SEXUAL HARASSMENT, OPPRESSION AND RESISTANCE: A FEMINIST ETHNOGRAPHY OF SOME YOUNG PEOPLE FROM HENRY JAMES SCHOOL

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by

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DECLARATION

Some of the materials and text presented in chapters 7, 8 and 9 of this thesis have been published (Halson, 1989a and 1991).

SUMMARY

This research project is based on ethnographic observations of and interviews with a sample of nineteen young women about their experiences of sexual harassment in everyday life. The fieldwork was carried out in a school. The aims of the project were to explore young women's perceptions and negotiations of sexual harassment as much as to document the variety of forms it took and to explore the role of schools in the institutionalization of sexual harassment.

The methods employed and the methodological perspective adopted were both ethnographic and feminist, underpinned by a realist philosophy and a standpoint epistemology. I highlight the need to address questions about how methodology, epistemology and substantive data are indissolubly interconnected. Thus, the traditional 'scientific' principles of objective impartiality and unemotionality are explicitly challenged by the demand that we reflect critically on our own *inevitably emotional* knowledge of the world which we investigate. The appeal to reflexivity rather than to reason or rationality (supposedly unfettered by emotionality) profoundly challenges our understanding of what 'science' means and, therefore, what knowledge is.

A definition of sexual harassment is offered. I argue that the phenomenon is a situated, mundane and masculine power practice which reconstructs or reproduces patriarchal social relations. It is patriarchy operationalized. Since the young women with whom I worked collaborated in defining what the research was about by relating their experiences of heterosex, the thesis also explores some of the oppressive continuities between these more intimate encounters and sexual harassment in everyday life.

Given that sites of oppression are also potentially at least sites of resistance, the thesis critically examines the ideological context which structures human agency and explores the extent to which young women are empowered to resist rather than accommodate themselves to the oppressive exercise of masculine power. I argue that the school effectively reproduces the oppressive reality in which the young women live their everyday lives.

Chapter One: Introduction: Origins and Themes

'The Personal is Political'

It has now become commonplace to locate the researcher in the research process; to reflect on and record how the researcher's own biography, experience and political perspectives influenced not only the selection of the topic of study but also the course and outcome of the research, indeed the very knowledge which results (Burgess, 1984: Hammersley, 1984; Bell and Roberts, 1984; Harvey, 1990). The sociological concept of 'reflexivity' has been employed to describe this process of producing 'first-person' accounts. Reflexivity has come to be accepted as one of the defining principles of a feminist approach to research (Stanley and Wise, 1983; Harding, 1987; Ramazanoglu, 1989; Kelly, 1988; Cain, 1990; Stanley, 1990). Indeed, as Gelsthorpe and Morris (1990: 88) argue, 'one of the essential ingredients of feminist approaches is that theorizing has to *begin* with the researcher's own experience. There is no other knowable place to begin.'

This thesis is about sexual harassment as one of the effective mechanisms by which young women are oppressed in everyday life. It has its origins in my personal experience of and resistance to oppression through this means. My first aim in this chapter, therefore, is to interweave some of the salient features of my own biography alongside the major themes of the project: oppression, changing consciousness and resistance. I hope, thereby, to convey to the reader how I came to choose to research sexual harassment, why the project had the focus on *process* and changing consciousness rather than 'causes' and why I adopted a materialist or realist conception of the world. My second aim is to convey, in outline, the contents of the remainder of the thesis.

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I am a white English woman, now 34 years old. I was born into a working class family and grew up in a working class area in the north of England. Like Cain (1990) I was not initially *conscious* of my class or ethnic identity. I first learned about class *relations* (about relative poverty, advantage and disadvantage) when I went to a 'posh' high school, a good school (Evans, 1991), as a non-fee-paying pupil, which I experienced as a profound 'culture shock' as I was later to understand and explain it (Payne, 1980). By the time I left school, I self-identified as a socialist. Between 1975 and 1979, when I went to Leeds University, I had a number of full-time jobs. I have worked long shifts on a factory production line, in offices as a clerk, in a hospital as an auxiliary nurse caring for then-called 'geriatric' patients, as a salesperson in a furniture shop and as a barmaid in a large public house in a working class area. Since graduating in 1982, I have worked as a teacher/lecturer (initially part-time) in adult, further and higher education. That is, I have progressively come to live and work in a predominantly middle class world. Thus, like Caroline Ramazanoglu (1989: vii-viii), I write now 'as one of the most privileged of women attracted to feminism', aware of the privileges I enjoy.

Two points emerge. First, I have not 'forgotten' my years of experience of the oppressive reality of class subordination, neither the relative poverty associated with one-parent working class family life, nor the oppressive reality of being a low paid and low status worker in hierarchical institutions. Such experiences are etched into me like Blackpool through a stick of rock. That is, I remain constituted as much by these experiences as by those which spring from my current relatively high status and relatively well paid job and its associated life style. Being so constituted continues to affect my relations with others: I can and do empathize with low paid and low status individuals who work in the hierarchical institution of which I am a relatively well paid and high status member. My everyday relations with the porters are far more friendly than my everyday relations with the professors, for example. The second point is that I long since came to realize that,

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whatever has been my class position or my occupational status at a given time, in common with other women (Stanko, 1985; Ramazanoglu, 1987; Herbert, 1989), I have been 'put down', 'put in my place', subordinated or oppressed *as a woman*. But I didn't always 'know' this.

I came self-consciously to feminism as a headstrong and extrovert young woman who believed in 'equal pay', 'equal opportunities', careers for women but not 'wages for housework' which I thought was 'a daft idea'. I did not have much respect for 'girly' women who 'simpered' and were dependent on men. I did not have much respect, that is, for many women. I liked men. I was a 'tomboy' still at heart, considered myself 'one of the lads' in the company of my many male friends (whom I kept separate from boyfriends) and was treated by them as an 'honorary bloke': I drank a lot, swore a lot and *thought* I 'gave as good as I got' in my everyday life.

I came to feminism as a 'pleasure seeking', though not particularly happy, young woman, already critical of 'the sexual double standard' and of the institutions of marriage and the family and the 'unnecessary' linking together of romantic love and sex. Aware of lesbianism as a positive choice for women (a school friend came out as a lesbian) this was, nevertheless, a largely 'unselfconscious' phase of 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Rich, 1989; Fergusen, 1982), during which my sexual politics and practice were influenced by libertarianism or 'permissiveness' (Weeks, 1981 and 1986). I thought women had a right to 'do their own thing', to go out alone, to go home alone. I asserted this right in practice: I was accustomed to getting myself, late at night, from one side of Bristol, where I then lived, to the other, either by walking or hitching. I took risks. I thought women had a 'right' to (hetero)sexual 'pleasure' aside from marriage or long-term dating relationships. I asserted this 'right' in practice although like many women, if the survey research (Hite, 1976 and 1987) is to be believed, I discovered that heterosex can be something of an anti-climax (Jeffreys, 1990). As Campbell (1980: 2-3) puts it,

in my school, whenever someone did actually 'do it' the collective curiosity about 'what is it like' was never met with celebration. At best it was 'all right' ... that low profile response ... expressed a dumb critique of normative patriarchal fucking.

I had not yet realized that 'the personal' was 'political' nor that 'the concept of 'right' and the unproblematic usage of terms such as 'pleasure' and 'desire' represent ... an individualistic stance and (implicitly) suggests that we possess fundamental characteristics which can be abstracted from social circumstances' (Kelly, 1988: 31).

I Became a Feminist: 'Not the Fun Kind'

Aged nineteen, I moved to Leeds and came 'face-to-face', emotionally and politically, with Peter Sutcliffe, otherwise known as the Yorkshire Ripper (Holloway, 1981; Stanley, 1985; Ward Jouve, 1986; Cameron and Fraser, 1987; Caputi, 1988; Radford, 1988; Smith, 1989). It was in 1979 also that I first came across 'real feminists'. I thought they were 'a bit daft', they had this strange idea that *all* women were oppressed and it was one I resisted. I can remember discussing the ideas with my mother: 'it's not *me* that's oppressed', I said, 'it's other women' (the 'simpering' ones who couldn't 'handle themselves', who couldn't 'give as good as they got'). My consciousness about gender was structured by a 'streak' of individualism, *and* by contempt for femininity/women. I had yet to learn a new respect for women, to see myself as a member of a *group* similarly placed in structured relations of domination and subordination and to problematize the taken-for-granted behaviour of men. Eventually, the moral panic (Cohen, 1973; Hall, et al, 1978) about 'the Ripper's' atrocious acts of violence against women made me realize that fear of men's violence was 'there', a part of my everyday experience, despite my sense of myself as a 'strong' and 'streetwise' individual (Stanko, 1985 and 1990). This was the time that I worked in a pub. I had to walk home, alone, many a night that Sutcliffe was on the streets. I did walk home but, like many, many women living in the north of England at the time, I experienced indescribable but 'well-founded' fear (Hanmer and Saunders, 1984).

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The misogynist social responses to those murders of women, primarily the responses of the police, the mass media and some of the men I knew, contributed to the development of other essential components of feminist consciousness: anger; a strong sense of injustice. I began to make connections between the *gross* misogyny of Peter Sutcliffe and the contempt for women in general of other men: the oppressive categorization of women into 'good girls' and 'bad girls' (who 'get what they deserve'). I learned a new respect for women, including for myself. I began to get visibly angry when men denied me/us the 'right' to choose when, where, how and with whom we have intimate contact. I began to 'see' things differently: no longer in terms of individuals with abstract human or civil 'rights' but in terms of structured relationships of power, which I began self-consciously to resist. `I became a feminist: 'not the fun kind' (Dworkin, 1986: 90).

Coming to see sex as 'sexual politics' (Millet, 1969), I came to question my intimate relationships with men *both* in terms of (the absence of) 'pleasure' and in terms of 'loving your enemy' (Leeds Revolutionary Feminists, 1981). Ultimately, I felt compelled not to ignore the writing which was, literally, on the wall. In particular, and most disturbingly, the slogan 'sex with men is violence against women', was one which I used to pass at regular intervals. This constituted my introduction to the idea that 'coitus is punishment' (Dworkin, 1986: 90). I resisted the idea for a long time, struggled to reject it. Two particularly oppressive encounters of the intimate heterosexual kind later, I could no longer fail to 'see' that the slogan contained a grain of truth and I began a largely celibate period of 'separatist reaction' while I attempted to resolve some of the contradictions in my life.

Essentially, I am attempting to describe here the complex and lengthy process of how, as an unselfconscious 'child' of liberal feminism and libertarianism, I began to use the concepts provided by radical feminism to help me see what I could not see before (Ramazanoglu, 1989: 53-4): the oppression of women by men, rooted in social relations (Delphy, 1985). Therefore, I was implicitly also adopting a realist perspective. I came to believe that feminist and sociological ideas and explanations provided better or more

truthful or more objective accounts of how my 'everyday world was organized by social processes which are not knowable through ordinary means' (Smith, 1986: 6). In an important sense I believed I had 'seen the light' or discovered a certain knowledge about the world! And yet, the 'knowledge' was uncertain, precarious and fraught with contradictions, a point to which I shall return.

Sexual Harassment: A Problem Named but not Shared

During the summer of 1982, I heard several news items about sexual harassment in North American workplaces which were broadcast on BBC Radio 4. The term, coined in the late 1970s, had crossed the Atlantic in 1981 (Wise and Stanley, 1987), naming for British women, myself included, a 'problem without a name'. At that time I was working as a temporary clerk at Leeds University. One of the men there used invariably to stand so close to me whilst I was seated that his body brushed or leaned against mine and his head would rest on my shoulder or back whilst I signed for my wages (which he brought). Discomforted and irritated that he should invade my personal space thus, I eventually began to shrug off his hand and ask him not to do it: I verbally challenged his 'right' to touch me. This created some hostility between us and we were not 'on speaking terms' thereafter. One day (after 'war' had been declared) he lightly slapped my bum upon entering the office. I wheeled round, resisted the temptation to belt him, and argued (aggressively) with him. My oppositional stance was considered 'odd' by the others in the office, as 'over reacting' and 'making a fuss about nothing'. He was 'a nice, ordinary guy'. And these are precisely the points! He *was* a 'nice ordinary guy'. It *is* 'odd' to challenge their 'normal' behaviour. They don't expect it; other *women* don't expect it or, necessarily, condone it:

> any suggestion of putting the woman's perspective first is such a pro-
> woman idea that it is usually dismissed outright, for pro-woman thinking is
> so outside normal ways of thought that it can hardly be taken seriously as a
> basis on which to make judgements about male behaviour. An insistence on
> any woman-based criterion - not to do what makes the woman feel
> uncomfortable - is thus a challenge to the whole way in which men and
> women relate to each other (Seddon, 1983: 21).

