terms of masculinity in conventional settings (language games, forms of life, performatives and occasions).

## **Part Three**

### **Methodological Issues**

## Chapter Six

### Researching Men and Sexual Violence: Ethical Issues

#### Introduction

Ethical issues have been of concern throughout the process of this study, from its inception to writing it up. Rather than discuss them separately in various chapters I have decided to devote a chapter to outlining and considering the range and diversity of these issues. Kvale (1996; p. 110) has highlighted that ethical issues can arise during seven stages of interview-based research. These stages are thematizing; designing; interview situation; transcription; analysis; verification; and reporting. I use this structure to explore the variety of ethical issues encountered in this study, but first I consider the special nature of issues related to this area of study.

#### Talking to sexually coercive men: overview of ethical issues

Research into the life histories of sexually coercive men raises many issues common to other sensitive areas and highlights starkly ethical dilemmas that may be less controversial in other areas of research. This section first considers general issues related to sensitive topics, with a particular focus on studying this particular group of men. It then addresses ethical approaches to research in this area.

#### Sensitive topics

Researching men who are known to have been sexually coercive raises many issues that are common to other 'sensitive topics' (Lee 1993), whilst having

additional problematic areas. Lee (1993; p.4) in considering what are 'sensitive topics' notes:

... insofar as there is a common thread in the literature it lies in the implicit assumption that some kinds of topics potentially involve a level of threat or risk to those studied which renders problematic the collection, holding and/or dissemination of research data (Lee and Renzetti 1990). A simple definition of sensitive research would therefore be 'research which potentially poses a substantial threat to those who are or have been involved in it'. Another way to put this is to say that sensitive topics present problems because research into them involves potential costs to those involved in the research, including, on occasion, the researcher.

Lee (1993; pp 4-11) identifies three broad areas in which research may be threatening. The first area is where research may pose an 'intrusive threat' (p. 4) because of the private, stressful or sacred nature of the subject matter being investigated. The second area of threat relates to the study of crime and also areas of social control and involves the possibility or potential to reveal information that may stigmatise or incriminate the person or persons being researched. The final area threat that may be in a research project relates to what Lee describes as 'political' matters; he uses a wide definition of political and includes situations that relate to vested interests of both people and organisations.

By interviewing men convicted of offences of sexual violence who are currently in prison, in a way that is different to the dominant mode of interviewing, this study may be construed, by some, as a 'political' threat. The aim to look at the men in a context wider than their offending behaviour may also have been viewed with some scepticism. However, the Director of the Sex Offender Treatment Programme (SOTP) was fully aware of my research aims, objectives and methodology and this did not appear to delay the approval of my proposal

and research access. So, as far as the 'political' area is concerned, it would appear that this study poses little or no political threat. I therefore focus my attention, in this section, to the first two threats identified by Lee (1993).

### Threat One – intrusive threat

The nature of the life history interview – its focus, intensity and length - inevitably produces accounts of private and painful events, the retelling of which can in itself be extremely stressful. The threat here is to the individual's emotional and psychological well-being. The life history interview (Plummer 1983; Connell 1995; Plummer 1995; Messerschmidt 2000; McAdams 1993) is an depth and sustained exploration of (some) memories of a person's life. Perhaps, because of the semi-structured nature of the interview and its duration, there develops a dynamic between the interviewer and interviewee that reduces defensiveness on the part of the interviewee and thus potentially facilitates unguarded disclosure. This can be very distressing to the interviewee and may have serious implications for both parties in the interview. This leads to consideration of Lee's second area of threat.

### Threat Two - the possibility or potential to reveal information that may stigmatise or incriminate the person or persons being researched.

This area of threat is of central concern to this study. The problem of newly disclosed information in the present study, however, is much wider than Lee (1993) describes. In his discussion of this 'threat', Lee (1993) concentrates on the fears of those being researched and the efforts of the researchers to reassure them. The researched fear that the researcher may disclose sensitive information to 'authorities' that may then impose sanctions. Writing about the work of

sociologists from the University of Chicago in the 1920s and the 1930s, many of whom used life history approaches to study deviance, Lee (1993; p. 11) notes that they were well aware of 'the importance of maintaining confidentiality'. His primary concern seems to be with the threat that the research poses to the person being researched and how this may inhibit or enhance the collection of information and the development of knowledge. Processes that inhibit the collection of information (for example, breaches or identified possible breaches of confidentiality) and the development of knowledge are viewed negatively and are to be avoided. Lee (1993, p. 167) notes:

In Britain ... the House of Lords has ruled that a promise of confidentiality does not itself make information privileged. Private promises of confidentiality need to be weighed against the public interest. Journalists in Britain who have refused to disclose their sources have on occasion been fined heavily (Tan 1988)

However, in the middle of an extended discussion of the legal implications of maintaining confidentiality (Lee 1993; pp 164-170), Lee notes that Sagarin and Moneymaker (1979) have identified situations when researchers become aware of information about a serious crime where a person or persons are known to be at serious risk of violence. He reports, without comment, that Sagarin and Moneymaker consider that a claim to confidentiality in cases such as this would be 'tantamount ...to aiding and abetting the crime, something that would be morally, legally and professionally dubious' (Lee 1993; p. 168). In the same paragraph, Lee (1993) also refers to the deliberations of Van Maanen (1983), who would apparently take a relativistic moral stance. Decisions to break confidentiality (even informal arrangements) take into account the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the person(s) being researched and the nature of the actual or potential threat:

Thus, although Van Maanen would not testify about his observation of the beating of a suspect in police custody, he was less sure that he could, morally, have withheld co-operation had the man been killed. (Lee 1993; p. 168)

On this issue, Kvale (1996; p. 115) briefly notes that:

Protecting confidentiality can involve serious legal problems, such as in cases when a researcher – through a promise of confidentiality and the trust of the relationship – has obtained knowledge of mistreatment, malpractice, child abuse, the use of drugs, or other criminal behaviour by the interviewee or others.

I would suggest that the problems such disclosures cause are more than legal ones. Both Lee (1993) and Kvale (1996) note that in the United States, social science researchers may be able to obtain a certificate of confidentiality protecting both their data and the anonymity of their informants. This, it is implied, enables the researcher to obtain data that may in less protected circumstances have been impossible to acquire. What appears to have been given less consideration is the moral position of the researcher who knows that violence has and is taking place against a known person or persons but does nothing about it, in order not to destroy a relationship that is providing rich data. Van Maanen (1983) clearly takes the position that it is the researcher who should make the moral decision to report or not dangerous or potentially dangerous behaviour that they are privy to. It is not, for example, reported how many beatings of a suspect the researcher would observe before they would take action; Lee (1993) leads us to believe that only a death would prompt Van Maanen to breach a confidentiality commitment.

What is at issue in these discussions is the tension between the desire for knowledge and the desire to act ethically to prevent another person or persons from harm. In the discussions reported above the weighting is very much on the

side of not breaking confidentiality if this would produce more information that would add to knowledge about a particular subject. This is a particularly serious issue when we are considering researching male sexual violence. The Abel, Becker et al (1987; pp 5-6) self-report study of 561 'non-incarcerated paraphiliacs' encouraged its respondents only to disclose general features of undisclosed offending; it gave the documentation from each respondent a distinct code and the key linking each respondent's name to specific documentation was held outside of the United States '...to prevent attempts by the criminal justice system to subpoena the data.' (p. 6), and it obtained a Federal Certificate of confidentiality. Researchers asked the men to self-report sexual crimes/behaviours that they had committed but that had not been reported or prosecuted. This study (Abel, Becker et al. 1987) found that 23.3% of the subjects offended against both family and non-family victims. 20% of the subjects offended against both sexes and 26% used both touching and non-touching behaviours when offending. They also found much higher rates of sex offending. Fisher (1994; p. 6) comments:

This study represented a watershed in the knowledge base about sex offenders, because of the huge amount of previously unknown information revealed, and served to dispel some previously held ideas and stereotypes.

Some of the previously held ideas that were dispelled were belief that sex offenders had a preferred type of victim, identified generally by age or gender. It is questionable whether this type of information would have been obtained without the elaborate guarantees of confidentiality given to the participants in the study.



However, this study was a relatively large survey. The issue of confidentiality and previously undisclosed or imminent offending becomes much more problematic when the researcher is contemplating interviewing an individual sex offender. Here, potentially the issue is stark: the specific offender is known and, it is most likely, the specific victim or victims will be identified. To keep this information confidential is to leave concealed the extent and nature of a man's sexual offending behaviour, and as such, it could be said that this colludes with him and his harmful behaviours (see the comments of Sagarin and Moneymaker 1979 above re aiding and abetting). In the case of a disclosure of current and continued offending, maintaining total confidentiality leaves someone in an ongoing seriously harmful situation. However, by putting boundaries on confidentiality, it may be that the researcher will receive a significantly moderated version of the man's sexually coercive behaviour. Kvale (1996; p. 109) cites the following statement from the American Psychological Association's (APA) ethical principles:

Psychologists respect the dignity and worth of the individual and strive for the preservation and protection of fundamental human rights. They are committed to increasing knowledge of human behavior and of people's understanding of themselves and others and to the utilization of such knowledge for the promotion of human welfare. (American Psychological Association 1981)

Clearly, in the present situation, there is a problem for researchers: to increase knowledge of sex offenders, particularly in relation to undetected coercive behaviour, it would appear to be necessary to compromise the safety (a fundamental human right) of others. I now briefly review some approaches taken with regard to confidentiality when interviewing, in depth, men (and adolescents) who have behaved in a sexually coercive manner.

In his doctoral thesis *Sexual Experiences of Adults with Children: an analysis of personal accounts*, Chin-Keung (1986) describes interviews with twenty-seven men 'who have had, or who desire to have, sexual contact with children' (p. 115). He obtained his sample from four different sources: psychiatric clinics (12 men), a paedophile organisation (3 men); an advert in *Forum* magazine (11 men were interviewed and he corresponded with another 4); and personal contact (1 man). The title of his study and the sources of his information clearly indicate that he was working with men who were mostly unknown to the Criminal Justice System. Concerning the confidential nature of his study, he notes that he told his informants that:

... I would undertake the responsibility to ensure the confidential nature of his participation in my study – that I had no relationship whatsoever with the court, the police, or other government organisations, that I was an independent academic researcher connected to a university, that he did not need to mention names or identifying characteristics while discussing his experiences, that all material that I might obtain from him would be kept strictly confidential and anonymous, and nobody else except myself would have access to the material, that I would not feedback information to the psychiatrists or other staff if he was a 'clinic' informant, that when I wrote the report of my research I would disguise any material I might use in such a way the informant's identity would not be known. (Chin-Keung 1986; p. 214)

Apart from the issue of harmful and illegal sexual activity, this position is similar to the position that I adopted when interviewing men in this study. By including in his statement that the men did not 'need to mention names or identifying characteristics' Chin-Keung, perhaps, avoided the ethical dilemma of hearing that an identifiable child was being sexually coerced/hurt/abused and being constrained by his commitment to total confidentiality. Chin-Keung obtained rich data (it is regrettable, that his study does not appear to have been published anywhere) and he was able to discuss in depth with the men their sexual preferences and their understanding of such. It is doubtful that he would

have (a) obtained access and (b) obtained such full accounts had he not guaranteed total confidentiality.

Scully (1990; p. 23) in her study of rapists in a maximum-security prison in the United States separated past behaviours and future intentions:

It is necessary ... to make a distinction between the researcher's obligation to an informant when information concerns past activities and when the information relates to a future act that poses danger to another person. In the latter case, protection of the endangered person takes precedence over the rights of the informant.

Fuller (1993) studied thirteen men convicted of sexual offences against children for her doctoral thesis *Masculinity, Scripting and Child Sexual Abuse: An Empirical Study*. Her sample was obtained from a Probation Service. Concerning confidentiality she notes:

It is standard practice to guarantee all interviewees, in whatever research, confidentiality. Theoretically, a man in a sample of undetected 'abusers' might make it clear that he is currently engaging in sexual activities with a child. My own feeling was that this would place me in a very difficult ethical position. As a researcher, confidentiality must be guaranteed; as an individual who feels the interests of the child must be paramount, confidentiality must be broken. Scully argues that 'protection of the endangered person takes precedence over the rights of the informant' (Scully 1990), p. 23). Others have argued that such research will aid understanding, and therefore future prevention, of sexual violence. I am more persuaded by the former argument, but happily the position never arose for me. However, in those interviews conducted while evaluating the group, I signed a confidentiality agreement ... The wording of this was agreed with the group staff and includes the warning that I would be bound to report such instances. (Fuller 1993; pp 52-53)

Her position of 'limited confidentiality' is similar to the position that I took in the present study and for very similar reasons.

Colton and Vanstone (1996) reported their interviews with seven men convicted of sexual offences against children with whom they had a professional

relationship (for example teacher, care worker). All of these men were imprisoned at the time of the interviews. The description of their methodology is sparse, but they do note the following:

We were faced also with the dilemma of how we could encourage the men to be as open as possible, without heightening their vulnerability. It has been essential, therefore, for us to work hard at fulfilling our promise of confidentiality and, to this end, factual detail that might be linked to both offender and victim has been either removed or altered. Accordingly, there has been a fictionalising of aspects of these stories, but we have been careful to ensure that their essential meanings and messages have been retained. Each of the men gave his written permission for us to publish the outcomes of the interviews, subject to the guarantee of confidentiality (Colton and Vanstone 1996; p.5).

Here confidentiality appears to be conflated with anonymity. There is no discussion of the ethical dilemmas surrounding their position. They seem to have allowed 'total confidentiality'. There is no mention throughout the text of any ethical dilemmas relating to additional disclosures, and no disclosures of unreported offending feature in the book.

Hearn (1998) explored the experiences and perceptions of sixty men who had been violent to known women. Many of these men had been sexually violent. The sample was taken from both the community and from prisons. In relation to confidentiality, Hearn (1998; p. 51) highlights some of the ethical issues and his responses to them:

Attention has also had to be given to confidentiality. Moreover, confidentiality is itself a social and political construction. Different versions operate in different agencies. Particular difficulties surround the possibility of men talking of (a) either their intention to be violent to women, or their intention to commit other crimes; (b) their violence or other crime in the past, both unsolved crime, ongoing crime investigations and crime which is not yet known to the police. Accordingly, while these were confidential research interviews, we informed the men that we operated within the limits of the law.

Whilst the above statement provides a clear exposition of the ethical dilemmas in this area, what is not explicit is whether Hearn and his colleagues construed 'operat[ing] within the law' as a mandate to report undisclosed criminal behaviour to the police. Given the explicit pro-feminist orientation of the book it is likely that this would be the case.

Messerschmidt (2000) studied three groups of adolescent boys: sexual offenders, violent offenders, and non-violent young men. He used a life history approach and the total number of young men interviewed was nine. Concerning his conception of confidentiality and how it operated he writes:

Prior to commencing an interview in a secluded room, I explained that risk of identification was negligible inasmuch as all interview information would be identified by a number only, stored in a secure facility, and destroyed by me at the conclusion of the study. Moreover, I pointed out that interview conversations would be treated with strict confidence and never made available to another person or agency and that certain identifying details would be changed. Further, I obtained informed consent prior to the interview. I also indicated that the final results of the research would be published in a manner that fully protected his anonymity, his family members, and all others mentioned during the interview (Messerschmidt 2000); p. 21).

Messerschmidt (2000) gives no information about where he obtained his sample of sex offenders. He does imply that he knew the details of their criminal records, so one may surmise that they were contacted via an official source. He does not consider the possibility of receiving information about unreported offending and presumably, given his reassurances about confidentiality, he would never report any matter.

In this group of studies, writers have more or less explicitly considered issues of confidentiality and risk to known or unknown persons. Where the exposition of

the ethical dilemma is fullest, writers tend to offer limited confidentiality. There does not however, appear to be a significant difference in the nature of the material reported where total confidentiality is promised or partial confidentiality given.

### **Ethical Issues: a review of the present study**

Kvale (1996; p. 121) suggests that there are three major philosophical theories of ethics that provide help in thinking about moral issues in research. These are: duty of ethics principles, a utilitarian ethics of consequences, and virtue of ethics of skills. I consider the place of each in thinking about ethics and research with sexually coercive men.

'Duty of ethics principles' focus on the nature of the act itself, rather than on the consequences of the act. Moral actions live up to principles such as respect for the person, honesty and justice. This point of view is also known as deontological (from the Greek word 'deon', which approximates to the English word 'duty'). A deontological ethics considers the innate nature of an action rather than its consequences.

By contrast the utilitarian ethics of consequences, also known as teleological (from the Greek word 'telos' meaning purpose) ethics, is concerned with the outcome(s) of specific actions and judges them to be more or less ethical on this basis.

Thus in thinking about the issues concerning confidentiality that were discussed above, a deontological position would be one in which any details of offences

previously unknown that are disclosed during a research interview must be reported because they contravene the law. The moral position of the researcher is to inform the person being interviewed prior to the interview so that they can then make an informed choice about whether or not to disclose unreported behaviours.

However, the position in relation to a teleological approach is much less clear, and depends largely on how the outcome is defined and understood. If the knowledge obtained from protected disclosure is deemed to benefit the wider community it may be that a position of total confidentiality could be sustained, in that the increased knowledge may inform a range of community safety programmes. However, if the outcome for specific individuals (victims past, present and future) is given greater weight then only limited confidentiality could be promised.

The third position identified by Kvale (1996; p. 122) involves 'a contextual ethical position'. This position seems less clearly articulated but appears to have overlaps with the work of Habermas (1989-1990) and various feminist theorists (Young 1990; Thompson 1994) in that both aspire to a negotiated ethics within a community (of equals). Kvale (1996; p. 122) notes:

Ethical behaviour is seen less as the application of general principles and rules, than as the researcher internalizing moral values. The personal integrity of the researcher, the interaction with the community studied, and the relation to their ethical values is essential. The emphasis is on the researcher's ethical intuitions, feelings and skills as well as on negotiations between actors in a specific community.

In an attempt to clarify the distinctions between these approaches, Kvale (1996; p.122-123) offers the following illustration of the different approaches:

An intentional duty ethic would emphasize honesty as an absolute principle, and thus reject any deception of research subjects for the greater good. A utilitarian-consequence position would justify deception in the interest of a greater good. ... A contextual-virtue position would be based on the researcher's practical ethical skills and reasoning and, in cases of doubt, on a dialogue with others in the relevant communities.

It is difficult to locate my approach to the present study firmly within any one approach. I was committed to being honest with the men that I interviewed and as such, this may indicate that I have leanings towards a deontological approach. I provided them with information sheets about my study and I outlined the parameters of confidentiality. Yet the very parameters of confidentiality that I identified may have moved me from a deontological to a teleological position: I was more concerned with the outcome for others (potential victims). However, as my concern was for a relatively small group I doubt that my position can really be described as teleological. A pure utilitarian approach would have been more concerned with the greater good and would, probably, therefore have guaranteed total confidentiality in order to obtain information that may have benefited the majority (using the information to develop community safety strategies and improve offender rehabilitation programmes).

I have considerable experience as a practitioner and as a consultant to groupwork programmes for sex offenders in negotiating and working with confidentiality agreements with group leaders and with group members (Cowburn, Wilson et al. 1992; Cowburn 1993; Cowburn 2000). Within the present study, I spent time with both of my advisors and the Psychology Department Ethics Committee reviewing the ethical implications of this work. Thus, I would identify my position as being 'contextual ethical' but also recognise the strong influences of the other two approaches. I highlight ethical



issues that occurred throughout this project by following Kvale's (1996) analysis of interview based research work.

### Ethical Issues during the seven stages of interview based research work

#### *Thematizing*

This stage of the process is concerned with the purpose of the study and both whether there is value in the information being sought and the knowledge that may be developed from. Additionally, Kvale (1996; p. 111) suggests that it relates to whether the knowledge developed has any relevance to the 'improvement of the human condition being investigated'. My study aims to consider men (who were convicted of sexual offences) not through the eyes of the cognitive-behavioural template, but by exploring (with them) their versions of what it was to be a man. The life-history approach seems to be an ideal vehicle for this exploration, allowing time and not bringing with it a prescribed answer. This approach, I hope raises questions about a penal policy that may have developed therapies that are more effective for convicted offenders but does nothing to address the wider social phenomenon of sexual violence and the 'making of men' within the context of community safety.

#### *Designing*

In this section I consider issues related to: identifying a group of men to interview; preparing full information about the study for potential interviewees, including confidentiality, and consent and safety; and finally to issues of power and exploitation.

(i) Finding the men - risk to the community?

This is a study of men who have behaved in a sexually coercive manner. Whilst prevalence and self-report studies indicate that many men who commit acts of sexual aggression are not reported, arrested, prosecuted or convicted (Percy and Mayhew 1997), I decided for practical and ethical reasons to restrict my study to men *convicted* of sexual offences.

Practically it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to identify a group of men who would admit that they had behaved in a sexually aggressive and coercive manner but had not been convicted of such behaviour. If I did obtain such a group, the arguments rehearsed above and the position that I have adopted about disclosure and confidentiality would mean that I would report their behaviour; this would, I suspect, either inhibit their participation or terminate it prematurely! Thus, although I think the area of unreported and unconvicted sexual violence is an important area to know more about, at this stage I did not feel able to begin researching it.

Having decided that I would interview a group of men convicted of sexual offences, I considered the ethical issues relating to whether the men should be in the community or in custody. From my experience of working with men convicted of sexual offences, I anticipated that talking about their life histories may cause some of the men distress; it may also sexually arouse some of them. Given my concerns about confidentiality and public protection, I wished to reduce the likelihood of a man being disturbed or aroused by our interview and then subsequently reoffending. If the group of men that I interviewed were living in the community, it was more likely that they could reoffend.

Consequently, I decided that interviewing men who were in prison would significantly reduce the risk of re-offending. Not only would prison separate them from the community at large, their response to the interviews could be more closely monitored.

(ii) Letters, information sheets and consent forms

These are contained in Appendix One. They introduce me, as a researcher who is independent from the Prison Service and yet who has experience of both prisons and working with sex offenders. They outline the aims of my research and highlight that I am interested in the potential participants as men who have committed sexual offences not merely as sex offenders. I highlight the parameters of confidentiality and on the consent form indicate that once they have consented to participate in the study they can withdraw at any time without having to explain their withdrawal.

Owing to the sensitive nature of my research, my research proposal had to be considered and approved by the ethics committee of the Department of Psychology in the University. Before approving the research, the Ethics Committee asked me to address three issues:

- *The level of confidentiality assured in my letter to potential respondents*
- *How I will respond to inmates with poor literacy, particularly with regard to the information sheet and the consent form?*
- *How I will respond if a prisoner becomes distressed during interview?*

These concerns are congruent with the type of concern that Kvale (1996; p. 111) identifies at this stage. I briefly consider the issues raised relating to each point here.

- The level of confidentiality assured in my letter to potential respondents?

In my response to the Ethics Committee, I highlighted that I could not keep as confidential either unreported offending behaviour or if the interviewees became distressed during the interview. Otherwise, what I heard would be confidential and when I wrote up my study, I would anonymise participants accounts and delete any details that may make them easily identifiable.

- How will I respond to inmates with poor literacy, particularly with regard to the information sheet and the consent form?

I indicated that the psychology department in the prison would be likely to inform me if there were any problems with literacy in regard to any of the men I was interviewing. Additionally, however, I made it clear that I would ask all of the men if they required any help with the forms.

- How will I respond if a prisoner becomes distressed during interview?

I responded to this question in four ways. I pointed out that at the beginning of the interview, when reviewing issues concerning confidentiality, I would highlight that I would not be able to keep the distress of the interviewee confidential. I would require him to identify someone within the prison that he would like me to inform of his situation. Effectively this made the men aware at the outset that some of the material may be upsetting and also allowed them to realise that I wanted to help them should they become distressed.

Additionally I noted that I would tell the man that I would inform the Senior Officer with responsibility for the wing where he was living of his distress; and

that I would confirm this report in writing within twenty-four hours. Finally, I indicated that my experience of working with men who have committed sexual offences would enable me to help the man in his immediate distress. However, the help would be brief and focused on managing the immediate crisis.

(iii) The issue of power and exploitation

It has been noted that Foucault (1976) has highlighted that, in western societies, discussion about sexual behaviour has generally taken the form of confession.

This has implicit within it the relationship of confessor and confessee: an unequal relationship in which the person confessing is judged within the terms of the value-framework of the person receiving the confession. In many ways I, too, was locked into this asymmetrical relationship with the men I interviewed. I had presented myself up as an expert in my introductory letter to all possible participants in the research and I re-emphasised this at the beginning of the interview. I was from a university; my letter was on university headed note paper. The notepaper indicated that I was bona fide and that my credentials could be verified, but it also silently asserted the power of middle-class educational institutions. Some of the men during the interviews referred to me in a way that allowed them to denigrate themselves. Michael, for example, links education and power and abuse:

*Michael: I got abused by a, deputy head in one of me senior schools.*

MC: What happened?

*Michael: I, academically I was never that ... very good, I was always good at practical, when I've actually joined a trade and, give me anything practical and I can work it out but like the job you're in, woh!!. You know.*

MC: I'm the other way round.

Michael: *Yeah (laugh), and, he offered to give me extra tuition, he picked me up from one of me foster homes, and, took me to his bungalow and then he got me to take me t-shirt off and, started feeling me and putting his hand down me trousers.*

Similarly, in order to reassure the participants that I was familiar with hearing about sexual violence, I emphasised my previous work in this area and my familiarity with prisons. This again, I note, on reflection also had the effect of some of them seeing me as an expert. Thus, a clear power differential was established.

However, I also recognised that they had some power – they had power to refuse to be interviewed, they had the power to leave the interview at any time without explaining their actions. Even so it was clear that at the outset there was a distinct power differential between us. Kvale (1996; p. 20) notes:

In professional interviews there is usually an asymmetry of power: The Professional is in charge of the questioning of a more or less voluntary and naïve subject. In contrast to the reciprocal interchanges of everyday and philosophical conversations, there tends to be a one-sided questioning by the subject by the professional.

This was made starkly clear when the first man that I interviewed asked me “What’s in it for me?” I answered, “Nothing”. Yet, for me there was the prospect of a degree and publications. As I make clear below, I was not quite accurate when I said “nothing” but at the time, it certainly seemed that all of the benefit was for me. Potentially, the power differential could affect the process of the interview (for example the men could give minimalist answers to my questions and or give me the answers that they think I want). However, in the course of the interview I tried, by my style of interviewing, to ameliorate some of

potential harmful effects of this discrepancy. I discuss some of these in the next section.

### **Interview situation**

In this section, I consider issues immediately prior to the interview(s), during them and at their conclusion.

### Pre-interview issues

On the first day of the interviews, I was met by the Senior Psychologist and taken to the Psychology Department within the prison. I was disconcerted to discover that none of the men who had been identified as participants in the research had been informed that I would be in the prison. It was the intention of the Senior Psychologist to “call one of them up”. By this, he meant that he would contact the place where a particular man was located in the prison and instruct prison officers to bring the man to me. I felt uneasy with this arrangement; it appeared discourteous to the man and I was worried that such an inauspicious start to the research would adversely affect how the men responded to the research. In my notebook, I recorded my concerns and the difficulties I had in dealing with them. If I was openly critical of the Psychology Department’s treatment of the men, I risked both being perceived as churlish and also losing their support and co-operation with my research. I resolved to remain silent and see how matters developed: if men refused to participate in the research, I would gently raise the matter and hope to negotiate an alternative method of informing the men in advance of my presence in the prison. In retrospect, although I believe my concerns were valid – the men had not been treated with adequate courtesy – perhaps I failed to recognise fully the nature

and experience of living and working in prison. None of the men were unduly concerned about being "called up" unexpectedly to see me. Prison routine is routine; and part of the routine is to expect the system to behave insensitively. I did, however, tactfully and successfully suggest that subsequent prisoners were notified of my desire to see them prior to the day on which I saw them.

With each man, I verbally reviewed all of the information that I had sent out about the research project, before he signed the consent form. Being cognisant of the concerns of the Ethics committee relating to illiterate participants, I gave all of the men a copy of the consent form whilst I read through each section. All of the men completed the form fully.

I reminded the men that the interviews were a part of a larger study that would be written up as a thesis for the university, but would also be published in academic journals, and possibly as a book. I also stated that the press might discover my academic publications, and thus my writing might reach a wider audience. However, I reassured all of the potential participants stating that I would disguise their identities in anything that I wrote and I asked them to tell me if there were things in their story that would make them easily recognisable (such as jobs, locations and so on). I referred to Colton and Vanstone's (1996) study as an example of how anonymising might be done.

Issues relating to publication prompted most detailed questioning. One of the men asked if he could have a copy of any papers that I had published. I said that it would be difficult for me to keep in touch with his whereabouts, but if he



wrote to me at the university, I would send him copies of anything that I had published.

All of the men accepted the caveats on confidentiality relating to unreported offending and to reporting their distress. I also said to all of the men that I would prefer to tape-record the interview so that I could concentrate on what was being said rather than taking notes; no-one objected to the interview being taped.

I discussed with the men whether they would like to see the transcript of their interview. All of them were very clear that they did not want it posted to them inside the prison. They also did not want it sent to them care of the Psychology Department. We agreed that the practicalities of the situation – the time it would take to type up the interviews, the uncertainty of which prison they may have moved to and the very serious dangers to them of any material going astray in the prison – meant that it was not appropriate to give them a copy of the transcript of their interview.

Having reviewed issues surrounding the research and answered questions upon it, I asked all participants to sign a consent form (Appendix One).

### Interview issues

In this sub-section I reflect ethical issues relating to: the prison environment, interview dynamics, and managing potential disclosure of unreported offences.

#### *The Prison Environment*

All of the interviews had many sessions. The boundaries of each session were prescribed by prison routines. The most important time boundaries were:

lunchtime, 11.30am-1.30pm, during which time the men were locked in their cells; and the teatime lock-up, which commenced at 3.45pm. Effectively this meant that without disruptions a session was roughly two hours, punctuated by a 'comfort break'. I had to be aware of prison time schedules and what was happening in the interview to allow the man sufficient space to prepare himself to return to the prison environment. On occasions when a man was distressed and crying, I would have to interrupt the direction of the narrative and suggest that he prepare himself for his pending return to the wing. This had a dual effect: it often halted the trajectory in which the interview was going, but it perhaps strengthened my relationship with the man, because he observed me taking care of him, in ensuring that he did not return to the wing in a vulnerable condition.

The room in which the interviews occurred varied but it was always relatively private. However, the prison was often loudly present outside the door. It is the nature of male dominated total environments that they are often noisy, as different men – primarily staff – assert their presence in the establishment. As I reviewed the tapes of the interviews the noise of greetings, jokes, and instructions, all occurring in the corridor outside the interview room or in adjacent rooms, provides a cacophonous male back-drop to the more difficult and painful matters being spoken of in the interview.

I was regularly escorted across the prison by uniformed staff, by Psychology Department staff and by Probation staff. In my contact with all of the staff, however, I had to be careful not to engage in discussion about the man that I was currently interviewing. Fortunately, most staff quickly realised and

respected issues of confidentiality. This did not, however, prevent some staff members expressing their opinions of the particular man I was interviewing. On one occasion, an opinion expressed was particularly negative and vitriolic; I merely noted it and did not pass any comment.

## Interview Dynamics

### *Therapeutic potential*

As I have mentioned above, the first person that I interviewed asked me “What’s in it for me?” My reply was immediate and direct: “Nothing”. However, at the end of the interview the man commented that he had found the process of reviewing his life in detail to be very helpful in both better understanding himself and his offending behaviour. He shared with this other potential participants who, later, also apparently felt similar benefits, thus the men I interviewed appeared to be promoting the benefits of the life history interview. Plummer (1983, p. 91) also highlights the often beneficial effect of life history research on the ‘respondent’ by quoting Frank Moore, ‘the institutionalised alcoholic’ studied by Straus (1974, p.371):

Methinks I have received far more than I have contributed. My own evaluation of this correspondence is that it has been to me what the confessional box is the Catholic, what the wailing wall is the Hebrew, what the psychiatric couch is the woman in the menopause ... with the added advantage you answer every time ... Whatever this correspondence might have meant to you, it prevented me from laughing myself to death or murder. The correspondence was like the touchstone of alcohol to a man who had reached his particular peak of mental pain.

It appears that there are two distinct positions over whether or not a qualitative research interview can/should fulfil a therapeutic function. Kvale (1996; p. 155) is quite clear – never the twain should meet. He acknowledges that the two

approaches may have many things in common, but, for him, they have very clearly defined and different objectives:

The main goal in therapy is change in the patient; in research it is the acquisition of knowledge.

Emphasising his point, he states:

In therapy it may be unethical if the therapeutic conversations the patient has asked for, and often paid highly for, do not lead to new insights or emotional changes. But in the research interview, which the interviewee has not asked for, it may be unethical to instigate new self-interpretations or emotional changes. (p. 156)

Coyle and Wright (1996), however, offer a different view. They consider that the use of counselling skills in an in-depth interview facilitates data collection and reduces distress for the interviewee. They suggest that a dual focus involving research and therapeutic perspectives is essential for researchers exploring sensitive issues:

Such a dual focus is vital when a researcher is interviewing people about sensitive topics because interviewees may find that the interview process restimulates painful memories and feelings. Interviewers must be equipped to deal with any resultant distress. *It verges on the unethical for a researcher to address sensitive issues with respondents, restimulate painful experiences, record them and simply depart from the interview situation* (pp432-433 emphasis added).

Coyle and Wright acknowledge that it is unreasonable to expect all qualitative interviewers to undertake prolonged therapeutic interventions with people that they have interviewed. However, they do note that interviewers should be able to suggest resources that the interviewee might be able to use to work through unresolved issues.

As I mentioned above, I was very clear with the men that I interviewed that I did not see the life history interview as an alternative form of psychotherapy.

However, I am clear that I used some of the counselling skills identified by Coyle and Wright (1996; pp435-438) – paraphrasing, summarising, empathy, unconditional regard and genuineness – at some time during all of the interviews. I sat with men in distress and I offered them support. I did not judge their tears but I recognised their unhappiness.

So, in many ways, although I said the contrary, I was operating ‘psychotherapeutically’ at times of stress and distress. However, it was more difficult for me to follow Coyle and Wright’s suggestion that interviewers should be able to suggest resources that the interviewee might be able to use to work through unresolved issues. This was a difficulty that I struggled with throughout the interviews and it relates to how I construed my role as interviewer.

I explore some of this more fully in Chapters Seven and Ten. However, it is pertinent to explore, briefly, how an epistemological paradigm constrains the behaviours of one engaged in sensitive research. In Chapter Seven I explore various paradigms relating to the conduct of interviews and I acknowledge that although I moved away from the ‘information extraction’ model (Franklin 1997), my interview endeavours were largely located within this paradigm. An aspect of this approach is that the interviewer remains distant (if not objective) from the process of the interview and merely extracts information from the person being interviewed. It is very difficult to remain within this paradigm when working with sensitive subjects, if one wishes to accord interviewees compassion. One example may be sufficient to illustrate the point.

My interview with Michael was a painful experience for both of us. His early history was unremittingly neglectful and abusive. His offence was brutal and very violent. He also appeared to be a thoughtful man who was trying to make sense of what he had done. He was dismissive of the cognitive behavioural programme in the prison. He had quickly realised that to progress he had to repeat the language of the programme. During our conversation, I wanted to suggest a book that might help him in his struggle to understand his situation. However, after much struggle about what was my role as a researcher, I concluded that it would be inappropriate for me, as a researcher, to suggest that he read this book (this is explored more fully in Chapter Ten). Clearly, Coyle and Wright would have thought differently, and maybe they would be right.

#### *Managing potential disclosure of unreported offences*

Dennis was a sixty-five year old man who was serving a seven-year prison sentence for rape of his granddaughter. He denied the charge of rape and somewhat ambivalently (as the extract below illustrates) admitted indecently assaulting her. Immediately before this extract, he had described his arrival at the prison where I conducted the interview. He spoke about meeting someone who lived in the area where he had allegedly committed his offences. This person did not know him but they had a number of acquaintances in common. Dennis describes how he and the other man cautiously recognised their common circle of acquaintance. Dennis has avoided mentioning his name and the man he was talking with has begun to walk away from the conversation, slightly puzzled as to who Dennis is:

**Dennis:** *"Fucking 'ell", he says. He come back "Your name's [surname]!" I says "Yeah".*

*"You're in 'ere for what Andy did!"*

*I says, "I don't know, you tell me."*

*He says "I've told you all I'm telling you at the moment"*

*And then a few days later I says "What did you mean by, you told me all you know for the moment?"*

*He says, "Well him and his son, used to go, used to, meet up at Jan's house and he says, they was all playing with the girls."*

MC: When you say him and his son, who do you mean, this bloke in here?

Dennis: *No, this Andy, he's got a son, the one that was about 18, that's his son and the other bloke was this son's mate, I don't know what his name is. He says "Andy is[pause] was having it with the girls."*

MC: Is Andy in here?

Dennis: *No. And they still see Andy.*

MC: Let me just stop a minute.

At this point, I stopped the interview and switched off the tape recorder. The interview with Dennis, by this time, had lasted almost four hours. He may have forgotten the statement about confidentiality that I made at the beginning of the interview, which would have been possibly a day previously. The circuitous route of his story occasionally touched on his offences, which he minimised. At this point, he appears to be about to identify someone else as the real perpetrator of the offences against his granddaughter. I stopped the tape to remind him of the confidentiality agreement. Having done so he chose not to pursue this particular line of narrative. My notes on the transcript of this interview clearly reveal the issues involved:

This is very difficult. He is telling a story that implicates someone else for the offences that he is alleged to have committed. Furthermore, the person he identifies is still at large and possibly sexually abusing other children. He has given some detail, but at this stage not full detail. I stopped the interview to warn him that if he continued he was in danger of identifying Andy and I would not be able to hold that information as confidential but I would have to report it to the social services. As it is, I have a forename and a statement, which Dennis could easily refute. When I made the situation clear to him, he decided not to pursue the story any further.

In this instance, I believe my actions were ethical. I reminded Dennis of the consequences for him of more fully identifying 'Andy'. The reminder may have sounded something like an official police caution, but it gave Dennis the opportunity to reflect on where his story was going and to make decisions about how to continue. It is, doubtless, idle speculation, but I did wonder at the veracity of the story Dennis was telling, but then to prove or disprove it was not a task pertinent to my study.

### *Ending the interview*

All of the men were aware when the end of the interview was approaching. Generally, the ostensible linear structure of the life story meant that the ending of their narrative was clearly anticipated. When the men indicated that they had nothing else that they wanted to say, I switched the tape off and spoke to each man about his experience of the interview. As mentioned above, most men said that they found that the interview was a positive, if tiring, experience. All of them said that they had never experienced such a long, in-depth exploration of their life before. Many said that during the process of the interview they had changed their opinions about certain aspects of their lives. I thanked them again for their participation in the study. I told them that if they wanted to contact me about any issue that I could be contacted via the Psychology Department or they could write to me directly at the University (they all had my address on the letter that they had received). I again reiterated my offer to send them copies of papers that I write. It was important to end the interviews respectfully, giving the men time to comment on the process and for us both to say goodbye to each



other, for, after all, we had spent considerable time with each other exploring, at times, very intimate and painful issues.

### Post-interview issues

#### Transcription

Concerning the issue of transcription, Kvale (1996; p. 111) highlights the importance of confidentiality and accuracy. However, in this study there is an issue that is, perhaps, more ethically urgent. All of the interviews were recorded on tape. They varied in length between three and a half hours and six hours.

The sensitive nature of the study meant that I had to find a transcriber who: (a) would agree to maintain confidentiality with regard to all that s/he typed and to keep no copies of it, but, more importantly (b) would feel comfortable typing the emotionally difficult material that was on the tapes. When the nature of the material on the transcripts was outlined in sufficient detail that they were aware of the nature of the material they would be transcribing two women agreed to type the interviews.

I met with the two transcribers and explained in detail the nature of the interviews. We discussed what support they might need in working with the material. I offered the opportunity to meet and talk over any material that might be distressing, but I also acknowledged that I might not be the most appropriate person, given my sex, to discuss issues.

In speaking to both women during their work, they each noted that their experience in typing up the transcripts of the interview was very different to

mine as the interviewer. They could stop the tape and take a break from the material and return to it when they felt ready to do so. I had to stay in the interview. Ideally, I would have liked to ensure that the transcribers had female support clearly identified before they started typing up the material. However, both women were clear that they did not want me to arrange any thing for them. They were both confident in their own ability to look after themselves. Having offered support, to impose it would, to say the least, have been an unhelpful paternalistic gesture.

Concerning accuracy and confidentiality, I listened to every tape whilst reading the transcript on my computer; I was thus immediately able to correct any errors. I anonymised the transcript documents and encrypted them on my computer so that they could not be accessed without a password (that only I knew). The original tape recordings are hidden in my house and will be destroyed at the end of this study.

I, thus, ensured that the transcripts of the tape recordings of the interviews were accurate, I took technical steps to protect the confidentiality of the transcripts and I concealed the original tape recordings. Of great concern was the issue of preparing the transcribers for the nature of the content of the tapes. I endeavoured to do this with care.

### Analysis

At the outset of the study, I made it clear to the participants that I would not be able to involve them in the analysis of their transcripts. Distance, and the

unacceptable risk of sending material through the post, meant that further involvement after the interview was not possible.

Kvale (1996; p.111) notes that 'It is the ethical responsibility of the researcher to report knowledge that is secured and verified as possible.' On the surface this statement seems no more than saying the researcher should check that the facts that they have obtained are accurate. However, this raises serious epistemological issues about objectivity and objective facts and about the very nature of the interview enterprise itself. Plummer (1983; pp 104-105) identifies four techniques for validating data from a life history interview:

- The subject can be asked to read the account and critique it. I have already outlined above why this strategy was not possible in this study.
- Comparison with other similar accounts, looking for notable discrepancies. This is problematic insofar as I am interested in the life history accounts of these men both as men convicted of sexual offences, but also as *men* who are (primarily) from working class/lower middle class backgrounds and whose ages range from 23 to 60 years. In many ways (accounts of childhood, school, work and relationships) the hi/stories in the present study resemble both life history studies of sex offenders (for example, Parker 1969; Colton and Vanstone 1996; Messerschmidt 2000) and also studies of 'ordinary men' (for example, Connell 1995). Official records can be used to check the veracity of factual data. In this case, the only factual data that I was able to confirm were in relation to the men's criminal record. The Psychology Department gave me an outline of the current conviction and number of previous sexual offences. None of the men contradicted this information in their stories.

- The final technique suggested by Plummer is to validate the data by contacting other informants who know the man and compare what they say about him to what he himself says. This was not possible or practical in this case.

The whole process of externally validating a life hi/story is both epistemologically problematic (see Chapter Three) in that it assumes an external reality that is verifiable by an objective observer. External corroboration in the form of another person's story is, after all, only another person's story. And, whilst this might provide information that leads to the questioning of the offender's story (as is sometimes done on programmes working with 'domestically violent men' (Burton, Regan et al. 1998)), this kind of activity is not appropriate to the present study, which is interested in how *the men* construe themselves and their behaviours. Plummer (1983; p.105) addressing the same issue, notes that:

... for the sociologist the account becomes a 'vocabulary of motive' – a set of linguistic devices drawn from the existing wider culture which can be used both to re-interpret the past, to fashion the present and to anticipate the future ... The linguistic constructs that people make about their lives at a given point in time are of interest sociologically in themselves.

This point is also true for social psychologists, social constructionists and social anthropologists whose interest focuses on how people construct their identities, rather than how what they say relates to an objective external truth located out there.

### Reporting

Kvale's (1996; p. 111) main ethical concern here is around care being taken when publishing material that anonymity and confidentiality are maintained, and that

consideration is given to the consequences of publication for the individuals concerned.

Apart from the men interviewed, the other party directly involved in the study is the Prison Department. It is important in this study to be aware of possible consequences of publication for the Prison Department. However, the focus is the stories that the men tell. There is little actual focus on prison issues within this study (other than recognising that it was the place in which the stories were told). In this dissertation, specific consideration of Prison Service issues is restricted to considering issues related to research in a prison environment.

Apart from the issue of concealing identities to ensure the safety of the men that I interviewed, there is the more difficult issue of whether and how some of the material in the interviews should be recorded. Hearn (1998; pp 60-68) has usefully described different ways of 'talking about violence' and the epistemological underpinnings to these approaches. In writing about 'material/discursive practices', he notes how, from this perspective, the talking about violence (in an interview or elsewhere) becomes a form of violence itself:

Men's violence to known women and men's talk about such violence are both separate from and intimately connected to each other. We are not concerned just with the *impact* of representation upon action and behaviour, but with the ways in which representation and talk themselves may constitute violence. (p. 66)

This raises the issue of whether detailed reproduction of the men's accounts of their sexually coercive acts in a research report effectively re-embodies those acts. To put it another way, reproducing in detail the texts of the offenders' accounts of their crimes may (re)embody the violence and also provide material

that could be akin to the pornographic depictions of sexual violence. Given the nature of the material in the transcripts, I have decided not to focus primarily on the men's experience of sexual violence either in relation to their fathers or being fathers. In this context I do not reproduce any material that provides detailed accounts of the sexual offences. Whilst it is important to ensure that this study does not conceal the presence and experience of the people that have been sexually hurt (Hearn and Collinson 1994; p. 98), it is equally important to ensure that the nature of their presence does not provide the opportunity for them to be further abused – albeit vicariously.

### Summary

In this chapter, I explore theoretical and practical aspects of ethics in research work with men convicted of sex offences. I consider whether this research fits into Lee's (1993) definition of a sensitive topic. It clearly does, in that Lee (1993) considers the essence of a sensitive topic is the threat(s) that it poses. I explore the threats that research in this area poses by its very nature (intrusive threat) and to the individual disclosing information about illegal activities. I discuss the dilemma in this work between maintaining confidentiality and protecting person or persons from further sexual aggression. I outline three theoretical positions regarding ethical behaviour and consider their implications and application in this study. Then, using Kvale's (1996) framework for highlighting ethical issues during the seven stages of interview based research I reflect on each stage within the context of the present study.

## Chapter Seven

### Researching Men and Sexual Violence: Practical Issues and Processes

#### Introduction

The life history is, I believe, the way a person conceptualizes the stream of experience that constitutes his life as he knows it, in accordance with the demands and expectations he and others impose on the act of relating that life. If this is so, understanding means grasping the operating characteristics of the context in which the life history as a production is played out (Watson 1976); pp 127-128).

The aim of this chapter is to describe and consider practical issues relating to the research project and to address some issues related to the process of the interviews

Initially I discuss issues related to men and prisons and other general issues relating to the prison context. Both the above quotation from Watson, and hermeneutic perspectives generally, give emphasis in the interpretation of texts to the circumstances in which they were produced. Following the consideration of the prison environment, practical issues involved in identifying and gaining access to a group of men who admitted they had coerced others into sexual activities are described. I then provide a profile of the group of men interviewed in more detail, and describe the practical issues that were involved in setting up the interviews. Finally, I describe and reflect on matters relating to the processes of the interviews. In line, with my confidentiality agreement (see Chapter Six and Appendix One), details that would enable the prison where the research occurred to be identified have been altered and the prison is called 'Prison A'.

## Prison masculinities and research in prisons

This section considers issues relating to prison-based research. It addresses issues relating to prison culture in particular prison masculinities. It also considers the practical details of undertaking a research project in a closed institution.

### Prison masculinities

In this section, I concentrate on issues related to men and sexism in prison. Part of this section is derived from my 1998 paper *A Man's World: gender issues in working with male sex offenders in prison* (Cowburn 1998) [paper appended].

The vast majority of people in male prisons are male; it is appropriate, therefore, to consider the influence of the dominant form of masculinity in prisons upon the culture of male prison establishments. Masculinities and the men that perform them vary according to age, race, class, sexuality, physical and learning abilities. However, in western societies there appears to be a dominant - hegemonic- form of masculinity (Connell 1995). In 'total institutions'<sup>3</sup> Fielding (Fielding 1994); p.47) in his discussion of the male dominated 'cop canteen culture' notes:

... the stereotyped cultural values of the police canteen may be read as an almost pure form of 'hegemonic masculinity'. They highlight (i) aggressive, physical action; (ii) a strong sense of competitiveness and preoccupation with the imagery of conflict; (iii) exaggerated heterosexual orientation, often articulated in terms of misogynistic and patriarchal attitudes towards women; and (iv) the operation of rigid in-group/out-group distinctions whose consequences are strongly exclusionary in the case of out-groups and strongly assertive of loyalty and affinity in the

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<sup>3</sup> Here, I am using the phrase in the way defined by Goffman (1961; p. 11) 'A total institution may be defined as a place where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life.' Although not physically cut off from society, I would include the police within the scope of Goffman's definition.



case of in-groups.

Although prison culture is not homogenous, and cultures can vary across establishments (Sim 1994(b); pp110-112; Genders and Player 1995; p. 154), it is this form of male behaviour that appears to dominate male prisons. It is a masculinity that sees itself as exclusively heterosexual, and which defines itself as opposite to the feminine (an 'out-group'). Its presence was first vividly, if uncritically, described in relation to prisons by Sykes (1958) in his seminal study of a male maximum-security prison in the United States. Speaking of the deprivations suffered by the male prisoners, Sykes observed that:

Shut off from the world of women, the population of prisoners finds itself unable to employ that criterion of maleness which looms so importantly in society at large - namely the act of heterosexual intercourse itself. Proof of maleness, both for the self and for others, has been shifted to other grounds and the display of "toughness" in the form of masculine mannerisms and the demonstration of inward stamina now becomes the major route to manhood. These are used by the society at large, it is true; but the prison, unlike the society at large, must rely on them exclusively (pp. 97-98).

He develops further his conception of male gender identity and discusses the implications of imprisonment on such an identity:

In short, there are primary and secondary characteristics in terms of social behaviour just as there are primary and secondary sexual characteristics in terms of biological attributes; and the inmates have been forced to fall back on the secondary proof of manhood in the area of social relations, i.e. "toughness", since the primary proof in the form of sexual intercourse, is denied them (p. 98).

Similarly, in their study of Pentonville undertaken in the late 1950s the Morrises (1963; p.184) noted similar constructions of masculinity that were constituted, firstly, by heterosexual intercourse and secondly by aggression and violence

In a more recent study of a male maximum security prison in the U.S.A., Scully (1990; p. 9) noted similar displays of masculinity:

Externally, at least, traditional male role behavior is exaggerated. Manhood is validated through physical strength and aggression. Expressions like anger are expected and acceptable but emotional sensitivity to others or the appearance of caring is regarded as dangerous. Any display of characteristics or behavior traditionally associated with the feminine is scorned and avoided.

The dominant form of masculinity within prisons may thus be construed as being heterosexual, misogynistic and violent. As Sim (1994b; p.105) has noted, this masculinity is not:

... a pathological manifestation of abnormal otherness, but ... part of the normal routine which is sustained and legitimated by the wider culture of masculinity...

Other commentators have identified similar constituents of masculinity outside of male dominated institutions; Mac an Ghail (1994; p96) in his study of "Parnell" comprehensive school in the midlands of England noted that:

male students at Parnell School learn to be men in terms of three constitutive elements of compulsory heterosexuality, misogyny and homophobia

Jackson (1990; p.124), similarly identifies the this form of masculinity as being:

"Hard case" masculinity [that] not only defines itself positively through assertiveness, virility, toughness, independence etc. but also negatively by defining itself in opposition to what it is not - feminine or homosexual.

However, in considering the impact of hegemonic masculinity within a male institution, Sim (1994b; p. 108) highlights considerations that move beyond the individual:

A gendered reading of the social order and hierarchies of the male prison therefore moves the analysis beyond organisational imperatives and individualised profile. This reading points to how the maintenance of order both reflects and reinforces the pervasive and deeply entrenched discourses around particular forms of masculinity. To speak in terms of normal and abnormal men - as the vast majority of state and sociological studies have done - is to miss a fundamental point, namely that normal

life in male prisons is itself highly problematic - it reproduces normal men.

This form of masculinity is more oppressive when it dominates organisations and institutions. Its collective presence has been noted by commentators on both the Police (Holdaway 1987; Messerschmidt 1993; Burke 1994; Fielding 1994; Martin 1996) and the Prison Service (Gambetta 1988; Genders and Player 1989; Scraton, Sim et al. 1991; Sim 1994a; Sim 1994b Genders and Player 1995). And one way in which institutional hegemonic masculinity exerts its power is through institutionalised sexism. In their study of HMP Grendon, two female researchers Genders and Player (1995; p. 95) noted:

During the research, it was possible to discern a distinct male ethos, which was prevalent throughout the institution, and which categorised and stigmatised women on the basis of sexual stereotypes.

As a male researcher working in prisons talking to male prisoners, it can be easy to ignore or to minimise the presence of and effect of sexism. In an earlier study of prisons, I asked male workers if they were aware of sexism in prisons. My observations and their responses are cited below:

... Male workers however, tended to have a more sceptical view as to what was sexist. In a number of prisons, when asked about the presence of sexist displays male workers stated "*if you define pin-ups as sexist then, yes, we've got pin-ups*". There was considerable doubt as to whether pictures of naked women, generally obtained from so-called "soft" pornographic magazines were in fact, or in effect, sexist. A number of male workers expressed strong doubts as to whether "men's magazines" were sexist<sup>4</sup>. These doubts appeared to be because such magazines were extremely common in all prisons in the country:

*There would be some argument as to whether that ["men's magazines"] is sexist material. You can go into any prison in the country and you'll find that magazines, calendars etc. adorn every single cell, whether the man is a sex offender or a burglar or whatever. [uniformed senior officer]*

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<sup>4</sup> For a fuller account of issues related to pornography in prison, see Cowburn, M. (1992). *Pornography in Prison. Beyond Containment: The Penal Response to Sex Offending*. Prison Reform Trust. London, Prison Reform Trust: 37-46.

*... it depends if you think pin-ups are sexist or not. ... Pin-ups are not a big issue with me. Whereas I wouldn't encourage them. There is pornography around no doubt but again its kept at the mildest end of pornography.[psychologist].*  
(Cowburn 1998; p. 240)

A worker's personal experience, their gender, status and their job will affect how they personally responded to sexist behaviour; this is true both for workers in the prison and researchers within the prison. The experiences of female workers (see Cowburn 1998; pp241-242 & pp 244-245) were, unsurprisingly, very different from the experiences of male workers. Generally women are perceived primarily in a sexually objectifying manner. In 1995 an Industrial Tribunal awarded a female prison officer £15,000 compensation for injury to feelings after winning her sex discrimination case against the Prison Service (Equal Opportunities Commission 1995). The Tribunal noted that:

*... remarks about women's breasts or other physical characteristics of both males and females were quite common ... The culture of the prison officers ... was that sexual jokes and innuendo were the norm amongst many officers. It is agreed by most witnesses that swearing was rife but we do not accept that that is necessarily the same thing, nor that swearing in itself was a serious problem. However, we find the culture of sexual jokes and attitudes towards women was a problem. Undoubtedly some of the prisoners could use terms including sexual remarks in order to attempt to shock: that is something which prison officers have to deal with and live with. It does not follow that the first respondents [The Home Office] could not take steps to alter the conduct of officers where necessary in our view. (The Industrial Tribunals 1995;pp3-4. cited in Cowburn 1998; p. 238)*

These behaviours are acts designed to embarrass, intimidate and denigrate the female worker. Genders and Player (Genders and Player 1995; pp 42-43 & pp.95-96) in their study of HMP Grendon noted a similar range of attitudes and behaviours towards women from both prisoners and prison staff. Other researchers in prison have made similar observations (see for example Morris, Morris et al. 1963 pp. 326-327) , (Scully 1990 pp. 11-13).

However, the experiences of the male workers provide a context in which to think about the difficulties and some of the issues faced by a male researcher. The following quotations, from male workers, are taken from my study:

*I'm not in favour of it (pin-ups and "soft" pornography) but I think there are bigger issues to battle because you wouldn't win it anyway. [Male Psychologist]*

*... when you think of the language prison officers use - f'ing and blinding all day long - they don't know they're doing it. Trying to change that would be an enormous task - and yet I find that offensive. Some inmates find it offensive but nobody ever tries to tackle it. [Male Senior Probation Officer]*

*... it's part and parcel of the "norm". You'll find it throughout any male environment - it doesn't have to be a prison - and that becomes prevalent and it's an everyday acceptable way of carrying on for the majority of people. It's done in a jocular fashion, it's not really done in a vindictive fashion. It's the "macho" image sort of touch. It's an acceptable level and it rises across people as opposed to sinking them. [Male Senior Officer - uniformed staff] (Cowburn 1998; p. 243).*

In general, in my study, male workers either participated in what was considered to be male humour, cementing the male in-group coherence and were accepted into the dominant male ethos of the prison or they were either shunned or merely tolerated. A few male workers considered how to respond to sexism, but most opted for an easy life and colluded with the pervasive sexist humour. Where workers did not collude, however, their non-collusion took the form of silence rather than confrontation.

Sim (1994b; p. 108) has highlighted how a 'gendered reading of the social order and hierarchies of the male prison' raises important and difficult questions about the nature of the context in which men are imprisoned. He notes (Sim, 1994b; p. 108):

*Nor does [prison] alleviate, change or challenge their self-perception as gendered individuals, as men. Rather in its very 'celebration of*

masculinity' institutions, materially and symbolically reproduces a vision of order in which normal manhood remains unproblematic, the template for constructing everyday social relationships

And, making the link with masculinities outside the prison, he adds:

... incapacitating rapists for example, has not guaranteed an alleviation of violence against women either at an individual or collective level. Such men are likely to be confronted by a culture of masculinity which will do little to change their behaviour, heighten their consciousness or the consciousness of those in wider society concerning the 'intimate intrusions' which collectively face women on a daily basis (Stanko 1985); p.116). This argument is supported by the first major study of rapists in the UK which showed that only 32 out of 142 believed that raped women had been harmed, while less than half displayed any compassion for their victims (*Guardian* 5.3.91). ...These findings are hardly surprising given the nature of most penal regimes and the discourses surrounding sexuality, masculinity and femininity that prevail within and without the prison walls. In that sense ... prisons are not removed from the body of wider society as has been previously argued. They are linked to that society by the umbilical cord of masculinity where *similarities between prisoners and men outside may be more important than the differences between them in explaining sexual and other forms of violence against women.* : (Sim 1994(b); pp. 115-116 emphasis added)

Messerschmidt has also described how state agencies embody and consciously reproduce dominant forms of gender/masculinity:

... institutionalized practices define and sustain specific conceptions of masculinity that express and reproduce social divisions of labour and power as well as normative heterosexuality. In this way state agents do gender in response to the socially structured circumstances in which they perform their work. Gender, then, is a behavioural response to the particular conditions and situations in which we participate: we do gender according to the social setting in which we find ourselves. (Messerschmidt 1993; p. 174)

#### *Problem of the male researcher and prison masculinities*

My research had to fit round prison routines. On arriving at the prison each day, I had to check-in with the security officers at the prison gate. This was the first place where control games were played. Especially in the early part of the research, I would be subject to questioning and often had to wait ten or fifteen

minutes before I gained access to the prison. In many ways, this was understandable, but there was a variety in the way I was treated, some officers clearly wanting to let me know that they were in control. Most of the officers on the gate were male. It is difficult to theorise or notice something that does not happen, but, given that I am trying to recognise and explicitly consider gender in the research process, it is noteworthy that I was not subject to sexist badinage or hostility whilst I was waiting to be taken to the psychology department. Genders and Players (1995), and Pauline Morris (1963), women researchers in prison report very different experiences.

On each visit, I was escorted from the prison gatehouse to the Psychology Department, either by a member of that department or occasionally by someone in the Probation team in the prison or by a prison officer that recognised me. As the research progressed, I became a familiar figure at the prison and was generally treated well by all of the prison staff that I encountered.

And yet, on reflection, some of the prison processes that I inevitably had to experience are, in a mild way, parallel to some of the induction and incapacitation processes identified by Goffman (1961). Once inside the prison I could not move anywhere without an escort. There was no immediate access to toilets, thus in the interviews we scheduled periodic comfort breaks. The man I was interviewing had easier access to a toilet. I had to be escorted by a member of the Psychology team to and from the toilet. I learned to drink little during the course of the sessions. On one occasion where a member of the psychology department allowed me to go unaccompanied to the toilet, I was apprehended by a uniformed Senior Officer (SO) and asked to account for why I had no escort.

Unfortunately, the member of staff that allowed me out unescorted was female. The SO said he would have to have word with her and 'smack her bottom'. This could have been taken as an invitation to join in sexualised banter to cement a male bond; I did not respond but informed the staff member of my encounter with the SO. Similarly, during my second batch of interviews the prison was rocked by scandal. A female prison officer had been found with a prisoner in a shower block; she was hiding. It was apparent that she had had a sexual relationship with the man. To make matters worse, the prison officer was married to a Governor of another nearby prison. This matter was reported salaciously in *The Sun* for a number of days. Initially no comments were made to me about it, but I gradually began to encounter (be invited to share in) oblique sexual jokes. Again, I refused to participate and, being an outsider I was able to feign ignorance about what was being alluded to.

Prison masculinities also asserted themselves in more directly obtrusive ways in some of the interviews. On two or three occasions, one particular prison officer walked into the interview room without knocking to inform me that it was 'nearly bang-up time'. The prisoners appeared to cope with this flagrant lack of courtesy much more easily than I did, but then, of course they had no other option. Issues of control and power were very clearly being asserted. I contemplated making a complaint about this specific officer, but on weighing up what I stood to gain and lose (the co-operation of most people in the prison) I chose not to pursue the matter. One interview (Roger) was interrupted on three occasions over two days by staff (including senior managers of the prison and the local probation service) activating a singing Christmas tree and subsequently laughing very loudly. On the first occasion, the man was distressed prior to the



disturbance and the disturbance seemed to enable him to distance himself from his distress by being contemptuous of the prison staff. On the second day, when two 'activations' occurred within two hours, I left the interview room to protest and was met by a very embarrassed manager who meekly apologised. There was often noise outside the room where I was interviewing. Some of this was the general noise of a large number of men walking and talking in the corridor, but some noise (or at least my construing of it) seemed particularly focused - often just outside the door of the room we were in. It seemed to me that it was almost saying, you might have private room, but we know that you are in there and we can make as much noise out here as we wish. The perpetrators of the more focused noise were invariably male members of uniformed staff.

### Research in Prisons

In this section, I explore issues related to the setting up of the interviews and conducting a research project within a prison.

#### *Access*

As a result of a number of presentations at conferences, my M.Phil research (Cowburn 1991) and publications, my work with sex offenders was known to the Prison Service. Additionally, I was a member of the Prison Service's Multi-racial Advisory Group to the Sex Offender Treatment Programme (SOTP). It was after a meeting of this group that I met with the Principal Psychologist responsible for the SOTP, to discuss my research proposal. Following a discussion, she authorised my research access to whichever prisons I needed to visit. However, she suggested that I approach, in the first instance two prisons: 'Prison A' (a Category C Training Prison), and 'Prison B' (a Dispersal - maximum-security -

prison). She considered that these prisons housed a wide range of sex offenders serving medium and long-term sentences. She agreed to contact the prisons to inform them that my research was officially approved. I wrote to both prisons outlining the aims, objectives and methods of my research (see Appendix 1). 'Prison A' agreed to allow me access to men within the prison. 'Prison B' denied me access because of work pressures.

All of the interviews took place in 'Prison A', which is a category C Training Prison in England. However, the setting where all of the men were located was 'protected', that is to say they: (a) were not vulnerable to assault from the 'non-sex offender'<sup>5</sup> population of the prison; and (b) knew that other prisoners in the location had committed similar offences to themselves. The interviews took place in a private room, either in the Education Department, the SOTP office or within the Psychology/Probation suite of rooms.

*A word about research terminology.*

At the outset of this study, I was, perhaps, unaware of how much I was influenced by positivist approaches to social research. In many ways, this is shown most clearly in how I identified and construed the group of men that I wished to interview. I, uncritically, used the term 'sample' to denote the group of men that I wished to interview, and in deciding how they were to be identified, I specified criteria that sought to be as representative as possible. Robson's (1993); p. 135) comments concerning sampling illustrate the issue:

Sampling is an important aspect of life in general and enquiry in particular. We make judgements about, people, places and things on the

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<sup>5</sup> This phrase is placed within quotation marks because some sex offenders successfully conceal their offences and remain on 'ordinary' location. Part of their success in doing this seems to be dependent on them expressing hostile attitudes to known sex offenders.

basis of fragmentary evidence. It is what Smith (Smith 1975), in an excellent discussion of the place of sampling in social research, refers to as the 'search for typicality' (p. 105). A different way of saying the same thing is that sampling is closely linked to the *external validity* or *generalizability* ... of the findings of an enquiry; the extent to which what we have found in a particular situation at a particular time applies more generally.

Sampling, thus conceived is, eventually, about developing a strong basis for identifying causal laws. Although I began this study with suspicion of the application of natural science paradigms to human phenomena and I intended to use idiographic research methods (Smith, Harré et al. 1995), I found myself uncritically using nomothetic terminology ('sample'). Smith et al (1995; p. 59) make the distinction clear:

A nomothetic study of people attempts to establish general laws about human behaviour. In contrast, an idiographic study has as its primary concern 'not to confirm and expand these experiences in order to attain knowledge of a law, e.g. how men [sic], peoples and states evolve, but to understand how this man, this people, or this state is what it has become' [Gadamer, quoted in Fielding and Fielding 1986; 36].

So, initially, I was using natural science paradigm language to describe aspects of my study. Henceforth in this chapter, I use the phrase 'group of men' rather than 'sample,' and I refer to 'variety' rather than 'representative' when I offer a rationale for how the group was chosen.

### *Identifying a group of men*

In 'Prison A', my initial and main contact was with the Senior Psychologist. It was he who liaised with the prison governor and confirmed my research access. Originally, I hoped to interview a group of men that was mixed in terms of:

- offence-type: I wanted to interview men who had committed offences against children and men who committed offences against adults;

- previous convictions: I wanted to interview both men who had no previous convictions and men who had previous convictions for sexual offences;
- length and stage of sentence: ideally I wanted to interview men serving a range of sentences and at all stages in their sentence;
- age: I wanted to interview men across the age range of the prison (21+);
- race: I wanted to interview black and Asian and white men;
- SOTP: I wanted to interview men who had completed the SOTP, who were in the middle of the SOTP and who had not done the SOTP.

I discussed these requirements with the Senior Psychologist and he agreed to identify a number of men who fitted my criteria. I prepared an information sheet and a letter to the men introducing the study and asking them to consider participating (Appendix One).

The Senior Psychologist, using my selection criteria, identified 15 men and wrote to them sending them my letter and asking them to respond to him if they did not wish to participate in the study. Two men contacted him and said that they did not wish to be a part of the study; unfortunately, one of these men was Black and consequently I did not have any Black or Asian participants in my research.

### *The Group of Men*

Thirteen men were identified to participate in the study, eventually; however, owing to the passage of time and men completing their sentences before I could interview them, I interviewed nine men. Details of the group are given below.

Respondent	Age at interview	Current Offence	Present sentence	Previous sexual convictions	Previous nonsexual convictions	Relationship to victim	Age of victim
1 Brian	39	Indecent ass. x 2 USI <sup>6</sup> x 2	4 years	None	None	Step-father/ father	Both 11
2 Wayne	25	Ind. <sup>7</sup> ass x 6 GBH <sup>8</sup> x 3	4 years	None	None	None	11-15
3 Michael	31	Rape	7 years	None	None	Ex-partner	29
4 Dennis	61	Rape (but admits to indecent assault)	7 years	None	None	Grand-father	10
5 Andrew	38	Rape	10 years	None	Drink driving, BoP, D&D <sup>9</sup> , Burglary	Step-father	12
6 Jack	60	Ind ass x 3 USI x 2	7 years	USI 33yrs previously Found G	Many for dishonesty (6 prison sentences)	Step-father	Between 10 and 18
7 Roger	36	Ind. Ass x 6	5 years	None	Theft x 2 Speeding x 3	Step-father	11-14
8 Martin	59	Incest	8 years	None	None	Father	10-22 (two daughters)
9 Darren	23	Indecent assault	5 years	None	2 cautions for offences of dishonesty	None	43

Table 1. Demographics of Sample interviewed

<sup>6</sup> USI = Unlawful Sexual Intercourse

<sup>7</sup> Ind. ASS = Indecent Assault

<sup>8</sup> GBH = Assault occasioning Grievous Bodily Harm

<sup>9</sup> BoP = Breach of the peace; D&D = drunk and disorderly

This table provides an overview of the group of men that I interviewed. Further details are provided in Chapter Eight. The group has a number of features that require comment. The ages of the group of men form three cohorts: Darren (23), Wayne (25) and Michael (31) form the first cohort; Roger (36), Andrew (38) and Brian (39), form the second cohort; and Martin (59), Jack (60) and Dennis (61) form the final cohort. Michael could belong to the second cohort because the difference in his age and Darren's is eight years and the difference between his age and Brian's is eight years.

Six of the men offended against children in their family: three were stepfathers, one was a father, one was both a father and stepfather to his victims; and one was a grandfather. Of the three men who offended outside the family, one offended against children: the other two offended against adults, one raped his ex-partner, and the other indecently assaulted a stranger. Only one of the group had previous convictions for sexual offences; four of the group had no previous convictions, the remainder had some convictions for offences of dishonesty, motoring offences and being drunk and disorderly. All of the group members were serving medium to long-term sentences.

### *Managing the interviews*

None of the selected group refused to see me, and all of the interviews lasted considerably longer than I initially anticipated (between four and six hours). I should have been warned by the experience of Colton and Vanstone's (1996; p.4) similar study in which they report their interviews lasting between four and six hours. Also, Scully (1990; p. 17) writes of one of her interviews lasting seven hours.

The interviews were, therefore, conducted in two batches/phases. The first group of men were seen in August 1998 and the second group were seen in December 1998. Having three months between my first and second group of interviews did allow me space to reflect before commencing the second group of interviews, and this was beneficial because I became more focused, and yet flexible in conducting the later interviews.

### *Prison Routines*

It is something of a truism to say that prison life is highly structured. The whereabouts of prisoners and their activities, inevitably, have to be strictly controlled. This structure prescribes when a prisoner has to be locked in his cell, when he is allowed out to work, when he is allowed out to eat and when he is allowed 'association' with other prisoners. The pattern of the day is generally unchanging and inflexible.

To some extent, my research slightly disturbed this pattern, insofar as the men I interviewed were not required to attend their workplace. With the help of the Psychology Department, arrangements were made that the men did not lose any pay because they were not at their workstation but were being interviewed by me. We were, however, still largely constrained by the patterns of prison life. The most inflexible routines were the 'bang-up' times – the times when prisoners had to eat their meals and be locked into their cells. These most significantly affected the interviews at lunchtime.