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Another young woman in the next office had a similar problem but dealt with it differently. She would laugh and joke with one of the academic staff during the course of his not infrequent visits to her office, which adjoined mine. After he had gone on one occasion she commented to me, 'I wish he'd keep his hands to himself'. This response, disliking but 'playing along' with 'normal' but oppressive behaviour mirrored a response I had employed in not dissimilar circumstances some years previously when I was a 'Saturday girl' working in a shop with an under manager who used to 'tease' me and run his finger down the length of my back as he passed by.

In September that year, I started to teach 'O' level Sociology in a large College of Further Education and became involved in my trade union, the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE). I took minutes at branch meetings and silently suffered the chairman's patronising comments: 'there's a good girl'. As a result of my involvement in NATFHE, I heard about and attended a one-day conference on sexual harassment organised by the Yorkshire and Humberside Women's Section. Here I obtained a copy of the leaflet on sexual harassment that NATFHE's Head Office had produced (following NALGO's lead).[1] I had seen no copies of the leaflet in college and few members (including branch officials) seemed to be aware of its existence. When I took some into college, the most common reaction from those who saw them and who unwittingly took part in discussions about harassment was to make fun of the issue. Men and women made comments like, 'chance'd be a fine thing!'. This experience highlighted for me the ways in which Head Office 'consciousness' about the issue had failed to reach those ordinary members of the Union to whom the information and guidelines in the leaflet were directed. For many people, 'sexual harassment' was 'just being friendly' or 'fun'.

Others, besides myself, however, had experienced the problem and felt differently. I observed one incident in the staff common room. Two colleagues stood discussing a new course. The woman, a teacher, was half way through a sentence when the man, the Head

of her Department, poked his finger through a buttonhole gap at breast level on the woman's blouse and laughingly pointed out that he could see her bra. The woman was immediately flustered. She put her hand up ('instinctively', defensively) to her blouse buttons and lost the thread of what she was saying. She did not laugh. In immediate response to the woman's reaction, the man laughed and said, 'Don't worry! I always do that!' - i.e. that she was not to feel 'singled out'; this was not 'a pass'. The woman regained her composure and continued to talk about the course.

I had a number of conversations with this woman during my time at the college. She was an 'easy going' middle aged woman, well liked by both staff (including myself) and students. She told me about a recurring problem she had had with another teacher who frequently made loud comments about the size of her breasts which made her feel uncomfortable and humiliated until one day she 'plucked up courage' and suggested that he might feel less than happy if she were to make loud comments in public about some of his 'dimensions'. Thereafter he stopped harassing her but relations between them were 'strained for a while'. He disliked her courageous challenge to a 'right' or a 'freedom' which he took for granted; she resisted the exercise of masculine power.

Thus, to summarize, I have tried to indicate how my own consciousness changed from a 'normal' way of thinking to a pro-woman or a feminist way of thinking. I used to think that 'the problem' was 'daft feminists' and 'simpering women who couldn't handle themselves'. Slowly, I made connections between what feminists were saying and writing and my own everyday life and experience of being in the world. Slowly, I came to problematize the taken-for-granted, everyday behaviour of men and, thereby, came to view myself and other women as similarly placed in a patriarchal structure with its rules and conventions 'standing behind' mundane interactions in everyday life.

Secondly, I have tried to indicate that what happened in the early 1980s was not that a *new* pattern of behaviour (like skateboarding or breakdancing) came into being. Rather, an

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'old', customary, conventional or established pattern of behaviour came to be problematized by those who *felt* oppressed, and were *being* oppressed, by such behaviour, by those who disliked the 'rules' and the conventions. Feminists were struggling against patriarchal 'definitions of the situation' to get their pro-woman definitions of the situation to be taken seriously as a basis on which to evaluate men's behaviour. They were, thereby, chipping away at men's 'freedoms': resisting oppression. I became convinced that sexual harassment was both an important political issue and one worthy of detailed sociological consideration. This research project was 'framed' or born in this personal/political context.

The Formulation of the Research Project: Its Objectives

My primary objective was to explore the significance of sexual harassment in the everyday lives of young women. How did they experience it? What form did it take? How did they both perceive it and handle it in practice? Specifically I hypothesized that because sexual harassment was such a pervasive social process, it would be regarded as 'normal' rather than problematized. I argued:

> sexual harassment must be analysed as an aspect of patriarchal power relations, as a form of power ... (which) in schools and in the workplace is ... used as a vehicle for maintaining existing relations of domination and subordination, made all the more effective by women's apparent complicity... With the eclipse of more manifest forms of sexual discrimination, the more difficult forms of social control to address are those that arise simply through socialization. It is this aspect of sexual harassment which is particularly interesting: the manner in which it becomes a 'normal' feature of women's lives'.[2]

Three points arise. The first is that at this time, as is clear, I was employing different explanatory concepts: 'sexual discrimination' and 'social control' rather than oppression. The intentions are clear, however: In using the phrases 'patriarchal power relations' and 'existing relations of domination and subordination', I am suggesting that the interactions labelled sexual harassment are not 'arbitrary' incidents. They are 'structured' incidents. Understanding 'structure' as the rules and conventions which 'stand behind' observed

regularities in social activity (Giddens, 1992: 349), I am suggesting that such interactions are in accordance with the rules of patriarchy; they are one of the ways in which men dominate and women are subordinated.

The second point, then, is the focus on *process*. I formulated the project with an emphasis, not on discovering frequencies of occurrence, still less on social structural 'origins' or 'causes', but on observing, on a small scale, and discussing with young women interactions which occur in everyday life. I viewed sexual harassment as a form of power, as the exercise of power, as one of the *means* by which relationships of domination and subordination were ongoingly maintained or reproduced. My aim was to focus on perceptions (or attitudes) and on the processes of reproduction (or change) of *oppressive* events and relationships. Since I was of the view that reproduction of social relations was likely to be more in evidence than resistance and change, I referred to the process as the 'institutionalization' and the 'normalization' of sexual harassment.

The third point which arises is signalled by my use of the phrase 'women's apparent complicity' and the mention of socialization. The concept of resistance is not mentioned in the research proposal, not because I was of the opinion that women's response to sexual harassment is inevitably one of acquiescence: that women are (pre)disposed to yield or comply when confronted with the exercise of masculine power, as Scruton (1983) and Storr (1970) would have us believe. Sites of oppression are also, potentially at least, sites of resistance. I explicitly indicate that such 'complicity' as might be found is as likely to be *apparent* as real (accommodation to rather than collusion with). I set out to discover whether younger women than myself were developing an oppositional consciousness to sexual harassment or whether their consciousness was non-oppositional.

However, as is clear from this quote from my research proposal, the question of complicity *must*, I felt, be addressed. If, as I suggest above, sexual harassment is 'institutionalized' behaviour, one would expect to find, amongst young women, conformity to the 'logic' or

norms or values of the system in which it occurs. One would expect, that is, to find conformity to patriarchal 'ways of seeing'. One would expect women's options and choices to be circumscribed by dominant ideas. What I had in mind at the stage of formulating my research proposal was a citation of Servan which I came across during my undergraduate studies of Foucault:

> An imbecile despot can bind his slaves with iron chains; but a true politician binds them more tightly *with the chain of their own ideas*, its end attached to the solid base of reason - a bond which is all the stronger because we are ignorant of its substance and believe it to be of our own making; time and despair can wear down bonds of iron or steel, but can do nothing against the habitual union of ideas, except tie them more firmly still; and it is on the soft fibres of the brain that the unshakeable base of the strongest empires is to be founded.

Servan cited by Foucault, 1975:102 (my emphasis).

Now, I do not consider women, young or older, to be the 'slaves' of men! However, I do consider it important to acknowledge that young women might be 'bound by the chain of their own ideas' *in some measure*. Thus, I made it as much my objective to discover the extent to which young women were struggling at the level of *ideas* about sexual harassment as it was my aim to ascertain how they struggled in the negotiation of their everyday lives, assuming that sexual harassment did indeed feature as a component of those everyday lives.

Having identified young women's experience, perception and negotiation of sexual harassment in everyday life as the primary focus of this research project, I move on to the other less clearly explicated theme of the proposal: the role of schools in the institutionalization of sexual harassment. Here, I asked myself the following sorts of questions: does the culture, structure and organization of life in school, unwittingly or otherwise, contribute to the reproduction of existing relations of domination and subordination in ways which facilitate the continued existence of sexual harassment? do

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schools, through the attitudes and activities of the teachers and management teams, effectively participate in the institutionalization of sexual harassment? Reformulating the proposal into more manageable proportions I retained an interest in the above questions but asked them in relation to just *one* school: Henry James School.[3]

The Experience of Doing Research: Two New Themes Arising

As is frequently the case, research projects change and some alter substantially (Herbert, 1989) during the process of doing them. New themes arise at various stages. In the case of this research project, the issue of heterosex arose during the period of fieldwork. Epistemological and methodological issues were 'there' all along but became critically significant during the period of writing up, or, as Hallam (1992) expressed it, the process of 'putting oneself together on paper'.

I had no specific intention, either at the stage of formulating the original research proposal or in the reformulation(s) of it which preceded the period of fieldwork, of discussing sex itself with thirteen and fourteen year old girls.[4] Some of them, however, wanted to and did discuss 'it' with me. As a result of this theme 'arising', that is, since some of the girls collaborated in defining what the research was about by adding sex to the 'agenda' I had set, I found myself having to engage with the debates within feminism about sexuality, debates which, amongst others, divide some feminist activists and theorists quite fundamentally, and apparently quite irreconcilably, into two different 'camps'. 'Libertarians' are critical of the way in which feminist concerns about sexuality as 'the key area in the management and control of women's oppression' have developed into a 'form of erotophobia' (Clark, 1982; see also Snitow et al, 1984; Vance, 1984). 'Radicals', often separatists, emphasise heterosex as danger and/or inherently oppressive of women and are critical of the 'pleasure seekers' (Jeffreys, 1985 and 1990; Kelly, 1988; Adkins, 1990 and 1992; Kitzinger et al, 1992). These issues, although 'new' to the thesis, were far from being new to me, as I have indicated.

I have written about how the 'concealed' nature of oppressive social structures, including heterosexual structures, were 'revealed' as I adopted a materialist radical feminist perspective. The adoption of this perspective was both meaningful and liberating *and* fraught with contradictions and uncertainty and, therefore, profoundly disorienting and painful. I became both certain of the material reality of women's oppression and disoriented by the resulting 'inner conflict' (New, 1991). Deeply critical of conventional masculine behaviours, of the more everyday and the most intimate variety, I could not, that is, I *resisted*, the apparently 'logical' or 'inevitable' 'separatist solution'. In short, my experience of reality has been and remains contradictory: it is based on a recognition that I have *investments* in relationships with men, despite the contradictions (Hollway, 1984; Ramazanoglu, 1989). How does this connect with the second 'new' theme, that relating to epistemology and methodology? There are two interconnected points to make. The first centrally concerns theoretical reflexivity which, through emotions, connects with the second point which centrally concerns knowledge (un)certainty.

First, personal experiences and theory are linked. Reflexivity is defined by Cain (1990: 133) as involving both the now more conventional practice of 'making the particular circumstances of the knowledge production public' *and* 'thinking about oneself in terms of a theory: theoretical inclusion. She argues,

> the theory we produce should account for our own knowledge as well as for
> that of those we investigate ... (this) does not imply a smooth or continuous
> theoretical totalization but ... allows for contradictions and discontinuities.
> (Cain, 1990: 139)

Thus, the traditional 'scientific' principles of objective impartiality and unemotionality are explicitly challenged by the demand that we reflect critically on our own *inevitably emotional* knowledge of the world which we investigate. The appeal to reflexivity rather than to reason or rationality (supposedly unfettered by emotionality) profoundly challenges our understanding of what 'science' means and, therefore, what knowledge is. Feminists,

and others (Giddens, 1992), have argued that:

> in practice, reason cannot be separated from emotion. This has been a dramatic development which has forced a reconsideration of everything reasonable that we know about social life (Ramazanoglu, 1989: 49).

In the language of 'postmodern' feminism, I came to critique the idea that one can write with confidence about the objective reality of heterosex and sexual harassment, or have certain and certainly not 'impartial' knowledge about anything. That is, increasingly over the years, and most particularly in the process of writing this thesis, I have become more explicitly concerned with exploring, if not in detail, some of the complexities of how the shape and nature of 'what' is known is inevitably and crucially connected both to the 'how' of its investigation (Stanley, 1990) and to the manner of its conceptualization in terms of epistemology and of substantive theory (Ramazanoglu, 1989).

The Organization of the Thesis

There is an enormous volume of literature which relates to the substantive, epistemological and methodological concerns of this thesis. Notwithstanding the inevitable interconnectedness of the various themes, for the sake of clarity I present the analysis in stages. In chapter two I selectively review the literature on sexual harassment, focussing on women's and girls' experiences, problems in defining sexual harassment and in attempting to establish its incidence by means of 'victimization' surveys. In exploring the differing attitudes to or perceptions of and methods of investigating the phenomenon, I critique empiricism.

In chapter three, I briefly argue the case for a realist philosophy and a standpoint epistemology, noting the important contributions of the variously labelled 'post-structuralist', 'deconstructivist' and 'postmodern' feminists. Then I elaborate my theoretical perspective on sexual harassment and power. Suffice it to say here that the argument is not based on what Davis (1991) describes as 'an oppressive paradigm' of

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power which assumes that power is *inevitably* oppressive. Power can be employed to empower others as to oppress or repress. Hence, I have elected to employ 'oppression' together with the companion term resistance in the title of this thesis. The concepts of patriarchal social relations and intransitive realities are introduced and explained.

In chapter four I outline what it means to describe the project as both feminist and ethnographic 'in principle' and begin to outline aspects of the research process: initial decisions, selecting the school, negotiating access, initial orientations and research roles and relationships. In chapter five I develop and detail the manner in which I sampled young women, my interviewing style, the nature of the relationships which developed with the young women. Here, I focus explicitly on trust, reciprocity, and negotiating hierarchy in feminist research, on how sexual harassment came to be discussed and on the concomitant issues of validity, ethical and political integrity. The young women themselves are introduced in this chapter.

In chapter six, I provide evidence of the patriarchal social relations in Henry James School, specifying patterns in what the Head referred to as 'the whole hidden ethos of the school' and the 'things which are not explicitly laboured' but which are 'just implicit in the organization and structure of the school'. Chapter seven presents the data on sexual harassment in everyday life. Here, I document the variety of forms of sexual harassment experienced by the young women and analyse these as mechanisms of power, means of oppressing women, active reproductions of the structure of patriarchy. In chapter eight, I document some of the oppressive continuities between sexual harassment in everyday life and heterosex, arguing that, despite the invest ments which young women have in 'going with boys' heterosex too can be a site of oppression, a *form* of patriarchy.

Chapter nine analyses the manner in which young women *perceive* and negotiate their experiences. Here I focus on both 'the despair of the oppressed', documenting how the intransitive realities of many young women are characterized by hopelessness, self-blame

and negative coping strategies, and on girls' compliance with and active, though unselfconscious, reproduction of patriarchy. In this final chapter, I analyse perceptions and negotiations of oppressive everyday realities in terms of the ideological context which structures human agency, arguing that young women are largely disempowered through 'the chain of ideas' against which they make sense of their experiences. The chapter concludes with a focus on how feminist teachers and feminist researchers help to create the possibilities of change, of resistance to oppression.

Chapter Two: Experiencing, Defining and 'Measuring' Sexual Harassment

Introduction

Since the late 1970s, there has been a 'knowledge explosion' (Kelly, 1988: 43) about

sexual harassment and the related phenomena of rape, child sexual abuse and woman

battering. There now exists an ever increasing volume of books and papers, reviews and

commentaries which focus on sexual harassment in the everyday lives of women workers

(Mackinnon, 1979; Farley, 1980; Read, 1982; Hadjifotiou, 1983; Hearn and Parkin, 1987;

Ramazanoglu, 1987), students in higher education (Lott et al, 1982; Dziech and Weiner,

1984; Hanlon, 1990) and school girls (Jones, 1985; Mahony, 1985; Jones and Mahony,

1989; Kitzinger, 1988; Herbert, 1989). Within the subdiscipline of the sociology of work

and organisations, a number of studies pay specific attention to the issue of sexual

harassment (Pringle, 1988; Cockburn, 1991; Adkins, 1992) and specific mention of the

phenomenon is made in Ball's (1987) analysis of school organization. Additionally, there

is a growing volume of published work on sexual harassment outside of these formal

organizational contexts: in the street and within the home (Wise and Stanley, 1987), in

public houses (Hey, 1986) and in a wide variety of locations and circumstances (Sumrall

and Taylor, 1992). Some authors, notably Whitehead (1976) have not explicitly used the

term sexual harassment but have nevertheless analysed everyday interactions which can

easily be so defined. Others, notably Lees (1983, 1986 and 1989), have focussed on one

particular aspect of the phenomenon: the pervasive labelling of young women as 'slags'

(see also Cowie and Lees, 1981).

Further evidence of this knowledge explosion is the filtering through effect whereby the

issue of sexual harassment has come to be regarded as of sufficient importance for

sociological attention in introductory textbooks (Abercrombie and Warde, 1988; Giddens,

1989; Abbott and Wallace, 1990). Similarly, male authors writing from a variety of

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criminological perspectives have attended to the phenomenon of sexual harassment in everyday life (Aggleton, 1987; Box, 1983; Scraton, 1987; Young, 1988; Anderson et al, 1990a and 1990b). Feminist contributors to criminology have discussed sexual harassment by the police of apprehended or arrested women (Bardsley, 1987), of Irish women (O'Shea, 1989) and of black women (Fekete, 1988) in particular. The widespread production of policy statements, guidelines and reports on sexual harassment by Trades Unions, Students' Unions, the Commission of the European Communities (Rubenstein, 1988), employers, including universities which has occurred since the 1980s in the UK now constitutes a portion of the literature on sexual harassment, as do guides for teachers (Herbert, 1992) and articles in newspapers and mass circulation women's magazines (Lantin, 1982; Root and Hunter, 1982).

The literature is diverse also in that a variety of methods, methodological presuppositions, political and theoretical perspectives and epistemologies can be discerned. With regard to methods, some studies have been based on mailed questionnaires (Carey, 1982; Schneider, 1982), and interviews (Kelly, 1988). Others have employed ethnographic methods (Kanter, 1977; Jones, 1985). Case studies alone (Addison and Al-Khalifa, 1988) and together with analyses of historical documents form the basis of other works (Backhouse and Cohen, 1980). Valuable insights have also been provided by women reflecting on and examining their own experiences (Whitbread, 1980; Anon, 1983; Hey, 1986; Ramazanoglu, 1987; Wise and Stanley, 1987; Stanko, 1991; Hill, 1992; Coverdale Sumrall, 1992). The use of multiple methods characterises a number of works. Mahony (1985), for example, combined the observational and interview data resulting from her comparative study of three London comprehensive schools with materials recorded in taped discussions between groups of girls and in diaries and letters sent to her after her period of fieldwork. A wealth of both quantitative and qualitative data, that is, information about 'the substance of women's everyday lives' (Ettore, 1990), is, therefore, now available.

My aim in this chapter is to review the literature on sexual harassment, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, insofar as it relates to the themes of my own work and my own interests. Thus I do not provide any detail on employment-specific issues and effects, such as job satisfaction and security, nor on legal or European Commission responses to the problem. Rather, I focus on, first, women's experiences of sexual harassment as humiliating imposition and, second, on how best to define the phenomenon. In the remaining sections of the chapter, I discuss whether it is possible to establish the 'facts' of the matter, specifically whether it is useful to attempt to measure the prevalence of sexual harassment given that the perceptions of both individual women (Sedley and Benn, 1982) and those of groups of women (Schneider, 1982) vary and that, broadly speaking, women and men construct the problem quite differently (Lott et al, 1982; Wise and Stanley, 1987; Thomas and Kitzinger, 1992). In short, then, this chapter will focus on different ways of seeing sexual harassment, on why there are different definitions of the situation and on the implications of this for any attempt to produce systematic knowledge of the phenomenon. I combine an analysis of substantive, methodological and epistemological issues, reserving detailed discussion of the theoretical concepts which inform my analysis of sexual harassment until chapter three.

Women's Experience of Sexual Harassment

The term sexual harassment covers an enormous range of behaviours. Sexual harassment may involve *physical contact*: being 'felt up' or groped or grabbed in a sexual way; being pinched, patted, stroked, squeezed, hugged, held, touched or kissed against one's will. It does not always involve physical contact, however. It may be *verbal or vocal*: sexual remarks, name-calling or taunting, obscene jokes or explicit conversations about sex or about the body which cause offence, subtle or explicit pressure for sexual activity, sexual propositioning, unwanted and repeated requests for dates, appraising non-verbal but vocal whistles and 'grunts'. Sexual harassment may also be *'psychological' or non-contact and non-verbal*: staring, leering, 'standing too close for comfort', being followed, threatening

body postures or obscene gestures including indecent exposure or 'flashing' and 'mooning'.

I have already noted that, in the early 1980s, many people of my acquaintance regarded many of the above behaviours as fun or harmless flirtation. A number of the early academic feminist writers (Bularzik, 1978; Gordon, 1981) were keen to stress that they were not 'anti-fun' suggesting an awareness that this was a then dominant way of seeing. Read's (1982) book cover sports a picture of a woman's bottom being pinched by a man's hand. The book title poses a question: 'sexual harassment: is it just "fun and games"?'. This represents an attempt to start discussing sexual harassment with due regard to what people already 'know' or think and feel about everyday interactions. It represents an attempt to assert the necessity of redefining some everyday interactions *without* necessarily redefining as sexual harassment any and every interaction. Contrary to the assertion that authors who provide a list of specified behaviours are 'identifying certain actions as "objectively" constituting sexual harassment' (Thomas and Kitzinger, 1992), I provide the above list as merely illustrative of the many forms which sexual harassment may take and return to the issue of 'objectivity' shortly.

Although I appreciate Wise and Stanley's (1987) critique of the manner in which the 'fun' argument is reproduced in order to *dismiss* the claims of feminists and trades unionists that sexual harassment 'really' is a problem, I would argue that we must be very careful not to deny completely the subjectivity of others (Brittan and Maynard, 1984). In my view some of the behaviours identified above, if they occur at the 'right' time and in the 'right' places and involve the 'right' persons in the 'right' mood, may well *not* be experienced as unpleasant. On the contrary, they may be experienced as pleasurable, arousing or flattering. In all kinds of contexts - in workplaces, schools, in public houses, on the street - women and men joke, tease one another, flirt with one another and 'lark about together'. A request for a date, even if it is declined as 'unwanted' is not inevitably troublesome. What distinguishes (or what is said to distinguish) sexual harassment from friendly sexual

banter, flirtation, pleasurable groping and so on is that it is *not* mutual; it is *not* welcome; it is *not* pleasant. On the contrary, it offends, it embarrasses, it humiliates. It is imposed. It may threaten and invade.

This attempt to distinguish the same or similar behaviour as harassment on the one hand and non-harassment on the other on the grounds of non-mutuality, imposition and subjectively experienced humiliation was a common theme in the early literature. NALGO's (1982) pamphlet states,

> Some people argue that, if you eliminate sexual harassment, you eliminate all the 'fun' from the workplace - all the office flirtations and romances. But they are wrong. A flirtation or love affair is mutual ... Sexual harassment on the other hand, involves one person imposing on the other
> ...