Other issues that intruded on the interviews were primarily to do with the specific circumstances of the individual man I was interviewing. For example,

one man had an appointment with the prison dentist in the middle of our session, another needed to buy his week's supply of tobacco, confectionery, stationery and toiletries. Fortunately, with the co-operation of the man and the help of the Psychology Department, we managed to prevent these important issues from intruding too much into the time of the interview. However, on one occasion I returned to the prison at 1.15pm to resume an interview with Roger. I was taken to my room. By 1.50pm Roger, whose timekeeping had previously been good, had not appeared. I recorded in my notebook "*No Roger. The prison is silent. Is there a security issue? A 'freeze'? Are prisoners confined to their cells? No-one has told me anything.*" Shortly after 2pm, Roger arrived at my room and he confirmed that there had been a big Prison Officers Association (POA) meeting over lunchtime so no staff were available to unlock the prisoners. Generally, we were able to accommodate the routines of the prison within the interviews. The most difficult times were caused by some officers using the routine as a reason for disrupting the interview.

#### *Relationships with Prison staff*

Generally, with the exceptions mentioned above, my relationships with all of the prison staff that I encountered were positive, and as I spent more time in the prison, this developed. The officers on the gate recognised me and did not require me to produce proof of my identity every time I came to the prison. In the summertime, they shared prison-grown tomatoes with me and in the winter, we railed against the harsh weather and poor road conditions.

My relations with the Psychology Department were cordial and appeared to develop positively because of two main factors (a) I was known by members of



the Probation department in the prison because of my previous work with sex offenders. This was well regarded; (b) as I completed interviews with the men, the staff in the Psychology Department, started to receive feed-back from the men that I conducted the interviews well and that they found them to be very helpful in thinking about themselves and their offences. This, coupled with the amount of time I was spending with each man, appeared to earn the respect of the staff in the department.

My relationship with the probation team was positive and this developed during my visits. I was particularly grateful to the Senior Probation Officer who provided me with tea, coffee, a kettle, cups and milk. This enabled me to offer the men a drink during our interview sessions.

#### *Prisoners talk to each other*

The final aspect of prison cultures that I wish to highlight concerns the prisoners themselves. As I mentioned above, the men were imprisoned in a protected environment. There were not the threats and dangers to the sex offender that is usual in ordinary prison locations (for a fuller picture see HM Chief Inspector of Prisons 1986; A Prison Department Working Group 1989; Rt Hon Lord Justice Woolf and His Honour Judge Steven Tumim 1991; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary 1992; Briggs 1994). However, I was intending to carry out research on sensitive issues in a male prison; I did not anticipate that the men would talk to each other about the research, and in particular their own experience of it. In line with my observations on prison masculinities, Scully (1990; p. 9) notes:

... prison culture seems to breed bored, frightened, angry, and very lonely men who believe that survival depends on constant vigilance and a tough façade. Externally, at least, traditional male role behavior is exaggerated. Manhood is validated through physical strength and aggression. Expressions like anger are expected and acceptable but emotional sensitivity to others or the appearance of caring is regarded as dangerous. Any display of characteristics or behavior traditionally associated with the feminine is scorned and avoided. Confined men do not trust other people, including other inmates, and they don't talk to each other about matters of personal or emotional importance.

Therefore, I did not anticipate the beneficial effect that their conversations would have on my response rate. And yet, many of the men did talk to each other about their experience of the interviews. This may have been due to the unusual nature of their place of confinement: it was protected and therapy groups were a part institutional part of the institutional regime.

### **The interview(s)**

Technically speaking, although this study is based around a life hi/story approach, the length of time that I spent with each man was minimal compared to some studies. Classic life history research seems to depend on many contacts between researcher and the person being researched over a sustained period. Also, many of the contacts seem to be informal and almost social. Plummer (1995; p.11) writes of his study of 'Ed' lasted two years and 'Ed' became part of Plummer's 'friendship network'. Bogdan (1974; p. 8) in his study of Jane, a transsexual, notes:

... During the three months period the material was recorded, we met one to five times a week, and our meetings lasted from one to five hours. I did not keep an accurate account of the number of hours we spent recording our sessions; an estimate is about a hundred. Over 750 pages of material was the result of our effort. (Cited in Plummer, 1995; p. 53).

If length and frequency of contact are to be taken to be as the principle criteria of life hi/story research, then in the light of the above quotations it is doubtful if the present study qualifies as genuine life hi/story research. However, it may be that in the terms described above, life hi/story research with convicted sex offenders is not possible. Plummer (1983; p. 92-93) considers that 'the researcher will almost be trying to become a close friend of the subject and in doing this the life history goals may lead to a potential tension between friendship and professionalism.' In the case of researching sex offenders in prison, there are serious difficulties here: the prison context largely militates against sustained contact with one person over a lengthy period of time, and the issues of the potential disclosure of further sex offences and other harmful behaviours militate strongly against the development of a close relationship. Issues related to these matters are discussed more fully in Chapter Six.

Despite the shortcomings of the setting and the subject, life history approaches with sex offenders in custody have been attempted (Colton and Vanstone 1996; Colton and Vanstone 1998; Messerschmidt 2000). Messerschmidt (2000,p. 19) interviewed each person in his sample on two occasions for three hours each time, whilst Colton and Vanstone (1996; p. 4) note:

... we cannot make claim to a life history approach in its fullest sense of involving the subject in extensive interviews over prolonged periods; the constraints of time and our research objectives prescribed a modified version involving two, and some cases, three interviews, spanning between four and six hours of recorded conversation.

So, within the phenomenology of a life history approach this study is closer to the work of Messerschmidt, and Colton and Vanstone, than it is to that of Bogdan or Plummer.

As mentioned above, the interviews lasted between four and six hours, but because of prison routines, they were broken into a number of sessions. The timing of a session was determined by the various 'lock-up' times. The interviews, therefore, comprised at least three and up to six sessions. Sometimes the interviews lasted more than one day, and on one occasion, a weekend separated sessions.

I travelled to the prison daily from my home. The journey, each way, lasted between one and a half and two and a quarter hours. Prior to the journey to the prison, I would read my notes taken in the breaks during the interview. On the journey to the prison, if I was in the middle of an interview, I would listen to the tape of the last forty-five minutes of the interview to orientate myself. On arrival at the prison, I would be taken to the Psychology Department, where I would have a drink whilst waiting for the man I was to interview. Generally, the man would arrive at the Department within half an hour of my arrival. I would often be in the private room waiting for him to arrive. I would ask him if any issues had arisen since we last met.

The pattern or the shape of the interview was, as I mentioned above, entirely prescribed by prison routine. I was careful to ensure that the main body of the discussion in the sessions finished in sufficient time for the man to prepare himself to return to the wing. In some cases, if a man was distressed, this necessitated me reminding him of his imminent return to prison life to enable him to calm down and prepare a composed exterior for his return to the 'wing'. Fortunately, no one was so distressed that I had to warn the wing about him.

The lunch break allowed both myself, and the man I was interviewing, time to reflect on the morning's conversation. I would leave the prison at 11.30am and return to the prison at 1.15pm. The interview would resume at 1.30pm. In this time I went to a nearby town and quickly became a regular' in one of the cafés. In the café, I would both eat my lunch but also I would write in my reflective journal/notebook. Most of my notes were related to how I thought the interview was progressing and what I thought I needed to address in the next session. I would decide to return to an issue that I did not think had been explored sufficiently or I would link it to something else that had been said at a different point in the interview. Primarily I used the notebook for reflecting on and planning the course of the interview

However, at times I also used it as a vehicle for self-reflection. For example, in a lunchtime break in my penultimate interview, I noted that I was tired and that I lacked a keenness to pursue some issues related to bullying in schools. I responded to this tiredness (perhaps in true masculine fashion) by noting that I needed to restructure the interview and I re-wrote a structure for the afternoon session.

The men also reflected on the interview and how it was affecting them. A number of them came to the post-lunch session commenting on the morning's session and noting that they had thoughts that they had not had before about themselves and their offences. One man (Martin), who had been very distressed in the session before lunch, returned in the afternoon with two healing crystals, which he said would help prevent him from becoming, distressed again.

I began each interview by reminding the man of the information that I sent out. I told him that I was interested in understanding male sex offenders as men. I also made it clear that I did not in anyway condone sexual violence. Some of the men asked me about my experience in working with sex offenders and my experience of prison. Clearly, this initial phase was important in identifying the various forms of life that we had in common and the language games that we would operate within. I discuss this further in Chapter Ten.

The main part of the interview, which focused on life-hi/story issues, largely followed the structure of the interview schedule outlined in Appendix one. The aim of the interview was to focus on key transitional moments in the life course and ask the men to consider how these transitions affected their sense of being boys and men. This relates to the 'occasions' of 'doing masculinity' that Coleman (1990) writes of and is similar to that used by Connell (1995; pp90-91) in his study of three groups of men. He comments:

The interviews followed the same overall plan, with a great deal of flexibility in each conversation. The interviewers asked for a narrative ('story of your life'). We kept the focus on the practices in which relationships were constructed i.e. on what people actually did in the various settings of their lives. We used transitions between institutions (e.g. entry into High School) as pegs for memory; but we also asked for accounts of relationships within institutions such as families and workplaces.

Although the interview schedule was a guide, I did not use it as an inflexible protocol. In the first batch of interviews, I followed the structure of the interview schedule more strictly than in the later group of interviews. However, even from the very outset, I was aware of themes and issues that potentially underlay the aims and objectives of the interview, which I would try to explore

further if they appeared. And one of the most important of these was the issue of men and feelings. I recognised that there was a potential difficulty in the interview process if I rigidly insisted upon following the interview schedule. Thus, for example, Brian, quite early in the interview mentioned the recent death of his mother. Rather than delay the account of this until its appropriate chronological place in the interview (near the end), I chose to explore the issues that were clearly important for him at that moment. Thus, he was able to cry for and express anger about his mother and her death in a particularly vivid way. Additionally, I was keenly aware of the dialogical dimensions of the interview – two men talking together – and their gendered potential for avoiding issues of overt feelings. Thus, I deliberately chose to explore his feelings when they manifested themselves and not defer dealing with them until later. There were similar occurrences in many of the interviews, and on each occasion, I ensured that the man had space to cry and I verbally recognised his distress. I allowed time for the man to recover and on occasions stopped the tape and agreed a toilet break for him to gather himself.

At the end of each day (4.30pm.), when I had finished interviewing, I was escorted to the gate. I did not discuss the interviews with anyone. The journey home always seemed longer, particularly with the winter interviews. I was tired. I had been listening and concentrating intensely for many hours all day. Additionally, I had been hearing distressing and painful material, both about what the men had experienced and what they had inflicted upon others. Sometimes I would sit in my car and write notes; mostly I sat behind the wheel and headed for home. I was too tired to do much else. The exhausting effect of this type of work has been noted by other researchers (Scully, 1990; Colton and

Vanstone 1996; and Hearn 1998). In Chapter Ten, I reflect more fully on the impact of research into sexual violence on the researcher.

### **Summary**

This chapter describes the practical issues relating to the research project in prison. It considers how both the prison context and more specifically, prison masculinities have impacted on this study. Practical issues concerning the setting up of the project and issues emerging from the interviews are described. Difficulties relating to undertaking life hi/story research in prison are identified and discussed. Finally, the impact of the research on the researcher is noted: this is explored further in Chapter Ten.



**Part Four**

**The findings**

## Chapter Eight

### The Nine Men

This chapter and the following chapters in this section present and discuss the data from the interviews. It was not easy deciding how to present this material. The first part of this chapter introduces, in brief, the men that I interviewed. In the second part of the chapter, some of the difficulties in presenting the data, particularly in relation to its quantity and various analytical themes, are discussed.

#### The men

As mentioned in Chapter Seven the group of men comprise three cohort generations. Briefly a cohort generation is:

... group of persons born during a limited span of years who share a common and distinct social character shaped by their shared experiences through time ... Cohort generations are based on shared historical experiences ... a cohort generation is a social structural variable akin to social class, race or gender ... According to Ryder (1965): 'At a minimum, the cohort is a structural category with the same kind of analytic utility as a variable like social class. Conceptually the cohort resembles most closely the ethnic group: membership is determined at birth, and often has considerable capacity to explain variance, but need not imply that the category is an organized group (Rindfleisch 1994; p. 470; cited in Miller 2000; p. 30).

The cohorts in this study are:

- Cohort 1: Darren (23), Wayne (25) and Michael (31), covering birth years 1967-1975.
- Cohort 2: Roger (36), Andrew (38) and Brian (39), covering birth years 1959-1962.

- Cohort 3: Martin (59), Jack (60) and Dennis (61), covering birth years 1937-1939.

### Cohort One (1967-1975)

#### *Darren*

Darren is the youngest man in the group. He was twenty-three years old at the time of the interview. He was twenty-one when he committed the offence of indecent assault on a 43-year-old woman. He said that he vaguely knew the woman. He was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment for the offence. He had no previous convictions for sexual offences. He did, however, have two cautions: one when he was under ten years old for an offence of shoplifting and one when he was nineteen for an offence of attempted burglary. At the time of arrest, he was living at home with his mother and father and twelve-year-old brother. He had occasional contact with his paternal grandmother.

Darren's earliest memories relate to a family holiday on the East Coast of England. Both of his parents were employed; his father was a driver and his mother worked as a cleaner. Darren has both a sister who is eighteen months older himself and a brother who is nine years younger than himself.

His description of his family life is minimal, but, apart from regular rows with his sister, he construes it positively. He was very unhappy at school. He was bullied throughout his school career and this seriously affected his attendance, which was, in the secondary school, very poor. He was not able to talk to anyone about being bullied. However, at the age of fourteen he states that he hit back at a bully, severely beating him up. This was, for Darren, a turning point in

his life; thereafter he became violent and a bully himself. He spoke often during the interview of his short temper.

He had few friends throughout his school career and at the time of arrest he said that he had about five male friends. At this time, he was not involved in an intimate relationship, and although he had had a number of relationships with women, they were mostly brief and 'only for sex'.

On leaving school, he had a variety of unskilled jobs that he lost largely through his own disinterest and poor timekeeping. Prior to arrest, he was employed as a trainee joiner and is hopeful of resuming that work on his release from prison.

At the time of the interview, he was in the middle of the Prison Service's Sex Offender Treatment Programme (SOTP).

### *Wayne*

Wayne was twenty-five years old at the time of the interview. He was twenty-three when he committed his offences. He was convicted of six offences of indecent assault, and three offences of assault occasioning grievous bodily harm, on girls aged between eleven and fifteen years old. He has no previous convictions for any type of offence. In the interview, he gave little detail about the offences, save only that the offences were committed whilst his wife and child were away from the home, visiting relatives and he was drinking heavily. He said that a group of girls were harassing him, using his house to play on his computer and play-station. The indecent assaults, he said, involved touching the girls over their clothing. The offences of grievous bodily harm involved him

firing an air pistol at some of the girls and injuring them. At the time of the offences, he was living with his wife and young (approximately two years-old) son, in a flat provided by the army. Wayne had been a regular soldier for six years. He was in regular contact with his mother, brother and his wife's family. Following the disclosure of the offences, he was dishonourably discharged from the army.

Wayne's first memory is of being a part of a family made up of him, his mum and his dad. His father was a soldier. When he was four years old, his brother was born. He describes his relationship with his mother as being the most important relationship in his life. When I asked him about his friends, he immediately stated that his mother was his best friend. He remembers his parents verbally fighting for most of his childhood and they divorced when he was in his mid teens. His relationship with his father was troubled. He described his father as being mostly absent from the family and violent when he was in the family. On one occasion, he severely beat both Wayne and his brother with a squash racket. Physical violence from his father to both himself and his brother was common. His father also drank heavily.

The army was very important in Wayne's early life, not only because it regularly took his father from him, but because the family never stayed in one location for more than a couple of years. Also, the insularity and exclusivity of 'being army' is important. Army codes of behaviour were important – particularly unwritten informal codes: for example, the separation of work and home: problems in either location were expected to be kept separate from each other and individuals had to deal with their own problems.

Wayne attended both army schools and civilian schools throughout his childhood. He did not make many friends although he said that changing school frequently meant that he learned to fit in quickly. He spoke of the difficulties that army children have in being accepted in non-army schools. The main feature of Wayne's school days and the one that he spoke most about was sport – particularly soccer and rugby. He was an accomplished sportsman, playing in school teams. However, because he changed school frequently he considered that he regularly had to compete to be accepted by his peers. Competition and striving for excellence are themes that are constantly rehearsed in Wayne's story.

Wayne's brother also featured in his struggles during his school life. Although he was four years younger, Wayne describes him as always being ready to stick up and fight for him. He construes himself and his brother as fighting and supporting each other in a hostile world.

Wayne says that throughout most of his school life, he had no close relationships: boys were team mates and he was not interested in girls. In his late teens, he describes his father as encouraging him to have casual sexual relationships with girls and his mother advising him to wait until it 'felt right'.

On leaving school at sixteen, Wayne joined the army. Although the induction into the armed forces was painful, he enjoyed army life. Shortly after becoming a regular soldier, he married his first 'proper' girlfriend. As a regular soldier, he

saw service in Northern Ireland and Bosnia. He speaks at length about this and how it affected his marriage.

The birth of his son – Jason – was an important event for Wayne. Jason was born whilst Wayne was living away from his wife in Cyprus. When Jason was a few months old, Wayne bought him a pair of sports training shoes. In the early months of Jason's life he was admitted to hospital with serious head injuries. Wayne was suspected of inflicting the injuries, but nothing was ever proved. Throughout the interview, Wayne clearly asserted that he had not injured his son. The child was placed on the 'at risk register' and remained on it for approximately one year.

Wayne describes the quality of his marriage as becoming poor. He attributes the decline to the pressures of army life – particularly living apart and working in 'trouble spots' such as Northern Ireland and Bosnia. Wayne says both that he was not the typical 'squaddie', in that he did not drink heavily, but he also describes many occasions when he was drinking to excess. He also notes that he will be attending an alcohol education course whilst in prison.

Wayne as mentioned above was temporarily living by himself and drinking heavily when he committed the offences.

Wayne was waiting to start the SOTP.

## *Michael*

Michael was thirty-one years old at the time of the interview. He is the oldest member of this cohort. He was serving a seven-year sentence for the rape of his ex-partner. He was twenty-nine at the time of the offence. He has no previous convictions for any type of offence. His personal circumstances at the time of the offence were that he was living in a bed-sit. He was not involved in any relationship. He has two children aged thirteen and fourteen years with whom he was in sporadic contact. And another of eighteen with whom he has no contact (see below). He had worked as a taxi driver for six years and was drinking heavily at the time of his arrest.

His earliest memory is being on a bus and his mother being at the other side of the bus doors: he was being taken into care. He thinks that he was three years of age at this time. He spent all of his childhood in Care of the local authority. He lived in a variety of settings – foster parents and local authority residential units – and attended a number of different schools. He had occasional and generally upsetting contact with his mother. He said that he had not seen his real father for thirty years.

He was, mostly, at odds with both where he lived and where he went to school. His description of his childhood is one of violence, conflict and continual change. He says he had his first sexual experience at the age of nine and engaged in a range of 'just sex' encounters thereafter. At the age of fourteen, he had a sexual relationship with his foster mother, who became pregnant and had a son (who at the time of the interview was eighteen years old). In the interview, he disputed the SOTP tutors' description of this relationship as abusive.



Although he did not like school, he had a positive relationship with the woodwork teacher. This was the area of the school curriculum in which he excelled. He was very proud of the fact that although he did not fit in at school he had a craft apprenticeship waiting for him when he left school. Many of the other pupils, whose academic work was better, faced unemployment. His working life was important to him. He easily obtained work on building sites all over the country and when the building trade went into recession he was able to find work as a driver. Pay and having plenty of money and a powerful car were important to him.

Although Michael describes himself as having many sexual partners in his teens, he also married when he was nineteen years old and the marriage officially lasted twelve years. He describes the marriage as being unhappy from the start, both partners having a variety of 'extra-marital' affairs. He also describes himself as being violent within and outside the marriage, beating up both his wife and her lovers. He was often away from the marital home and was regularly drinking heavily.

When he met the victim of his offence, he says that he immediately knew that the relationship was important. The relationship lasted for approximately two years. It was punctuated with violent rows and vicious allegations from her ex-partner and his wife. She finished the relationship because of his increasingly out of control lifestyle – drinking, drugs and gambling very heavily.

He burgled her flat and raped her at knifepoint. He also said that it was not his intention to rape her – he had intended to kill her son in front of her and then kill himself. Immediately prior to him committing the offence, armed police surrounded the flat where he was holding his ex-partner and her child hostage. He was persuaded to release the boy. Having raped his victim, he surrendered to the police.

Since being in prison, he thinks he has changed. He has completed the SOTP. He talks to other men about his problems and other men talk to him. He has met a woman through a pen-friend organisation and has married her in the prison. He hopes to change his possessive and paranoid behaviours that have characterised his previous relationships. He also noted that if his victim wanted him back he would leave his new wife immediately.

### Cohort Two (1959-1962)

#### *Roger*

At the time of the interview, Roger was thirty-six years old. He was serving a five-year sentence for offences of indecent assault against his four stepdaughters, aged between eleven and fourteen. The offences occurred in the home over a five-year period. He had five previous convictions for non-sexual offences: two for petty theft, which he committed in his early twenties, and three road traffic offences of speeding. At the time of his arrest, he was living with his second wife and two of his victims. He was employed as a sales manager for a large international ceramics firm. He also worked behind the bar in a local social club.

His earliest memory was of his mother lying at the bottom of the stairs – she and his father had been arguing in an upstairs room. His mother was covered in blood. His early memories concern his parents arguing over money. His father drank often and heavily; his mother had a number of affairs with other men. His father had been a regular soldier and later worked as a driver. When Roger was seven years old, his father was sentenced to a short period of imprisonment for motoring offences. Whilst his father was in prison, his mother's current boyfriend spent a lot of time in the family house and when Roger's father returned home his mother moved out of the family home. Roger was still distressed when he spoke to me of this event and he considers that it formed the foundation of his inability to trust anybody. And yet, initially, he described his childhood as being happy.

He describes his father coming out of prison and immediately taking responsibility for the childcare of the three children (with the help of two consecutive women friends). Roger remained in unpredictable contact with his mother – he describes a number of occasions when as a child she failed to keep to prearranged contact agreements. When he was nine, his sisters moved to live with his mother; he chose to remain with his father. He describes his relationship with his father in ambivalent terms: as a young child he wanted to be with his father all of the time; as he grew up, he was more circumspect about his father and his/their failure to communicate in any meaningful way.

When his father re-married, his new wife brought her own three children into the household. He was not happy with her and felt that she always favoured her own children above him and his sisters. He describes his relationship with

his stepbrother as good enough, but also acknowledges that he does not have close relationships with anyone. His relationships with his stepsisters were (from the age of approximately ten) primarily sexual. He describes them in terms of being mutually 'exploratory' (up to the point of digital penetration and mutual masturbation). These relationships ceased to be sexual when all parties found sexual partners outside of the family.

He describes, in brief, his school days as being largely happy. He was good at all sports and played in many teams (for school, local area and county). He had a 'trial' with a senior league football team. All of this was very important to his positive sense of self. He had a number of team mates but no close friends.

Whilst in secondary school he was sexually abused by a man who was known to his father. The memory of this caused him to become distressed in our interview.

He left school with seven CSEs (Certificate of Secondary Education) and went straight into the RAF. He left the RAF to work in Saudi Arabia and then worked in England variously as a fireman, a windscreen fitter, a lorry driver, a sales representative and sales manager. The periods of time that he spent in each job were not clearly specified for they largely featured in his story as a backdrop to his personal relationships. The way in which they were primarily referred to was to show that he provided well for his family.

He describes himself as being sexually active from his early teens. Often he was having a number of sexual relationships at the same time. He also stated that he

regularly went to sex saunas for 'pure sex'. The various relationships and marriages that he describes overlap and re-overlap in a (to me) bewildering fashion. No ex-partner was really an 'ex' because he would often return to her for sex. He says that he was abusing his stepdaughters at the same time that he was having affairs and visiting sex saunas.

At the time of the interview, he was doing the SOTP. This was evident in the language that he used in describing both his sexual behaviour and his offences.

His hope for the future is to find a new relationship and behave in a very different manner with regard to sexual relationships. He is hopeful of finding employment but fears the possibility of becoming known as a sex offender.

### *Andrew*

At the time of the interview, Andrew was thirty-eight years old. He was serving a ten-year sentence for the rape of his twelve-year-old stepdaughter. He had no previous convictions for sexual offences but did have a number of convictions for being drunk and disorderly, for breach of the peace, for driving whilst under the influence of alcohol and for burglary. At the time of the offence being reported, he was living at home with his wife and children. He has one stepdaughter (the victim) and four other children. He said that he was in regular contact with his wife's family and that he was working as a plumber's mate.

Andrew's earliest memory is of living in a terraced house in a mining village with his mother and father. He thinks he was about three years old at the time.

He initially describes his childhood as 'happy' and then undermines this with a description of a childhood pervaded with parental discord and strife.

Throughout his story, he described a deep hatred for his father and this seemed to derive from his mother's unhappiness in the marriage. His father did not drink, rarely wanted to socialise and sought to keep his wife at home undertaking domestic chores. With the same intensity that he hates his father, he acknowledges his love for his mother. It was she who was always there for him during his childhood and youth and it was she who explained to him, at the age of eight, that he was an adopted child. Although he says that this was largely a matter of indifference to him, towards the end of his story, he describes his unsuccessful attempts to locate his natural mother.

In the early years of schooling, he describes himself as being mocked for being an adopted child ('your mum is not your mum'). However, he also states that he was the second 'hardest' child in the school and had many fights. He says he was caned at junior school for minor misdemeanours, such as climbing on to the school roof to retrieve a football. From about the age of ten, he says that he and other like-minded friends would steal flagons of cider from a local brewer's yard and spend time together drinking large amounts of the liquor.

At around this time, untypically, his father took him, with other family members, to an international football match. From here on began an increasing interest in a particular local football league team. His passion for his team was inextricably interwoven with his drinking habits and his peer group. They became skinhead football followers, who particularly went to football matches in search of violence. He was convicted on a number of occasions for football-

related acts of violence. At this time, he was very rarely attending secondary school; he had refused to wear the school uniform and his skinhead attire was strenuously resisted by the school. He had little contact with his father during these years, but his mother did unsuccessfully attempt to encourage him back to school.

For his twelfth birthday, the group of friends that he mixed with had arranged for him to have sexual intercourse with one of their fifteen-year-old female associates. Andrew describes in a matter of fact way how he went with the girl to the school field and had sex. Following this event, he occasionally engaged in casual sex with female associates of his gang. He then formed a relationship with a young woman that lasted for approximately nine months and this was an important relationship. He, his parents and her parents thought the couple were likely to marry. However, because of his heavy drinking, short temper and jealousy the young woman finished the relationship. He says that he found this very difficult to cope with and his drinking became even heavier. He says that he did not have sex with anyone for a period of seven years, during which time he drank heavily and was involved in football violence.

He notes that the day after he left school he began an apprenticeship with the National Coal Board and within three months he was working underground. He worked down the pit for approximately thirteen years. During this time he met and married his first wife. She had two children from a previous relationship, one of whom was eventually to become his victim. When the collieries closed due to the Tory government's energy policies, he experienced periods of unemployment, casual work and finally managed a pub.

Although Andrew says that for periods of his life (sometimes lasting many months) he abstained totally from alcohol, he, in effect, had drunk heavily from his early teens. This increased when he took over the management of the pub. It was whilst living in the pub that he committed his offences against his stepdaughter, who was aged twelve. The offences were committed over a period of approximately six months. He describes his stepdaughter as behaving in a sexually provocative manner prior to the offences starting. Although he accepts that he had 'full intercourse' with her on at least six occasions, he was angry about the fact that he has convicted of raping his stepdaughter. He acknowledges that what he did was wrong but rejects the definition of it as rape: although his stepdaughter was not old enough to consent to sexual intercourse he considers her to have been a willing party. He denied the charges and was on bail for a period of almost two years. He was found guilty after a prolonged trial. His wife divorced him and he has had no contact from his children or stepchildren since conviction. He has, however, met a woman through a prison pen-friend organisation and they have married whilst he has been in prison. He has not yet attended the SOTP but he knows a lot of the therapeutic language. When he is discharged from prison, he hopes to live with his new wife (she has adult children) and expects to have no contact with his children or stepchildren.

### *Brian*

Brian was thirty-nine at the time of the interview. He was serving a four-year sentence for two offences of indecent assault and two offences of unlawful sexual intercourse against both his daughter and stepdaughter. Both girls were eleven years old at the time of the offences. He had no previous convictions of



any kind. Prior to the offences being reported, he had been living at home with his wife and three children. He had been in full time employment with the same firm for ten years. He noted that in twenty-three years he had only been unemployed for three months. He had completed the SOTP and other prison courses.

Brian's earliest memories are of living in a boarding house owned by his parents in a seaside town. His father worked outside the home and his mother managed the accommodation. He speaks positively of his family but also notes that the happiest times during his childhood were spent on the beach with miners and their families who were guests in his parents' lodging house. He notes that his childhood was lacking in expressed love.

Much of Brian's childhood was spent helping his mother care for her parents who lived next door to the family home. He has one brother who is ten years older than him. He notes that, given his parents' work commitments, his brother, in many ways brought him up.

He was sexually abused, at the age of eight, by a man in whose care his parents had left him whilst the family were on holiday. He remembers the abuse as being enjoyable at the time. He notes that he felt that this man appeared to care for him, unlike his parents. The abuse and the confused emotions that it produced, engendered in him a deep fear and uncertainty about his sexual preference. This troubled him throughout his adolescence.

He disliked all of his schools and was bullied in all of them. The focus of the bullying seems to have been his size; he was tall and large framed. He was both

called names and physically assaulted. Both staff and pupils in all of his schools bullied him. These experiences caused him to be absent from school and he considers that his education suffered as a result.

He met his wife (to be) when he was seventeen years of age. She was pregnant at the time with a child from another relationship. He knowingly accepted the child as his own. When she was eleven he abused this child, and, subsequently, his own daughter.

His relationship with his own parents appears to have been difficult.

Throughout his childhood, he recalls feeling unloved and neglected. Yet, he also admits to having been deeply upset by the death of both his father and, five weeks prior to the interview, his mother. When his father was an hour from death, Brian lifted him gently and kissed him telling him that he loved him and said 'good-bye' to him. He noted that his father was unconscious at this time.

Caring, for Brian, has always been a central part of his life. Apart from accompanying his mother or father for caring for grandparents, he also worked as a volunteer for the Red Cross and became a highly qualified first-aider. He also considers himself to have been a very caring parent and sees the offences as occurring because he 'cared too much'.

His victims were, at the time of the interview, adults, but he had no recent contact with them. He planned to live with his wife on release from prison.

Although he had written to his former employer asking for work, he was not hopeful of finding employment. He was also cautious as to how some family

members and friends would respond to him when he was once again out in the community.

### Cohort 3 (1937-1939)

#### *Martin*

Martin was fifty-nine years of age at the time of the interview. He was serving an eight-year sentence for offences of incest against his two daughters. The offences had occurred from the early 1970s through to the mid nineteen-eighties. The brother of the two victims reported the offences. Despite the fact that Martin described his daughters as unwilling to co-operate with the police, they did make statements and he was convicted and received a long prison sentence. Martin has no previous convictions for any type of offence. At the time that he was arrested he was living with his youngest daughter (one of his victims), her husband and their two children (aged five and ten years old). He was in full-time employment working in the printing industry, where had worked for over thirty years. He said his social life primarily focused around his family and some workmates.

His earliest memories are of British World War Two bombers flying near where he lived. He was four or five years old at the time. He was living with his mother and brother who was two years younger than he was. His father was away in India with the RAF. He remembers there being very little food available. He lived in a semi-detached council house, which his mother shared with another woman who had a small son who screamed with fear when the bombers flew overhead. His father was a somewhat spectral figure who

returned home on leave and then went away again. He did not live full time with the family until Martin was aged six.

He describes himself as caring for his younger brother full-time from when he was seven years old. He says that this childhood was happy when he and his brother were away from their parents. Both he and his brother were subjected to beatings from both of their parents. Their father used to hit them with a thick belt, but only at the instigation of their mother. Their mother used to beat them with anything and was the most violent of their parents. On one occasion, Martin's younger brother had messed his trousers whilst they were out together. Martin 'piggy-backed' his brother home. He recalls his mother being very angry and instructing their father to thrash his brother with the belt. Martin said that he was so upset he ran away for a couple of hours in order not to witness the beating. He describes his parents as arguing regularly but he said that he never really understood what the arguments were about.

At the age of eleven, Martin was admitted to hospital, initially with appendicitis, and it was discovered that he had rheumatic fever. He had visits from his mother whilst in hospital and he saw his brother twice through a hospital window: his brother was not allowed to visit him. He was in hospital for approximately five months. When he left hospital, he was behind in his schoolwork. It took him a long time to catch up with other pupils. At school, he had only male friends and played exclusively with them.

His mother left the family home when he was twelve years old. For two years, their father cared for him and his brother. However, when he was fourteen

years old, his father told him that he and his brother would have to leave their home and be cared for by their Granny, because he had a new relationship. This announcement was totally unsuspected and deeply distressed Martin. During the interview, he became very upset recalling these events but he insisted on finishing his story. He perceives his father's actions to have been a total betrayal of parental trust, which, he believes, formed the context out of which he committed his offences.

He left school at the age of fifteen and began work in the hosiery trade. He considers that he became a man when he learnt how to behave responsibly at work. He had been in full-time work for over twenty-three years with only one period of three months when he was unemployed.

He had his first experience of sexual intercourse at the age of seventeen with a woman with whom he worked. As a young man he formed a close relationship with another man – they drank and played snooker together. His friend was upset when Martin married. He married his wife to justify leaving his grandmother's house where he had lived since he stopped living with his father.

He describes his relationship with his wife as stormy, largely due to the affairs that she was having. He left her and lived in a bed-sit and then started to buy his own house. Initially his children (two daughters and a son) lived with his wife. His oldest daughter started staying with him at weekends. Eventually all of the children lived with him on a full time basis. He started abusing his oldest daughter when she was eight. The abuse ceased in her early twenties. He started abusing his other daughter in her middle teens and the abuse stopped

again in her early twenties. He describes both of his daughters as being responsible for instigating and sustaining the sexual relationship. He says that he did not stop it because he did not want them to consider him to be a rejecting father (as his own father was). The offences were disclosed by his son whilst being questioned by the police in regard to drugs related offences. At that time, the daughters were in their late twenties and early thirties. They both gave full statements to the police. He considers that it was easier to be a father to his son than to his daughters (because of their sexual demands on him). He thinks that he was a good father to all of his children, but acknowledges that his offences were 'wrong'.

Martin has had some contact with his family during his sentence, by letter and phone. He hopes to meet a mature woman through a dating agency on his release from prison, and live on the North Yorkshire coast.

### *Jack*

Jack was sixty years of age at the time of the interview. He was serving a seven-year sentence. He received a five-and-a-half-year sentence for three charges of indecent assault and two of unlawful sexual intercourse. Whilst serving this sentence he was convicted of inciting his two step-sons to commit burglary, and receiving stolen goods; he received an additional eighteen months consecutive to the sentence he was already serving. The sexual offences were all committed against his stepdaughter from when she was ten years old until she was eighteen years old. Jack has one previous conviction for a sexual offence; this was forty years previously when he was twenty. He was convicted of unlawful sexual intercourse and received a nine-month prison sentence. Jack also has many

previous convictions for offences of dishonesty. He was first convicted of an offence when he was thirteen years old, for the theft of a watch: he was sent to 'Approved School'. He has subsequently served six custodial sentences for a variety of offences of dishonesty. The longest prison sentence that he had received prior to his present sentence was a three year sentence when he was twenty-one years old. Prior to his current offences, however, Jack had not been convicted of any offence for twenty-nine years. At the time of arrest, he was living with his wife and her daughter (his victim); they had lived together (sporadically) for fifteen years. He continued to maintain some contact with some members of his family, including his wife. Prior to his arrest, he had been unemployed for five years: this he attributed to his having a criminal record.