This apparently neutral statement of course masks the gender issues which, as I shall argue, *contribute* to (rather than determine) the defining of behaviours as 'harmless fun' rather than 'imposition'. Nevertheless, since the pamphlet goes on to state that sexual harassment is a problem which 'in the main affects women', it implicitly helps to empower women to (re)define imposed behaviour and implicitly challenges the right of other 'people' to assert their definition of the situation as the only truth: 'they are wrong'. There is more than one way of seeing.

What clearly emerges from all the literature is that many women, however they act in response, whether or not they resist, 'see' sexual harassment as discomforting and distressing: 'it had a very traumatic effect on me. I found it embarrassing. I was humiliated and very demoralized' (Diane Williams, a financial analyst, cited by Farley, 1978:81). Other women are 'not bothered' to begin with but, after persistent harassment, feel dehumanized, upset and angry. Writing about her experiences as a construction worker, Ms Mitchell says,

> Their first ploy was to hoot, holler, whistle and stamp their feet every time I walked by. That didn't bother me. I was expecting it. And I was prepared

to put up with it ... (After a couple of weeks) they started to get physical with me. Every chance they got they would grab at my body. I can't count the number of times I was pinched. But they were fooling around with the wrong lady ... I punched a couple of people really hard in the ... the stomach ... The physical abuse stopped abruptly. But they adopted other tactics. They tried to break me down psychologically. One of them even put a dildo in my lunch bucket. I started to receive obscene phone calls at home. I was also sent threatening letters. It was just awful and it really did get to me. I started to feel very alienated and lonely ... I finally got so upset and angry that I complained to the union. My union rep just laughed ... Sexual harassment is their way of saying you're a non-person, only a sexual object. They're right, it's completely humiliating, one of the toughest things to fight. It dehumanizes you when people are grabbing at you and yelling obscenities. It makes you feel very vulnerable and afraid (Backhouse and Cohen, 1989:12-13).

Some women, like Ms Mitchell, actively oppose or resist the oppressive practice of sexual harassment. I do not believe, however, that 'most women fight back' (Wise and Stanley, 1987:8). Although I agree that it is a 'mistaken impression' to construe women as 'ready victims' (ibid), it seems clear from the literature that many women do not feel empowered actively to resist. Some feel confused, ashamed and guilty: they 'see' sexual harassment in these terms: 'I was ashamed to do (anything), thinking it must be my own fault in some way' (a clerk cited by Bularzik, 1978:32). Others see themselves as stupid for having handled situations badly, for 'playing along' with discomforting situations, and end up feeling dirty, as if the guilt were primarily theirs rather than the offender's. Ms Simon says, of her experience of being sexually harassed as a graduate student by her professor/supervisor:

Instead of speaking up,.I just smiled and didn't say much ... It's hard for me to believe I could have been so stupid ... I was very uncomfortable but I had no idea how to handle it. So I remained very nice ... Even though I knew I was being a victim and that he was taking advantage of me, I berated myself for handling this so poorly. It really stays with you. I guess I never did forget. I've always felt that it represents something dirty in my past (Backhouse and Cohen, 1980:16-17).

Kelly (1988) regards responses such as these, characterized by shame and self-blame, as evidence of the despair of the oppressed.

Young women and girls have had fewer opportunities to express their feelings to researchers than adult women, but their experiences are beginning to be recorded. Herbert (1989) provides numerous case studies of girls subjected to unwanted sexual attention by teachers and by peers. Chloe, aged 5, for example, describes how at breaktimes the boys 'gang together, decide on a victim, who is always one of the girls, chase her and cut her off from her friends, and once islated they try to look at and touch her knickers' (Herbert, 1989:9; see also Dworkin, 1986). One of Kitzinger's 14 year old respondents wrote:

> One day a teacher made a pass at me, he wanted to take me to a disco. I said no thank you, and this history teacher seemed upset. I thought nothing of this at the time, until after school, he was waiting in my social studies room. He exposed himself to me. I ran out of the room, with this teacher trying to kiss me. I told my mum and she had a word with this teacher. He still gives me funny looks. I felt very upset. I think that they should fire this teacher for what he is (Kitzinger, 1988: 5).

Other girls complain that boys humiliate them with pornography, holding *Playboy* pictures up and saying, 'Hey!, you got one of these?'. The girls, say 'Of course, they touch us up all the time: they're boys'; they comment on their fear of walking home (Jones, 1985:28-29) and some 'walk another way rather than go past a load of boys. It's they way they look at you, you feel undressed or they make obscene gestures' (Mahony, 1985:42). Although the experiences of the girls cited by Mahony clearly constitute sexual harassment in my and Mahony's view, for there is evidence of great discomfort, there is little evidence that the girls 'see' the phenomenon from a resisting or oppositional stance. It is, rather, just 'part of life, the way things are' (Wise and Stanley, 1987: 18). Women and girls are infrequently empowered to label such behaviour as unwarranted imposition, nor is 'change necessarily a corollary of labelling' (Herbert, 1989:11) for there is much resistance to the (feminist) redefinition of men's 'fun and games', as we shall see.

The literature, then, is littered with case studies and interview materials, accounts and illustrations, which indicate that women and girls are harassed by male peers, superiors and by younger men/boys who *supposedly* lack power due to their status in, for example, a

school hierarchy (Whitbread, 1980). Regardless of whether women feel empowered to resist specific incidents or harassing relationships, they do not 'see' 'harmless fun'. These are accounts of incidents which cause, to a greater or lesser extent, distress, and they make very distressing reading.[1]

Defining Sexual Harassment

Although sexual harassment can be understood simply as behaviour which is imposed rather than mutual and which results in women feeling distressed or humiliated, there remain a number of problems in *defining* the term. It is, as many writers have argued, a very difficult term to define with any precision. In what follows, I intend to use the literature to specify my own difficulties in defining the concept and to set some parameters around the behaviours under scrutiny in this study. The one issue which I do not discuss here is gender specificity: men/boys sexually harass women/girls. I shall argue the case for this assertion in chapter three.

One problem is how broad or how narrow a definition should be, how many or how few behaviours might usefully be included and, related to this, whether the behaviours are necessarily sexual. The use of the term sexual harassment in some authors' work is overly inclusive and insufficiently specific for my purposes. Mahony (1985), for example, regards the 'servicing' aspects of girls' relationships with boys (the endless lending of rulers and erasers) as sexual harassment although in previous (1983) work 'sexist processes of interaction' was her preferred term. Both Wise and Stanley (1987:8) and Coverdale Sumrall and Taylor (1992:vii) argue explicitly that sexual harassment 'is not necessarily sexual'. In the views of the former, 'any and all unwanted and intrusive behaviour of whatever kind' constitutes sexual harassment. At 'one end of the spectrum' is the sexual murderer, at the other are the 'many loved and loving men who make much more ambiguous demands', including, for example, a man who demands attention after an 'awful day at work' and who, in pursuit of this goal, turns off the TV which his daughter

is watching. In the views of the latter, 'a woman carpenter on a job who is asked to clean the toilets, and a wife who his hit by her husband, are both experiencing sexual harassment'. Many authors explicitly subsume rape and attempted rape under the general category of sexual harassment (Oxford University Students' Union, 1984; Lott et al, 1982).

Notwithstanding the difficulties of distinguishing sexual harassment from sexism (Sedly and Benn, 1982; Wise and Stanley, 1987) and noting that behaviours which are labelled sexual harassment blur into or are continuous with rape, for example, I would argue that sexual harassment is not the best *general* term to describe rape, violent assaults on women by their partners, nor, indeed, sexual murder. For the purposes of this study, sexual harassment is understood as exclusive of rape, attempted rape and battery and of '*sexist* harassment' which is based on a 'stereotyped assumption about the role of women but with no sexual content' (Herbert, 1989:19).

There remains the problem of distinguishing between sexual harassment and sexual assault. Technically, the grabbing of breasts, for example, constitutes sexual assault, as legally defined. When the perpetrator is an adult in a position of trust and authority (a father, an uncle, a teacher) and the assaulted person a child, we are clearly discussing behaviours which blur into or are co-terminous with child sexual abuse. 'Flashing' is similarly classified as a criminal (sexual) offence (see McNeill, 1987). Kelly (1988:103) argues that there is 'a considerable area of overlap in the definitions' of harassment and assault used by the women she interviewed. Only one distinction emerged: whereas 'sexual harassment involved a variable combination of visual, verbal and physical forms of abuse; assault always involved physical contact' (ibid). For the purposes of this study behaviours which technically constitute sexual assault (though they are rarely perceived or criminalized as such) are included as particularly intrusive and threatening forms of sexual harassment.

Further definitional problems arise in respect of the related issues of the intentions of the

perpetrator, the response of the sexually harassed woman and repetition or persistence. Consider the following definition of sexual harassment:

> The making of unwanted sexual advances by one individual towards another, in which the first individual persists even though it is made clear that the other party is resistant (Giddens, 1989:749).

Leaving aside for the moment the problem of 'unisexing' sexual harassment (Wise and Stanley, 1987:41), it is here, by definition, repeated, clearly resisted behaviour and, therefore, deliberate or purposeful behaviour. If the behaviour is not repeated by the 'first individual' and not resisted by the second, by implication, it does not constitute sexual harassment. The implicit assertion that 'clear resistance' is required as 'evidence' of sexual harassment is both naive and untenable in my view. As I have already argued, women are infrequently empowered clearly to challenge such behaviour. Sexual harassment is construed as 'deliberate or repeated sexual behaviour' also by Coverdale Sumrall and Taylor (1992:vii). A more subtle definition is employed by others: sexual harassment is 'unwanted sexual attention made by a person who knows or *ought reasonably to know* that such attention is unwanted (Grahame, 1985:112). In common with other feminist writers (Herbert, 1989; Kitzinger and Thomas, 1992), I would argue that, although some 'people' (men) do purposefully and intentionally humiliate women by means of sexual harassment, their intentions are not a defining issue. Sexual harassment may be as much an unintended and unanticipated consequence of human activity as a purposeful activity. Whether it is *sociologically* justifiable to assert that a person 'ought reasonably to know' will be discussed in chapter three.

Regarding repetition, we can discern an apparent contradiction. The idea of repetition is a component of the term 'harassment'. To harass is 'to trouble, torment or confuse by continual, persistent attacks, questions etc.' (Collins English Dictionary). Much of the literature includes case studies of individual women being 'troubled' continually by the same man over a period of time. However, many cases are cited where this criterion of repetition is not fulfilled. Farley (1978:4-11) and Bularzik (1978:25), for example, both

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describe cases of a woman being sexually propositioned during a job interview. In terms of specific individuals, the job interview is a 'one-off' situation in which the women were subjected to humiliation by another just once. Such cases are quite properly cited as instances of sexual harassment for, in my view, the idea of repetition does not relate to specified individuals, it relates to the phenomenon in more general terms. Sexually harassing behaviours are not isolated incidents but encounters which occur and recur in the everyday lives of women. Sexual harassment is a *process* of social control (Wise and Stanley, 1987:15) or an institutionalized mode of conduct (Giddens, 1982:10). Thus, whether or not a particular individual repeatedly imposes unwanted sexual behaviours on another specified individual, is irrelevant to the general definition.

Drawing on elements of a number of definitions, I define sexual harassment as:

> any non-reciprocal, unsolicited, sexually oriented physical, visual or verbal act, excluding (attempted) rape
>
> that is experienced by women/girls, at the time or later, as humiliation, imposition, or invasion,
>
> that has the effect of degrading her in the eyes of others and/or takes away her ability to control sexual intimacy.[2]

This definition is properly based on women's or girls' own experience of behaviours as humiliating rather than pleasurable, but it implicitly accords the right to define as sexual harassment behaviours which (especially young) women may not 'see' as adversely affecting their ability to control sexual intimacy. The definition allows for changes in perceptions or definitions of situations. The question still remains as to how far young women's own definitions of the situation and how far those of 'others' (notably, here, those of the researcher) should inform an account of sexual harassment.

Coverdale and Sumrall (1992: vii) assert, 'women get to determine what is and isn't sexual harassment. Just as blacks should determine what is racist and gays what is homophobic.

And if we say it happened, it happened'. I am much in sympathy with this sentiment. However, it does raise problems, not least that women themselves are divided over the issue, just as 'blacks and gays' are divided, at times, over what constitutes racism and homophobia.[3] *Which* women get to determine what is and is not sexual harassment and how pervasive a problem it is? What if large numbers of women say it does *not* happen? Are Wise and Stanley (1987:71-2) justified in asserting their 'one startling statistic: *all* women have been sexually harassed at some time or another'?

Here, then, I return to the question of whether sexual harassment can be defined 'objectively' or whether it depends 'very much on how a(n individual) woman perceives it' (Sedley and Benn, 1982:6) and must, therefore, inevitably be construed as existing only if women 'say' it happens or 'see' it happening. Can *feminists* posit a truth about oppressive social structures which 'really' do exist, whether subordinated women know this or not; that social structures and relationships 'really' do exist independently of people's understanding of them (Ramazanoglu, 1989:194) or are we more engaged in the business of 'deconstructing truth' and 'offering alternative meanings' (Smart, 1990 and 1991)? Before I address myself to these questions, I shall take a look at the statistical data on sexual harassment which Wise and Stanley (1987) do not review on the grounds that they are 'not terribly helpful'.

If It Exists, We Can and Must Measure It?

There have been many attempts to establish the incidence of sexual harassment. For two reasons, the issue of prevalence is dealt with in some detail here. One reason is that my ethnographic study does not warrant wide generalization, some readers may, therefore, expect to see statistical data on prevalence drawn from other sources. Since most of the survey research relates to the prevalence of sexual harassment at work and in universities, it might be objected that these data are not strictly relevant to my concerns. I would argue that workplaces and places of study are places where many women spend a good

proportion of their everyday lives. My concern is with sexual harassment in everyday life. Thus the data are relevant. A second reason for presenting the statistical evidence is because, although it would suit my purposes simply to assert that sexual harassment is 'extremely common' (Giddens, 1989:182), or that 'one statistic and only one has any validity' (Wise and Stanley, 1987:71), the quantitative data are neither conclusive nor indisputable. The data therefore raise some questions about 'truth'/'reality' and 'proof'/'validity' which are central to my own concerns.

A number of surveys have been conducted since the mid 1970s. The first large survey was based on questionnaires included in a 1976 *Redbook* magazine which elicited 9,000 responses from women. Of these, some 90% recorded personal experience of sexual harassment at work and 92% regarded it as a serious problem (Farley, 1978:20). Kelly (1988) discovered that 93% of her rather smaller, and non-random, interview sample of 60 British women had experienced sexual harassment. High statistics of incidence (over 50%) have been found by Schneider (1982): 76% of 381 women respondents; and by the Alfred Marks Employment Bureau (1982), (cited by Hadjifotiou, 1983:10). In this nationwide UK survey, questionnaires were returned by 799 respondents, 455 of whom were employees and 344 were in management. 61% of the employees and 86% of the management said that they were aware that one or more forms of sexual harassment occurred in their own offices; 51% of the women respondents recorded having experienced some form of sexual harassment in their working lives. Cooper and Davidson (1982) found that 52% of the women managers they studied had been sexually harassed. In a survey by the Birmingham branch of the National Association of Schoolmasters/ Union of Women Teachers (*Times Educational Supplement*, 6th February 1987:3, cited by Kitzinger, 1988:8), over 72% of respondents complained of instances of sexual harassment in school.

Not all survey research produces such high incidence statistics, however. Statistics on prevalence in adult populations range upwards from just over 13% of 361 Oxford

University women students who returned questionnaires (with an 'apparent rate' of just 1.6% amongst the 3,000 women students to whom the questionnaire was sent (OUSU, 1984). Of the sample of 197 women surveyed by Morewitz (1982) in two urban areas in a large American city, just 25% stated that they had ever been sexually harassed at work; just 27% reported that they had ever known of sexual harassment. The statistic obtained by NALGO's (1982) survey of 504 workers at the City Treasurer's Department in Liverpool, of whom 160 returned the questionnaire, was 'only' 36%. However, of these, 72% were women. Similarly, using data based on the US Merit Systems Protection Board's sample of 23,000 federal employees, Tangri (1982) found 'only' a 25% incidence rate, of which 42% were women.

There exists very little survey research and, therefore, quantitative data on sexual harassment of young people in general or, in particular, of girls in schools. Just 5% of the girls in a sample of 2,000 secondary school students described some form of sexual abuse or harassment in schools (Kitzinger, 1988). A survey of 1,150 eleven to fifteen year olds which specifically asked a series of questions about 'harassment of an overtly sexual nature by adult males' produced the following data: 26% of the girls and 9% of the boys had been victims of such harassment at least once 'in the last 9 months'. The most common experiences were a man trying to touch them and indecent exposure (Anderson et al, 1990a and 1990b).

Several questions arise thus far. First, given the great variation (from 1.6% to 93%) in the incidence statistics compiled over the years, what, if anything, about the prevalence of the problem might we meaningfully conclude? What, if anything, is 'really' or 'in truth' happening? Is it a pervasive problem in some locations and rarely in others? Is it a subcultural problem? Therefore, are some women more likely than others to be victimized? Secondly, why do some surveys sample only women whilst others sample women and men? Are offenders always men? Can men be sexually harassed? I will review the quantitative data on what kinds of women are harassed and by whom shortly leaving the

question of men as victims of harassment until later. First, let me grapple with the thorny issue of the inconclusive prevalence statistics.

Ways of Seeing Sexual Harassment II: The 'facts' don't speak for themselves

The quantitative data derived from survey research highlight the way in which many researchers felt 'duty bound' to fill the gaps in existing knowledge with 'hard facts'. Although feminist researchers had identified a new subject for empirical research (one which was of interest to women) and had an alternative purpose of inquiry (women's emancipation), thereby adhering to what came to be known as two of the principles of feminist research (Harding, 1987; Stanley, 1990), many of them adopted established methodological prescriptions and an empiricist epistemology. They felt obliged to collect the facts from 'out there' in the world and to employ established, and therefore, respected 'tools' for this purpose. Sexual harassment surveys, like criminal victimization surveys, were regarded as a 'useful research instrument to deal with the problem of inadequate statistics and to pinpoint more accurately problems within society' (Young, 1988). Notwithstanding the awareness of many survey researchers that statistics have to be treated with caution, both sorts of victimization survey are grounded in a positivist or empiricist tradition which presumes that scientific research can in and of itself produce (more) objective knowledge; that knowledge is grounded in the 'facts'.

However, unhappily for feminists who would wish to argue that all women experience sexual harassment, that it is not a subcultural problem which affects a minority of women, the statistics on the prevalence of sexual harassment do not, on the face of it, warrant such a conclusion. Quite how widespread sexual harassment is, therefore, remains a matter of controversy and is ultimately a conceptual and a political issue, as I shall argue, but first let us examine the criticisms of the data derived from surveys from within the positivist paradigm.

Survey research on sexual harassment is subject to the same kind of criticism that followed Hite's (1976) report on female sexuality, namely that the results obtained were more a reflection of non-random sampling techniques and the rate of non-response. Huff's (1954) discussion of the sample with the built in bias remains relevant, therefore. Morewitz (1983) claims his relatively low incidence statistics are the result of his random, stratified sample, the implication being that his are more accurate than those obtained by the *Redbook* survey for example. The popular press picked up on this critique to discredit the 'evidence', arguing that it only had validity for the 'self-selecting' group of women who returned questionnaires (*Mail on Sunday* cited by Wise and Stanley, 1987:35).

Clearly, many of the surveys cannot easily be defended on traditional methodological grounds (the statistics were naively constructed and unwarranted generalizations were made rather than argued coherently). However, studies on the 'possibly biased sample' have shown that this objection to mailed questionnaires is either inaccurate or overstated. One such study (cited by Bailey, 1982:159) concluded that 'there were no significant differences between the responses of the mailed questionnaire and those of the interviewed respondents who had not answered the questionnaire'. Research on whether anonymous questionnaires or face to face interviews with known to be or thought to be sympathetic interviewers produce more valid data remains inconclusive also (Bailey, 1982). Certainly, the opportunity to 'probe' is absent in mailed questionnaires. This may well result in artificially low incidence statistics.

Other 'within the paradigm' criticisms about the validity of survey data include the ability of respondents to recall incidents and their willingness to record or report incidents. These difficulties are particularly acute when, first, many of the incidents under question may well have been so mundane or routine that they cannot readily be recalled and, secondly, when embarrassment or shame is part of the experience. Since these issues clearly apply in research on sexual harassment, incidence data, it may be argued, are as likely to be underestimates as overestimates. How questions are framed also affects results obtained.

Kitzinger comments on her 5% statistic as follows:

> (D)espite the taboos on writing about it, despite the fact that many of them *did not expect me to believe them* - still nearly 5% of girls described some form of sexual abuse in schools in response to my open-ended question about unfairness. A research study which focussed explicitly on sexual abuse of girls ... and asked directly about this experience, would, of course elicit a great deal more (Kitzinger, 1988:9, my emphasis).

Anderson et al's results based on specific rather than open-ended questions seem to support Kitzinger's assertion. More importantly, the comment about the girls' expectations is emphasised because it indicates a recognition amongst the girls that disbelief is a likely reaction to their accounts (see also Herbert, 1989; Jones, 1985). They 'know' this as the 'reality' of the situation. That is, the statement is indicative both of the girls' particular understanding or consciousness about the issue and of 'real' social relations: there are 'taboos' on speaking and writing about sexual abuse and 'given the scepticism which women are liable to encounter if they label and experience "sexual harassment", many are deterred from doing so' (Thomas and Kitzinger, 1992:1).

How does this help us make some meaningful conclusions about the inconclusive statistical data on incidence? I would argue that consciousness amongst the sampled population is as crucial a factor as methods of sampling and data collection. Low and high incidence statistics from questionnaires returned may as much reflect the (un)preparedness of respondents to label behaviours which they have experienced as sexual harassment. Because women 'know consciously *and unconsciously* what it means to be vulnerable to sexual and/or physical male intimidation and violence' (Stanko , 1985:1, my emphasis), women give different accounts of their experiences; they 'know' differently.

One of the surveys cited above which specifically addresses the issue of consciousness is that of Schneider (1982) whose sample of 381 women comprised 144 heterosexual and 237 lesbian women. The proportions of lesbian and heterosexual women recording incidents of harassment were not vastly different (82% and 69% respectively) enabling

Schneider to conclude that by 1982 women in the United States

> are increasingly familiar with the term sexual harassment and are willing to use it. However, the multifaceted approach employed here to examine elements of consciousness about sexual harassment indicates the conditional and subjective nature of the naming process itself (Schneider, 1982:95).

Schneider discovered that lesbian and heterosexual women responded quite differently to five separate attitude statements which reflected 'a feminist perspective on sexual assaults and sexual harassment' (p.88). The lesbian responses were 'highly skewed' towards problematising 'unwanted sexual approaches' while the heterosexuals show much more variability and much less tendency to agree strongly with the statements. However, Schneider argues, 'it is also the case that heterosexual women workers who identify as "extremely feminist" show a response pattern similar to the lesbians' (p.89). The naming process is conditional upon both sexual identity *and* identification with feminism. Certainly, familiarity with the term is one issue but willingness to use it is another. The very concept of sexual harassment is one which 'challenges the meanings of taken-for-granted behaviours embedded in heterosexual interactions and relationships' (Schneider, p.75; see also Stanko, 1983).