Jack's earliest memory is of walking with his father to the local pit (colliery) and going to flower shows, near the colliery, with his father and mother. He thinks that he was about five at this time, although he had not started school. He lived in a small mining town with his parents. His maternal and paternal grandparents lived nearby and were significantly involved in his early childhood. He was particularly close to his maternal grandmother. On one occasion, when she was ill, he stole some flowers from a neighbour's garden and gave them to her. The local police officer rebuked him and 'gave him a slap' but no formal proceedings were taken over the matter. He spent much time with this grandmother; he remembers her talking about his mother as a child and her deceased husband (a grandfather that he could not remember) who was a coalman. He remembers his grandmother keeping two horses in the back yard of her house. He also spent time with his paternal grandmother and fondly remembers her making him fresh bread and jam sandwiches for him.

He has very vague memories of having a younger brother Ray who died in infancy. He clearly recollects the baby dying on his mother's knee when he was about five or six years old. He noted that he had on many occasions tried unsuccessfully to find his baby brother's grave.

At the age of six, he was admitted to hospital where he remained until he was thirteen or fourteen. His explanation of why he was admitted to hospital is unclear and in many ways characteristic of how he may have experienced it as a child. He remembers being with his maternal grandmother and falling off a wall at her house. He then was unable to walk properly. He was admitted to a variety of hospitals, all of which were at some distance from where his parents lived. He was in plaster from his waist down for many months. He received regular visits from his parents and grandparents. It was while he was in hospital that he learned of the death of his maternal grandmother. This caused him much distress.

Whilst in hospital, he says that he had no formal education. He was taught to read by a hospital cleaner, and the American servicemen, who were also in the hospital, informally helped his education by talking to him about books and reading. It was when he was nine that he had his first sexual experience. He describes himself as being sexually harassed by a girl one year older than himself, who was in the bed next to him. He found her verbal and physical sexual advances unpleasant. He spoke to his father who told him that she did not mean any harm by what she was doing. He was greatly relieved when she left the hospital. Although he was in hospital for approximately eight years, he



only remembers being allowed to go home 'on leave' on once or twice. He remembers these occasions fondly and commented that the whole community came to see him and people shared cups of tea in the back yards of the houses. Immediately prior to being discharged from hospital, he remembers the physiotherapy that helped him to learn to walk again.

When he returned home he was put in school. Although he had much 'catching up' to do, he recalls that he did this well in the academic, musical and athletic areas of activity. He has a memory of one teacher asking him to obtain him cheese (all food was rationed at this time). When he was able to do this the teacher befriended him. At school, he had one major fight where he was picked on by one of the school bullies, who was also a school prefect. Jack had had no previous experience of fighting, but considers himself to be a 'natural' because he easily beat the bully and was not troubled by anyone else in the school seeking to fight him. Later in life he fought in boxing booths.

Apart from making friends at school, Jack also made friends with other boys at the newsagents where they all had delivery jobs. It was at this time, that he describes himself starting to make the wrong kind of friends – young people who were regularly committing crimes. It was this social group, Jack considers, that lead him into a long life of crime.

Although, Jack describes his relationship with both of his parents as being 'good', and also their marital relationship as being 'good', he describes himself witnessing his father regularly hitting his mother. The violence occurred most often after they had been drinking. On a number of these occasions, he noted

that his father and himself almost came to blows, but he was unable to hit his own father.

During the Second World War and up to shortly after Jack was discharged from hospital, Jack's father was in the RAF. He remembers him being pursued by the Military Police for not returning promptly from a period of home leave. Jack recalls his father playing football with him and also taking him fishing. His father also taught him that not all Germans were bad people and, this Jack considers to have been a very important lesson. However, his father also told him that it was wrong to hit women and Jack said that this maxim confused him, because his father regularly hit his mother.

Apart from his sexual experience in hospital, Jack had one girlfriend in his early teens and then had his first experience of sexual intercourse with a married woman who was fifteen years older than he was. The relationship lasted approximately six months and ended when the woman and her husband left the area. Jack married when he was twenty-three and remains married. However, during this period, he has had two other significant relationships with other women and has children by both of them. He has said that he wants no contact from his children when he is released from prison, except for his nine-year-old daughter (the child of his last extra-marital relationship). Unlike all of his other children, he spent a lot of time with her until she was five-and-a-half and he started his present sentence. He has not seen her since. On release from prison, he intends to fight through the courts to have supervised contact with her.

On leaving school, Jack worked for the National Coal Board where he trained as a plumber. He worked for this employer for two-and-a-half years and fondly remembers the camaraderie of the work force. On leaving the pit he worked as a self-employed plumber and then worked for a friend in his antiques business. When he had learned enough about the trade, he started his own business. During his employment, Jack also served a number of custodial sentences for offences of dishonesty.

He was also trained by a friend to be a boxer and he used to win fights and therefore money in boxing booths at local fairs. He also was occasionally involved in bare-knuckle fights. He said that he did not start drinking alcohol until after a fight when he was aged thirty-eight. Thereafter, however, he became a heavy drinker and was drinking heavily at the time the offences were committed.

Jack was deeply affected by the deaths of both of his parents and admits that, many years later, he still misses them. On release from prison, he hopes to spend the rest of his days (which he thinks will be few) with his wife, away from all previous family contacts except, perhaps, for supervised contact with his youngest daughter.

#### *Dennis (61)*

Dennis was sixty-one years of age at the time of interview. He was serving a seven-year sentence for an offence of rape against his granddaughter who was aged ten at the time of the offence. He had no previous convictions of any sort prior to this sentence. At the time of the offence, he was living with his wife in a

house that he owned. The couple had been married for forty-one years. They have five children aged from twenty-five to thirty seven years old. At the time of arrest, he was working as a self-employed plant operator, which he had been doing for thirty years.

Dennis is the oldest of seven children. His earliest memory is of being on his bicycle in the garden of his parents' semi-detached house. Also in the garden, he remembers there being a pram in which lay his sister. He lived in a seaside town. His father worked as a bus driver and Dennis remembers cycling to the end of his road to wave to his father as he passed in his bus. He remembers being towed, on his bike, to the beach by his mother who was also pushing a pram. At this time he recalls the pattern of life being 'hectic' because it was towards the end of the Second World War and German planes were still occasionally spotted and he remembers having to race to the air-raid shelter. He remembers his father taking him to see the *Coronation Scot*, a famous steam train, pass on its way to Glasgow. He also remembers his mother and grandmother baking on Mondays and Tuesdays, and being taken to the shop to queue for food which they bought from their ration books. He spoke fondly about the friendliness of the neighbourhood – playing in a group of twelve or so children (boys and girls) and the adults supporting each other ('in and out of each other's houses') with practical tasks. Nobody's house was locked.

He did not particularly remember his first day at school, but he does remember that his pet dog and rabbit used to walk with him to school and be waiting for him to come out of school. He did not have any particular friends at junior school. The only two names that he could recall from this period were the name

of the headmaster and the name of the school bully. He had a number of hobbies whilst at junior school; collecting cigarette cards and milk bottle tops being of particular significance. He also vividly remembers some of the games he played at school especially with milk bottle tops. His mother would take him to school until he was old enough to go by himself. His father had nothing to do with him in school, because his father was out at work all day. His mother would attend parents' evenings. He remembers being mocked by other children because he did not like playing football. At the age of eight he attempted to offset the mockery by asking his parents for full football kit and he played with his peers; within minutes, he had broken his leg. Thereafter he avoided football. He similarly avoided playing cricket at school. He comments, however, that he was not too severely mocked because he was particularly good at making model aircraft and this gained him a sort of kudos amongst his peers. He noted that he would occasionally go with his father to a nearby large town and visit model exhibitions.

From approximately the age of eight or nine, Dennis would arrive home from school and the house would be empty. His father would be at work and his mother would be at the cinema. She apparently visited the cinema most weekday afternoons and did not return home until the early evening. He would make unusual sandwiches for his brothers and sisters when they arrived home from school. When he was ten or eleven, Dennis' maternal grandmother died and within twelve months, his maternal grandfather had also died. The death of his maternal grandmother particularly upset him because he regularly spent time talking to her and she showed an interest in him. However, at the death of her mother, Dennis's own mother retired to her bed and did not actively

participate in family life for a number of years. He remembers his father becoming responsible, along with himself as the eldest child, for the care of both the other children and also his mother. His father would come home mid-afternoon to care for his wife and then return to work, coming back to the family home in the early evening. The children would generally have looked after themselves, but Dennis remembers his father bathing the younger children and reading them all stories.

The move to secondary school was uneventful for Dennis. He moved with his peer group and maintained his relationships with his 'gang' of friends. He remembers his childhood (at both levels of schooling) as being a time of happiness without much money. He believes that the streets and the beach were much safer places for children to play than they are now. He recalls being placed in the C stream at school and enjoying practical subjects such as woodwork but particularly technical drawing. He fondly remembers teachers who spent extra time with him to help him understand things that he found difficult. Although he did not enjoy sport at school, he did enjoy playing on the beach and sand dunes on bikes and go-karts with groups of friends. These groups were exclusively male.

He remembers having a few girlfriends, but these were solely platonic relationships and he spent much time with these friends playing board games in their houses. He did, however, speak of a relationship that he had with a young woman who was probably three or four years older than himself. This relationship lasted approximately two years. He met the woman regularly and they seem to have talked of many things, including 'sexual knowledge'. Dennis

acknowledges that she taught him much about sex, but is insistent that their relationship was in no way sexual. He states that he was a virgin until he married his wife.

Dennis considers that leaving school and beginning an apprenticeship was a very important step in becoming a man. He said that although he had friends and associates whilst he was at school, there was a tacit agreement that on leaving school the workplace and workplace relations would take precedence over ties from school. He obtained an apprenticeship as a cinema projectionist. The hours of work required by this job meant that he did not have leisure time when most of his peers did. He spent his leisure either swimming or making models. He rarely swam in swimming baths (because of the cost of admission) but he would often swim with a workmate across a local bay. The trip would take two hours each way. The man with whom he went swimming was not, Dennis asserts, a close friend.

When Dennis was sixteen his father moved to a town in the midlands where he had obtained work. The family moved with him. Dennis was slightly irritated but quickly obtained work in a local cinema. After eighteen months, the cinema business was failing. He obtained work in local factories. At the age of seventeen-and-a-half, just prior to his National Service, Dennis and a friend joined the army for twenty-two years, with an option to leave after three years. He left the army after three years because he wanted to be near his parents. He found work driving a van for the local Co-op. Dennis then met and married his wife. His mother strenuously opposed the marriage, to the extent that she stole her husband's wedding clothes and punctured the tyres of his car in an attempt

to prevent him consenting to the marriage (Dennis was under twenty-one and parental consent was therefore required). The wedding did occur and following it Dennis and his wife lived for a few months with his wife's family. They then obtained a flat near to the workplaces of both himself and his wife. Their first son was born approximately one year after they married. Dennis maintained regular contact with his father who worked part-time in the Co-op garage. He had infrequent contact with his mother. Shortly after the birth of their first son, the couple moved back to the seaside town where Dennis had lived as a child and young man. He obtained work as a mechanic for the council bus company and his wife looked after their son.

Dennis and his wife subsequently had four more children – three boys and one girl – with roughly a two-year gap between each of them. For much of the childhood of his older children he had little to do with them because he worked as a long-distance lorry driver, and he mostly saw his children only at the weekends. He recalls his relationship with his two younger sons being different because he had had a heart attack and was convalescing at home for much of their childhood.

He has variously worked as a driver, a mechanic and an antiques dealer. He and his oldest son worked initially as scrap dealers but this soon became a successful antiques business. The business ceased when he had a very serious accident whilst repairing a car. Following the accident, and somewhat perplexingly, Dennis reported that his oldest son did not speak to him for many years.



Dennis was charged with offences of rape and indecent assault against his oldest son's daughter. Dennis steadfastly denied that he had raped his granddaughter. He pleaded guilty to the charges, he says, because of poor legal advice. He admits that he had touched his granddaughter all over her body, but only in bathing her as a small child. Dennis had appealed against his conviction but was considering dropping his appeal because it may extend the time he spent in prison. In interview he began to identify another person as being the rapist of his granddaughter, but when he was reminded of the consequences of such a disclosure (see Chapter Six) he decided to stop this part of his story. Following the disclosure of the (alleged) offence, his son (the father of the victim) subjected him and his wife to a sustained campaign of terror and intimidation. His son also alleged that his mother (i.e. Dennis's wife) was centrally involved in the sexual abuse. She was, however, never charged. Some of his children remained loyal to Dennis and some believed their oldest brother and were extremely hostile to their father and mother. Shortly after being sentenced, Dennis's house was burned down. He suspects one of his sons of being responsible, but decided not to pursue the matter, because to do so may invalidate his insurance claim.

Dennis intends to live with his wife on release from prison and maintain contact with his daughter and son who still wish to be in touch with him. He sees his biggest difficulty being able to avoid other allegations of a sexual nature being made against him. He foresees any contact with female children or young female adults as being potentially dangerous to him. He considers that he has been a victim of injustice once and can easily be so again.

## Whose story, whose voice?

In undertaking this research, as I explained in Chapter Three, I chose to use a life hi/story in order to understand more fully the sex offender as a man living in a social and cultural context and not, merely, as an example of a category in a forensic psychology typology. In Chapter Three, I outlined Plummer's (1995) 'contamination continuum'. He suggests that the presentation of life hi/stories ranges along a continuum from the material being solely the voice of the person whose life is narrated, to, at the other end of the continuum, a commentary by the academic researcher, in which the voice or voices of the life story-tellers is lost. Ideally, I wanted to use as much of the men's own words as possible and present them in such a way that they gave a sense of the 'full story' that emerged from our interviews. However, for the present purposes this has proved difficult: even with radical editing, the stories remained substantial. Yet to submit a thesis with four volumes of appendices is, perhaps, neither an elegant means of presentation nor particularly helpful to process of examination.

In Chapter Three, I suggested that in this study I was adopting a *systematic thematic analysis* approach to analysing and presenting the data. Plummer, (1995; p. 61) describes this as where:

... the participant is more or less allowed to speak for him – or herself but where the researcher slowly accumulates a series of themes – partly derived from the participant's account and partly derived from social scientific theory.

A series of the themes have already shaped the interview schedule and focus on understandings of what it is to be a man in relation to family, school, friends, and work; interwoven in this consideration is how men construe themselves in terms of feelings, thoughts and actions. These themes are similar to those

adopted by Connell (1995) in his study of three different groups of men. Connell used life history approaches but analysed his data using a tripartite model of the structure of masculinity. This model considers (a) power relations; (b) production relations; and (c) 'cathexis'.

However, this framework had the potential difficulty of losing the men's stories in sociological analysis. I did not want the profile of each man to disappear into a generalised discourse. However, to retain a coherent sense of each man *and* use Connell's tripartite analytical structure did not seem possible unless the presentation of this study at least doubled in length. I then considered using just one of the dimensions used by Connell. I was particularly interested in considering 'cathexis' – which I translated as being concerned with emotions and relationships. I considered looking at *friends lovers and victims*, but once again, the amount of available material seemed too much, if I was to allow each man a voice.

Tony Parker (1969) interviewed eight men and presented his data in the form of linear life stories with very little comment from himself. Approximately two hundred and thirty pages of his book are filled with direct (edited) quotations. Colton and Vanstone (1996) interviewed the same number of men for similar lengths of time as I did. They present their data in the chapters with the following titles: *Subjects' early life experiences; Sexual Development, Educational and Employment Careers; and How abuse was perpetrated*. These chapters are primarily the words of the men they interviewed and in total they occupy one hundred and thirty-six pages. Messerschmidt (2000) summarises the lives of his nine young offenders (three of whom were sex offenders) and intersperses short

direct quotations in his narratives. In the chapter relating to the sex offenders, his quotations, primarily illustrate conceptions of 'manhood' - control, coercion, sexual behaviours - (Messerschmidt 2000; pp 25-49). Whilst there is a sense of the young men in Messerschmidt's work, it comes primarily through his words rather than the words of the interviewees.

In presenting material for this thesis, which has a wider range of theoretical material than Parker, Colton and Vanstone or Messerschmidt, I decided on two strategies. In this chapter, I present brief biographies of each of the men that I interviewed. This enables me to present an overall view of their life hi/stories, which I acknowledge is my version derived from the interviews. Additionally, following Miller (2000) I present their stories in 'cohorts' to clearly demonstrate the age ranges and identify any cohort effects (e.g. the oldest group seemed to describe both a stronger sense of the community in which they were brought up and a starker experience of poverty). The other part of my presentation strategy, involves a return to Connell (1995) and 'cathexis'. I am interested in how men learn about emotions and how they express them in close relationships. It therefore seemed appropriate to consider 'Fathers'. This enables me to consider and present how the men talk about their own fathers and how they talk about being fathers or stepfathers. With the exception of Darren, all of the men had both experiences. Also, focussing on them in a paternal context enables me not to lose sight of the victims in their lives.

The other aspect of analysis that it is important not to lose sight of is the dynamic between the men and myself during the interviews. I use Wittgenstein's (1953) concepts of 'language games' and 'forms of life' combined

with Mac an Ghail's (1994) suggestion that masculinities are developed in three areas (misogyny, homophobia and compulsory heterosexuality) to explore how the dynamic of two men talking develops around these issues. This material is presented in Chapter Ten.

### **Summary**

This chapter is concerned with presenting brief biographies of the men in this study. The biographies derive from long interviews. I present this material using Miller's (2000) notion of 'cohort'. I outline the struggle to find a way of presenting the material, which allows me to use the words of the men themselves, but is not too unwieldy to present in this thesis. I initially consider the tripartite structure that Connell uses to present his material, but this provides too wide an area for elegant presentation. Eventually I concentrate on the emotional dimension identified by Connell and more specifically focus down on the men's experience of their fathers and their experience of being fathers.

## Chapter Nine

### Sons and Fathers

#### Introduction

This chapter is about men and emotional relationships, or, to put it another way, this chapter is about men and their feelings. I have chosen to focus on the role of the father to explore how men learn to express feelings. The focus is twofold: it is on what the men say about their relationships with their fathers; and on how they describe themselves in the role of father including both step-parent and biological parent roles. I wish to portray what men learn about emotions from their fathers, and how they implement or embody this in their relationships with their children.

I present the data in cohorts and mostly choose one representative from each cohort. Presenting the data in this way permits an overview of paternal behaviours throughout the latter half of the twentieth century.

**Cohort One: Darren (23), Wayne (25) and Michael (31), covering birth years 1967-1975.**

#### Wayne

##### *On his father*

*Wayne: ... first memory was basically that it was just me and me mum, my dad. I was born in '72 but my dad was never around 'cause he was in the Forces, so he was here, there and everywhere, going to Northern Ireland ...*

MC: How about your dad in your early years? You say he was away a lot, what, what memories of him do you have, what feelings do you have?

Wayne: *Er, up until 3, 4 weeks ago I hated him. Erm, I hated him in the aspect that we did a lot together when I was, when he was around, and he, he was strong because he wanted to push me into a field that he thought I could specialise in and I had no interest in it and he'd keep pushing and pushing and I just did it because he pushed me into it, erm.*

MC: What field was that?

Wayne: *He's a rugby player and I, don't ... but I play rugby myself but I enjoy playing more now because I can do what I want to do, but when I was younger he'd push me into that and he'd be pushing me into my education and I think that's why I rebelled against everything because he was pushing me into things that I just, wasn't really interested in as a child.*

MC: When you were in your pre-school times, can you remember much about your dad, in those days?

Wayne: *Again, he was here, there and everywhere so there was not a lot, he was, sometimes he was home sometimes he was away, it's not ...*

MC: Do you remember any feelings about that?

Wayne: *(pause) There was times when I'd cry because I wanted him around, because even though I didn't get on too well with him that I needed him there, there was something that I wanted to ask him or something, a problem that I could do with him helping me sort out, even though I should've, had to sort my own problems out 'cause it was like, a thing, that he could help me sort, because he was bigger than I was, he was stronger and he looked, he could look after me more, he was never around when I needed him. When I didn't need him, he was there.*

MC: What about your mum and dad, did you think that they were happy in your early days?

Wayne: *My dad was always out drinking on a Friday, every Friday he'd be out drinking, and it was him, him, him, it was never us as a family. My mum wanted us, to take us abroad, and do things with us as a family because my mum worked as well, just to keep the income, keep us going, keep us afloat, but as long as he had his money for his beer he wasn't bothered and he had his car and he had this and he had that, he was happy, wasn't, wasn't bothered about the family, it was luggage to him.*

MC: What was he in the Armed Forces?

Wayne: *He was a driver, driver come don't know, Driving Instructor, he drove anything up to artic, from motorbike up to articulated trucks and taught people to drive in them as well, so.*

MC: What about sex?

Wayne: ... on that respect I've had two problems with that, because on my mum's side she said you don't have to have sex with a girl to have a relationship, and on my dad's side, yeah you've got to do this, that and the other, you've got to have sex to have a relationship ... My dad was trying to push me into a relationship more, sexual relationship with girls as I was getting older

MC: What are your memories of your dad during your childhood?

Wayne: As I said before, he was never around when I needed him and he was around when I didn't need him. ...

He was strict and he was violent but again, as he, he, it's the way he was and he, born and brought up with 5 other brothers and 6 sisters so it's, that aspect, but he was over the top at times but, we just got on with it, it was just part and parcel of life to me and my brother.

MC: What struck me quite strongly was you saying that you were scared [of your father] here, now, in prison, so what must it have been like for you as a child?

Wayne: Horrific at times, it was horrific at times, I couldn't do what I wanted to do I had to do as he told me to do, be where he told me to be, I didn't have the freedom as a kid that I couldn't do what I wanted, I had to do what he said, when he said, and how he said, erm and if I didn't do it then the consequences would be ... he'd throw anything or hit, hit, hit me or my brother with whatever he could get his hands on.

MC: Can you remember any particular bad beatings?

Wayne: With a squash racket, end of a squash racket.

MC: He beat you with a squash racket?

Wayne: Yeah, because I went out when I was supposed to have stayed in with my brother to do, we were off school, and he hit the pair of us with a squash racket, I went back to school with numerous amounts of bruises.

MC: How old were you then?

Wayne: Erm, 10 or 11-ish, just getting ready to start senior school.

MC: And what was it he beat you for?



**Wayne:** *For being outside with my friends, not being in the house when I was supposed to have been, because my dad was working and so was my mum, left me and my brother at home and we just got bored so, two kids, decided to go out and paid the price afterwards.*

**MC:** Was he sober when he beat you?

**Wayne:** *Yeah.*

**MC:** Was he generally sober when he beat you?

**Wayne:** *He'd, er, flip at the weirdest and wonderful things. I think that was the way he was brought up, if you did anything wrong, then you got hit and it just gone down and down and down with him, and he just continued it with me and my brother, erm and he, he'd say to us that the only time he'd get involved is if something was really bad, but sometimes some of the things were like petty, like going out when you weren't supposed to, but we were kids, you know, off school, bored senseless, got to stay in to do the housework, we did the housework, we were bored, what did he expect us to do, hang around like two zombies basically? So we just took off.*

**MC:** Was there another time it was very bad?

**Wayne:** *I have threatened to leave home 3 times because of him.*

**MC:** At what ages?

**Wayne:** *Very young.*

**MC:** What, say?

**Wayne:** *Anything from 7 to 10 or 11, 3 times I threatened to leave home and on the last time I got as far as the train station, picked me up.*

**MC:** Who's that?

**Wayne:** *My mum and my dad come pick me up and mum said don't, don't go near him, don't, and I just got in the car and mum said don't worry about it, just gonna get you home, I went straight home, straight up to my bedroom, dad didn't go anywhere near me, he was mad with me you could tell, with his temper, the way he looked at me just said it, he wasn't impressed, and he kept saying to me I can't wait for you to turn 16 so I can legally kick you out the house and get rid of you. I think that was just the way he dealt with life.*

**MC:** Was that regular when he was around?

**Wayne:** *His attitude was, he's hostile, he always has been hostile, his attitude to sort any problem out was hit first ask questions later.*

**MC:** Does that involve your mother? Was he violent towards her?

Wayne: *No, he was never violent towards my mother. They were always arguing, but he was never violent towards my mother. I don't know why but he was just, verbally violent to her but never physically violent to her. And never, physically violent. Numerous accounts Mum would always try to pick the pieces up or he'd get drunk and lock the house up so we couldn't get in. I had to break into the house once.*

MC: At what age was that?

Wayne: *Er, my brother was very young, my brother was about 3 so I'd have been about 7, 6 or 7, I had to break into the house through a window so could get the rest of the family in because my dad had got drunk and fallen asleep, locked the house up. But I just thought it was part of life you know, people say oh you've had an horrendous childhood but to me it was just part of my life, I just got on with it. Kept it quiet, just got on with it.*

MC: Why did you keep it quiet?

Wayne: *As I say, to me it felt like part of my life, it was, just wanted to get on with life, get away, get it done, to me.*

MC: But you said keep it quiet, that's...

Wayne: *Keep it quiet from the ... 'specially teachers an' that, if I ever had ... what happened, well me and my brother had a fight, we fell down the stairs, or I fell over.*

MC: Why would you do that?

Wayne: *I, I don't know, probably because I was scared what the reaction would be if the people had got involved towards my family ...*

MC: Had that been said to you?

Wayne: *No, that was just a notion I come up with.*

MC: Your dad hadn't said?

Wayne: *No, no, my dad never, he'd always do it and then, apologise at the end, oh I'm sorry, it was, for whatever reason but that didn't mean anything, just kept happening so I just (pause) basically I just learnt to lie and get through it. But for the wrong reasons I think, I should've just spoke out and the problem could've been solved a lot sooner, instead of going on through the childhood that I went through.*

MC: When did he stop beating you?

Wayne: *When I started fighting back physically and verbally with my brother, when the pair of us were old enough to say look we've had enough of this, we're gonna stand up to him.*

MC: What age was that?

Wayne: *I was at school so I'd have been about 13, so my brother would've been about 9. Between the pair of us we'd had enough and he'd also be, when we were in Nottingham and my dad was working away a lot Monday to Friday and the house was a lot better because he wasn't around so we could relax more and we were just, just me and my brother and my mum so it was more, excuse me (quietly belches), more relaxed.*

MC: It's an odd sort of question, linking it back to that time, do you think your dad, no put it another way, what do you think your dad taught you about being a man?

Wayne: *Nothing. The only thing my dad said, the only thing that came across from my dad was that the way to solve a problem was to hit, first and ask questions later but as I've grown up that's the wrong attitude to have. My brother's still got slightly that in him, and I have in one aspect because yes I am a mummy's boy. If it's anything to do with my immediate family, my brother, my mum, my wife, my son, then I've got a tendency of punching out because I'm protecting what, not my property but is belongs, got something to do, belonging to me. Is, if it's a really bad situation then I will lash out but it takes a lot for me to build up, the anger has to build up so much inside me that I'll just explode but it's very rare that I lash out, I try to sort it out by walking away, assess the situation, come hit it from another angle and I learn that from my mum, quite, at quite a young age. And, but I don't like to get involved in fights, it's not me. I'm not, I wouldn't say I'm a placid person in the aspect that people can walk all over me but it'll take a lot for me to explode, violently and physically as well, I try to just stop back and just look around and think well ... this problem ... this aspect is to, go head on, losing it ...*

MC: Wind back a bit and think about you in the Army (pause). Your decision first, you've told me some of the circumstances but why the Army?

Wayne: *Because of the discipline. Because I wanted to join the Forces, and because of the discipline side of life. I've always said that if I'd stayed away from the Armed Forces I'd have been in trouble a lot sooner than I actually have been, but I never planned to get into trouble. So, I joined the Army, to be disciplined, to see the world and just do something different, my dad had done it and everybody else had done it, I wanted to do it for me.*

MC: Was your dad an influence on you?

Wayne: *Erm, yes and no. He tried to tell me it was the best, it was the crème de crème but it, I also seen the bad side of the Forces, I also seen the hard work you had to do, all the late shifts, that one minute you can walk out the door and say no you're not, you gotta come back we need this doing. So I knew the positives and the negatives but I still wanted to do it for me because I thought, I've gotta do this just to get away, get a life, do something positive. ...*

## As a father

*... When I finished my training I also got married because, I'd planned to get married to my wife but later on in life, I wanted to get used to living with her and doing things like that, but we brought it forward 'cause she got pregnant, and I thought no, I can't have my son living and being without a father, even though I'm going to be x amount of thousand of miles away, I might still be an influence and support him and my wife, so I, we got married, brought it forward ...*

MC: Did your relationship change after you were married?

*Wayne: I resented my son, I was in a ... I resented it because to begin with it was just me and her, and then out pops this little individual, this little lad that's come between us, because she had to spend so much time, first 6 month's I hated him, oh I detested him, because she'd had to spend so much time with him, feeding him, changing him, everything else that, and I couldn't, he was so small, and I just couldn't, I didn't see my son until he was 3 months old.*

MC: Why?

*Wayne: Because I was in Cyprus and she was in England ... And 'cause she was pregnant she couldn't fly, so I asked if I could fly home and I'd pay the price of the air ticket but they said no, you've only got 12 weeks to wait so you just get on with it. So, I was gutted, big time. But I got on with it, then I found out that I had a son and I absolutely got, got absolutely smashed, took me a week to recover but it was wetting the baby's head as they call it. But, didn't do that ever again afterwards. I was proud, I was happy, I wanted everybody, I wanted the world to know that I was a dad that I was actually married with a fabulous son but I wanted to be there ...*

*... I slept together with my wife for the first time in 3 months and I slept with my son, and I couldn't sleep, I could not sleep and she said to me, you're like a bag of nerves, I wanted to poke him, I wanted to pick him up and I didn't want to pick him up, just wanted to wake him up. She goes, 'Leave him alone he's sleeping'. I said, 'I know, but I want to wake him up, want to say hello to him.' She goes, 'No, leave him alone.' When I actually got into bed to get to sleep, I couldn't sleep, 'cause every time he coughed or moved that was it, I was up. What's wrong with him? I just couldn't sleep and the following morning I got out of bed and I looked like death warmed up and my mother-in-law said to me, God you look a state, what time did you get in? I said, I got in at 1 o'clock, I said I haven't slept all night, can't sleep with him in my bedroom. She said why? I said, every time he coughs, or moves whatever, I'm off, boom, what's a matter with him? So they said right, we'll move him. I said no, you can leave him where he is. She goes no, we'll move him. So they moved him, into my mother-in-law's room, I was alright, I could sleep alright 'cause he wasn't around and I was, there was nobody there so I was alright, but when she brought him down and he was crying and he was so little and white and, she went like that, and I went no, walked away, crossed my arms, went no, he was too dinky, too little, he was just, too scared that I could hurt him 'cause I was*

so big, compared to him as a child, and it upset my wife, it always has done, she was crying, she was always crying. I said, what's a matter, what have I done wrong? She goes, don't you want your son? ... I just can't, I feel wrong, it's a case of I'm too big, I'm scared I'm gonna hurt him. But her mum said to her, just leave him, he'll come round. It took me three and a half days before I held my son, it was so hard, I wanted just to hold him, from day one, but I couldn't because I felt I could hurt him because I was too big. I could, I'd wimp 'im, wick 'im, in that pram, ah, we were, ah, Nigel Mansell's got nothing on me in that pram. We were, whoosh, all through town, get him out the pram that was it, woh! Samantha I couldn't do it. After I held him, that first time, I was sat there on the settee and he was in my arms, ah, I relaxed, it took me 20 minutes, he was in my arms, soon as he come to me, I don't know how or why but I think there was a chemistry, 'cause he relaxed, he was always crying, not all, constantly crying, as kids do, but soon as I picked him up, he, he, quiet, and I could just sit in the chair and he'd fall asleep in my arms, it was unreal

... After the 3 days we were alright, I didn't ... after that you couldn't stop me from holding 'im, you couldn't stop me doing anything, erm, even got into changing nappies, everything, I was, the domesticated dad. I even bathed him so, how much I changed him, in a matter of days, hours, that proud I'd take 'im out everywhere, take 'im for a walk, even if I had to go and get the paper I'd have to take little 'un with me just to show him the world, that it, take him across to see my mum and everything, told the world. And one Sat' day, ... first proper weekend that I'd been home, I had this brainwave that I just had to go down town with 'im. So I just said to my mother-in-law, 'cause, I think Samantha had gone for a haircut or something, so I'm going, I'm taking Jamie with me, so I packed a bag up, tell Samantha I'm alright and I'll be down town, going shopping, with little 'un. And I did and I took him down town, now, he's only 3 months old, and I took him into a sports shop, and sports shop, went sports shopping with him, 3 month old kid, and I went round 6 or 7 shops 'cause all I wanted to do was buy him his first pair of trainers. 3 months old and all I wanted to do was buy him his first pair of trainers. Man, sad man, but I did. £20 for a pair of little trainers no bigger than, 2 or 3 inches in length and they looked great. I was proud, but. But I didn't leave 'em on him, I left 'em in the box, ... and I went round and bought this for him and that for him, little bits and bobs, and went back and she went absolutely spare, she goes why didn't you tell me you planned to go and I'd have come with ya? I said, yeah you'd have planned to come with me just to watch me and make sure I did everything correctly and not leave me on my own. I said, he's in one piece, I said he's happy, changed 'im, fed 'im, what more do you want? He's quite happy, he's alright, leave him. And then she said to me, what have you been buying? Not a lot. And I showed her what I'd bought him, just the bits and bobs, few bibs ... gloves, socks, and then she seen the trainers and she went, she just laughed. She said, you're mad. I went yeah, but I love 'im and I had to do it. It was, it was brill. And my mother-in-law said you are out your head and she said, he's not wearing them in this house and I said, yeah, just leave him, nobody'll know, just leave him, he's great. And we spent time together, after that did everything but I had to go back didn't I? That's the worst part of saying goodbye to the family, yeah I'll see you in a few weeks, left 'em June time and they came across I think August, September to join me in Cyprus. As a family, that's when we started our family life in Cyprus, which was different because she'd never been

*away from her family, she's a single, single child and she'd never been away from her family, it was a big jump, get married, have a son, and move away, so it was hard for her but she enjoyed it as far as I'm aware, she never told me different. And we just got on with life, enjoyed ourselves, two young parents, trying, supplying my son, everything he needed, everything he wanted.*

MC: Was your resentment still around?

*Wayne: Come October, November time, it wasn't until October, November then I got used to the idea that he was part of the family and that we had to play ball together. Because I'd now learnt that he was just as much a part of me as he was a part of my wife, it wasn't he was just hers and not mine, we both had to deal with it, he was ours and we had to bring him up together, the best we could, with what we could. But things changed in December when he had his subdural haemorrhage and had to be shipped into hospital and everything else.*

*When I was in Cyprus, my son had a subdural haemorrhage, which is a blood clot to the front and back of the head and initially they pointed the finger at me and my wife, because he was only 6 months old. After x amount of months, 6 months or so, they couldn't prove that it was done by freak accident and they said look we can't prove how it's happened so they put my son on the At Risk Register. And because I said to 'em at the beginning, I want my son with the best doctors even if I've got to fork the bill out myself for the next 10 years, I don't care, and in my eyes it was Great Ormond Street, so soon as he was stable enough to fly, they flew him to England, and when they flew him to England and put him on the At Risk Register, I had to stay in England*

MC: What happened? How did that happen?