Thus, I would argue that it is meaningful to conclude that low response rates and low recorded rates of incidence amongst survey respondents may well be a reflection of heterosexual and non-feminist women's reluctance to label their experiences as sexual harassment in the way that feminists have. A widespread 'reluctance to redefine' behaviours embedded in heterosexual interactions and relationships might, it is meaningful to suppose, be more acute in cultures and locations imbued with traditional (non-feminist) ways of seeing the world in general, Oxford University perhaps being a case in point. Now, it *could be* that Oxford men are particularly respectful of and courteous towards Oxford women; that sexual harassment is 'really' not a pervasive problem in this location (nor in the other locations where survey research has produced low incidence rates). However, it is equally plausible to assert that the majority of Oxford women see the world

in general in ways which mitigate against their identifying with feminism and against *defining* their experiences as sexual harassment. Low response rates (12%) and low recorded rates of incidence (13% of returned questionnaires) do not, in my view, *necessarily* mean that sexual harassment only exists as a problem for a small minority of women at Oxford University; that it is a 'subcultural problem' in the main affecting certain kinds of women, in certain locations, with only particular types of men as perpetrators.[4]

Status of Women and Experience of Sexual Harassment

The illustrative examples provided towards the beginning of this chapter were selected to indicate that *both* professional and well educated men (the financial analyst's boss, the graduate student's supervisor, the schoolgirl's teacher) and men in manual trades (the construction workers) may harass women. The cases in which schoolgirls were harassed by peers were drawn from both working class and middle class locations. A number of authors have discussed how the 'interconnections between variables' (Burgess, 1986) might affect the likelihood of women being subjected to sexual harassment and/or influence the forms it takes and/or the specific nature of the social reaction. Bularzik (1978:30), analysing secondary texts (historical accounts of women workers in the early years of the twentieth century), argues that 'harassment certainly crossed ethnic lines. Jewish, Italian, WASP, Southern White and Black women were all harassed',but she properly refers to the specificities of the oppression of black women through this means. Farley (1978:40) locates the history of sexual harassment of black American working women in slavery, through which the free availability of black women 'as sex objects was enshrined in tradition, upheld by laws and enforced by terror'. Fekete (1988) notes the *simultaneity* of sexual and racist subordination of black women at the hands of the metropolitan police.

With regard to occupational status, Farley (1978), for example, devotes two lengthy chapters to documenting the experiences of harassment of black and white women in a range of non-traditional (mostly male, including professional) jobs and in traditionally feminine

occupations, arguing that although all women are subject to at least the subtler forms of harassment, physical violence is most likely to be experienced by women working in menial jobs. In the Merit Systems Protection Board survey, women occupying various positions within the governmental structure (professional, technical, clerical and blue collar) recorded incidents of harassment. More highly educated women reported more harassment, which as Stanko (1985:62) observes, whether this is because of their *perception* (their willingness to define more forms of behaviour as harassment) and/or because they worked as minorities of women in non-traditional jobs and were perceived as more threatening therefore, we cannot know for certain.[5]

Another uncertainty is whether age and marital status affect the likelihood of women being sexually harassed or whether these more effect women's perceptions. The Merit Systems Protection Board survey (cited in Stanko, *op cit*) found significant differences: 67% of women between the ages of 16 and 19 as opposed to 33% of women between the ages of 45 and 54; 53% of single women as opposed to 37% of married women. Schneider (1982) discerned an age difference which she considered significant: the lesbians in their sample

> are younger than the heterosexuals, and youth is one factor enhancing the frequency of incidents. For both groups of women, the younger ones are more likely to have greater numbers of incidents than the older women; this is not surprising in a culture that puts a premium on youth. Young women are considered more attractive and more available (Schneider, 1982:85).

I do not dispute Schneider's data nor disagree with her comment about the greater value placed on youthfulness. However, there remains some uncertainty about how much the incidence levels are a reflection of consciousness or perception as well as age per se. Also, younger women may be primarily perceived as less powerful (easier targets) rather than, or as well as, 'more attractive and more available'.

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter, first, that comparable behaviours may be experienced perceived and responded to in markedly different ways; that, although many women are willing to employ the term sexual harassment to describe interactions which they experience as humiliating, discomforting and depersonalizing, there are important differences of perception amongst women. Secondly, noting the difficulties of defining a complex phenomenon, I have attempted to offer a definition which both respects and problematizes women's perceptions of their experiences. Finally, I have argued that empirical data alone cannot 'prove' whether or not sexual harassment is a pervasive problem, any more than local crime surveys 'prove' that 'the crime problem' is located in urban areas (Young, 1986 and 1992). The statistics on sexual harassment are not 'factual' statistics comparable with statistics on 'who does what in schools' (Mahony, 1985, and see chapter 6). They are the product of attempts to measure a complex, subjectively defined phenomenon. All attempts to measure complex social phenomena, are based on an unwarranted presumption: that one can establish a verifiable knowledge about the world which is indisputable (Cicourel, 1964). The problem is not empirical data or survey research it is *empiricism*, an epistemology which in its traditional or mainstream version, claimed 'the facts' as collected from the 'independently existing' world by a neutral, detached scientist employing the scientific method, perceived as involving the dualistic separation of reason and emotion, objectivity and subjectivity and so on, as the basis of objective knowledge. Knowledge, here, is claimed as Truth in the sense of actual, factual, absolute. Frequently, there are both causality and universality claims in the resulting theory.

Critiques of the empiricist/ positivist view of 'knowing' and reality, the idea that knowledge is structured by social relations of power (and reality socially constructed) have a long (non-feminist and non-postmodern, frequently Marxist) history within social science (Berger and Luckman, 1966; Gramsci, 1971; Bernstein, 1976; and see Harvey, 1990). And yet the empiricist tradition continues to thrive. In its feminist version, empiricism

critiques the claims to objectivity of 'sexist scholarship' and argues that a truly objective science would be 'non-sexist' rather than 'androcentric' (Eichler, 1988), rather missing the point, in my view, that any knowledge is structured by relationships of power (Halson, 1989b). 'Proof' or validation, as Ramazanoglu (1989:51) observes, is 'as much a conceptual as an empirical process, and inevitably proceeds with dispute, debate and political struggle'.

High rates of incidence of sexual harassment, rape, child sexual abuse and so on can be rejected by those who do not choose to believe them on a variety of methodological grounds as indicated above. They can be and are also rejected from an empiricist stance on the grounds of bias. Feminist 'evidence' is disputed on the grounds of unwarranted impositions of feminist definitions of the situation on 'raw data' provided by respondents. Such a criticism has been levelled at Warshaw (1988) and other writers on the phenomenon of acquaintance rape. Asking questions of some 6,000 undergraduates across 32 college campuses, not about rape per se, but about 'sexual experiences', Warshaw writes that 'one in four female respondents has had an experience that met the legal definition of rape' (p.2), and chapter one is headed 'the reality of acquaintance rape'. As the issue came to be discussed more widely, it was met with a furious response which refuted the 'so-called evidence': this is not rape, 'it is an effort to reduce the awesome complexity of intimate discourse between the sexes to the banality of "no" means "no"' (Professor Neil Gilbert, *The Wall Street Journal*, 27th June 1991, cited by Dworkin, 1992: 13).

Similarly with regard to sexual harassment, feminists are charged with bias *as if* from an objective (value free and unemotional) standpoint. However, the research demonstrates (or 'proves' to my satisfaction) that gender is the factor which most consistently predicts variation in people's identification of what constitutes sexual harassment (Thomas and Kitzinger, 1982). Men are more likely than women to dismiss claims of sexual harassment as invalid. I shall review the literature shortly. Suffice to say here that 'all oppressed

groups', as New (1991:3) observes:

> have their experience dismissed as imaginary, exceptional or exaggerated. This is an integral part of the oppression itself, and an inevitable one, since all those with an interest in the status quo (or simply frightened of change) will defend a viewpoint which minimises or denies the oppression.

Ultimately, then, as I asserted earlier, what counts as 'valid knowledge' is a *political* issue, which the empiricist cannot grasp, let alone resolve. Now, whether we choose to adopt a feminist standpoint and argue that feminist knowledge is 'better' or 'more objective' knowledge (following Cain, 1986 and 1990; Ramazanoglu, 1989) or whether we argue that feminist knowledge about sexual harassment is one of several 'subjugated knowledges which tell different stories and have different specificities' (Smart, 1990:82), none having a claim to truth, remains a matter for consideration in chapter three, as does the nature of the complex relationship between gender and power. It is to these epistemological and other theoretical issues that I now turn.

Chapter Three: Sexual Harassment, Knowledge, Power and Gender

Introduction

In chapter two, I referred to standpoint and postmodern feminisms as alternative perspectives from which to 'see' knowledge about sexual harassment as 'better' or more objective knowledge about reality on the one hand, as 'alternative interpretation' with no claim to objectivity or 'truth' on the other. Epistemologies are inextricably linked to substantive theories, in respect of sexual harassment, theories of gender and power, or theories about the oppression of women. In essence, postmodernism deconstructs gender (as well as truth and reality) and rejects a structural analysis of power together with the associated concept of ideology. The major problematic, therefore, is whether, in view of these fundamental critiques of 'modernist' (realist and structural)[1] analyses of gender, power and knowledge, the adoption of such a perspective for analysing sexual harassment can be justified. My arguments in this chapter will lead to a rejection of postmodernism in favour of a realist philosophy, a standpoint epistemology and a substantive theory of gender and power which deconstructs *and reconstructs*.

This chapter, then, has several related aims and is divided into sections which reflect these. First I provide a brief overview of 'the feminist standpoint' and postmodern feminist epistemologies and argue that, despite differing premises, standpoint feminism and postmodern feminism are not utterly distinct: there are important 'postmodernist strains' well evident in the work of 'successor scientists' (Harding, 1986). That is, standpoint feminist or successor science work is not a unified body of thought. For the sake of clarity in the argument I distinguish 'unreconstituted' and 'reconstituted' feminist standpoints,[2] aware as I am of the problems involved in assuming uncritically that such a dualism is entirely warranted, and argue that 'reconstituted' standpoint feminism is not so vulnerable to postmodern critiques as has been assumed.[3] In this section I take the various core

elements of the postmodern outlook and discuss, first, the extent to which they are shared by 'modernist' scholars before moving on to consider, in the second section, the points of departure between postmodern feminist and 'reconstituted' feminist standpoint epistemologies. My aim here is to argue the case for adopting a 'realist' philosophy and a reconstituted feminist standpoint epistemology in this analysis of sexual harassment and heterosex. Having argued the case 'for theory' and 'for objectivity' in a (not 'the') 'modernist' sense of the word, my aim in the third section of the chapter is to introduce the major concepts of power, ideology, intransitive realities and patriarchy, which together inform my theoretical analysis of sexual harassment. In this, third, section I move back to the more 'grounded' literature on sexual harassment and deploy the empirical data in support of the more abstract theoretical analysis.

'The Feminist Standpoint' and Feminist Postmodernism

Standpoint feminists share in common with feminist empiricists, a belief in reality and in the methods of 'science' (critiqued almost beyond recognition) but, unlike empiricism, many attempted to ground epistemology, not in 'the facts' as might be collected by any 'detached' observer but (originally) in the (assumed to be) shared *social* experiences or distinctive activities of women as perceived by feminists. That is, the epistemological basis of this form of feminist knowledge is feminist experience which is achieved through a struggle against oppression (Ramazanoglu, 1989). Knowledge is grounded in the practices and political concerns of the women's movement, in the material reality of women's lives, most notably in women's labour or 'the gendered divisions of activity' (Rose, 1983 and 1986). Hartsock (1987) similarly grounds knowledge in women's work plus the 'continual invasions or blurrings of women's bodily boundaries'. Other, inappropriately labelled 'cultural' feminists (Rich, 1977; Daly, 1979; Spender, 1980, 1982, 1984) argued that male and female are really two different cultures and their life experiences are utterly different (Millett, 1977). Biological difference gives rise to psychological difference, to a distinctive 'female' ontology and view of the world or knowledge.

Whatever the professed basis of these diverse feminist standpoints, they shared in common the idea that 'the standpoint of women is epistemologically privileged: it is a standpoint from which it is easier to understand more and better'(Cain, 1990: 126). This is said to be so because women's subordination facilitates the necessary 'double vision' required both to overcome the dualisms which inhere in Enlightenment thinking and to see what is 'really' going on in the world (Ramazanoglu, 1989; Cain, 1990). Here, a feminist truth - more valid knowledge - is posited against 'patriarchal lies' (as Smart, 1991: 158 sees it): 'lies' about 'a woman's place', 'the nature of women', women's work, sexuality and so on. Neither feminist empiricism nor feminist standpoint epistemology is, on the face of it, relativist (Stanley and Wise, 1990), a point to which I shall return.