*Wayne: We don't know, we've never, haemorrhage is a, blood clot, front and back, we don't know how or why. But that changed, in a big, I'd come back from a night's work and the next, next thing I know he's having an epileptic fit and she's going out of her head, screaming and yelling and crying so I've slapped her, said look, calm down, we don't need this getting out of hand, and that was the first time I'd ever laid a hand on Samantha, in 2 or 3 years, but it was to make her realise that she was trying to make, and it sounds stupid, but to make the situation worse in my eyes because I had a problem, he was having a fit and I didn't need her yelling and screaming and getting all worried 'cause she thought, her initial thought was that he was gonna die.*

MC: Did you find him in the fit?

*Wayne: Yes. And I dealt with the fit, I just let him get on with his fit, and stop. As soon as he stopped, or as he was fitting, I said to her, get dressed, get a bag together, we've got to go to the doctor as soon as he stops. And as soon as he stopped I wrapped him in two blankets, picked him up and I ran, fast as I could, to a neighbour, to get him to hospital, or to a doctor. Their initial thought was suspected meningitis, and they told us that it would have to be, it would be Medivac-ed to the closest hospital, private hospital it was as well.*

MC: To be what sorry?

**Wayne:** *Medivac-ed, by chopper, so in other words the chopper flew to the hospital. Er, so, then they said to us that there wasn't enough room for the parents to go with him. And I said to her, you better go, I'll wait and I was told that there was a car on its way and I'd be there within an hour, and I was still sat there two hours later waiting for a car to turn up to pick me up to take me there. I walked into that hospital and I will never forget it, walked straight in there and I walked straight back out. Seen him with all these tubes and everything on him, I just couldn't, emotion of that, whoomph, brick wall come straight up and I walked straight out, she come running after me and said she needed me, and I said I can't, it hurts so much I just couldn't, emotionally, physically, and as a person I just couldn't stand there and watch him, it was like, wo, I just got away. I got into so much trouble for walking away because.*

**MC:** From Samantha?

**Wayne:** *From the Forces as well, because it took me three days to come round, I disappeared, I just eat and slept for three days and just wasn't interested in 'em, then I got summoned to work, why haven't you been to see your son? And I said I can't face 'im. Why? I can't. They said, you wanna go see him, I said I can't face 'im. So they then arranged the following day for me to go and see my son. They'd taken some of the tubes away and he was not so bad so I could deal with the situation, 'cause he didn't look so bad even though it was bad, and then I had a doctor and a nurse in asking for permission to draw blood off his head, 'cause of the clot and everything else, so they could draw the pressure out of his head. I couldn't sign a paper, I just couldn't, said no I can't do it, and walked away, and Samantha said Wayne come on, this is our son, and it wasn't until she started crying and said that he was our son that it actually physically hit me that this was my son, and that I had the power of the pen, I either signed the paper and sort him out, or I didn't sign the paper and I didn't know how long he'd live, and that was how it hit me, so I signed the paper, and they asked me to sign another one and I asked them what it was for, and they said, this is in case we need to do another one, and I said no, I'm only signing one, if you need to do a sign, do another one I'll sign the other one when I know that you've got to do it, I said I'm not signing two, then you've got my signature, I'm not like that. You know, I said to them, to my wife, that we had to go back and that we, gotta build up together and support each other and there's no point in one of us staying at the hospital where he was round all the best people at the time to look after him, I said he, he just didn't know what was going off around him, I said we need to help each through this. So every other day we were going to the hospital and when we weren't together we were relaxing, well trying to relax, we were trying to sleep and get as much done as possible and it was our, supposed to be our first family Christmas together, which got blown out the window. We did go up Christmas Day, then we came back and, to us it was just another day in the year, because he was up, I wanted to be there to, planned everything to rip his presents with him, and, but it just didn't happen, 'cause he was in hospital. Ended up spending New Year's, on my own 'cause my wife was in England and I ended up in Cyprus.*

[Child and mother were flown to a hospital in England]

*... I had to pack up the house and then go back, everything had to be moved. To Aldershot, after he'd come out of London, everything went to Aldershot, we had to start our life in Aldershot 'cause we didn't know long he was gonna be in hospital for, and so, it was a case of just going from day to day, and after so long he was released and, we were told that we could move on, as the saying is and we moved to Aldershot, started to rebuild our lives, the social workers, and Health Visitors coming to check us, come to check little 'un, check where we live because.*

MC: I was going to ask you, because you said at the ... At Risk.

Wayne: *Yeah, we had it all of it, going through lifestyles and, going into our past and everything, and then.*

How did that make you feel?

Wayne: *Horrible, it was like I didn't have my own life. Somebody was always watching me. I couldn't breathe without somebody.*

MC: But when it was first raised.

Wayne: *I, I, I was so mad, because I was in a room with all these, people, powerful people, people who was higher ranks than I was.*

MC: Army ranks?

Wayne: *Army ranks, telling me that I shouldn't do this and I couldn't do that. I lost it. And I said to him, 'cause when they said they'd put him on the, I said to them well you can go forth and multiply, I said you ain't taking my son away from me. I said he means too much to me, I said if you think, me as an individual, can hurt a six month old boy, I said you're sadly mistaken, I said that, person there, means so much to me in my life it's unreal, and I lost it and walked out, and I phoned my mum and I spoke to her, and she said what's a matter? And I told her, she said look we'll get a solicitor involved, this, that and the other, we know. I said no listen, and I thought great, somebody's helping me, somebody's on my side, somebody believes me, then they brought me back, come back after I'd calmed down and my wife was in bits.*

MC: Was the allegation against you?

Wayne: *More me than her. But they couldn't prove anything. But I wish we could've done, I could've, cleared my name, that's all I wanted to do, I had nothing to do with, I just wanted to clear my name, er, but nothing could be proved so we stayed on the At Risk Register, I think it was 6 to 12 months,*

[Later – having spoken fully about separations and stresses of army life and his offences]



MC: Is your marriage broken up?

Wayne: *My marriage is on and off.*

MC: What about you as a father?

Wayne: *I am still a father, my, I, I, I haven't seen my, well I see my son once a month, first time I seen him some time this year was, was about March, which was the first time in 12 months and my little boy just give me the biggest cuddle and he said I love you daddy and I miss you and there was, no, it was as if we'd never been away from each other.*

MC: How did that make you feel?

Wayne: *Great, because, I'm not taken away, I'm still wanted as a father, I feel resented because I'm not wanted as a husband, but I am wanted as a husband at the moment, just taking it day by day, but I'm glad that my son still wants to know me. But I'm ashamed because I'm in here, he doesn't know I'm in here, he doesn't know I'm in prison, he thinks I'm away working, best way to be for a six year old because it's only gonna be a case of somebody find out, he's gonna get trouble at school, I don't want that.*

*... hopefully in years to come he'll forget it, 'cause he's only six, by the time I get out he's gonna be seven, seven-and-a-half, and hopefully, that part of his life, hopefully, ... he's not gonna remember it too much, what's happened to his father, but I've been lucky 'cause we get on so well and he keeps saying that he wants me to come home and he's told me that I've got to buy a new mountain bike and I've got to take him shopping, and I've got to do this and I've got to do that. I've got a list as long as my arm.*

*... Would I change any of my life? No. I've enjoyed my life, even though I'm in here, don't get me wrong I have not enjoyed doing what I've done, relating to my offences but prison has come with it (pause) but I wouldn't change anything in my past.*

MC: Not the beatings from your dad?

Wayne: *No, it's all, it's made me the person, it's made me stronger-willed, if I'd have changed the beatings from my dad then it could have had a knock on effect and I could've been a completely different person, I could've been worse than I am now.*

MC: In what way?

Wayne: *I could've been easier to walk over, I could've gone one of two ways, I could've gone easier to walk over or I could've gone to violence, more to violence, I don't know.*

Cohort Two: Roger (36), Andrew (38) and Brian (39), covering birth years 1959-1962.

Andrew

*On his Father*

MC: What contact with your dad during this time [early years]?

*Andrew: Not a great deal. I got, my, my, I've not got a lot of memories of my father, as actually taking part in my life, he was, I say he was working, it was always my mother was there with me throughout the day, he would come, he wasn't a drinker, he did never go out (pause) but I got no memories, there's nothing ...*

*... Well, school was just normal, school was all right, I say apart from the teasing I had, 'bout my mam.*

MC: You didn't talk to your dad about that?

*Andrew: No, not at all, I didn't talk to him much.*

*... I've been a Wrexham football supporter all my life, I mean my father took me to my first ever football match ... was, I couldn't have been more than eight.*

MC: What do you remember?

*Andrew: Yeah, I remember clearly, it was a [local] match. Yeah, it was, and that's when I really became interested in, in the football and Wrexham being my local side or as local as you could get, that's the team I started supporting and, from about eleven on, I used to go down on my own, on the coaches, 'cause every Saturday there'd be anything up to ten coaches leave our town to go ... So from eleven on, I started going every week.*

MC: Do you remember the, your father asking you if you wanted to go, 'cause you've already said that your father's very much a distant figure, so was that something that surprised you?

*Andrew: I don't think it was planned to go as such. We had relatives in Wrexham, my grandmother's brother, lived in Wrexham, Uncle Jim, and, I think we were down, for the day, me, my mam and my dad to see Uncle Jim and Auntie Ann and I think it just came up from the visit, I don't think it was planned, as such to take me, it was just three of us went down on the day.*

MC: Do you remember how you felt about it?

Andrew: *Yeah, it was, I loved it, brilliant, I mean it was ... I remember sitting up on the toilet wall to watch the game because I couldn't see, the crowd was that big, so dad sat me up on the toilet wall so I could see, and, oh yeah it was great.*

MC: Was it any more special that your dad was taking you, did you feel something special?

Andrew: (long pause) *No. I didn't put any significance to that.*

MC: Did it make you feel different towards your dad? .

Andrew: *No.*

Andrew: *... I don't think our mam knew how to control me. Father never tried, I mean, if he had tried I think I would've turned on him, if he'd tried to put some kind of restraint on me I would've turned and gone for him and he never tried, I mean we, there's nothing between me and my father, there is absolutely no feelings at all.*

MC: Neither good ones nor bad ones?

Andrew: *No, I've just got no feelings for him, he's just a nonentity ...*

MC: Let's backtrack, see, you, you talked about the, offences starting as you and your wife were on split shifts. Can you talk me into that a bit? From where do you think's the best part to begin?

Andrew: *The best part to begin, is '91 when my mother died. I mean that was, to sit and hold your Mam's hand while she died is not, not nice and she was only 59.*

MC: What did she die from?

Andrew: *I don't really know what she died of, she'd had a bad heart, she'd had a heart bypass, back in the 70s and she had a lot of trouble with water retention. ... our Daisy was admitted on the Wednesday, pneumonia and she was, she was bad, she was really bad way and the same afternoon my mother was admitted, to the same hospital, with, she had water retention trouble. And, so, we was ... the hospital, things weren't looking good for either of 'em, we really thought we was going to lose Daisy, she was on drips, and she was in an oxygen tent, ... she was in a really bad way, so, and this was on the Wednesday. On the Friday, there was no change, she was still the same and our mam was getting worse and, on the Friday afternoon a message came through to the children's ward, could I make my way over to where my mam was. So I left Linda with Daisy and I went across to the ward and they was taking the drips, ... my mam, the monitors off her, she was still alive then but the nurse said we can't do any more for her so they were just gonna let her die and I said you can't do this, I said she's still alive. She just said sorry Mr Robinson we can't do no more for her. So, my dad was there, our Pat, our Jean ... Linda come across, and she died. And then, (pause)*

MC: We can stop for a moment.

Andrew: *No ... (pause). I can't understand what ... why they stood back and let it. They never explained to me why, never explained to me what they couldn't do for her, so, ... we left them to, to tidy her up and we went back to the ward.*

MC: Were you able to talk to her, as she was dying?

Andrew: *I was told, I don't think she could've known.*

MC: Was everybody else trying to talk as well?

Andrew: *No, they were just ... our dad ... It was, ... they was just unplugging her (pause). She never spoke to me before she died, she did speak to Linda.*

MC: Was that because you weren't there or?

Andrew: *I was, I was on the ward with Daisy and Linda had gone across to see our mam, so she spoke to Linda before ...*

MC: What did she say?

Andrew: *She said Daisy'd be alright, as if she knew, and that's the weird part about it 'cause when we went back to the children's ward, Daisy was sat up in bed playing with her teddy bear, we'd left her, she was virtually unconscious and it was so weird. It was ... how she come round so quick after our mam died, it's as if, she died for Daisy to live like, really ... and she recovered totally, next day, discharged her the next morning, yeah ... Gospel truth, Saturday morning she come home with us, it was unbelievable, never experienced anything like it (pause).*

MC: Did you all go to the funeral?

Andrew: *... that was something I didn't want, I wanted her buried, I wanted her to have a headstone and, somewhere I could go and look after the grave, spend some time with her, but he wouldn't have it, he said she wanted to be cremated, that was her dying wish, she never said nothing to me, so she's somewhere in the middle of a field ... in a plastic bag, ... no ... no headstones, no nothing, I've always ... to the crematorium and I can get her ashes and bring 'em home ... He didn't want her when she was alive and he didn't want nothing to do with her when she died.*

MC: How do you know she, he didn't want her when she was alive?

Andrew: *(long pause) He made her life a misery, especially with the grandchildren you know.*

MC: What did he do?

**Andrew:** *He wouldn't do anything, that's the problem. The first year we were married, our mam came to the house and I think she spent about 25 minutes with us, she said I've got to go back, he's waiting ... Now, if you knew my father when our mam was alive, he had bad legs, he had varicose veins, he did bad legs, he had bad eyes, using drops, cataracts and God knows what and he had a bad back, and he couldn't do nothing for himself, couldn't get out of bed and put his stockings on, couldn't get into bed and put back support on, couldn't put his eye drops in, nothing, our mam had to do everything for 'im. I think when she died, and he was living on his own, totally, with no, no, carers going in or nothing he changed, started going out, five nights a week, not drinking heavily but he'd go out five nights a week, started seeing other women, he started living his life, he started living the life that our mam wanted and he wouldn't have and she couldn't have our first Christmas with us as a married couple, because of 'im, she brought the presents over for the kids, she stopped twenty-five minutes and she had to go.*

**MC:** Was he violent towards her?

**Andrew:** *No, he never ... If he'd laid a hand on her I'd have took his head off. He's got some truth to learn when I get out, and he's gonna learn, he couldn't have kids, not our mam, that's why I was adopted but she always said she couldn't have kids, wasn't her it was him, impotent, can't have children.*

**MC:** Your mum told you that?

**Andrew:** *My mother told me that. She didn't tell me, she told my wife, she told Linda, Linda told me and she said don't you say a word while your mam's alive, I never did ... I get out.*

**MC:** What other things are you going to say?

**Andrew:** *To him?*

**MC:** Yeah.

**Andrew:** *(pause) I don't, I don't know (pause) depends, depends on how I am.*

**MC:** At your worst, what would you say?

**Andrew:** *I might not say anything, I might just hit him (long pause). Tell 'im I hate 'im and tell 'im why I hate 'im.*

**MC:** Why do you hate him?

**Andrew:** *'Cause he deprived my mother of all she wanted ... Deprived me of what I wanted.*

**MC:** Which was?

**Andrew:** *A father. Somebody, somebody who'd take me and keep a hold of me. I suppose that's (pause).*

## As a Father

**Andrew:** *It was, well somebody that wanted me, somebody that cared for me, somebody that was there for me, but then there was Micky and Rosie [step-children]. ... She was on the rebound, she wanted stability in her life, I was looking for stability and we sort of clicked, very quick, but I think if we'd hung it out like we'd originally planned, the 12 months then we may not have got married.*

MC: Right. How did you get on with the children?

**Andrew:** *Great ... Right from the outset. It was brilliant, used to call me Nipper, that was my nickname, yeah it was fantastic (pause). She had a lot of problems with her first husband.*

MC: The children's father?

**Andrew:** *He was a right slimeball. He used to come to the house and threaten us, expect that's how I ended up one day, put 'im over the bonnet of the car, ripping 'is head off, something ...*

MC: Were you charged?

**Andrew:** *No. 'Cause she explained what had happened, that he'd come to the house, he was mouthing off and, his kids ... blah, blah, blah, and I just, he went so I just went for 'im ... so there were no charges made.*

MC: Was he injured?

**Andrew:** *Well he had a lot of bruises on his throat, you know, he's lucky he got away from me 'cause if he hadn't, I might've put him, I might've put him away, as far away as possible, but ...*

MC: Which was where?

**Andrew:** *Dead. 'Cause he was a creep. Didn't happen, so.*

MC: Was that a regular feature of your relationship?

**Andrew:** *No, cause he didn't bother again. We didn't see 'im again. In fact, he signed the children over to me for adoption.*

MC: Without talking to your?

**Andrew:** *He wanted redundancy money. He didn't want Linda to have any of it. So he said, you have the kids, I'll have the money, that's what he did, he signed 'em over to us for adoption, so I adopted 'em ...*

MC: How old were they then?

Andrew: *Rosie was six, Micky would've been, what four-and-a-half.*

MC: What did they think of it?

Andrew *They loved it. Well they didn't know, they didn't really know 'im, 'cause he walked out on, walked out on Linda when she was, (pause) she was carrying Micky, when he walked out, which would've put Rosie at eighteen months or so ...*

MC: How, you, did you, how long did it take yourself to see yourself in a fatherly role?

Andrew: *Towards Micky and Rosie? (long pause) I don't know. I mean. Fatherly role?*

MC: ...[W]hat role do you see yourself in relation to them then. Let's take fatherly role out of it.

Andrew: *Well I was a provider. I was willing to provide though, willing to provide for Linda even though they weren't mine (pause). Adoption felt right.*

*... Adoption felt right because I was adopted, so I knew that it was possible for children to go into an adopted, you know adoption situation. There was differences with me, and them because they was still members of 'is family, their natural father's family, living not so far away, who, used to see them and talk to them, especially when they started school, 'cause their own kids were in the same school so they used to see 'em and talk to 'em and mention their dad and all that to 'em. I guess it was confusing for the little ones, 'cause they didn't really know what was going on and that caused a lot of problems, that caused a lot of arguments, between me and Linda, not us, personally but, us two and, that side of the family, there was a lot of arguing about it.*

MC: What were you arguing about?

Andrew: *Well the fact that they were still, poking their noses in, to two children that basically weren't anything to do with them any more, because their father had signed away his rights to 'em and we didn't want 'em, mentioning their father, we didn't want them talking, so there was a lot of friction between the two different sets of families.*

MC: Did you ever get into fights?

Andrew: *Came close but never actually came to any blows. Not after I had 'im over that car, I mean I had words with 'is brother in law, he worked in the same pit as me, so, he was always, times when we would meet each other, it was always words, it never came to blows.*

MC: What sort of words?

Andrew: Well, he was mouthing off.

MC: Saying what?

Andrew: He's got a right to see 'em, they're his kids and all this, I said he's got no fucking rights at all, they're not his kids ... my children, it was just that kind of thing (pause). So, I can't say I ever felt fatherly towards 'em, really, mainly I think because, I never had a father figure, and I don't suppose I was a father, true father, I don't think to be honest I was a true father to my own daughters.

MC: What is a true father?

Andrew: No, never give them the attention (pause), I wouldn't sit, help them with their homework, especially ... 'cause (pause), I don't know, perhaps I was afraid that I couldn't do it, 'cause I'm not, you know, facts and figures and that, I'm not, brilliant, but perhaps I had a bit of a, a mental, image of myself ... them so it was always their mam who would sit down and help 'em with their homework and stuff, I mean I wasn't a father to Micky in as much as taking him down the field and playing football with 'im.

MC: You weren't? You didn't do that?

Andrew: No, very rare. He was mammy's boy.

MC: Did you bait him with that?

Andrew: No I never baited him but I used to get my hair off with him, especially when he started school, and if anybody picked on him he'd come home crying, or he'd come home miserable and showing off and, and once I found out what the trouble was I, I would have a go at him, say well look you've got to stand up for yourself. I wouldn't put up with ... bigger than me, picking on me, I wouldn't have it.

MC: Did you teach him how to stand up for himself?

Andrew: I tried, but he, some people got it in 'em, some people you can bring the aggression out of 'em, while our Micky was very quiet, he was very affectionate towards his mam, he loved his grandma, his granddad ... but he has no aggression and that used to really get my back. Now Rosie was exact opposite, she was like a cat out of hell if somebody turned her, she'd fight and she'd swear, and, me and her, we were very close, which left ... but that's a different story, so I could relate to Rosie, I could see a lot of Rosie or a lot of myself in Rosie even though she wasn't mine, the way she behaved and the way she stood up for herself.

MC: Did you like, like both of them?

Andrew: I liked 'em both, ... I wouldn't see no harm come to 'em. But there was always that age that Rosie had over Micky, and it worked the opposite way with Linda, she was all for Micky and she never had a lot of time for Rosie, 'cause Rosie was so, flighty and so straight to the point, if she was told no by



*her mother it'd be bloody hell. It would, with Micky he'd say alright mam, but with Rosie, if she wanted something and it was a no off her mam, she'd fly off the handle and she'd come and see her dad, and her dad'd usually say yes.*

MC: When your own children came along, how old were Micky and Rosie?

*Andrew: Rosie was, Daisy was born '88, Rosie would've been coming up to her ninth birthday, ... eight-and-a-half, Micky was ...seven, when Daisy was born.*

MC: How did, the family, how did you all individually cope with that? Were you at the birth?

*Andrew: No, I missed it, I was drunk (pause) Christmas Eve, no Boxing Day, ... missed her by 5 minutes, ... and I was drunk and my mother couldn't wake me, ... that didn't go down very well (pause).*

MC: What was the reaction?

*Andrew: She, she had to have caesarean, 'cause she got into difficulties. It wasn't so much Linda's reaction, it was my reaction, I felt so fucking useless, at that time of my life, I thought you, this is the one time in your life you're wanted, and you failed everybody (long pause). It devastated me, it absolutely devastated me (pause). So I was determined that if we had another one, which we were planning, 'cause we, with the three, the house we had, we had a nice little house, little terraced house, three was perfect but, she ... again, Nancy, and I was determined then to be at Nancy's birth and that was in 1990 and the World Cup was on so I slept at the hospital, Linda's mam had the kids, and I slept at the hospital, ... she was in, again she had to have, the caesarean because the baby got into difficulties and, the doctor said yes, when we asked him, could I go in to see the birth and anaesthetist said no, not unless she had the epidural, she didn't want it, she said I can't do this, she said I want to go to sleep, he said well if, she's not having the epidural you kiss her goodbye now, and that was his words, I just went for him, I had him against the wall and the nurses had to peel me off him ... he talked about her as if she was a piece of meat and I just fucking ... (pause) so I missed our Nancy being born as well (long pause). I seen her virtually as soon as she, they cut ... head and her neck ... heat lamp and so I was there, waiting for them to bring her through from the theatre so I saw her, virtually within 15 seconds of her being born, I didn't actually see her ... I would've killed him, I really would've killed him.*

MC: Did they call the police or ... ?

*Andrew: No, no.*

MC: How did Linda act to you ... ?

*Andrew: Well she was in distress anyway, 'cause the baby was in distress, that's why, when she said she didn't want it, that's why he said no ... put her under ... (pause)*

MC: It's still very strong with you now isn't it?

Andrew: *Very strong, it is very strong (long pause) ... I think I was too proud ... (long pause) It's gone innit.*

MC: Do you want to explain a bit more?

Andrew: *Mm?*

MC: Do you want to explain a bit more?

Andrew: *(long pause) 'bout what?*

MC: You say it's gone.

Andrew: *It's gone, it's happened, it's over.*

MC: Your role as a father or the moment, what are you talking about?

Andrew: *(pause) My role as a father ... (pause) I've not seen my daughters, ever since Christmas '96, I agreed ... not to ... contact through the courts, I've had no contact at all since April of last year, I haven't spoken, I've sent birthday cards and Christmas cards ... nothing at all happened, so, my role as a father it's, finished ... they've moved on, she's got a new partner, they got, they got their lives, Rosie's got a baby.*

MC: How old's Rosie now then?

Andrew: *She'll be eighteen, next birthday.*

Cohort Three: Martin (59), Jack (60) and Dennis (61), covering birth years 1937-1939.

Martin

*On his Father*

Martin's father had been in the armed forces during the Second World War. He had very little contact with him until Martin was seven.

*Martin: Well, some [of the children in his primary school] had their fathers with them. Some didn't.*

MC: And what did that mean to you?

*Martin: It meant having nothing, and having something.*

MC: So they had something and you had nothing?

*Martin: Yes. Nothing, no Christmas presents or nothing. I remember that. All the other kids that got their dads with them, they go Christmas presents and you didn't. Me and my brother, we had one book, I think it was a Mickey Mouse book, between us. That was it. That was Christmas.*

*Martin: ... things started to get difficult then, when you were seven. It was all right till I was seven. Then my mother went to work, well ... my dad come home, he went to work, then my mother went to work, and I had to look after my brother from that day forward. That was difficult, because I was made responsible for his ... actions. I was only seven. So if he did anything wrong, I got a bollocking for what he did wrong. And if he got a bollocking, I got one for letting him do it. That's how it was.*

MC: Did you get hit as well?

*Martin: On the odd occasion.*

MC: Who hit you?

*Martin: Mother, mostly. It had to be something serious. My brother, he was slow with his toilet, he used to mess himself sometimes. I mean he was only six. And if he did, my mother would tell my dad to give him the belt. That more frightened you than hurt you, because it was an army belt, and he used to fold it over and over, the buckle was in his hand, and us used to literally whack you, but it didn't hurt, it was fright more than anything. It terrified you.*

MC: Did he say anything while he was beating you?

*Martin: No, but he would only do it at her instructions. He would never do it ... if he hit you, it would just be a clip at the back of the head. That's all you used to get from him.*

MC: Did your mother hit you more?

*Martin: Yes, oh yes, she did, she hit us more.*

*... [my parents] argued a lot. My mum told me later in life, they're both dead now my parents, she said I used to cry, and she used to come up and tell me not*

*to cry and not to listen, you know. Because what she used to do, she used to go to work, and then she'd go straight out from work with her friends to the cinema, or so I was told, so we never seen her perhaps till the next night, so we didn't see too much of our mum. As I got towards eight years old, we never seen much of her at all ... She used to come home from work ... she 'd perhaps come back from work and go back out. It was dad we stayed with mostly.*

MC: ... What did they fight about then?

*Martin: ... I can only assume it was about her not coming home, staying out the night, or whatever.*

MC: So was he in, all the time then?

*Martin: Yes. Once he come home from work that was it, he stopped in and she went out.*

MC: And he didn't go out at all?

*Martin: On the odd occasion, they both went out together, mostly a summer evening when they went ... I don't know, they never used to tell us where they were going. They just used to tell us to get to bed at nine, half past eight ... I think it was, and that was it.*

MC: Did the pub feature much, because you said your dad was a brewery driver?

*Martin: No, he didn't drink as such. Even though he had cases of it in the bathroom, he used to have fags in the cupboard, and he didn't smoke. He didn't drink, he didn't drink much. Mind you, my mother told me he did. When he used to go round to the pubs, he used to have a drink in the pub, and sometimes he'd come out a bit sozzled, but I didn't know about that, as far as I was concerned he didn't seem it to me ...*

MC: Who were you frightened of most?

*Martin: Mum. Our mother, I was frightened of most. Definitely. Although if she told Dad to get the belt to you that ... that terrified you, it didn't frighten you, it terrified you, but it wasn't very often. He only did that if it was something serious, like, which wasn't very often. I should think if he hit us with the belt four times, five times throughout our childhood, and that's all he ever did. It was always terrifying ...*

MC: Do you remember what he did it for, for you?

*Martin: Yes, although this ... I'm going up to about ten, twelve years old now. He bought a telly, with them both working they could afford tellies, and good radio stuff, and nice furniture, but we was locked out of that room, they used to put a lock on, and we found out that by unscrewing the screws out, we could get*

*in, and that's what we did. And he come home one dinnertime and caught us, and er ... he whacked us both with the belt, only once. He just whacked you and that's it, out you went. You used to run out of the door, run out into the street. Cos' I said to my mother, she said, "That didn't hurt you, did it?" and I said "Nah". It didn't hurt you, that belt didn't. It was too wide, I mean, it was about that wide (gestures), and folded over and half, and he never hit you with the buckle, he'd have the buckle in his hand, never would hit you with it, anything like that. Mind you, I'm not saying the same for my mother, she might have done (laughs), but she didn't. She just used to like slash out at you, mother, you know. It wasn't all that often you got lashed out at. Only if you gave her too much mouth, she'd definitely ... you used to back off.*

MC: Do you want to tell me the build up to your mum leaving and then tell me about it. We've got, about ten minutes, so its whether you want to tell me now ...

*Martin: I don't ... we didn't know. I mean we weren't told these things, then. I was playing out in the street, it was one evening, a summer evening, the same as it is now, only it was summer, I went running in because I wanted a widdle, and my dad says "Martin, come here". He was sitting listening to his records. I went into the living room to him, and he says, "Your mum's not coming home again, she's not living with us any more". "OK" I says, and off I went, had my wee, went back out and told me brother. That was it.*

MC: How did your brother react?

*Martin: I don't think it bothered him much, neither. Remember, we had hardly ever seen her; we were always with my dad. My dad was my hero, I've got to be honest, my dad was my hero, and I think what he did ... (sighs) put me in here. (Martin is extremely emotional, and is crying).*

MC: It's OK.

*Martin: It's nothing sexual, don't get me wrong. But what he did ... put me in here, I'm sure he did. (Very emotional, crying, again).*

MC: Do you want to explain..?

*Martin: Yes, I'll explain it to you. After my mum had gone, everything was all right, we were just an ordinary family, it was lovely. I enjoyed being in my dad's company, and it were all right. Two years after that, 1954, me and my brother were in bed, we had single beds in the same room, twin beds as they call them. He popped his head in the door, and said, "Well lads, I've got something to tell you, and you've got to tell nobody else. Not your friends, nothing". He said "...or you'll be for the high jump". He said "I'm leaving, with the woman next door" (Pause, still very upset) and me and my brother were going to live with my grandma. I couldn't believe it, (sighs). I was losing my home, my dad, everything, my friends and we were going to have live with our grandmother. I didn't want to have to live with my gran ... Anyway, the next time he come, he*

says "Martin, I'm taking you with us". It was the woman next door he was going off with, I didn't like her, but there you are. And I accepted that ... I was with my dad. I thought to myself, I've not lost my parents ... he wants me. Couple of nights after that, he come and says "I've been talking with your gran, and ... we don't want you to split up, so you're going with Billy, down to your gran's". And that was it. But that was not the finish, that was not the finish. That was in October 1954, and it was getting towards Christmas, and ... the closer it got to Christmas ... we never seen anything of my dad after that. He sort of deserted us. I thought, he's got to send us a Christmas card, you know, for Christmas, and I don't know ... I were fourteen, and I thought he'll put us some money in, half each for me and my brother, ten bob note, you know, five bob each. That was me own ... thingy ... I mean, he'd never said anything. But I assumed that being as we were his kids, he would do that. It got closer towards Christmas ... no card. Christmas Eve, I was ... I've got to be honest; I was full of anticipation now. It was coming towards ... coming from school dinner time, going home to me Gran's - I didn't like living there but we had no choice ... no card. Oh, the bastard. Oh that did hurt me ... I went upstairs and I cried my eyes out (very emotional, crying) I don't know why this is upsetting me now.

MC: Do you want me to stop the tape?

Martin: No, you're all right, go on, carry on. I went upstairs, I cried, I cried, and it made me realise that they didn't want us. They never did. They didn't love us ... nothing. I looked after my brother all them years, and all they did was... walked out on us. I can't describe how you feel when both your parents walk out on you. I can't ... it's total rejection ... absolute ... your parents ... both your parents have left you, and you did nothing, you did nothing to them. And ... in them days there was nobody to turn to ... nobody to ... you was expected to carry on, get on with it ... you know. Now if I'd have told me granny, they'd have thought it was their fault because they were not looking after us right, or they were doing something we didn't like so ... they weren't in anyway, they were working. So I had nobody, I had to just get on with it. It wasn't easy, and I gave them a hard time, my old granny, they were as good as gold, they tried, but it wasn't enough for me ... it wasn't their job to bring me up. My parents had deserted both of us. It hurt me more than it did my brother. I don't know why it hurt me more than it did him. Perhaps because my dad was my hero, you know, and erm ...

MC: And it still hurts you?

Martin: Yes, because I don't know ... I still don't know why they did it, why did they do that? And I still don't know, now. I still can't understand it. But, I swore if ever I have kids of my own I would never let them feel how I feel this day. You'll see how it reflected on my attitude to my kids.

[Lunch break in the interview]

Martin: ... The thing that occurs to me is when you look back on your childhood you think it was all right. When you keep ... like you do ... you realise it weren't quite so good as it ... it brings back things that you'd locked away, sort of thing, and they come out. It really does hurt you, there's no doubt. Pain's been terrific, I'm still traumatised to some extent but its not too bad ...

MC: From this morning?

Martin: Yes.

MC: Do you want to talk a bit about your relationship with your dad?

Martin: Yes, we can do.

MC: So what was it about him that made him your hero?

Martin: *He stuck with us. When mum left us, he stuck with us, and he was good to us, as well. And, it sort of changed him as well. When my mum and dad lived together they didn't get on, and you never knew how you stood with each one. Sometimes you'd go home when we'd been playing out and your dad was in a bad mood, so you used to go back out again, quick, you know. If I met my mum off the bus, she'd say you hadn't better come in for a while because your dad's in a bad mood, and I'd just left him and he was all right, so I assume that they were going to have a row as soon as she'd got home, so we used to stay out. But once she went he was all right, good as gold, really.*

MC: What sort of things did you do with him, you and your brother?

Martin: *Well, we only seen him when he come home from work, we only seen him ever from when he got home, about half five, he used to get home. If it was summer time, we used to be out playing so we didn't see him until ... about nine o'clock we used to have to be in bed then. So we never seen him till about half eight.*

MC: What about food?

Martin: *Err ... food? We had to get our own. Err.... we never had dinners as such. We had them at school and then he stopped them because we couldn't afford to keep doing it. We ate whatever there was in the house. If there was bread and jam, we had bread and jam. If there was bread and dripping, we had bread and dripping. We only had proper meals on Saturday and Sunday.*

(MC): What was Saturday and Sunday like? Did your dad work Saturday and Sunday?

Martin: *No, no, he was at home on Saturday and Sunday. Mostly we had chips Saturday and a proper dinner Sunday. That's all we used to have, chips, he had fish and chips, we had chips. He wasn't very generous with his money. Actually on a Saturday afternoon we used to go to the three-penny rush, actually it was ten pence. We only used to get nine pence spending money and our granny used to give us that. He arranged for us to go to granny's on Saturday, that's right, and we had dinner there sometimes. She used to give us nine pence and we asked him for a penny to make it up ... he used to moan like hell because we asked him for a penny. (laughs)*

MC: Three penny rush, is that the pictures?

Martin: *Yes, the afternoon matinee, at the local cinema.*

MC: So, did he spend any time with you at the weekend?

Martin: *Yes, the most of the time we were out for most of the time.*

MC: So I'm trying to get a sense of what it was that he did, or how he was with you that made him such an important figure. He stayed with you and I take that, as being very important, but was there other stuff? You said it changed him in some ways...?