Postmodern ideas (derived from outside of social science) have compounded the debates about what can be 'known' and what can be said to be 'real' into something of an epistemological crisis since they amount to 'the "discovery" that nothing can be known with any certainty: all pre-existing "foundations" of epistemology have been shown to be unreliable' (Giddens, 1990: 46). This 'disorientation', Giddens argues,

> which expresses itself in the feeling that systematic knowledge about social organization cannot be obtained ... results primarily from the sense which many of us have in being caught up in a universe of events we do not fully understand, and which seem in large part outside of our control (p.2).

Feminists locate the beginnings of their version of postmodernism in political practice, in the 'disorientation' which resulted from the 'demise of sisterhood': a widespread recognition of the myth of a common experience of oppression as women (Smart, 1990; Stanley, 1990; Yuval-Davis, 1992) and the realization that (notably white, middle class, heterosexual) women were oppressing other (notably Black and/or working class and/or lesbian) women 'by trying to encapsulate all the rich variety of womanhood in one theory' (Cain, 1990). Insights derived from feminist appropriations of psychoanalytic theory (Mitchell, 1974; Rose, 1986; New, 1991) together with heated debates about sexuality, pornography and desire not only undermined the idea of 'sisterhood' but also, as Smart

(1990) notes, began to undo the idea of the 'true self', central (according to Smart) to the modernist conception of the liberal, unitary subject, and gave way to notions of 'fractured' (complex and contradictory) subjectivities. The category 'woman' is effectively blown to smithereens, it has no 'real' meaning as a social category, only an essentialist meaning. Thus we 'modernist' (or realist) feminists have our one basic premise, our oppression *as women*, apparently overturned.

Smart's version of postmodernism is sophisticated and persuasive in many respects. In addition to her adoption of the idea of fractured subjectivities rather than unitary subjects and her critique of the essentialist category 'woman', Smart shares with Lyotard (1985, cited by Giddens, 1991: 2) the postmodern outlook which represents 'a shift away from attempts to ground epistemology and from faith in humanly engineered progress ... (seeing instead) a plurality of heterogeneous claims to knowledge, in which science does not have a privileged place'.[4] 'The core element of feminist postmodernism is', Smart (1990: 82) argues, in a valuable summarizing paragraph,

> the rejection of one reality which arises from 'the falsely universalizing perspective of the matter' (Harding, 1987: 88). But unlike standpoint feminism it does not seek to impose a different unitary reality. Rather it refers to subjugated knowledges, which tell different stories and have different specificities. Thus the aim of feminism ceases to be the establishment of the feminist truth and becomes the deconstruction of truth and analysis of the power effects which claims to truth entail. So there is a shift away from treating knowledge as ultimately objective, or at least the final standard and hence able to reveal the concealed truth, towards recognizing that knowledge is part of power and that power is ubiquitous. Feminist knowledge becomes part of a multiplicity of resistances.

These are important critiques but many of them have been well taken by scholars who do not accept the corollary that 'no systematic knowledge of human action or trends of social development is possible' (Giddens, 1990: 46-47). With regards knowledge uncertainty, postmodernism does not have the prerogative on uncertainty, nor is this a 'new' epistemological development. It has its roots in *and characterizes* modernity: 'philosophers ... such as Karl Popper, acknowledge that, as he expresses it, all science rests upon shifting sands'. In science, *nothing* is certain, and nothing can be proved

(Giddens, 1990: 39). This suggests that the distinction between modernist and postmodern thought is overstated and that it makes sense to see all these developments as 'modernity coming to understand itself' rather than the overcoming of modernity as such; 'no knowledge under conditions of modernity is knowledge in the 'old' sense where 'to know' is to be certain' (Giddens, 1990: 40-48).

In respect of 'falsely universalizing' perspectives, Giddens (1990) argues, in a critique of Marx, Durkheim and Weber, that modernity is multidimensional, not unidimensional on the level of institutions, and the 'grand' theorists who have postulated a single overriding dynamic (or 'cause') of transformation are wrong. The 'unreconstituted' feminist standpoints of Millett (1977) and Daly (1978) which have theorized in a 'grand', unidimensional, universalizing and reductionist manner, uncritically accepting the idea of the unitary or essential woman and neglecting both the differences amongst women and the contradictory nature of women's experiences, are similarly vulnerable to postmodern critiques. Despite explicitly seeking to avoid determinism, there is a lurking essentialism in Hartsock's argument too (Cain, 1990).

'Reconstituted' feminist standpoints do not theorize in this 'grand' or universalizing and unidimensional manner. They do not posit all women are the same. Rather, aware of diversity and divisions amongst women and of the power and privilege that some women have in relation to others, some 'modernist' feminists have argued the case that theory enables us nevertheless to 'abstract from the myriad differences between us without denying them, and to reunite around important samenesses' (Cain, 1990: 134) in relation to specified contexts and issues. Others have argued that 'feminists should not be depressed because the concept of 'woman' has been shown to be fragmented'. This theoretical development simply shows that feminist theory is catching up with the 'reality' of women's diverse and contradictory interests (Ramazanoglu, 1989: 190). Feminism 'is not a *total* social theory that can explain the connections between different forms of oppression ... the problem remains that the oppression of women is, in complex and contradictory ways,

enmeshed in all other forms that people have created' but 'feminism has to be taken as at least a *partial* theory of society' (Ramazanoglu, 1989: 178, 44).

Feminist theory is not a science of certainties. It is understood as productive of standpoint-specific knowledges. It is inevitably historical and culture bound: 'when a realist ... talks about theory she is making a set of culture bound statements which cannot be proved right in the short term and which are doomed to inevitable obsolescence' (Cain, 1990: 130). The theory of 'a humble realist' in sociology is not committed to a mechanical conception of cause; she 'maps relationships, constructing concepts which specify patterns ... she will be content to ... record the signs, the characteristics of connections' (Cain, 1990: 131).

In response to the problem of fractured identities, of whether a woman's class, femaleness or colour shape her vision, of where on earth a standpoint can be found in all of this, Cain argues the criticism is essentialist since it suggests that identities are fixed and that sites may not be chosen or changed:

> A standpoint is a site which its creator and occupier has agreed to occupy to produce a special kind of knowledge and practice and of which he or she is aware in a special, theoretical way. If knowledge is site specific then changing what is possible to know involves changing your site (Cain, 1990: 132).

Postmodernism *and* 'modern' feminist epistemologies reject universalism and essentialism. *Both* deconstruct the category 'woman', arguing that it is 'socially structured and internally fractured in ways which should be welcomed and explored in depth (Stanley and Wise, 1990: 24). Feminist standpoints are no longer 'rooted in a problematic politics of essential identities' (Harding, 1986: 27), neither those of women nor of men. The postmodern claim that standpoint feminism has 'not taken masculinity as a focus of investigation' (Smart, 1990: 81), that it has largely failed to deconstruct masculinity, is a reasonable and serious claim of much standpoint feminism. Wise and Stanley's (1987) account, which refuses to accept any 'different kinds of men' argument, is particularly open to such criticism.

It is not a wholly justified critique however. Segal's (1990) analysis, for example, is deconstructivist (see also Askew and Ross, 1988). We have become so inessentialist that, as Cain (1990: 132-4) argues,

> being a woman does not mean that one can automatically speak for women from a feminist standpoint ... We are not talking about biological givens ... standpoint is a relational concept which ... uniquely explains how/men can work from a feminist standpoint. A standpoint is constituted by politics, theory, theoretical reflexivity and choice (of site) not biology.

Some disjunction between ontology and epistemology is, therefore, posited. The precise nature of the relationship between ontology and epistemology remains   problematic.[5]

In conclusion, I argue that postmodern feminisms and 'reconstituted' feminist standpoints share in common certain crucial features: both aim to be inessentialist; both reject universalism or unwarranted overgeneralization; both reject unidimensional or 'grand' theorizing; both recognize that 'knowing' is an uncertain business.

An Argument for Realism and a Standpoint Epistemology

At this juncture I consider the points at which feminist postmodernism and standpoint feminism differ or party company and argue the case for a realist philosophy and a standpoint epistemology in this analysis of sexual harassment and heterosex. Essentially, this involves a consideration of relativism, objectivity, reality, ideology and the necessity of engaging in 'the hazardous strategy of reconstruction' (Cain, 1989: 5).

'Telling Different Stories': The Postmodern Problem of Relativism

The problem of relativism plagues both postmodern and standpoint feminisms in different but comparable ways. Postmodern feminism 'relativises "experience" by locating it within a micropolitics which is highly localised but organised through meta-narratives and more grounded ideological discourses' (Stanley and Wise, 1990: 27-28). The focus on how

meanings are produced through language, the denial of the fixity of meaning and the proffering of alternative meanings or 'telling different stories' has been important in deconstructing the claims to Truth of, for example, the law (Smart, 1989, 1991). Indeed, the very idea that there is a single truth can and does disempower women in such contexts: 'the whole rape trial is a process of disqualification (of women) and celebration (of phallocentrism)' (Smart, 1989: 35). Similarly, deconstructing the concepts of provocation, reasonableness, self defence and immanent danger in legal discourse and arguing for reconstructions of them which take women's experiences and behaviour patterns into account, as O'Donovan (1991) does from a standpoint, are important political projects. Feminist deconstructivist projects are a required component of the struggle for women's liberation.

However, engaging apparently in the production of one of a 'plurality of heterogeneous claims to knowledge', none of which can be said to constitute ⁀a better truth,⁀ leaves postmodernism open to claims of relativism. In some expressions of the deconstructivist argument the (or a) logical conclusion is inherently individualist and relativist in the extreme and, therefore, an anathema to both the sociologist and the standpoint feminist. Schematically distinguishing modernism from postmodern deconstructivism, Yuval-Davis (1992) characterized the former as asserting that 'all women are the same' whilst the latter maintain that 'everyone is different' and 'each person can speak only from her own partial standpoint'.

Whilst it is true that 'we all have relationships with other people and we speak from our own unique site in a complex configuration of interrelated people' and that 'in this sense, there are as many knowledges as there are people' (Cain, 1990: 129), I do not believe that all knowledges are equally as 'worthy' - common sense knowledge, for example, is 'rich yet disorganized, non-systematic, often inarticulate and ineffable⁀(Bauman, 1990) - and it was 'to deal with precisely this point that standpoint epistemologies (not to mention sociology) have been developed' (Cain, 1990:129)

In an important sense, feminist postmodernists like Smart are not relativist because, in relation to specific issues, they 'know which side they are on'. They do different things with their knowledge. Though they make no claims to objectivity or Truth, in producing their deconstructions they are doing so from a feminist standpoint of sorts. As Ramazanoglu (1989: 44) observes, all feminists implicitly believe that feminist ideas and explanations give a *better* account than others of what goes on in the world. Thus, Smart (1989: 33) asserts, for example, that the consent/non-consent dyad is 'completely irrelevant' to women's experience of sex. It is a *flawed* 'knowledge'. It is (implicitly) better to 'know' that women may submit unwillingly and 'better' to argue that submission ought not to be construed as 'consent'. Feminist postmodern knowledge can *only* be a 'form of resistance' if it argues that feminist knowledge is 'better' than patriarchal, or to use the term Smart prefers, phallocentric knowledge.

In one sense, then, I am arguing that feminist postmodernists implicitly do not 'merely' offer 'alternative meanings' or 'relative accounts', they in effect offer 'better' knowledge based on a deconstruction of 'phallocentric' claims to Truth and a simultaneous re-evaluation of 'women's definitions of the situation. The knowledge is implicitly offered as 'less partial' or less partisan, less 'taken-for-granted', more theoretical and, therefore, 'better'. However, postmodern feminists claim not to be in the business of producing 'better' or 'more objective knowledge'. They succumb to 'impossibilism' (Cain, 1990).

Against 'Impossibilism': Why Argue a Standpoint?

This 'impossibilism', the 'telling of (merely) different stories' rather than aiming to produce better knowledge is insufficient for the development of feminism as a (partial) social theory. As Ramazanoglu (1989: 45) observes, 'feminists, like other social theorists who want the knowledge they produce to be regarded as convincing, need to provide statements which generally hold 'true' within prescribed limits'. Although there are

reasonable objections to the notion of truth which arise from the problem of ever arriving at absolute proof as mentioned above, it can still be argued that feminists 'have a moral obligation to show that some statements are 'better' accounts of social life than others' (ibid.), that, although *all* knowledge is uncertain, not all knowledge is equally as worthy. Agnosticism and recognition of the hypothetical character of all scientific claims are quite different epistemological stances from relativism, as Harding (1986: 27) observes. Thus, standpoint feminism parts company with postmodernism: we are engaged in successor science projects. The successor science remains a science of uncertainties (Cain, 1990), but we make claims to objectivity, to better theories of what society is 'really' like.