Martin: *Yes, you could go in any time, and you, know, he'd be in a good mood sort of thing and he'd have a laugh and a joke with you. Things like that, and he'd say to us have you got any comics, because he hadn't got much else to do, telly weren't much good in them days, and we used to go round to other kids' houses swapping comics, and he used to sit and read the comics with us. Things like that. There was nothing special, he just changed his attitude, as I saw. He was better to get on with.*

MC: Do you think he loved you?

Martin: *In his own way, yes, probably. Well, they never showed any affection, they never showed any affection any way, either of them. We never had a cuddle or anything like that, even if we hurt ourselves. They never cuddled us or anything.*

MC: What would happen if you hurt yourself?

Martin: *If it was pretty bad, they'd put a bandage or plaster on it, that's it. Otherwise you done it yourself. You just got a plaster or something, or you just ignored it. You know how kids are, you just ignore some small wounds. But they never gave us any attention at all.*

MC: Do you remember any good times?

Martin: *Christmas. Once my dad got home. Actually they used to ... when say my brother or me done something wrong, or both of us done something wrong, then the threat from my mother was that she was going to have to stop home and look after us and we wouldn't get no Christmas presents. That was always her threat, because she would have to stop at home and look after us instead of us looking after ourselves. Erm ... and that was her threat. I can't say we ... we never had nothing else through the year, only at Christmas, and we did get good Christmases, so yes, Christmas was all right.*

MC: What was good about Christmas?

Martin: *You got plenty of goodies.*

MC: What sorts of goodies?



**Martin:** *All sorts of toys, you know, mostly toys and books ... yes. You see both going to work did give us a good Christmas but that was all, all the rest was nothing, really. I mean Saturday ... Sunday afternoon, we were not allowed in the house. Except if it was chucking down with rain, then we could come in. Otherwise we were not allowed in the house.*

**MC:** Why not?

**Martin:** *They wanted to go to sleep in the armchairs by the fire, and we made too much noise, so we were chucked out, and we couldn't go in until tea time. Even if it were freezing cold, as long as it weren't raining we were chucked out, that was it. We weren't allowed back in until tea time.*

**MC:** And after fourteen, you talked about ... him telling you that you had to go and live with your Gran ... ?

**Martin:** Yes.

**MC:** After that, what contact did you have with him?

**Martin:** *None ... Till I were about seventeen, I think. I had a motorcycle accident ... Actually; I went up to see him. I was on crutches. Erm ... that was the first I'd seen him since he left.*

**MC:** What made you go up to see him?

**Martin:** *(pause) I don't know, I've got no idea. Well actually yes, I tell a lie, I thought he'd give me a few bob to help because you didn't get much in the way of money in them days, you only got a couple of quid. So I thought he might help me if I go up and see him, and he sees me on crutches. So I struggled all the way from where I lived, which was two bus rides, to Egmonsall, and he gave me half a crown, can't believe it. My bus fare, more or less.*

**MC:** Did he say anything to you?

**Martin:** No, not anything ...

**MC:** Was he surprised to see you?

**Martin:** *Yes, he was surprised. I don't know, like I say, I didn't really like her much anyway, so I didn't really go up, because she was a bit of a nag. I mean, with her living next door to her, we used to hear her shouting at her husband as soon as she walked in, so we didn't like her much at all. She was "Nag, nag, nag, nag ..." at the poor old bloke, so ... we didn't like her. We kept well away from her.*

**MC:** Did you see your dad after this visit?

**Martin:** *(sighs)* Not for a long time. I took him up to see ... my ... our oldest son. He was only a baby, about two years old, maybe three, may have been a three year old. So I took him up to show my dad. Course, I was living at Braughnstone then, so it weren't too far.

**MC:** So what happened when your dad died?

**Martin:** *I shed tears, because it was a shock. I went to his funeral. Erm ... it hurt to some extent, can't say it didn't hurt me because it did. I think it would hurt anybody if it was their parents. But not as much as it should have done, because of what he did to my grandpa and to me. I suppose I likened it to what he did to us, he was getting rid of his dad, the same as he got rid of ... us. That's how I looked at it. I suppose it stopped it hurting so much.*

**MC:** Were you with him when he died?

**Martin:** *No, no. My auntie come and told me.*

**MC:** Was that your dad's sister?

**Martin:** *Yes, I didn't even know she knew where I lived. Erm ... my dad was knocking off another woman, the one next door didn't know about that, and she came with him, the one he were knocking off. And she said "Oh" she says "Your dad was really proud of you", and I said "Well I didn't know about that". "Oh yes" she said "He knew where you lived, and when we went by in the car he used to say my son lives down there, and he's done really well for himself". Apparently they lived nearby, I didn't know he lived back there.*

**MC:** How did that make you feel?

**Martin:** *I just thought, well he doesn't seem to bother, you know, whether he sees me or not; he never makes contact, you know, unless he sees me at Granddad's. After my granddad dies, you know, I never seen him again ... It surprised me. It really surprised me, took me back, that did, because I didn't think he thought anything of me. It did take me aback when she said that.*

**MC:** What feelings do you have, towards your dad, now?

**Martin:** *None, really.*

**MC:** Good ones or bad ones ...

**Martin:** *I don't hold bad feelings. I believe that hatred or things like that, it brings you down. They don't do anything to anybody else, they just bring you down, so I don't hate.*

*As a father*

MC: How long did your marriage last?

Martin: *Six years.*

MC: And you had four children in it?

Martin: *Yes.*

MC: You say ... I want to backtrack to you and your brother, because you say that your ex-wife went off with your brother. Did that affect your relationship with your brother?

Martin: *Only that I had to have the kids ...*

*My daughter my daughter started living with me and we sort of ... I used to go to see the kids every week, and she started coming down with me. Erm ... when I moved from lodgings, I had no furniture whatsoever because it was a bedsit, so you've got no furniture, so I had go round the family to see what they could part with. I got one or two good bits, I mean I got an old ... OK, it was old but you had what you were given. A suite, a double bed, kitchen table, pots, pans, knives, forks and other bits and pieces that people could part with. So when my daughter first come down she had to sleep with me.*

MC: She was ten then.....?

Martin: *No, no, she was about nine then. Yes. Erm ... Nothing was happening then for a long time, quite a while, you know, it was all right, there were no problems. When she was about ten she started to ask about sex, and I told her to ask her mum, and I didn't have nothing to do with it whatsoever. So I stalled it for as long as I could, and I thought if she don't ask me, I won't say nowt. Anyway, she finally asked me again, and I told her about it. I don't know what happened after that ... I don't know. Anyway, when she got in bed with me, she used to want me to cuddle her ... Erm ... anyway she finally talked me into it, and I said "All right, once and that's it". And I didn't like it. I didn't like what we were doing. I know it was wrong, and I thought I've got to get her into another bedroom, so I says to her "How would you like to go in your own bedroom?" "Oh yes", she says, "that would be nice, that would". "OK" I said, and I could ill-afford to do it, but I bought wallpaper ... I says "If we go out and get some wallpaper, I've got some paint, you can do the painting and I'll do the wallpapering". "All right", she says. She was only ten. So she done the painting and I'll start to do the wall-papering*

*... she said it was really beautiful, and I thought just the job, that's what I like to hear. Anyway the first night she got in it I sat with her until she went to sleep and I went out, and I shut the bathroom door, and shutting the bathroom door didn't allow any light ... Because what you have to remember is that the terraced house were there, and at the front was a lamp, here, and it shone in through the front window, upstairs and down. At the back you'd got my garden and Able Jack's car park and a pub just there. Now the pub, on the wall had a halogen lamp, because the back alleyway went from out street to the back of the pub, the*

pub was in the actual next street, you used to go the back way. So they had this lamp shining down, and that used to shine in the windows at the back. So when you shut the bathroom door it didn't allow any light to go down the passage. In other words, the passage was pitch dark, couldn't see a thing. I thought well if she comes out of her bedroom, she's going to ... it was pitch dark. Didn't make any difference. Half way through the night, she come in "Dad, I woke up and I can't go to sleep again". So I said "All right, get in love, we'll try again tomorrow". So I went straight back to sleep. She went straight to sleep. Next night, tried again, same thing. Exactly the same thing, half way through the night... of course, you ain't in much of a mood to piss about with the kids, that time of the night, anyway, middle of the night, must be about two or three o'clock in the morning, so I said "Go to sleep". That went on for two weekends; I tried for two weekends that way. And I said to her "What's up, why do you keep coming back in?" "I don't like it because it's dark". I thought that can't be right because the curtains only kept so much light out, and there was this halogen lamp, so it definitely wasn't dark. So I thought what am I going to do about that one. Anyway, I had a little paraffin lamp, like that, protected, you know, so I put some paraffin in it, and the next weekend, told her to be quiet, went and got in bed, and she was there, and I lit it. It weren't big so I assumed it lasted about three or four hours, and I thought ... she's come in again in the middle of the night. And I says, you know, "Get in, we'll sort it out in the morning, we can't sort it out now". I was half asleep. So I was like you are.... Saturday night, same again, and I says to her ... this was the morning ... "Why do you keep coming back in my bed, don't you like your bedroom?" "Oh yes", she says, "It's beautiful" "So why aren't you stopping in it?" She says, "I can't get to sleep". I says "Right ...", she says "Its dark" "No" I said, "Tell me the real reason why is it you keep coming in my bed". She says, "Because I don't like sleeping on my own". "Look", I says, "You're too big to sleep with me. She says no I'm not. I said yes you are. You are too big to sleep with me now". And she says, "Well nobody knows". I said, "I know nobody knows, but you're still too big". I said "I can get into serious trouble if you keep sleeping with me". "Nobody will know, nobody will know at all, nobody will know at all". I said to her "Well what are you going to do then?". She says "Move your bed into that bedroom". I said, "No this bed's too big for that bedroom, your little bed's nice in there for that. It's just nice". I said, "It will spoil your bedroom". "No it won't", she says, "No it won't, it will be all right. I'll sleep in it then" ... She says Go on, go on ...", bouncing up and down, "Go on, go on, please, go on, go on ..." And that's when ... how can I say this ... making her feel as I felt. I couldn't just say "No you're sleeping in your own and staying there" I couldn't do that, it made me feel as if I was pushing her away, you know. So I gave in, and she was happy at that. Erm ... then the sexual relationship started properly then, after that, she was about ten.

Martin: My younger daughter said yes that caused problems when my eldest daughter left. I got right shit from her, my youngest daughter, because she wanted to sleep with me and I didn't want her to, and she says to me "I know why it is, I know why it is, you want me to sleep with you, its because you loved her better than you loved me. Yes, that's it, I'm sure it is" she was shouting it at me. Erm ... that made me feel bad, that did, because she walked

*out of the bedroom crying, slammed the door. That did bring that rejection ... I'd made her feel like I'd felt all those years ago ... You know. That's how I felt. I'd rejected her, I'd turned her away from me and I went to her and I said "Oh all right then, if you want to" ... and it went on like that for years.*

MC: How many years?

Martin: *Till she was twenty, twenty-two I think.*

MC: What about your relationship with your sons?

Martin: *I got a letter from my son at [prison], he asked me to forgive him for what he did, and he said he wished he could turn the clock back. But what he said was when they arrested him he was full of drugs and drink and he just blurted everything out.*

MC: How did you get on with them in their young years, you as a father to them?

Martin: *All right.*

MC: How would you compare yourself as a father to sons, to your father to you, what was the same, what was different?

Martin *Oh, er ... (pause) I don't know really. I had more problems with the girls than the boys. Never had any problems with them. They were happy, I was happy. It was the girls that I was having problems with. No matter what I did, I couldn't ... sort of stop it. Mostly because I'm not assertive and I had this rejection thing ... I didn't like turning them away. It was the same with the boys, if I ever hit the boys I felt bad because I was their only around parent, and I didn't want to hurt them anymore than they already had. So I did my best for the boys and I did my best for the girls, but it went wrong with the girls, and all right for the boys.*

MC: Why do you think your son reported you?

Martin: *Well, he ... I can only say what I already said; he was full of drugs and drink. I mean, the girls asked him not to report it.*

MC: Why did they give statements?

Martin: *They were frightened, I suppose. I know my youngest daughter was terrified, because we never had anything like that ... anything with the police or the welfare or anybody else.*

MC: But she was thirty-odd then?

Martin: *Love and sex? Do you want to know what my erm ... thing is on that, my thoughts?*

MC: Yes.

Martin: *Love is a warm, tender feeling between two people. Sex is the physical side of that. Physical attraction, more or less ... that is sex. There is a difference, definitely. You can have er ... It's like my friend, there was a warm affectionate feeling between us but it was platonic, platonic, there was no sex, so you can have one without the other.*

MC: What about the notion of loving father?

Martin: *Well it's like I said with that ... I tried ... well I suppose more or less, you overdo the love and it goes wrong. I loved them as much as I could and it went wrong. Erm ... I let it go wrong, I allowed it to. Whatever ... way you want to put it. I know it shouldn't have happened, and I knew what I was doing. I can't say it was impulse, it certainly wasn't that. I just gradually allowed it to happen, although once I got into it I didn't like it, and I thought I've got to stop this, but that didn't succeed, mostly because of this rejection feeling I had. If I hurt them... course I never used to smack them or anything like that, I've never been a violent person with them ... err ... I gave in easy, too easy.*

MC: A thought came to me thinking about what you were saying. Did you have any parental authority, how did you exercise that?

Martin: *I never had much in the way of parental authority, I was a shit father, put it like that. I've no qualms ...*

MC: What is a good father?

Martin: *Somebody who's definitely more receptive than I was. If I'd have been receptive then it probably wouldn't have happened. When I've told ... I've told three women what I've done, these are outside women, the first thing they ask is "Was there a mother, was there a wife" and I've said no, and they say "Ah well, ah, yes I can understand that. What happens is that the oldest daughter always tries to replace the mother?" That's how they look at it. And they are probably right, I don't know but ...*

The remainder of this conversation is reproduced in the next chapter when I consider some of the dialogical aspects of these interviews.

## Summary

It was difficult to find an adequate way to present some of the data from my interviews. Both the large amount of material and the many and varied angles that I could use for analysis require me to be extremely selective in the material I present. At the outset of this study, I was interested in focusing beyond the sex offences that these men have committed. I wanted to consider them as men, and by using a life hi/story allow their words a presence in my study. I decided to focus on what they had to say about their relationships with their fathers and their roles as fathers. However, again I had to be selective; I chose one representative from each of the cohorts that I had previously identified. The material here is presented without comment. In the final chapter of the thesis, I discuss issues raised in this and the next chapter.

## Chapter Ten

### Reflections on the research

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I consider issues related to the processes of data collection and data analysis, and I reflect on epistemological issues that have guided the research and changed during the study

#### The process of data collection

In Chapter Six, I noted some of the impact of undertaking the interviews.

However, in this section I build on this by considering style and stance and the impact of the interviews.

#### Style and Stance

Two very different issues preoccupied me regarding style and stance, but both were significantly linked to my epistemological standpoint and my approach to interviewing. Although, as the project progressed, I became clearer about issues relating to objectivity, the question of the nature of my role remained, to some extent, problematic. This is most clearly highlighted in my interview with Michael and Martin. The sessions with Michael were gruelling in many ways (I explore this in more detail below) but one feature of them was his emotional pain, which appeared to have strong links with his very negative experiences of childhood. As I became more familiar with him, I wanted to suggest to him that he might benefit from reading Alice Miller's *Drama of being a Child* (Second edition) (Miller 1995). I thought that her insights into the relationship between a troubled childhood and adult problems might be helpful to him. However, I



said nothing to him. There were three reasons for this: firstly, I was concerned that such an intervention may skew the story he was telling me. At that time, I had vestiges of the objective scientist in my researcher identity and I did not want to contaminate the evidence. Secondly, before we had begun reviewing his life history, I had made it clear that there was no therapeutic agenda in the research: the sessions were not to be seen as offering him an alternative treatment. Finally, linked to the previous point, I was aware that the therapeutic orientation of the SOTP would not have considered the psychodynamic perspective offered by Miller to be helpful. Rather, to the contrary, the cognitive-behavioural hegemony in sex offender treatment considers any search for original causes in childhood of offending behaviour to be an opportunity to avoid responsibility and thus avoid changing. Salter's study (1989; pp 84-85) is an early but very influential example of this position. Thus, my suggesting that Michael read Alice Miller's book may have had far reaching consequences within the prison and may have jeopardised the rest of the research. This raises many issues in relation to the dialogic nature of the interview and the various language games that were possible within the research interview in a prison. What I could say and how I could say it were in many ways shaped and prescribed by intellectual traditions and organisational protocol. Had I been talking to Michael in another context, for example, if he were a client or a friend, I would have suggested that he read the book and possibly even bought him a copy; the style and location of interview and stance of myself as interviewer in that location prevented me from mentioning the book. I have also reflected on whether the fact that we were both men prevented the recognition of distress and responding to it. I do not think this is the case. Clearly I did recognise his

sustained but muted pain, but my only response was to note it explicitly and to ask if he wanted any help.

Martin presented very different challenges to my style and stance in the interviews. Colton and Vanstone (1996; p. 5) have noted that, as researchers,

...we had to consciously inhibit our natural reactions to some of the discourse of the men and to limit overt challenging of attitudes and distorted thinking in order to facilitate a process that enabled their stories to be told.

In his life story, Martin causally linked his father leaving him and his (Martin's) subsequent abuse of his daughters. When he spoke of how his father had initially been the only parent to stand by him and his brother, he spoke with affection and love. However, shortly afterwards he recounted how his father left him and his brother to be cared for by paternal grandparents, whilst his father moved in with a 'girlfriend'. In telling this part of his story, Martin became very distressed and cried profusely. He spoke bitterly of feeling betrayed and abandoned. Later in his story, he described how he sexually abused his daughters. His understanding was that they each wished to have sex with him. He said that he did not want his children to feel the pain of rejection that he felt because of his father's actions so he acquiesced to their demands. The abuse started when each child was approximately ten years old and went on until each was in her early twenties. In my previous work as a probation officer, I have heard many similar justifications from men who have abused their children, and it was part of my role in interview or groupwork to deconstruct their story and reveal inconsistencies in order to help them recognise that there was another version of the events. In my role as life hi/story facilitator, it did not seem appropriate for me to challenge the story that I was hearing. However, as he

elaborated his story I found it impossible to listen passively. The section below illustrates the problem and how I engaged with it:

*Martin: ... I tried [to be a good father] ... well I suppose more or less, you overdo the love and it goes wrong. I loved them as much as I could and it went wrong. Erm ... I let it go wrong, I allowed it to. Whatever ... way you want to put it. I know it shouldn't have happened, and I knew what I was doing. I can't say it was impulse, it certainly wasn't that. I just gradually allowed it to happen, although once I got into it I didn't like it, and I thought I've got to stop this, but that didn't succeed, mostly because of this rejection feeling I had. If I hurt them ... course I never used to smack them or anything like that, I've never been a violent person with them ... er ... I gave in easy, too easy.*

MC: A thought came to me thinking about what you were saying. Did you have any parental authority, how did you exercise that?

... if one of your children was doing something that was going to put them in danger, and they wanted to do that because they wanted to, how would you cope with that?

*Martin: Oh, I'd warn them of the danger, and make sure that the ... Mind you, you've got to remember I was at work, so a lot of the time they were on their own. But if I did see anything dangerous, I would point out the danger. I mean, smoking ... my eldest daughter blames me for her smoking, but she had a gang at school where one of them bought ten fags each day and they'd share the fags so they had some every day and she blames me ...*

MC: How do you know she blamed you?

*Martin: She put it in her statement. She blamed me and I said no, I warned her against it. I warned anyone against it. Even if a kid asked me for a light, on the bus, I said you want to pack that in before it gets too far. The earlier you pack it in the easier it is to get rid of, the habit.*

MC: So if they were doing something dangerous, immediately dangerous, because smoking is a long term danger, how would you cope with that?

Martin: (Pause)

MC: If they wanted to go skateboarding in the middle of the road?

Martin: (starts, shocked) *Uh, oh well, you say no, don't do that.*

MC: How do you stop them, do you have an authority?

Martin: *Yes, if you were in my position ...*

MC: Because what I'm thinking is ...

Martin: *I'd probably take the skateboard off them, lock it up.*

MC: What I'm thinking is trying to make a link with that and rejection. Because if they say ... if they experience you taking the skateboard off them as rejection, would that mean that you would give them the skateboard?

Martin: *No because they would probably have the hump instead of trying to talk me round, that's how I'd look at that, they'd probably have arse-ache because I'd took the skateboard off them. It's a different situation. It's not emotional ... its not so emotional as what I was trying to stop.*

MC: Explain that a bit more to me.

Martin: *That's ... that's ... what you are saying ... how can I explain that. That's a danger to them where they could lose their life, so you've got to do something. But where it doesn't ... where they assure you everything's all right, then that's a different ...*

MC: But if they assured you that they could control the skateboard?

Martin: *Err ... not in the middle of the road, I'd still try and stop them from doing that. I wouldn't be wild about it. I should have to beg them to see sense, from doing that sort of thing. I mean they've got to know the danger as well, of skateboarding in the middle of the road, so they've got to see the danger as well. I don't think that's a very good scenario, that's not, because then they must know, their life's in danger if they do a thing like that.*

MC: So I think what I was trying to think my way around was you saying that you weren't assertive enough with them, but were there occasions when you were assertive, and I was going through the example of the skateboard ... going through the example of them being in some danger doing something that was dangerous to themselves, and you having to try and prevent them from that, and that's where the skateboarding came in.

Martin: *No, that sort of situation never did arise, where they did something dangerous. Erm ...*

MC: Crossing roads?

Martin: *Well, when they were crossing roads, I wouldn't be with them all that often anyway. Erm ... they were big enough to understand that anyway, so I never had nothing to do with that. I expected them to do as they'd been shown, the same as we had to when we were kids. Erm ... When it come to being assertive, it was assertive sort of. In other words, I told them that I didn't want them doing that, and that was it. Either they took notice or they didn't. But it wasn't very often, anyway.*

MC: And if they didn't?

Martin: *Perhaps I'd raise my voice, and that used to work. Raise my voice to them.*

MC: I'm trying to make sense of when you could be successfully assertive.

Martin: *The different ... I don't really think I was every successfully assertive. Like I said, I was a really crap father.*

Gradually, my irritation at his construal of abusing both of his daughters for a period exceeding ten years became too much to bear. However, I used oblique ways of trying to highlight the untenability of his position. But, it is also clear that I was using my power and authority to direct the conversation and (eventually) to make him uncomfortable. It may have been that because of the unacknowledged power discrepancy between us that he allowed the conversation to continue. It may also have been that the absence of a direct confrontation allowed both of us to proceed with the interview but the situation did become increasingly uncomfortable for both of us.

### The impact of the interviews

Doing research on men's violence to known women is a process that demands an emotional response. It involves engagement and commitment; it can bring a whole range of social, physical and psychological effects, pains and aches. It can involve getting used to dealing with violence, and the possible dangers of the suppression of emotion, particularly in cutting off the effects of violence. Violence is a potentially powerful topic to research, because it connects with other powerful experiences in researcher's own lives – men's own violence, men's experience of being violent, men's relations with women, feelings of love and hate and so on (Hearn 1998; p. 56).

The interviews affected me, both at the time and in listening to the tapes of the interviews whilst analysing them. Although I have significant experience in listening to people talk about both sexually abusing and being sexually abused, I did not fully anticipate the cumulative effect that the interviews had on me.

Whilst the detail of the offending was distressing, it mostly was familiar.

However, when Michael told me, in a quiet voice, that when he burgled his ex-

partner's flat his intention was to kill himself, after he had made her watch him cut her son's throat, I was deeply affected both by the violent intent and the raw emotion in the room as Michael spoke. This stayed with me and the interview with Michael was the last one that I listened to for analysis purposes. Perhaps the most surprising effect of the interviews came from listening to all of the men speak of their emotionally-barren childhoods. This barrenness was largely unacknowledged and in many cases actively denied. The barrenness of the childhoods was also, in many cases, transferred to the family situations in which the men lived as adults. At the time and for many months afterwards, I did not fully realise the depressing and enervating effect that this had on me.

However, because I anticipated some impact, I ensured that I was in regular contact with a psychotherapist. It was in these sessions that I was able to recognise the impact of the research, particularly as I emerged from the interviews and began analysing the data.

### **The process of data analysis and data presentation.**

In this section, I consider issues that emerged during the analysis of the data and in the various processes of presenting the data including writing this thesis. In turn, I consider, listening to the tapes; writing the thesis and presenting material to seminars and conferences.

#### Listening to the tapes

Sometimes in listening to tapes or reading transcripts, the enormity of the *accumulation* of violence becomes a brick wall in thinking and working (Hearn 1998); p. 57).

The interviews produced over forty hours of tape recordings. In Chapter Six, I noted that the women who transcribed the tapes stated that they could stop the

tape and take a break if the material was becoming too distressing. To some extent I also had this option: however, given that I had originally participated in the interviews, the situation was somewhat different for me. I had resonances from the original interview. I mentioned above that I listened to the tapes of my interviews with Michael last, because of what I remembered of the interview and my feelings associated with it. Re-playing the tapes was essential, both to correct the transcripts and comment on the non-verbal components, such as sounds and feelings, that could not be captured in the transcription.<sup>10</sup> For example, listening to the tapes again strongly reminded me of the 'masculine' background noises that were frequently intrusive during the interviews (see Chapter Seven).

### Writing up the thesis

Writing (up) violence is a demanding and at times almost horrendous business. It is difficult to convey thought, experience and meaning around violence on the page ... It was important to avoid typologizing or stereotyping men, and instead to attempt to maintain an open-mindedness to what the men were saying, why they were saying it, and what might or might not explain these violences. Thus, *not* coming to a conclusion, *not* seeking an overall pattern, and *not* trying to make overall sense of men's violence has been part of the process of knowledge formation – a process of interpretation and possibly coping within the research (Hearn 1998; p. 58).

This has been a long trip on a steep learning curve. From the initial conception of this study in 1997 to the present day, I have struggled with many complex issues. Almost every chapter represents an area of intellectual struggle and growth. The easiest were the chapters where I either had some previous knowledge such as Chapter Four, or could reflect on the practical

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<sup>10</sup> I used the "Insert" comment feature in Microsoft Word to note these features.

implementation of the fieldwork Chapter Seven. The remaining chapters have been both exciting, arduous and, at times, depressing.

In Chapter Six, I reflected on the issue of whether to present graphic detail from the various offence accounts. From relatively early in the writing, I was clear that to do so would keep the victim at the centre of consideration in the wrong way. It would, effectively, re-victimise her, and possibly produce pornographic material over which I would have no control once the thesis emerges into the public domain. Thus, whilst the victims feature within this thesis, they do not appear in offence accounts.

In all of the other chapters, to differing degrees, I have had to confront and clarify issues related to the presentation of the self and how knowledge is constructed and how these relate to each other. This has been challenging and at different times has fundamentally altered my sense of self/ves. The work of Harding (1991) and the hermeneutical phenomenologists has been difficult, but significant in developing my epistemological standpoint. Theories about gender and masculinity/ies have again not only challenged me intellectually but also personally. Ironically the more that I read, the more the uncertainties that I had about essentialist concepts without context were supported: perhaps my early encounters with historiography and particularly the work of E. H. Carr (1970) had prepared me for some of these struggles. Both the work of Wittgenstein (1953) in his concepts of language games and forms of life and Shotter (1993, 1995) with his focus on dialogics helped me begin to think both of the nature of the interviews that I was involved in, but also of masculinities as being various forms of life which brought with them their own particular language game.



A problem that could be raised about the nature of this research is that it merely gives a voice to sex offenders; it allows them to excuse and minimise the harm that they have caused. One of the main objectives in this research has been to present the ordinariness of the men studied. They have hurt women and children sexually, but so do many men (see Chapter Four); the men studied are relatively different in that they are part of the minority who are reported, arrested and convicted. Otherwise much of what they have said and much of that which is presented in this thesis enables a consideration of them within a context of theories of masculinity/ies, and this consideration in itself then (re) problematises men and how they behave. The alternative (forensic) approaches to these men allows them to be located within a classification system of deviant men and thus separate from and ignore the wider problem of male behaviours.

### Presenting findings

Fixing upon an analytic framework leaves many issues unaddressed – some of which are mentioned above – and I have much material to work into papers and books following the completion of this thesis.

Apart from this thesis, I have already presented material from the research in a range of settings (See Appendix Two). I currently have a paper entitled “‘Normals’ and ‘Offenders’: a profeminist critique of sex offender classification systems” under review in *Men and Masculinities*. I also plan to submit papers relating to life history research and ethics to a number of journals.

## Masculinities and the male researcher

In Chapter Seven, I reflected on issues relating to being a male researcher in a male prison. Here, I want to bring together a few thoughts being a man researching the life histories of sexually violent men. I consider issues, firstly, in relation masculinity/ies and Wittgenstein's concepts of language games and forms of life and finally I address issues in relation to personal resonances evoked during the research process.

### Language games and forms of life

I have discussed language games and forms of life in Chapters Two, Five and Seven. In these chapters, I respectively focused on: (a) introducing the concepts and describing how they related to the present study; (b) how the concepts may relate to a consideration of masculinity/ies; and (c) how they related to the interviews. In this section, I want to bring together these various elements and consider how these concepts related to the dynamics of the research process

In Chapter Five, I suggested that various manifestations of male behaviours could constitute a form of life. Here, I want to consider, briefly, some of the language games and forms of life of masculinity/ies that were present during the research process.

In his study of the development of male identities in teenagers, Mac an Ghail (1994) noted that masculinities were formed in three areas where the expressions of emotions and desire were prescribed in particular ways: fear of same sex attraction (homophobia), compulsory heterosexuality, and fear or hatred of

women (misogyny). I was aware, during the interviews, of the men assuming that I shared a common viewpoint around these issues. Generally, I did not challenge the men's attitudes but I did not engage in the discussions. However, it seemed that my physical presence was sufficient to enable the various discursive practices to occur.

### Homophobia

In relation to homophobia, many of the men expressed overtly hostile attitudes, but what was more apparent was how homophobia affected the men's relationships with close male friends. Many of them spoke of close male friendships in their early/late teens. These relationships were clearly important, but as they moved into their early twenties, the relationships lost or were given less significance. Many of the men (for example, Andrew, and Martin) described missing their friends but feeling pressurised (by what, they did not say – but it seemed to be a form of 'compulsory heterosexuality') into relationships with women, relationships that they often quickly resented. And when I tried to explore how the loss of a close friend left them feeling they avoided the question or noted that both parties had moved on. There did not appear to be 'language game' that enabled me to explore men and their close feelings for other men.

### Compulsory Heterosexuality

The compulsory nature of heterosexuality is usually first expressed by the men when they speak of their early sexual experiences. Many of the men admit to participating in language games with their male peers when they produced falsified accounts of their sexual activities. In many ways a similar problem to the one outlined in relation to enabling men talk about close relations with other men, occurred here. There did not seem to be a way of talking about (hetero)

sexual behaviour that allowed for any exploration of emotions attached to or embodied in sexual behaviours. Although, some of the men asserted a difference between 'fucking' and 'making love' (these were the terms that they used), in conversation with them we were unable to find a mutually acceptable way of talking that allowed this distinction to be clearly established. Roger, for example, initially made distinctions between 'just sex' and 'love' but when we explored the distinctions they collapsed: sex with an adult partner, sex in saunas and the abuse of his victims, effectively became indistinguishable. I recognise that in using the vernacular and assuming a difference between fucking and making love I was using language and assumptions that shaped the discussion. Also, my physical presence as a man must also have contributed to the exploration.

### Misogyny

Misogyny is inextricably interwoven with compulsory heterosexuality and homophobia and it is expressed in a variety of ways by the men, most clearly in the offences that they have all committed. Similarly, expressed sexual mores and behaviours (as exemplified in the quotation from Roger's story above) objectify women and children as being vehicles for the sexual gratification of the men. A number of men witnessed their fathers being violent to their mothers and other women (see Chapter Nine), some of the men admitted to beating female partners (Michael, Andrew). Additionally, some of the men construed women as controlling and dominant particular in sexual contexts; this they saw as a negative aspect.

Talking about these areas was easy for the men; they were familiar with the areas and assumed that I would have common understandings and values. My physical presence (as a man) facilitated all of them in expressing in a wide range of ways their attitudes. Whilst it would not have been helpful to the research process to argue points related to values and attitudes, I either remained silent when I was invited to participate in familiar language games (such as misogynistic, homophobic or rampant male heterosexuality) or I asked naïve questions to elicit further information.

### **Personal resonances and understanding masculinity/ies/men.**

In many ways, this is the most challenging part of this chapter to write. Whilst I would take exception to his use of the word 'wallowing', Hearn (1998; p.56) does highlight the tension between providing an emotional commentary on the research process and ignoring emotive issues. The task is to recognise them and identify how they relate to the research process and outcome. This was difficult, in the early stages of analysing the transcripts: I was recording in my notebooks every personal resonance and reflecting upon it. I gradually became aware that there was a potential for these reflections to take over and become, in effect, a parallel psychodynamic autobiography. This made me reflect on what I wanted to record in a thesis and for what reasons. Following much thought, I decided that I would note some resonances and relate them back to issues to do with masculinity/ies and male identities. I also reflect on how the resonances may have affected either the interviews or the analysis.

My experience of being bullied at school resonated both in hearing some of the men (Darren and Brian in particular) tell of similar experiences and also in

hearing bullies (Andrew and Darren) talk of their activities. I think the prime impact on the research here was in how I was able to sustain questioning to obtain a fuller description of the experience:

*Darren: ... the school was OK for a while, until things started to go wrong. It lasted probably a few months and then name-calling started at school again, and bullying started. I was always covered in freckles, I was overweight and nobody ... like nobody liked me in a way, and they were always making fun of me but I took it the wrong way. Rather than fun I took it as personal and that they didn't like me. I suppose it might have been a little bit my reaction towards what they were saying, you know, I'd just go off in a mardy, and not speak to anyone again for a little while until I met another friend or something who hadn't been there making fun of me, you know. So I'd go off in a mardy, and then the other names would start, mardy-arse, and things like that. You know it went on like that for a while, just the name-calling. I'm not sure when it was, but after a while the bullying started, you know, every dinner time I'd be afraid to go out into the playground because I knew that someone was going to hit me, and I'd come in every dinner time crying, because someone had belted me round the face or kicked me in the shins, or something, and this would happen nearly every day. I covered it up as best I could because I didn't want anybody particularly seeing I'd been crying and, you know. I tried to cover it up, but this was happening near enough every day. If it wasn't getting hit round the face or getting kicked in the shins, or something, then it would be the name calling every day, but this was an every day occurrence at school. It then got to the stage later on in school where the physical bullying was happening near enough every day, sometimes more than once a day, but I'd do my best to cover it up.*

MC: Who was doing it?

*Darren: Everybody and anybody. It was one person turning another one against me and so on.*

MC: Boys and girls?

*Darren: Yes. Both. This happened for a long time, throughout my school.*

MC: Who did you seek to cover it up from, the teacher, your parents, who?

*Darren: Everybody. Because I was gradually getting older and being a boy and that, it was like I shouldn't be crying, you know, I shouldn't let this get to me.*

MC: Who was telling you that?

*Darren: Me. I told myself that.*

MC: And where were you getting that message from?

Darren: *From the other kids in the playground. You'd get the names of mardy-arse and cry-baby and things like that, and you'd take that as, well, I shouldn't be like that then, I shouldn't let them see me like that ... I didn't want people to see me like that, I mean, the teachers did see on occasions if the bullying happened late on in the dinner break, I wouldn't have time to go and wash my face properly and, you know, so they could see I'd been crying ...*

MC: They never said anything to you?

Darren: *Yes, they did. They asked me what had been happening and had anybody been picking on you, and I'd say I was playing football and someone bumped into me or tripped over, or something like that. That would be my excuse if it was ever obvious that I'd been crying, you know. I was the same with my Dad when I came home, well, my mum anyway because my dad wasn't there, he was usually at work, it was only odd times he had the day off. My mum would be the same when she picked me up from school - she'd know straight away that there was something up with me. I mean she might not be able to see that I'd been crying but she'd know that somebody had been picking on me or something was up that day. Something had upset me. And I'd say well it was an argument that started over a game of football, or I tripped over or banged into something. I didn't want her to know for some reason*

MC: What did being bullied make you feel about yourself?

Darren: *Erm ... the bullying that I suffered at school, and this was all through school.... basically turned me partly into what I am now ... It made me afraid, I felt nobody was liking me any more, I didn't have no friends anymore. I suppose my confidence was right down low. It was getting to the point where I didn't have... didn't have the confidence or the bottle to go up and you know, if there was some lads there playing football or something or kicking a tennis ball about, I didn't have the confidence any more to go over and ask to join in, because I didn't know if it was going to be that they were going to turn on me and start bullying me again. It wasn't ... wasn't everybody at school that was doing it, it was just a certain few, but when they started others joined in, you know. If they didn't start no-one would. So my confidence had gone right down and I was starting to shut myself off from a few people as well. There were still some that I would hang about with at school, but.... that was just a few good friends, you know. I didn't have that many friends after that because I didn't know who was going to be next with the making fun or the bullying. I didn't know who I could trust anymore, I suppose.*

MC: So what did it make you feel about you as a boy, or as a male person? How did it make you feel about your sense of yourself?

Darren: *... it made ... I suppose in regard to how it made me feel towards being a boy or a male, or however you want to put it, all this crying every day, it made me ... I don't know ... particularly how it made me feel. It made me feel stupid in a way and silly because I was a boy and I shouldn't be crying you know at things like this. I should be able to stop myself from being so ... getting so upset, but, you know I just couldn't. It just made me feel that everyone was laughing*

*at me because of it, and just afraid all the time I was.*

MC: Did anyone tell you you were stupid and silly?

Darren: *Er... yes, that was mainly to do with the name-calling that started it all off. Whether they thought I was stupid or not, that was just one of the names they called me ... after dinner time when I'd been bullied or someone had been making fun of me I'd come back upstairs, and if it was obvious that I'd been crying then other names would come out as, you know, sissy, mardy-arse, cry-baby, things like that, and ... I suppose in a way I was believing what they were saying and that made me feel even worse, you know, when they were saying these things like cry-baby and things, it made me feel even worse about things. You know, it wasn't a generally good feeling for me at school. After that first few months at school, everything went disastrously wrong, and I didn't like one bit of it. I kept going to school, I don't know why, but I kept going. I think it was mainly because my parents wanted me to go and I didn't want to let them down, but I hated every minute of it from then on. ...*

MC: Were you bullied out of school, on your way to and from school?

Darren: *Yes, on the way from school. Not going, particularly going to school, because my mum always took me in ... it wasn't the bullying it was the name calling more than anything out of school, because big sister was with me or an older friend, so it was name calling, they'd be in the playground, I'd be under the slide and they'd start shouting the names again, and that would happen after school...*

MC: Were any names more hurtful than others?

Darren: *The main ones ... were cry-baby, fatty and wimp, I suppose because of all this crying. Those were really the ones that hurt the most. Well not hurt, but stuck with me the most. I could put up with the name calling in the playground sometimes, depending on what it was. But if it was, you know, ever the ... some of the names that really hurt I never liked them but... you could, I could put up with things like stupid sometimes, just walk away and ignore it, you know, and just hope it wouldn't turn into anything else. Just walk away from it, yes but some of the names that do stick in my head more than others.*

(MC): Is it in your head now, and how does it make you feel?

Darren: *Thinking about it now ... I mean ... that name ... it always made me ... made me depressed that name. I never liked it. It was like ... ah, it just made me feel so low, and I was believing what they were saying and because ... because this bullying was happening and the crying was happening, it was like what they was saying was right in a way. Things that were going through my head was that I'd got to change it in some way, you know, I'd got to stop it from happening. You know, if I could stop the bullying I could stop the names. I could put an end to it myself.*

MC: How did you think of doing that?



Darren: *I avoided people, mainly. I did everything I could do to get out of school, after that point ...*

MC: The thing that's sometimes around in bullying is that some people are bullied so much that they kill themselves. Did you ever think of doing that?

Darren: *Not at that point, at the early age, no. Later on, yes. It's happened ... I've thought about it, actually quite a lot in my life. Since I was about ... I don't know, twelve or thirteen, it's been a thing that's popped into my head nine or ten times, you know what I mean. It's quite a few occasions, I think. But at that time, no I didn't. At that time it was mainly to avoid the people that were doing this, you know, not giving them the satisfaction of doing it by not being there myself. Taking as much time away from there as I could ...*

There is much material that can be used in a variety of ways; here, however, I use it to illustrate how my own school experiences (although not identical to Darren's) enabled me to sustain the conversation and obtain a fuller description. My experiences enabled me to imagine both the detail of being bullied and possible emotional responses to it. Although I did not discuss my own experiences with Darren, perhaps, because of my insights, two men were able to talk about an experience that is often construed as humiliating and certainly not to be shared with other men.

Inevitably, as the research progressed, there were many more resonances; Martin's discussion of how his father used the 'belt' to discipline him and his brother dredged from somewhere long forgotten, memories of my mother speaking of her father as a 'real man' because he used the strap to discipline his children, whereas my father did not. Such evocations give insight to the influences on my own growth, and sense of being a man. To develop this in a way that is, perhaps, akin to Jackson's (1990) critical autobiography is beyond the scope of the present project. It is sufficient to note that I have become aware

of and given explicit recognition to aspects of my own autobiography throughout the course of this study.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I reflectively consider the whole research process. I consider how my style and stance in the interviews changed. Initially, I was constrained by positivist imperatives, regarding objectivity, not to contaminate the evidence. Later, I was able to explore issues more fully and actively theorise my role in doing so. I highlight the emotional impact that this research has had on me. I consider the operation of male language games in relation to homophobia, compulsory heterosexuality and misogyny, and reflect on how I was invited to participate in them. Finally, I consider the effect of personal resonances on the research process and in presenting the data.

**Part Five**  
**Conclusion**

## Chapter Eleven

### Theoretical Implications

#### Introduction

In this chapter that concludes this thesis, I focus on the implications of a hermeneutic approach for understanding life histories of men. It would appear that hermeneutic perspectives have much to offer in developing an understanding of life histories. However, there is a range of very different intellectual standpoints that may be adopted when interpreting texts. In thinking about the hi/stories in this study, four issues are particularly important to explore:

- Sex, lies and audiotapes
- The double hermeneutic and the knowing subject
- Gendered reflexivity and the male researcher
- Stories embedded in social contexts

These issues focus on, respectively, how the processes of data collection and data analysis are construed within the research project.

#### **Sex, lies and audiotapes.**

A feature frequently encountered in my work with sex offenders and in research with offenders more generally is the pervasive doubt that you (the therapist or researcher) are being lied to. And doubtless, when the subject under discussion is sex, and may include discussion of behaviours deemed to be illegal, this problem is exacerbated. In thinking how to deal with this, it is helpful to locate the problem within various hermeneutical paradigms.

Within the romantic hermeneutical paradigm, the problem of discovering the truth of the matter is profound, the assumption being that at a certain time a certain act occurred about which there is somewhere a true and full account. The interpretation of this account will involve placing oneself empathically in the place of the storyteller. Researching a group of men who have been convicted of sex offences and who will include accounts of their offences in their hi/story presents a more serious problem of empathy. Colton and Vanstone (1996; p. 5), whose study is similar to the present study, writing of their role as researchers note:

Our own life stories, therefore, although untold, have influenced the way that we approached the study. To the degree to which we can understand that influence, we can say that it emanates from a shared conviction that a child does not have the capacity to make informed choices about sexual involvement with an adult, and that such involvement is inevitably the result of abuse of power, by the adult. However, we have had to consciously inhibit our natural reactions to some of the discourse of the men and to limit overt challenging of attitudes and distorted thinking in order to facilitate a process that enabled their stories to be told.

I experienced similar problems (see Chapter Six) in empathising with certain parts of the stories told to me by the men that I interviewed, both at the time of the interview and in the process of analysing the data. Apart from more general epistemological considerations, I would suggest that the particular nature of this study makes a simple romantic hermeneutic approach untenable.

Gadamer's dialectical approach to interpretation, outlined in Chapter Three, however, may offer more possibilities. Messerschmidt (2000; pp20-21), in his study of 'nine lives', cites the work of Ann Goetting (1999) as influential in developing his understanding of life history:

... I chose to study what is expressed in each conversation and to treat each life history as a *situational truth*. As Ann Goetting (1999, 20) points out, life stories are not simply "true" representations of an objective "reality"; rather, the interpretations of both interviewer and interviewee "combine to create a particular view of reality." (Italics in original)

The notion of interpretations combining to form a 'particular view of reality' is particularly resonant of Gadamer's suggestion that the hermeneutical process results in a fusion of horizons.

The issue of truth and lies, however, raises other problems. Within the realist, and neo-positivist approaches to life history identified by Miller (2000) and for a romantic hermeneutic and Gadamerian hermeneutic position, the issues of veracity is of paramount importance. For example, Watson (1976; p. 106) an anthropologist, greatly influenced by the work of Gadamer notes:

To assess hidden or repressed identities, however, it is generally necessary to go to sources of information beyond the life history itself. In the hermeneutical view one is seen to gain a greater understanding of the part (here, identity) by considering it in relationship to the whole (the total organism), the latter of which may be revealed through independent measures of the individual's psychic activity (e.g., dreams, tests, behaviour observed under stress etc.). In other words, while phenomenological investigation of identity can be carried out with the life history alone, the investigator may wish to supplement his understanding by expanding his framework of inquiry and the sources of information from which he makes his inferences.

Whilst recognising the possibility of a phenomenological exploration of life history Watson clearly considers it, in itself, to be inadequate to the task of uncovering hidden (and we could almost read truer) identities. However, approached from a 'narrative' perspective (Miller 2000) or a hermeneutical position influenced by the work of Derrida, then the issue of truth and lies becomes irrelevant. Freeman (1993; pp 10-11), perhaps a little dismissively, notes that Derrida's position suggests that:

the idea is basically that if indeed the world we have before is always and inevitably bathed in language, if indeed there really is no world (to speak) of apart from language, then there really isn't much reason to become distraught over the alleged fact that we can never get it quite right

And therefore, the issue of truth and lies is irrelevant:

Along these lines, notions such as falsification and distortion, since they tend to rely on the positing of some form or other of 'presence', some realm of the 'really real', may be essentially beside the point. If there is no presence, no really real – in this case, no true past – then there is little reason to worry about these notions; they are themselves products of just that epistemology that many are seeking to cast into question. (p. 11)

Miller (2000; p. 139-140) later in his text offers a further clarification of the use of the terms 'life history' and 'life story' and how a narrative perspective on life story affects the whole procedure of analysis:

... both the realist and the neo-positivist approaches can be said to collect life *histories* – recollections of the empirical facts of a lifetime. Emphasis is placed upon the reliable and accurate recall of events. There is a supposition that a complete and total version of life exists and the interviewing process is attempting to collect as much of that complete version as possible. In contrast, the narrative approach is different in that the respondent is seen to provide a *life story - depiction* of the events of a lifetime. Unlike the life history, which can be said to be a (hopefully accurate and reasonably complete) passive reconstruction of the core of factual events, the life story is active *construction* of the respondent's view of their life. There is no single 'best' or 'correct' construction. The content of a life story that a respondent will give in an interview will be dependent upon how they see their life at that particular moment and how they choose to depict that life view to the person carrying out the interview. The information given when a person tells their life story is 'true', but not in the sense of being a close approximation to a single omnipotent reality that would be 'truth' in the life history collected by a realist or neo-positivist. Rather, the life story is 'true' in that the story the respondent chooses to give at the moment of the interview is at that place and time, the one they have selected as a genuine depiction of their life. In a benign sense, the respondent will slant their account to fit with what they see as being the interviewer's areas of interest and tell their story in a way that they believe will be sensible for the interviewer. The respondent also may choose to omit material that they do not wish the interviewer to know about or choose to lie deliberately. Faced with all these considerations, the narrator sees the interview situation as inevitably fluid. The only course in an analysis is to recognize the situational nature of a life story interview and to focus upon the dynamic that produced the

unique situation of the interview that actually occurred. (*Italics in original*)

Within a narrative framework, the issue of lying is not important and lies, if identified, can be included in the analysis (Miller 2000; p. 154). This framework, therefore, will more easily allow a conceptualisation of the respondent's use of clinical jargon. By clinical jargon, I mean phrases that are regularly used in the cognitive-behavioural treatment programmes<sup>11</sup>, but that otherwise do not have a common usage. The following extract from my interview with Roger, illustrates this point:

*Roger: You know, like, I couldn't ... in my eyes I couldn't hurt anybody, and I know I have, but in my eyes, I just couldn't hurt anybody, and its come up all through ... you know, my teen years, and up till now. I couldn't hurt anybody now. I mean, you know, like, my stepdaughters, all I wanted to do was apologise and to say ... one day tell them why I did it, but I know that they wouldn't really want to hear that now. I just feel for them. What I did, what happened to me, gave me the biggest CD in my offending. Because I wasn't hurting them, I didn't think I was ... because I wasn't hurting them physically, and they was getting this and getting that ... erm, I mean they used to get this and that anyway, before I ... before I'd abused. I was all ... I never chastised them or anything. Even my little ones, I never hit them, you know, because, it's the way I've betrayed my life since the age of five, you know.*

MC: When you said CD do you mean cognitive distortion?

*Roger: Yes. I mean, I've used ... when I was abusing ... it was love and affection, it was our love and affection, our special type of love, and I thought they was responding to it, but obviously they were as frightened and scared as what I was. I can see that now.*

Within either a realist or a neo-positivist framework, the use of technical vocabulary provokes suspicion. Does the use of clinical jargon by interviewees indicate attempts to lie, to dissemble, to conceal their true attitudes and beliefs

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<sup>11</sup> Some examples of such 'jargon' would be (the list is not exhaustive) – CD, cognitive distortion, cognitive restructuring, cycle of behaviour, masturbation and fantasy cycle, motivation to offend, my victim(s), offending behaviour, relapse, relapse prevention, responsibility, victim, victim empathy.



and merely reproduce what they think the researcher or therapist wishes to hear? The narrativist approach requires a different approach: for example, to consider how the jargon is used within the dialogical dynamics of the interview.

### **The double hermeneutic and the knowing subject**

The adoption and use of technical vocabulary by people who have no formal training in the use of it is an aspect of social theory was discussed in Chapter Three. Giddens (1994; p. 93) describes the development of the 'double hermeneutic' thus:

The discourse of sociology and the concepts, theories and findings of the other social sciences continually 'circulate in and out' of what it is that they are about. In so doing they reflexively restructure their subject matter, which itself has learned to think sociologically. ... Much that is problematic in the position of the professional sociologist, as the purveyor of expert knowledge about social life, derives from the fact that she or he is at most one step ahead of enlightened lay practitioners of the discipline.

The 'double hermeneutic' or knowing/reflexive subject of social science research identified by Giddens is inevitably a feature of life history research. In the area of research with men convicted of sexual offences some examples of the need for the double hermeneutic were described in the previous section. This further highlights some of the difficulties in a psychological approach to sex offenders that is solely premised on a natural science paradigm. Giddens again:

The reflexivity of modernity, which is directly involved with the continual generating of systematic self-knowledge, does not stabilize the relation between expert knowledge and knowledge applied in lay actions. Knowledge claimed by expert observers (in some part, and in many varying ways) rejoins the subject matter, thus (in principle, but also normally in practice) altering it. There is no parallel to this process in the natural sciences...(Giddens 1994; p. 94)

## Gendered reflexivity and the male researcher

Every textual interpretation must begin ... with the interpreter's reflection on the preconceptions which result from the "hermeneutical situation" in which he finds himself. He must legitimate them, that is look for their origin and adequacy (Gadamer 1979; pp149-50; cited in Freeman 1993; p. 141).

Hermeneutics teaches us that if we wish to arrive at understanding through interpretation we must recognise the necessity of bridging the chasm that separates our context of intellectual operation from that in which the object of interpretation lies embedded. Overarching this difference requires us to question our own cultural preunderstandings, suspend our prejudices ... and establish a dialectical relationship with the phenomenon we hope to understand. In this dialectic we bridge back and forth between different contexts until we understand in the light of our own preconceptions, but *in an altered context* in which the unfamiliar has become in some measure familiar to us (Gadamer 1972; pp 275-283; cited in Watson 1976; p. 98).

To some extent, all of the hermeneutical theorists demand a degree of reflexivity from the person undertaking interpretation. Even the romantic hermeneutic approach requires interpreters to reflect on how closely they were able to reproduce the thoughts and feelings of the people in the account being interpreted. However, Gadamer pays most attention to exploring the preconceptions of the hermeneut. He requires the researcher to examine her/his preconceptions about what is being interpreted and to identify her/his prejudices. By moving between self-examination and consideration of that which is to be understood, the researcher makes clear the nature of their preconceptions and thus can explicitly integrate them into the understanding/interpretation. The process of integrating preconceptions is not to nullify them in an attempt to achieve objectivity but to recognise them and monitor how they affect the process of interpretation. Freeman, using Gadamer's own words, has described this process:

'Yet this receptivity', Gadamer emphasizes once more, 'is not acquired with an objectivist "neutrality"; it is neither possible, necessary, nor desirable that we put our self within brackets. The hermeneutical attitude supposes only that we self-consciously designate our opinions and prejudices and qualify them as such, and in so doing strip them of their extreme character.' It is only then that we can 'grant the text the opportunity to appear as an authentically different being and to manifest its own truth, over and against our preconceived notions. (Gadamer 1979; p. 152; cited in Freeman 1993; p. 141).

In many ways, what Gadamer is requiring of the hermeneutic researcher is similar to that which Harding (1991) demands from a researcher or theorist who wishes to achieve strong objectivity. Briefly, she requires the recognition of the researcher's standpoint and an exploration of how this has informed the research process from beginning to completion:

Strong objectivity requires that we investigate the relation between subject and object rather than deny the existence of, or seek unilateral control over, this relation. (Harding 1991; p. 152)

Hearn (1998; p. 808) has suggested ways that the exploration of the preconceptions of the researcher can be developed. Along with others, he has noted:

The notion of neutral, given knowledge is not tenable in social theory. The connections between the construction of supposedly neutral knowledge and the practices of the powerful, in this case, men or certain kinds of men, need to be carefully charted both by social theorists and in social theory itself.

He goes on to suggest that most social theory has been written by men without explicitly recognizing their gender as part of their standpoint or preconceptions or prejudices. Hearn (1998) identifies a continuum of six types of discursive practice in men theorising about men. His first category is '*Absence, fixed presence, and avoidance*' in which either the topic (men) or the author are absent, avoided or present yet non-problematic. He comments:

Not explicitly talking of men, not naming men as men, is a structured way of not beginning to talk of men's power in relation to women, children, young people and indeed other men. (p. 786)

At the other end of the continuum in his typology, Hearn places '*Critique*' as a self-conscious and politically informed response from certain male theorists:

Critique thus combines a number of elements: a critical relation to the topic, encompassing a self-reflexivity of the author and the topic, and the consideration of the social bases of knowledge; a commitment to the political emancipation of both women and men; and where appropriate, empirical inquiry not just assertion and speculation. (1998; p. 801)

This position, from a Gadamerian hermeneutic perspective, makes explicit the preconceptions and prejudices of the researcher in, perhaps, a wider fashion than was originally envisaged by Gadamer. It also carries the necessary explicit reflexivity suggested by Harding (1991). Additionally, it strongly asserts the necessity of explicitly incorporating a social and political position.

### Stories embedded in social contexts

... we must try to see the object of interpretation in its *larger context*, for a phenomenon takes its inner or true meaning only in relationship to the whole (Gestalt) of which it forms a part (Watson 1976; p. 99. Italics in original).

Plummer (1995; p. 16), whilst critical of the tendency of some hermeneutic approaches that reduce 'dense human life to texts', notes:

... the sexual stories I will be discussing must be seen to be socially produced in social contexts by embodied concrete people experiencing the thoughts and feelings of every day life.

And later he cites the aim of this book as being:

To push away from the dominant interest in stories as texts awaiting analysis and instead to see stories as *social actions embedded in social worlds*. (p. 17) [Italics in the original]

Given that the focus of this study has considered stories told by *men*, I now consider briefly the work of Mary Gergen (1995). She studied texts – autobiographies of famous men and women - but located her study within social constructions of gender. In exploring written accounts, it was inevitable that she consider the language used to describe identities, actions and the social world. However, the analysis that she produces is strongly focused on '*social actions embedded in social worlds*'. For example, she comments that:

... each gender acquires for personal use a repertoire of potential life stories relevant to their own gender. Understanding one's past, interpreting one's actions, evaluating future possibilities – each is filtered through stories. Events "make sense" as they are placed in the correct story form. (Gergen 1995;p. 208)

Considering the stories in their social context, she identifies that:

... Manstories tend to follow the traditional narrative pattern: becoming their own heroes, facing crises, following their quests and ultimately achieving victory. ... Their careers provide them their central lines of narrative structuring, and personal commitments, external to careers are relegated to insignificant sub-plots. ... Manstories seem to celebrate the song of self. Emotional ties are mentioned a "facts" where necessary, but the author does not try to re-create in the reader empathic emotional responses. The willingness to play the role of the "bastard" is seen in manstories. (pp.210-214)

In contrast, she considers that:

women's stories highlight interdependent nature of their involvements and the centrality of emotional well-being to all facets of their life much more vividly than men's stories do. (p. 215)

Gergen highlights the link between texts and social life by noting that narrative forms, the shape that stories take is inextricably interwoven with the 'foundations of society' narratives 'do not emerge from nothingness' (p. 218).

She cites Felicity Nussbaum who states:

Individuals construct themselves as subjects through language, but individual subjects – rather than being the source of their own self-

generated and self-expressive meaning – adopt positions available within the language at given moments. (Nussbaum, 1988, 169)

In the previous two chapters, I presented material in relation to various forms of life and language games available to the men in the study. They are not forms of life and language games that are exclusive to sex offenders. However, what the hi/stories do show is the ordinariness of much of the lives of these men. They express misogyny and homophobia as easily as other men. They subscribe strongly to the heterosexual imperative and recognise the force of it in their histories. They express the need to control and to manage their lives and families rationally and independently. Victor Seidler (1997; p. 57) has written more generally of this as a common male experience; he notes:

Even as we are hugging someone close to us, we cannot absorb the nourishment that they have to offer. This pattern is deeply set in contemporary masculinities, for as men we learn to affirm our male identities by *not* needing others. Since we don't have emotional needs, we cannot admit that we need nourishment, nor can we provide nourishment for ourselves. It is as if when we are down we have to hold more tightly to male identities so that we have to push away what others might give, for to admit that we need threatens our male identities. We give out the message that we don't need others, when the truth is often that we are desperate for contact but cannot take the risk of reaching out.

This is the denial of feeling and the desire for feeling is characterised in the men's discussion of their childhoods and adult relationships. Linked strongly to this denial and desire is the imperative to manage to cope independently; this, again, is strongly present in many of the hi/stories. Seidler (1997; p. 49) notes, again more generally in relation to men:

A central myth we inherit modernity is the idea that men do not have needs of their own because if they are 'strong' they can get on by themselves. The traditional concept of the macho man who is *in control* of his life and relationships helps to create false expectations and blinds men to the injuries that they do to themselves in aspiring to live up to these ideals.

So, if there is any new knowledge emerging out of this study it may be that male sex offenders are very similar to many ordinary men.

### **Summary**

This chapter draws together strands that have been threaded through the whole thesis. It considers the reflexive processes embedded in data collection and data analysis. It uses hermeneutical perspectives to draw together research reflexive issues and their social contexts. It explicitly considers the position of the male researcher and how this standpoint has affected the research process.

**Part Six**  
**Appendices**



## Appendix One

### Research Documentation

# Research consent form

<b>Title of Project</b>	<i>Men in prison</i>
Please complete the whole of this form yourself	Please cross out as necessary
Have you read the MWHCSO information sheet?	yes/no
Have you had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study?	YES/NO
Have you received satisfactory answers to all of your questions?	YES/NO
Have you received enough information about the study?	YES/NO
Who have you discussed this with? Dr/Mr/Ms '  Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• at any time</li> <li>• without having to give a reason for withdrawing</li> <li>• without affecting the progress of your sentence and your release date ?</li> </ul>	YES/NO
Are you clear about the degree of confidentiality you can be given?	YES/NO
Do you agree to take part in this study?	YES/NO
Signed:	
Date:	
Name in Block Capitals	

## Interview schedule for the men

### The aim of the interviews is:

To learn about the mental and social worlds of men who have committed acts of sexual aggression

### Objectives of interview:

to enable the men to tell their life story  
to discover how the men's sense of sexual identity has developed  
to develop an understanding of how the men construe their sense of masculinity

### An initial structure for interviews

I assume a structure to each interview that will include an introductory, beginning to feel safe phase, a middle more in-depth exposition phase, and a concluding winding down preparing to go back into the prison phase (and if necessary making links to the next interview with me)

*Foci of interview (in sequence) - these are "pegs" rather than questions*

#### Early childhood

- \* how do you feel about your early childhood
- \* family structure
- \* where you lived, with whom you lived
- \* significant memories
- \* what other people have told you about this time
- \* how you feel now about it

#### School days

- \* what feelings do you have about your school days
- \* infant school
- \* junior school
- \* secondary school
- \* teachers
- \* friends (boys and girls)
- \* enemies?
- \* out of school activities (legal and illegal)
- \* interest/role of parents
- \* where did you live during these times
- \* relationships with parents/carers
- \* dominant feelings around each "peg"
- \* most important thing about school days
- \* leaving school - feelings etc.

#### From boy to man

- \* what did you feel about becoming a man - was it something you looked forward to or something you dreaded?
- \* as a boy what did you think made a person/boy a man/ (what was "manly")?

- \* what things were important in this transition ( work? sex? strength? mates? fights? etc.) and how were they important (prompt around biological, legal and psychological aspects)
- \* when did the change begin - when did you start to see yourself as a man  
- how did this make you feel?
- \* When was it completed? - how did you know it was completed
- \* significance of friends (male and female) - did they enhance your sense of being a man did they threaten it?
- \* significance of "family" - who and how - did they enhance your sense of being a man did they threaten it?

### As a man

- \* what made (makes) you feel good about being a man
- \* what can men do/what can't men do?
- \* what power do they have
- \* what makes you feel bad about being a man

### Offences

- \* feelings about (and story of?) first time perpetrated sex offence (NB distinction between convictions and sexually aggressive acts - refer to confidentiality caveats and possibility to anonymise acts)
- \* subsequent offences (stories?)
- \* which are most significant to you and why?
- \* feelings about acts
- \* feelings about self

### Changes in sense of being a man

- \* what changes have you noticed
- \* has sense of self changed (How?)
- \* where are you now in your sense of self and being a man?
- \* Would you want to change it - if so how?

Malcolm Cowburn (1998)

Information Sheet regarding "Men who have committed sexual offences"  
research project.

### The project

\* I am interested in talking with men who have committed sexual offences. I am interested in exploring how you understand and feel about yourself as a man.

\* The aim of the research is:

To learn about the mental and social worlds of men who have committed acts of sexual aggression

\* The Objectives of interview are:

to enable the men to tell their life story  
to discover how the men's sense of sexual identity has developed  
to develop an understanding of how the men construe their sense of masculinity

### Who am I?

\* I am a university lecturer working at Sheffield University. In the letter accompanying this information sheet you will see that I have also worked with men convicted of sexual offences for many years.

### Expectations of those participating in the research

\* Participation in the research is voluntary, and is in no way linked to anything to do with your prison career (you will not be considered a better or worse prisoner for participating or not in the research).

\* I would like to see you for an initial visit when I would explain more about the research, and then for at least one more visit to enable you to talk more fully to me about your life.

\* You can withdraw from the research at anytime without having to explain your reasons for doing so and without attracting a penalty from the Prison Service.

### Confidentiality

\* The contents of the interviews is confidential unless you: (a) tell me in detail about an offence that you have committed but have not been prosecuted for; and (b) if you indicate that you are a risk to yourself. In both cases I would report these matters to the Prison Service. Otherwise everything you tell me will be confidential. When I write-up the findings of my research I will do everything I can to ensure that you cannot be identified by anyone reading my report, but I cannot guarantee that you would not be recognised by someone reading my report.

This piece of research may provide you with an opportunity to tell your own story.

Malcolm Cowburn June 1998



## THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

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Malcolm Cowburn

Department of Sociological Studies

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Sheffield

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Tel: (0114) 222 6427

Fax: (0114) 276 8125

M.Cowburn@sheffield.ac.uk

January 28, 1999

Dear

Thank you very much for participating in my research. All of the interviews were very interesting and have given me much to think. In total, I interviewed 9 men and I have over 40 hours of taped recordings to listen to. The analysis will take some time!

I enjoyed meeting you all, and I hope that the interview was of interest to you. Many of you said that it was helpful to have the time to reflect at length on your personal history. Thank you for sharing it with me.

I hope that the remainder of your time at [name of prison] passes as positively as possible.

Best Wishes

Malcolm Cowburn



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M.Cowburn@sheffield.ac.uk

28th August 1998

Dear

Thank you for agreeing to consider being part of my research into "Men Who Commit Sexual Offences". I have completed five interviews to date. The interviews are taking much longer than I had expected. People have so much to say about their history. Unfortunately, owing to work that I have to do in the University, I am not able to resume interviewing people until December. I am writing to let you know that I will not be able to interview you in the near future, but I hope to be able to interview you between December '98 and January '99. However, if you no longer wish to participate in the research would you please let [the prison psychologist] know and I will take you off my list.

Once again thank you for volunteering to talk to me. I hope to speak to you in December/January.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Cowburn



# THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

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Fax: (0114) 276 8125

M.Cowburn@sheffield.ac.uk

January 28, 1999

Dear

Thank you for volunteering to meet me as part of my research.

Unfortunately I have, for the moment, stopped interviewing men. The interviews that I have done so far have lasted, in total, over 40 hours, and that is a lot of material to analyse. So, at present, I am not interviewing anyone else.

Should I need to do more interviews (and I won't know until mid summer), I will contact [the prison psychologist] again, and there then may be an opportunity for us to meet.

I hope that your time in [name of prison] passes as well as it can. Once again thanks for your interest in my research.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Cowburn





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---

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M.Cowburn@sheffield.ac.uk

22nd May 1998

Dear Sir,

I am a lecturer at Sheffield University and I am currently undertaking a piece of research about men who have committed sexual offences. I am writing to you to ask if you would be willing to spend some time with me telling me about your life. Newspaper and television accounts of people who have committed sexual offences often overlook the fact that people who have committed sex offences have personal histories and lives in which their offending behaviour is only part of the story.

Before working at the university I was a probation officer for many years working with men who had committed sexual offences. I have a lot of experience of listening to men talk about their offences.

However, my current interest is listening to men who have committed sexual offences talk about their life stories. This research is not just about men's sex offences, it is also about many other aspects of their lives - childhood, school days, family, work social life, close relationships and whatever else is important.

Listening to this story may take a number of visits (we can agree how often we meet). The contents of the interview will be confidential except if you: (a) tell me in detail about an offence that you have committed but have not been prosecuted for; and (b) if you indicate that you are a risk to yourself. In both cases I would have to report these matters to the Prison Service. Otherwise everything you tell me will be confidential, and when I write-up the findings of my research I try to will ensure that you cannot be identified by anyone reading my report.

I would like to meet people who have not yet attended the SOTP and also people who are either in the middle of it or have completed it. I am happy to meet to discuss the research further before you decide whether you wish to be interviewed.

This piece of research has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology at the University of Sheffield.

I look forward to hearing from you and hopefully meeting you

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Cowburn  
Lecturer in Social Work Studies

**Appendix Two**  
**Presentations of Material Related to this Research**

- 2002                    *Ethics and the process of life history research with sexually abusive men.* Invited seminar paper, Lunchtime seminar series. Centre for Life History Research at the University of Sussex
- 2001                    *'Normals' and 'Offenders': classification systems, complacency and critical masculinities.* Main conference paper. Chester College Conference 19th-20th November *'Virtual Boys and Virtual Girls: gender in flux'*
- 2001                    *'Life history approaches to male sex offenders: de-constructing typologies by reconstructing masculinities'* Seminar Paper, Centre for Gender Studies, Department of French, University of Sheffield.
- 2000                    *"Talking the talk and walking the walk" Issues in evaluation of sex offender programmes.* Conference Workshop (with Jean Hine). Evaluation for Practice, International Conference 12-14 July 2000. University of Huddersfield Centre for Evaluation Studies
- 2000                    *Life History research with convicted male sex offenders: reflections on the dialogical nature of the interviews.* Department of Sociological Studies Children and Families Research Cluster
- 1999                    *Male Sex Offenders - initial thoughts from a life history approach.* Inaugural Seminar, Centre for the study of Violence and Reconciliation, Centre for Psychotherapeutic Studies, Sheffield University

**Related Publications During the Period of Registration for the present degree**

(1995- )

**Refereed Journals**

- 2001 'Masking Hegemonic Masculinity: Reconstructing The Paedophile As The Dangerous Stranger' (with Lena Dominelli) British Journal of Social Work 31, 399-414
- 2000 'Pornography and Men's Practices' (with Keith Pringle). Journal of Sexual Aggression, 6, 1/2, 52-66
- 2000 'Assessment of Social Work Students: Standpoint and Strong Objectivity'. (with Peter Nelson and Janet Williams). Social Work Education 19 (6) 627-637
- 2000 'Consultancy to groupwork programmes for adult male sex offenders: some reflections on knowledge and processes'. British Journal of Social Work 30, 635-648
- 1998 'A Man's world: Gender Issues in Working with Male Sex Offenders in Prison'. Howard Journal, Vol. 37 No 3, pp234-251
- 1998 'Moving beyond Litigation and Positivism:: Another Approach to allegations of Sexual Abuse' (with Lena Dominelli). British Journal of Social Work 28, 525-543
- 1996 'The Black Male Sex Offender in Prison: images and issues'. Journal of Sexual Aggression 2(2): 122-142.

**Non-Refereed Abstracts, Reports and other publications**

- 2002(in press) '*Normals' and 'Offenders': classification systems, complacency and critical masculinities.*' In Virtual Boys and Virtual Girls: gender in flux papers of the Second Chester Conference: Chester Academic Press; Chester
- 1999 '*Values and processes in groupwork with men*' (with Hilary Pengelly) in Working with Men for Change ed. Wild J. London; UCL Press
- 1996 '*Sex Offender Treatment Programme & Black Prisoners Working Group*'. Interim Report of Prison Service Working Group (I co-ordinated, contributed to and edited this report)
- 1996 '*Towards an Integrated Structure for Groupwork with Male Sex Offenders: The Report of the Working Group*'. South Yorkshire

Probation Service. (I co-ordinated, contributed to and edited this report)

1996

*'Work with Male Sex Offenders in Groups'* (originally published in Groupwork 3,2 in 1990) in Kerslake, A., (ed.) Groupwork and Child Sexual Abuse London, Whiting and Birch, pp. 69-84

1995

*'Justice in an Unjust context: implications for working with adult male sex offenders'* (with Modi, P.) in Ward, D. and Lacey, M. R., Probation: Working for Justice, London, Whiting and Birch, pp.185-207

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# A Man's World: Gender Issues in Working with Male Sex Offenders in Prison

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*Abstract: The aims of this paper are to describe how prison culture affects male and female workers differently, and to consider the implications of this for work with male sex offenders in prison. This paper sets the context of work within prisons both by describing the gender make up of the staff group of the Prison Service of England and Wales and by considering the presence and influence of dominant masculinities within Prison Service establishments. It reports some findings of research which the author has undertaken, and considers the implications for work with sex offenders in prison.*

## Masculinities and the Prison Context

The staff group of the Prison Service of England and Wales is overwhelmingly male. Of Prison Service staff in post at the end of March 1995, 19% were female (HM Prison Service: Personnel Planning Group 1995) – (these figures do not include probation officers). *Table 1* provides a detailed picture of job type (grade) and gender of the staff of the Prison Service. Of workers involved in the day-to-day management of prison establishments (Governor 1–Governor 5) only 9.4% were female; of the staff responsible for the majority of face-to-face contact with inmates (principal officer–prison officer) only 9.2% were female.

Thus, although the vast majority of managerial and discipline staff are male, a significant majority (69%) of the staff primarily responsible for the work with sex offenders (psychologists) are female. Probation staff are not shown in *Table 1* because they are not employed directly by the Prison Service. However, they are centrally involved in work with sex offenders and Home Office statistics for 1995 indicate that almost half of the probation officers in prison are female.<sup>1</sup>

As the majority of people in male prisons are male, it is appropriate to consider the influence of the dominant form of masculinity in prisons upon the culture of male prison establishments. Masculinities vary according to age, race, class, sexuality, physical and learning abilities. However, in western societies there appears to be a dominant – ‘hegemonic’ form of masculinity. Fielding (1994) in his discussion of the male dominated ‘cop canteen culture’ notes:

**TABLE 1**  
*Prison Service Staff, March 1995: Showing Gender and Grade*

Grade	Total	Number of women	Percentage of total
DG + grades 3 & 4	18	4	22
Grade 5 + asst director	64	9	14
Governor 1	46	2	4
Governor 2	75	5	7
Governor 3	125	16	13
Governor 4	306	36	12
Governor 5	467	37	8
Principal officer	1364	69	5
Senior officer	3508	167	5
Prison officer	19215	1989	10
Temporary officer	4	4	100
Auxiliary officer	1829	361	20
Night patrols	973	87	9
Stores person	604	34	6
Grade 6 + 7	146	18	12
Senior executive officer	88	26	30
Higher executive officer	289	114	39
Executive officer	619	371	60
Administrative officer	2001	1514	76
Administrative assistant	735	571	78
Secretarial + typing grades	627	625	100
Medical officers (FT)	82	8	10
Medical officers (PT)	103	4	4
Nursing grades	589	449	76
Pharmacy grades	57	39	68
Psychologist grades	183	126	69
Chaplains	252	32	13
Farm manager grades	88	1	1
SPTO + S tel & tech	95	0	0
HPTO + H tel & tech	117	4	3
PTO + tel & tech	73	6	8
Senior instructional officer	1	0	0
Higher instructional officer	25	2	8
Instructional officer	1082	155	14
Support bands 1 + 2	232	208	90
Librarian	1	1	100
Regional catering manager	4	0	0
Animals inspector	1	0	0
Information officers	10	3	30
Industrial staff	2866	201	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>38964</b>	<b>7298</b>	<b>19</b>

*Note:* Figures as at end of March 1995: percentages greater than 1 rounded up to nearest whole number

*(Source:* Table derived from *Equal Opportunities in the Prison Service* (HM Prison Service: Personnel Planning Group 1995))

the stereotyped cultural values of the police canteen may be read as an almost pure form of 'hegemonic masculinity'. They highlight (i) aggressive, physical action; (ii) a strong sense of competitiveness and preoccupation with the imagery of conflict; (iii) exaggerated heterosexual orientation, often articulated in terms of misogynistic and patriarchal attitudes towards women; and (iv) the operation of rigid in-group/out-group distinctions whose consequences are strongly exclusionary in the case of out-groups and strongly assertive of loyalty and affinity in the case of in-groups. (p.47)

Although prison culture is not homogenous and cultures can vary across establishments (Sim 1994b, pp. 110–12; Genders and Player 1995, p. 154), it is this masculinity that appears to dominate male prisons. It is a masculinity which sees itself as exclusively heterosexual, which defines itself as opposite to the feminine (an 'out-group'). Its presence was first vividly, if uncritically, described in relation to prisons by Sykes (1958) in his seminal study of a male maximum-security prison in the United States. Speaking of the deprivations suffered by the male prisoners, Sykes observed that:

Shut off from the world of women, the population of prisoners finds itself unable to employ that criterion of maleness which looms so importantly in society at large – namely the act of heterosexual intercourse itself. Proof of maleness, both for the self and for others, has been shifted to other grounds and the display of 'toughness' in the form of masculine mannerisms and the demonstration of inward stamina now becomes the major route to manhood. These are used by the society at large, it is true; but the prison, unlike the society at large, must rely on them exclusively. (pp. 97–8)

He develops further his conception of male gender identity and discusses the implications of imprisonment on such an identity:

In short, there are primary and secondary characteristics in terms of social behaviour just as there are primary and secondary sexual characteristics in terms of biological attributes; and the inmates have been forced to fall back on the secondary proof of manhood in the area of social relations, i.e. 'toughness', since the primary proof in the form of sexual intercourse, is denied them. (p. 98)

In their study of Pentonville undertaken in the late 1950s the Morrises (Morris, Morris *et al.* 1963) noted a similar construction of masculinity that was constituted primarily by heterosexual intercourse and secondly by aggression and violence (p. 184).

In a more recent study of a male maximum-security prison in the USA, Scully (1990) noted similar displays of 'masculinity':

Externally, at least, traditional male role behavior is exaggerated. Manhood is validated through physical strength and aggression. Expressions like anger are expected and acceptable but emotional sensitivity to others or the appearance of caring is regarded as dangerous. Any display of characteristics or behavior traditionally associated with the feminine is scorned and avoided. (p. 9)

The dominant form of masculinity within prisons may thus be construed as being heterosexual, misogynistic and violent. As Sim (1994b) has noted this masculinity is not '... a pathological manifestation of abnormal otherness, but ... part of the normal routine which is sustained and legitimated by the wider culture of masculinity ...' (p. 105). Similar constituents of masculinity outside of male dominated institutions have been observed by many

commentators, including Mac an Ghail (1994) in his study of 'Parnell' comprehensive school in the midlands of England who noted that:

male students at Parnell School learn to be men in terms of three constitutive elements of compulsory heterosexuality, misogyny and homophobia. (p. 96)

and Jackson (1990):

'Hard case' masculinity not only defines itself positively through assertiveness, virility, toughness, independence etc. but also negatively by defining itself in opposition to what it is not – feminine or homosexual. (p. 124)

However, in considering the impact of this hegemonic masculinity within a male institution, Sim (1994b) highlights considerations that move beyond the individual and have implication for therapeutic work with sexually abusive men:

A gendered reading of the social order and hierarchies of the male prison therefore moves the analysis beyond organisational imperatives and individualised profile. This reading points to how the maintenance of order both reflects and reinforces the pervasive and deeply entrenched discourses around particular forms of masculinity. To speak in terms of normal and abnormal men – as the vast majority of state and sociological studies have done – is to miss a fundamental point, namely that normal life in male prisons is itself highly problematic – it reproduces normal men. (p. 108)

The difference between 'normal men' and men convicted of sexual offences becomes less clear when research that has examined the attitudes about and proclivities towards sexual violence in populations of 'normal' adult men is considered (Malamuth 1981; Petty and Dawson 1989; Rapaport and Burkhart 1984; Muehlenhard and Linton 1987; Kanin 1969, 1985). These studies indicate that aggression and force are common in sexual interactions within 'normal' populations. They demonstrate that a significant proportion (approximately 30%) of the 'normal' male population believe it acceptable to carry out a sexual assault, and acknowledge the likelihood of doing so if they could be assured of not being detected or punished. A smaller percentage also report having actually carried out forced sexual assaults against both women and children. Most of these studies, however, have used college students as samples. As the majority of students tend to have come from middle-class socio-economic groups, they cannot be regarded as representative of the general population. Briere and Runtz (1989) suggest that using students might be a 'conservative test of hypotheses' regarding motivation for sexual abuse, as they probably represent a less deviant sample than incarcerated sex offenders. The presence of pro-rape attitudes in a population of men in prisons – both workers and inmates has been noted by Scully (1990, pp. 78–95).

This form of masculinity becomes more oppressive when it dominates organisations and institutions. Its collective presence has been noted by commentators on both the police (Holdaway 1987; Messerschmidt 1993; Burke 1994; Fielding 1994; Martin 1996) and the Prison Service (Gambetta 1988; Genders and Player 1989; Scraton, Sim *et al.* 1991; Sim 1994a, 1994b; Genders and Player 1995). Martin (1996) referring both to her own study and to those of others commented on:

The reality for women . . . is that in their daily lives as police officers, they must endure constant sexism and considerable harassment from male colleagues in order simply to do their jobs (Anderson, Brown *et al.* 1993). Many male officers treat female colleagues not simply as fellow officers, but as inferior *women* officers. This is significant because many policemen cannot put aside their own view of the appropriate place for women in society, and it is certainly not one in a controlling position (Pope and Pope 1986). The denigration of women as police officers – particularly because of perceived physical limitations – and constant referrals to women as sex objects make life for women officers difficult and unpleasant. (pp. 512–13)

Similarly, in their study of HMP Grendon, Genders and Player (1995) stated:

During the research it was possible to discern a distinct male ethos, which was prevalent throughout the institution, and which categorised and stigmatised women on the basis of sexual stereotypes. (p. 95)

Recently, the Equal Opportunities Commission (1995) reporting the case of Patricia Hoare, a female prison officer who was awarded £15,000 compensation by an Industrial Tribunal for injury to feelings after winning her sex discrimination case against the Prison Service, stated that Mrs Hoare's:

. . . career in the prison service was adversely affected within two years by discrimination by a very small group of male officers. The case highlights the problems faced by many women when they enter traditionally male dominated occupations and suffer harassment and discrimination. (press release)

In their report, the Industrial Tribunal noted:

. . . remarks about women's breasts or other physical characteristics of both males and females were quite common . . . The culture of the prison officers . . . was that sexual jokes and innuendo were norm amongst many officers. It is agreed by most witnesses that swearing was rife but we do not accept that that is necessarily the same thing, nor that swearing in itself was a serious problem. However we find the culture of sexual jokes and attitudes towards women was a problem. Undoubtedly some of the prisoners could use terms including sexual remarks in order to attempt to shock: that is something which prison officers have to deal with and live with. It does not follow that the first respondents [The Home Office] could not take steps to alter the conduct of officers where necessary in our view. (The Industrial Tribunals 1995, pp. 3–4)

It is within this context that the experience of both female and male workers trying to work with male sex offenders must be seen.

## The Study

In 1989 the author wrote to the governors of the 114 prison establishments which accommodated male prisoners. He asked whether any offence-focused work was taking place in their prisons with sex offenders, and received a high response rate to the letters (89%). Subsequently (October 1989), questionnaires were sent to all the establishments that had indicated they were working with sex offenders, asking who was working with which offenders and from what particular theoretical framework. Thirty-five questionnaires were sent out and 31 were returned. The final stage of the fieldwork



involved selecting and visiting seven establishments. They were chosen on the basis that the work they had described in the questionnaire appeared to be well-established and that the sample represented the range of categories in the Prison Service 'estate' (that is, a dispersal prison, two local prisons – one accommodating a Vulnerable Prisoner Unit; two Category B training prisons – one of which operates a nationally recognised therapeutic regime; a Category C prison; and a young offender institution). The interviews concentrated primarily on three areas: (i) the prison allocation system and the regimes; (ii) the therapeutic work itself; and also (iii) issues for the workers. This paper focuses on the responses of the workers that were interviewed. In particular it concentrates on 'issues for workers'.

### The Sample

The workers who were interviewed (eight female and 13 male all of whom were white) were psychologists (two of senior grade and one psychological assistant – all of whom will be referred to as 'psychologists'); probation officers (one of senior grade and the remainder basic grade); a senior medical officer and uniformed staff – including basic grade officers, senior and principal officer grades (see *Table 2*). They all (with the exception of the principal officer) had direct involvement in the therapeutic work with the sex offenders. Additionally those of senior grades had a managerial responsibility for the work.

Women were proportionally over-represented in this sample, compared with their presence in the overall staffing of the Prison Service in 1995 – this may be due to the fact that proportionately more probation officers and psychologists were interviewed and these professions have a more equal gender balance in their staff group. However, given the size of this sample, the findings must be treated with caution although they do appear to confirm other findings related to gender issues in male dominated institutions (Holdaway 1987; Messerschmidt 1993; Burke 1994; Fielding 1994; Martin 1996; Gambetta 1988; Genders and Player 1989, 1995; Scraton, Sim *et al.* 1991; Sim 1994b).

TABLE 2  
*Interviewed Workers: Staff Category and Gender*

Job description	Female	Male	Total	% of total
Prison probation officers	5	4	9	43
Prison psychologists	2	1	3	14
Prison medical officers		1	1	5
Uniformed staff	1	7	8	38
Total	8	13	21	100
% of total	38	62	100	

## The Findings

### *Understandings of Sexism*

Workers were asked if they had seen or experienced any displays of sexist behaviour: if they had they were asked to describe them and their response to them.

Definitions of sexism adopted by workers were largely predicated by their gender and their experience. There seemed to be two main dimensions to the definitions that women workers subscribed to; these were sexual objectification and misogyny. A female probation officer commented:

It is a very personal thing, but I think it's very sexist to have some particular kinds of pictures/posters of women in particular attitudes . . . I actually think it's very sexist to allow that because it's showing women as sexual objects and not as people.

A woman working in a psychology department stated that:

There are members of staff who think that women, even though we have four female prison officers, there are male officers who think that women shouldn't be working in prisons or shouldn't be working on the wing and they make their opinions clear.

Martin (1996), reviewing literature relating to the attitudes of male police officers to their female counterparts also found that male police officers strongly held this belief (p. 512).

Male workers however, tended to have a more sceptical view as to what was sexist. In a number of prisons, when asked about the presence of sexist displays, male workers stated: 'if you define pin-ups as sexist then, yes, we've got pin-ups'. There was considerable doubt as to whether pictures of naked women, generally obtained from so-called 'soft' pornographic magazines were in fact, or in effect, sexist. A number of male workers expressed strong doubts as to whether 'men's magazines' were sexist.<sup>2</sup> These doubts appeared to be based on the fact that such magazines were extremely common in all prisons in the country:

There would be some argument as to whether that ['men's magazines'] is sexist material. You can go into any prison in the country and you'll find that magazines, calendars etc. adorn every single cell, whether the man is a sex offender or a burglar or whatever. (uniformed senior officer)

. . . it depends if you think pin-ups are sexist or not. . . . Pin-ups are not a big issue with me. Whereas I wouldn't encourage them. There is pornography around no doubt but again its kept at the mildest end of pornography. (psychologist)

Martin (1996) found a similar level of denial about sexism in her study of police officers. She notes:

All the men were aware of the existence of canteen culture, but most denied that a macho or sexist style was evident in their division. Comments like 'it doesn't happen here' and 'not really in this station' were common. There was a general acknowledgement that in a situation of 'all boys together' there was bound to be an element of coarse language and sexist jokes, but it was stressed 'the girls give as good as they get'. (p. 523)

This difference in perception of what constitutes sexism potentially creates a situation in which women workers' experience may be ignored, denied or dismissed by some of their male colleagues. These differences may cause serious misunderstandings between workers when working with sex offenders.

### *Experience of Sexism*

All of the women interviewed recognised the presence of sexism in their working environment and acknowledged its negative impact upon themselves. The behaviours and attitudes encountered by the women from male staff and inmates were remarkably similar in all of the establishments. This finding is similar to that of Martin (1996, p. 519), where all but two of the policewomen she interviewed had experienced sexual harassment of a physical (as distinct from verbal) nature. However, none of the women in this study described physical assault – this may have been due to their not experiencing such or to the fact that the interviewer was male and they were inhibited about disclosing such experiences. The following quotations give a flavour of the problem as experienced by women workers; they have been sorted into comments which clearly refer to the behaviour of inmates and comments which refer to the behaviour of staff.

#### Comments related to the behaviour of inmates:

There is a lot of shouting if you go across the yard . . . during exercise, or if you go after exercise, when people are banged up, they whistle out of the window or shout derogatory comments. (female probation officer)

A number of women and one male worker commented on occurrences of inmates exposing themselves:

Although we had one case of someone exposing themselves at a window at female staff . . . that's the only very overt display I can think of. The name calling seems to be fairly low key, from my perception of course – not a woman's perception. I can't tell how it affects woman. (male psychologist)

I actually had quite an unpleasant situation with a man on my landing . . . As I used to leave the wing at lunch-time, he used to make a noise . . . At the time my fringe was long so I could look up without him seeing me move my head, and he would masturbate at the window. He later told me that he used to fantasise about me in his masturbation. (female probation officer)

#### Comments related to the behaviour of staff:

. . . Assumptions, you know, 'If I were ten years younger, I'd give you a run for your money'. Assumptions that you'd welcome that. (female psychologist)

. . . you get your usual sort of male behaviour when they're in a crowd – wolf-whistling and making comments when you're trying to be as professional as possible in that sort of situation. (female probation officer)

Comments when you go and visit a prisoner or see them – 'when can I come in and lie down on the couch?' – that sort of thing from a member of staff. (female psychologist)

Lots of comments about my appearance, lots and lots of comments about whether I wore tights or stockings, which they did in front of the inmates constantly. (female psychologist)

They were two or three officers that . . . every time I came on it was: 'what are you wearing today?' and that sort of talk. Lots of arms around me and: 'give us a cuddle' and that sort of stuff . . . Lots of jokes, jokes I would regard as sexist – telling each other jokes. Lots of reading these postcards out loud, showing them to me. . . I sometimes found myself surrounded, feeling surrounded by all these members of staff – I mean forget the inmates – the members of staff were all in this together. (female psychologist)

**Comments related to the behaviour of both staff and inmates:**

I had, outside my office, the other week a mattress, and joking remarks made to me about: 'Was that left for later in the day?' . . . But it's the fact that comments are made, and if I was a male (worker) they would not be made. You get the comments made from staff as well as inmates. (female probation officer)

. . . I came back from leave. I went into my office and the colour supplement of a magazine had been left which was about house decorations. It was on bedrooms and somebody had written some very offensive information about myself which I found very distasteful and quite intimidating. (female probation officer)

The majority of these behaviours are acts designed to embarrass, intimidate and denigrate the female worker, by sexually objectifying her. Genders and Player (1995, pp. 95–6) in their study of HMP Grendon noted a similar range of attitudes and behaviours towards women from both prisoners and prison staff. Gutek (1989) in her study of the impact of sexualised behaviour and sexual harassment on women, men and organisations has highlighted what she calls 'Sex-role spillover' experienced by women at work:

Not only are the sexual aspects of the female role carried over to work, but also they swamp or overwhelm a view of her as a capable worker. . . . a woman's perceived sexuality can 'blot out' all other characteristics. Thus sex role interferes with and takes precedence over work role. (p. 61)

Messerschmidt (1993) in his consideration of how gender politics affect State agencies noted that:

[Wexler and Logan 1983] . . . concluded that the most common source of stress for policewomen derives from being women. As a result, policewomen frequently experience a work situation wherein they are 'ignored, harassed, watched, gossiped about and viewed as sexual objects (p. 52)'. (p. 180)

For women workers in prison this experience is, however, accentuated, when the work which is being undertaken is with male sex offenders. The motivation of the woman is questioned and sexualised and thus dismissed:

I've overheard things being said about me as a woman. One recent example was questioning my motives for working with sex offenders. Suggesting, I suppose . . . that I was getting some kind of personal gratification. (female probation officer)

One worker's experience was of uniformed staff talking about her involvement in the work with inmates – other men – and thus perhaps sealing a male misogynistic bond at her expense:

I feel that if a prison officer is actually questioning and talking with prisoners about what [I am] doing working with sex offenders, it's raising doubts in their minds as to my integrity and what I am trying to do. (female probation officer)

**Working with sex offenders in a prison environment affected women workers at both a personal and professional level:**

**I think it must have made my position more difficult, being one of the few women down on the Wing anyway, and being the only woman who was specifically working with sex offenders on their offences. I think, for me, knowing that officers had been making such comments to me and, in a sense, devaluing me as a person; and then having to go in and run a group without holding that in your head . . . and expecting inmates then to value me as having a serious contribution to make. (female probation officer)**

**I think it affects the way I work. If I'm hearing that, I'm beginning to start questioning: 'Am I going about it the right way?', 'What am I doing wrong?', 'Am I being too sexual?' and it did make me think: 'Well how am I actually behaving on the wing?' . . . I felt I was really suppressing my sexuality when I was down on the wing. Really being terribly careful about just the way I conducted myself (female probation officer)**

**– that I think made me often swing between either being straight with them, often quite heavy, in an attempt to counteract this sort of frivolous view of me that some officers had. Alternatively it made me feel jokey with them a little as well. A very difficult position. (female psychologist)**

### *Responses*

**A worker's personal experience, their gender, status and their job affected how they personally responded to sexist behaviour. Male workers were either accepted into the dominant 'male' ethos of the prison because they participated in what was considered to be male humour – cementing the male 'in-group' coherence – or they were either shunned or merely tolerated. The following quotations are from male workers in most of the different departments involved with the work:**

**I'm not in favour of it (pin-ups and 'soft' pornography) but I think there are bigger issues to battle because you wouldn't win it anyway. (male psychologist)**

**. . .when you think of the language prison officers use – f'ing and blinding all day long – they don't know they're doing it. Trying to change that would be an enormous task – and yet I find that offensive. Some inmates find it offensive but nobody ever tries to tackle it. (male senior probation officer)**

**... it's part and parcel of the 'norm'. You'll find it throughout any male environment – it doesn't have to be a prison – and that becomes prevalent and it's an everyday acceptable way of carrying on for the majority of people. It's done in a jocular fashion, it's not really done in a vindictive fashion. It's the 'macho' image sort of touch. It's an acceptable level and it rises across people as opposed to sinking them. (male senior officer – uniformed staff)**

**In considering how to respond to sexism, a minority of male workers acknowledged difficulties in not opting for an 'easy life' and colluding with the pervasive sexist 'humour'. Generally, however, the non-collusion took the form of silence rather than confrontation. A male senior probation officer described his (and his team's response) to this issue:**

**. . . I think I would take the view that in many issues sometimes the best way of tackling it is not by way of direct confrontation, but by working on attitudes. Not by ignoring**

them but standing up for what you believe. Very often a quiet word with an officer, later, who comes out with a racist or sexist remark – anything actually over the top. It would be easier to pull the officer aside later and say: 'Look between ourselves, I take exception to that'. If I were to go into a wing office and somebody made a racist remark and I tackled it then and there; my guess is that I would be much less likely to achieve an aim in confrontation.

It may be, that whilst such a response may reveal insight into how individuals may react to confrontation, it fails to place sexism or racism within a structural context. Offensive behaviour is individualised and seen to be a matter for resolution between offensive and offended individuals. This fails to take account of the role sexism and racism play in sustaining 'prison culture' and also the oppressive effect of such behaviours on excluded groups and individuals.

The responses of women workers to male behaviour in the prison ranged from the fatalistic ('men will be men'), to anger:

I find that you've got to make a joke of things like that because at the end of the day I chose to work here, and okay I shouldn't have to put up with it, but it's not going to change overnight. (female probation officer)

As a female working in a prison, I've had to put up with sexual innuendo on a number of occasions. I deal with that on a one-to-one basis, but I don't make a big issue of it. I would speak to an officer who was doing it, likewise I would speak to an [inmate]. (female probation officer)

I usually retaliate with a comment. Probably in a similar (or put in a different) way . . . If I had a derogatory comment made to me I would try and move it around to make them feel small . . . Every time an inmate walks past me I've got an immediate retaliation. That's a habit I've picked up, whether it be good or bad, but it works. (female uniformed officer)

Interestingly two of these women (the first and third quotation) were working in isolated positions in otherwise all male teams and with virtually no support in regard to this issue. The third woman was working in a team which appeared to have consciously adopted a policy of not directly confronting either racism or sexism. The strategy of the uniformed officer is very different to the other two workers and almost embodies an aspect of the 'macho' culture of her male counterparts (for example, 'Every time an inmate walks past me I've got an immediate retaliation'). However, none of the women referred to a female occupational culture from which they could derive support and nurturance – this appears to be similar to the situation in the British police force, where the relatively small numbers of women and the predominance of the male culture inhibit the development of an alternative female culture (see Fielding 1994 p. 51).

The above responses are individual strategies for survival that do not involve official Prison Service procedures. Where workers recognised that there was an issue that needed addressing at a policy level, there was a degree of pessimism or fatalism that the overall culture of the prison was not amenable to change. None of the women concerned had any confidence that the Prison Service would respond either sympathetically or sensitively. With regard to incidents of indecent exposure, no-one who had been

victimised spoke of taking proceedings against the offender. One worker stated that she feared the prison authorities would react thoughtlessly and punitively:

... I was reluctant to put him on report because of what had happened at the last place – he'd been put on report, he'd been transferred out immediately and was even more angry and bitter towards women than he had been initially so we wanted to work with that ... (female psychologist)

Similarly the male culture in prisons affected the confidence women workers had in the prison disciplinary systems:

... on one occasion he [an inmate] brought me a letter (and asked me to read it) in which there were hairs and it was fairly obvious they were pubic hairs and I found that very unpleasant. I also felt quite stuck in what I could do with it because if I actually took that forward as a charge in an adjudication system I felt I would have to almost go through a process like a rape victim would feel. So I didn't do anything about it and felt really quite bad about that. (female probation officer)

The experiences of these women are not unique or atypical. Studies that have examined the 'canteen culture' of police forces have also found similar patterns of male chauvinism and sexism. See, for example, Martin 1996, pp. 512–13; Messerschmidt 1993, p. 180; Wexler and Logan 1983, p. 52, all quoted above. Remington (1981) found that 'sexual joking and innuendoes towards ... female officers were commonplace', and Martin and Levine (1991) found that the following types of harassment were most commonly experienced by policewomen:

men officers would:

- \* view 'pornography' while women officers were present
- \* physically touch officers in ways the women found offensive
- \* make jokes about the way women officers look
- \* try to force officers to have sexual intercourse. (Messerschmidt 1993, p. 28)

Studies which describe the experience of female researchers in male prisons have also noted similar attitudes and behaviours from male prison staff to female research workers (Morris, Morris *et al.* 1963, pp. 326–7; Scully 1990, pp. 11–13; Genders and Player 1995, pp. 42–3).

### **Implications for Work with Sex Offenders in Prison**

Sim (1994b) has highlighted how a 'gendered reading of the social order and hierarchies of the male prison' raises important and difficult questions about how prison order is maintained and what effect it has upon the men imprisoned (p. 108). This, of course, may pose particular difficulties for programmes aimed at changing the behaviour and attitudes of men who have committed sexually abusive crimes. Sim (1994b) notes:

Nor does [prison] alleviate, change or challenge their self-perception as gendered individuals, as men. Rather in its very 'celebration of masculinity' institutions, materially and symbolically reproduces a vision of order in which normal manhood remains unproblematic, the template for constructing everyday social relationships ... (p. 108)

Whilst programmes may aim to change attitudes and values that are deemed to be related to the sex offender's offending behaviour, many of these attitudes and values appear similar to those of the hegemonic masculinity endorsed and actively embodied in the culture of the prison. Separating programme content and programme delivery from the culture and ambience of the prison as a whole may merely indicate to sex offenders on programmes that they have to learn one language for the therapy group and retain another for their daily life inside the prison and beyond its gates.

### *Programme Content*

Since this study was completed, the Prison Service in England and Wales has introduced a cognitive-behavioural programme for sex offenders in approximately 22 prisons (this figure was accurate in November 1995) (HM Prison Service: SOTP Programme Development Section 1994). Block 2 of this programme focuses on attitudes relating to gender, sexuality and child sexuality. It may be that many of the attitudes which the block seeks to challenge and which it labels as 'cognitive distortions' are also an important part of the hegemonic masculinity within the culture of the prison. For example the workers use 'attitude cards' on which statements are written to provoke discussion; statements such as 'Only certain types of women get raped' and 'The way some women dress, they are asking to be raped'. Discussion provoked by these statements in therapy groups may challenge both the statements themselves and the sexist foundations from which the statements originate, however, the prisoner spends the majority of his time in an environment that actively endorses the statements. Sim (1994b) notes that:

*. . . incapacitating rapists for example, has not guaranteed an alleviation of violence against women either at an individual or collective level. Such men are likely to be confronted by a culture of masculinity which will do little to change their behaviour, heighten their consciousness or the consciousness of those in wider society concerning the 'intimate intrusions' which collectively face women on a daily basis (Stanko 1985). (p. 116). This argument is supported by the first major study of rapists in the UK which showed that only 32 out of 142 believed that raped women had been harmed, while less than half displayed any compassion for their victims (Guardian 5.3.91). . . . These findings are hardly surprising given the nature of most penal regimes and the discourses surrounding sexuality, masculinity and femininity that prevail within and without the prison walls. In that sense . . . prisons are not removed from the body of wider society as has been previously argued. They are linked to that society by the umbilical cord of masculinity where similarities between prisoners and men outside may be more important than the differences between them in explaining sexual and other forms of violence against women. (pp. 115-16, italics added)*

To challenge these attitudes is to create a dissonance with the dominant prison culture for both the workers and the group members to address and to resolve.

Not only are certain parts of the core programme uncomfortably located in relation to the dominant culture in prisons, but some of the behaviours of both staff and inmates described above also have the potential to undermine the therapeutic objectives of the work. Whilst some male workers acknowledged that sexist attitudes and behaviours did not affect them personally, a



number of them did indicate that they would challenge these attitudes and values when expressed by the sex offenders with whom they were working:

When you're actually working with the inmates themselves in groups or as individuals they're very quick to understand that is not the way, that it's not acceptable and we don't allow them to speak about sex objects unless it is to find out a man's attitude. (male senior uniformed officer)

At the same time he indicated that such challenges would only occur within a specific work focused context, and that outside of that context both offender and worker would resume the 'macho' image expected of males within prisons. Thus the message a programme in prison could be inadvertently giving to sex offenders is: 'You have to learn one language to succeed on the programme and then unlearn it to survive in the prison'. In their study of Grendon, Genders and Player (1995) noted that not only did sexist values permeate the therapeutic groups but:

the overwhelmingly male environment undoubtedly produced a milieu in which such portrayals of women frequently went unquestioned and, in consequence, provided fertile conditions for the reinforcement and perpetuation of distorted and invidious stereotypes. (pp. 96-7)

Additionally they noted that 'women working [in Grendon] were particularly vulnerable to the effects of . . . stereotypes', - either being viewed as the nurturant 'Madonna' or vilified through the use of sexualised language. For example a probation officer who refused to accede to a prisoner's demands was described as 'a hard cold bitch' (p. 92).

The cost for female workers in challenging sexist behaviours of sex offenders in groupwork programmes was different to that experienced by the male workers. Female workers acknowledged that in the context of their work with offenders they would seek to use the offenders' sexism as a vehicle for challenging their entrenched attitudes and behaviours towards women and children. However, they also graphically described a personal cost of endeavouring not only to work with sex offenders, but to survive:

. . . [sexist behaviour] can be useful in a professional sense: it's what it does to you on a personal level. (female probation officer)

Thus the availability and the nature of a co-working relationship could be crucial to their survival and to the effective delivery of the group work programme.

### *Co-working*

The culture of male prisons poses particular difficulties to the development of mixed sex co-working partnerships. The author's research on the male and female prison staff working together on sex offender treatment programmes shows how female staff have found discrepancies between their male co-worker's behaviour in the treatment group and the same man's behaviour when on the wing and surrounded by male colleagues. This dissonance was experienced as seriously undermining the co-working relationship, as one woman commented:

how far can such a co-worker be trusted to support you? (probation officer)

A female worker described the behaviour of a male prison officer with whom she jointly led a group for sex offenders:

... I was working with a male officer who never took part in any of the joking on the wing, but never intervened to stop it. So there was a sense in which he colluded with what was going on and yet I knew he had a high regard for what I did. And when we were up in the group-work room running the group we worked very well together, and when we were doing the debrief, absolutely fine, but back on the wing ... he wouldn't enter into any of this, but often wouldn't acknowledge me at all. (psychologist)

These difficulties may affect the efficacy of a co-working relationship and thus potentially impair the treatment delivery and effectiveness of any programme. To some extent these issues can be addressed through supervision and consultancy, but how successful this will be may depend on the skill and critical awareness of the supervisor and on the willingness of the prison management to challenge pervading attitudes and behaviours.

### Summary and Conclusion

The dominant culture in the prisons of England and Wales is problematic (Woolf and Tumim 1991). Prison culture, they note:

... is not confined to the inmates alone. It is also present among some prison officers. It is at least as important for those prison officers' attitudes to be changed as it is for inmates' attitudes to be changed. (par. 12.211)

Although Woolf did not specifically highlight the issue of sexism in prisons, the report does emphasise the necessity of controlling the dominant culture of the establishments by challenging attitudes and behaviours of both staff and inmates.

Messerschmidt (1993) has described how state agencies embody and consciously reproduce dominant forms of gender/masculinity:

... institutionalized practices define and sustain specific conceptions of masculinity that express and reproduce social divisions of labour and power as well as normative heterosexuality. In this way state agents do gender in response to the socially structured circumstances in which they perform their work. Gender, then, is a behavioural response to the particular conditions and situations in which we participate: we do gender according to the social setting in which we find ourselves. (p. 174)

Throughout this study it has been clear that the practices of male prison staff construct and reproduce a form of masculinity that is dominant and, as Mac an Ghail (1994, p. 96) observed characterised by 'compulsory heterosexuality, homophobia and misogyny'. A significant and problematic element of this hegemonic masculinity is that it appears, in many ways, indistinguishable from the espoused masculinity of most male sex offenders. Work within prisons to help sex offenders change their attitudes and behaviour may be inhibited if the nature of prison culture is ignored and considered to be unproblematic or unchangeable.

Sykes (1958), in 1958, clearly realised the importance of the prison environment when contemplating the reform of the individual inmate, and it appears fitting to conclude this paper with his words:

... present knowledge of human behaviour is sufficient to let us say that whatever the influence on the man held captive may be, it will be a product of the patterns of social interaction which the prisoner enters into day after day, year after year, and not the details of prison architecture, brief exhortations to reform or sporadic attacks on the 'prison population'. The particular pattern of social interaction into which an inmate enters is, in turn, part of a complex social system with its own norms, values and methods of control; and any effort to reform the prison – and thus to reform the criminal, – which ignores this social system of the prison is as futile as the labours of Sisyphus. The extent to which the existing social system works in the direction of the prisoner's deterioration rather than his rehabilitation; the extent to which the system can be changed; the extent to which we are willing to change it – these are the issues which confront us and not the recalcitrance of the individual inmate. (p. 134)

Given the potential danger to the public that sex offenders represent, it would appear advisable that reforms to the staff and inmate culture of prisons need to be a key part of any strategy for working with sex offenders in prisons.

### Notes

- 1 On 31 December 1995 there were 639 probation officers seconded to prisons in England and Wales; 296 (46%) were female and 343 (54%) were male (Home Office Offenders and Corrections Unit, personal communication, 15 October 1996).
- 2 For a fuller account of issues related to pornography in prison see Cowburn (1992, pp. 37–46).

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