The major reasons for arguing that feminism is scientific social theory are twofold. On the one hand is the empowerment of women; on the other is the need to be able to communicate our knowledge as valid beyond the boundaries of an immediate empathetic group (Cain, 1990: 130). In relation to the first point, although it can be argued (as above) that the very idea of truth can disempower women in specific contexts, the idea of truth can empower. 'The point of feminism is not to produce an abstracted theory of society only intelligible to intellectuals but, like Marxism, to change societies for the better ... there is no point in engaging in political struggle if we do not have an accurate understanding of what to struggle against ... (and) at a common sense level, people want to know what is true' (Ramazanoglu, 1989: 45, 50). Any view which *ultimately* allows for 'multiple realities' in relation to specific aspects of social life (such as rape) cannot give feminism or women any particular political direction. We have to be able to expose as 'lies' some of these 'realities' or so-called truths so that women can feel empowered, at a common sense level, to know what is 'really' true and to work towards changing an oppressive social reality. This is not to deny that people do not experience their lives as multifaceted and contradictory but it is to assert the political necessity of getting off the 'multiple realities' fence.

I have a particular situation in mind: a young woman (aged thirteen) calls the Rape Line and tells the listener that her stepfather is 'having sex with' her. He sometimes tells her that

she's getting what she deserves: punishment for naughtiness. At other times he tells her that she will 'get to like it'. She believes these assertions, these contradictory 'truths': she *is* bad sometimes; it may be 'just punishment'; her rabbits like 'making babies' so maybe she will one day too. She does not *want* to believe them, however. She is ringing a *rape* line which, by implication, has a quite different definition of what is 'really' going on.

Does the woman who receives her call engage her (implicitly) in a conversation about the necessity of deconstructing truth and the importance of denying the fixity of meaning: that we cannot be certain about what is 'really' going on? Of course not. Such a response - a *logical* postmodern analysis of the situation - would effectively disempower not just this young woman but all women similarly victimized. What we do is, gently and reciprocally, 'deconstruct' her stepfather's 'truths', we expose them as 'lies', we assert the truth: he is raping her; she will not get to like it; this is not 'punishment for her naughtiness'. Feminist truths such as these can and have empowered disempowered individuals by providing new ways of thinking about the sometimes awful circumstances in which we find ourselves. Feminists have a political responsibility to validate as real, as truth, the material reality of the situation which, for complex reasons, the disempowered individuals may have (attempted to) 'explain' in some other, often self-injurious, way. Saying 'in truth he is raping you' and 'he is lying, you don't have to believe his lies', even if we harbour epistemological doubts about the 'ultimate validity' of these statements, is facilitative of change for the better.

On the other hand, the reason for arguing a standpoint is that although feminism seeks to empower women to struggle for liberation, it recognizes that we have to argue with what Evans (1983: 219) calls 'the more articulate battalions of male chauvinism'. As Ramazanoglu (1989: 45-46) observes, 'we can all discriminate between 'better' and 'worse' theories on moral and political grounds' we 'also need to be able to judge theories on their scientific adequacy ... because this is the only basis that we have for claiming that those who do not share our premises should be convinced by our conclusions'. We want

feminist knowledge to be accepted as better knowledge *whether* critics of feminism like it or not. It is politically important both to invalidate the patriarchal 'knowledge' - or mystifying and oppressing ideologies - of the powerful and to validate feminist knowledge against specified criteria. Thus feminist theory can be regarded as truth in the sense of fidelity to required standards of data collection, analysis and interpretation. However, as I said in the previous chapter, that validation is *as* much a conceptual as an empirical process. It requires theoretical knowledge which, because of the self-consciousness with which it is formulated, because the relationships between the concepts are logical, public, easier to share and easier to defend than less elaborated or common sense knowledges, such theoretical knowledge has an 'objective' form. It can be called or construed as objective knowledge. The pitfall then becomes to forget that the objectivized knowledge was created for a purpose, from a site and so on (Cain, 1990: 130). The pitfall remains the avoidance of both relativism and universalism.

Standpoint Relativism and When, If Ever, is 'Universalizing' Justified?

In Harding's (1986) specification, standpoint feminism includes, as Stanley and Wise (1990: 28), following Zita (1988), point out, '*only* those positions which theorise out of a sexual division of labour in society (and) ignores the sexualization of women's experiences and also the widespread existence of sexual and other violence towards women'. Feminist proponents of being standpoint knowledge grounded in women's experience of 'male violence', including intercourse and pornography, include Dworkin (1981, 1987, 1992) and, where sexual harassment is viewed as a form of violence, many other of the authors whose work was reviewed in the previous chapter (Kelly, 1988; Ramazanoglu, 1987; Jones, 1985). Some of these works are 'unreconstituted'. Dworkin's work, for example, admits of no contradictions in women's experience of pornography. However, in failing to include these works in her account, in discussing only one variation of standpoint feminism, Harding suppresses   feminist pluralism. In particular, she suppresses the radical feminist standpoints. She does note, however, that the relativist 'tension' which is

omnipresent in postmodern feminism, is present in a weaker form in the standpoint position. As Stanley and Wise (1990: 28) observe, 'once one standpoint is recognised, this then admits the possibility of a range of different but equally valid feminist standpoints'.

There is no single, overarching feminist standpoint. Nor should there or could there be. Sharing with postmodern feminists the critique of the essentialist category 'woman', standpoint feminists of various hues argue, nevertheless, that 'woman' is a necessary and valid social category because women share social experiences of oppression. However, this is not to say that we all share the *same* experiences; that all women are equally oppressed or all oppressed in the same way at all times. The social contexts within which different kinds of women live, work, struggle and so on means that we do not share one single material reality (Stanley and Wise, 1990). Since standpoint feminism is materialist feminism, it follows that diversity of material realities will lead to plurality of standpoint

* see note overleaf

feminisms and the attendant (unresolved) problem of relativism. As implied in the discussion of 'humble realist' feminist theorizing above, standpoint feminist knowledge accepts its culture boundedness and does not aim to universalize, over-generalize or to 'impose a single unitary reality'.

Thus we must reject Wise and Stanley's 'unreconstituted' and, in view of their statements presented above, their ironic assertion of their one startling statistic: that all women have been sexually harassed. The experience of being a Bedouin or Somali woman may well not involve being sexually harassed. I cannot claim any knowledge of this. It is not only an unwarranted generalization to assert that all women experience sexual harassment, it may be a gross insult to assert that this is a *significant* feature of the oppression of all women: for Ethiopian women who, along with their menfolk and children, are dying of starvation, sexual harassment can hardly be construed as a significant feature of oppression in this cultural context. It may be that sexual harassment can only be construed as a

*Here, as elsewhere, in this section it is argued that feminists have posited i) different material *bases* of women's oppression and ii) varying relationships between ontology and epistemology. The material reality and ontological experience of being a lesbian woman and/or a black woman have given rise to (at least) two standpoints (see Stanley and Wise, 1990). The presumption of the primacy of the material reality of class relations in constructing (some) women's oppression gives rise to another standpoint. The 'relative validity' of each of the plurality of standpoint feminisms remains problematic.

significantly oppressive feature of the lives of privileged, Western women. The knowledge about sexual harassment presented in this thesis makes no claims to the universality of this particular phenomenon.

It does, however, argue that, notwithstanding the diverse specific material realities of women, there are *general* mechanisms by which women have been and are oppressed by men. The use of physical and sexual violence and the threat of violence by men remains one important general (widespread if not universal) mechanism which oppresses women as women, cutting across the boundaries of nationality, class, 'race' and religion, although these cultural factors may influence some of the specific forms which such violence takes and the specific forms of social reactions to the violence.[6] Like Ramazanoglu (1989), I believe this is the main area in which arguments for the generality of women's oppression by men can be supported. Feminist analysis has also revealed sexuality as an enduring area of political struggle between women and men, although as Ramazanoglu (1989: 65) observes, there is some dispute over whether the development of sexuality in western cultures is a specific historical case of the oppression of women, or whether sexual relations are more generally oppressive of women. A universalizing, unidimensional and over-generalizing single theory of 'the' oppression of (all) women is uncalled for but theoretical statements, amounting to objective knowledge, about the generality of violence as one mechanism of the oppression of women and the social construction of sexuality as another are valid and necessary components of the struggle for women's liberation. An analysis of the social construction of sexuality combined with an analysis of the violence by men against women constitutes one of several feminist standpoints which legitimately generalizes rather than universalizes.

The 'Disappearing Reality' Problem and 'Intransitive Realities'

Having argued against the impossibilism and relativism of postmodern feminism and for a feminist standpoint, notwithstanding the unresolved problematic of relativism and the dangers of producing universalizing accounts despite one's best intentions, I turn now to

the final point of departure between postmodern and standpoint feminisms: whether 'reality' exists or, more properly, how far social structures can be said to exist *independently* of people's understanding of them. Materialist feminists take exception to the elements of the postmodern stance which assert that we cannot make claims to what Smart describes as 'revealing the concealed truth'; we cannot 'seek to impose' reality. Yuval-Davis (1992) makes a similar point when she argues that 'building categories is a political activity, not a description of the way things 'really' are. There is no objective truth masked by dominant ideology'. There are no 'structures'.[7]

I have real problems with this. My problems are related one to the other: first, that material reality seems almost to disappear altogether, second, in particular the material exercise of power, including the direct use of force, independent of self-conscious 'knowledge' about it, seemingly disappears also. I say 'almost' and 'seemingly' disappears because postmodern feminisms which do not 'entail the denial of poverty, inequality, repression, racism, sexual violence and so on' (Smart, 1990: 76) implicitly at least believe in the material reality of these phenomena. What they do deny is that the intellectual can divine the answer to these through the demand for 'bigger and better theories'. I have already agreed that 'grand' theorizing is unwarranted, given the complex and multidimensional nature of modernity. The implication remains, however, that not much in the way of systematic knowledge can be produced by 'intellectuals', who can 'see' more than the person in the street, who, more specifically, can 'see' structures. If we do accept this, which I simply am not prepared to do, we witness or take part in the demise of sociology and might as well, as Giddens (1990: 47) observes, 'repudiate intellectual activity altogether ... in favour, say, of healthy physical exercise'.

Whilst I appreciate that building categories like 'sexual harassment' or 'acquaintance rape' is indeed a political activity, I would argue these categories refer to 'real' events in the world, 'real' events which may be experienced but not *experienced as* sexual harassment or rape because they have not been thought about in these terms. Consider the following

case reported by Finkelhor and Yllo (1982): a woman whose boyfriend was drunk described how he had attempted to force her to have anal intercourse. She screamed her refusal and struggled. He became more violent, held her down and forced her to submit. When asked by researchers whether she had ever been forced to have sex against her will, she replied in the negative. Does this woman's assertion, her 'knowledge', lead us to deny the reality of rape in this instance and in all instances where there is a comparable 'denial' or refusal to call it rape (Warshaw, 1988)?

When young women assert in response to sexual name calling, which clearly humiliates them, that they 'don't mind', 'get used to it' and 'take it as a laugh' (Halson, 1991), or discuss social phenomena as if they were 'natural' and 'only to be expected' (Jones, 1985) or simply say, 'you don't notice it if it's happening all the time', is it not realistic to construe this as sexual harassment concealed by an ideology which does not empower young women to recognize and name it as such? The fact of events not having been so conceptualized does not make the events less 'real' or material. The material reality of the situation is 'there', independently of how it is named/explained by the individuals who experience the event.

I would posit, following Cain (1990), herself following Bhaskar (1971/89), the existence of intransitive or unthought about realities. This is a fundamental ontological claim:

> the construction of an ontology in which the reality of objects is independent of knowledge and in which objects can therefore impact directly upon people in no way amounts to a claim that objects in the world can be directly apprehended. Death, floods and relationships of class and gender might be such objects (Cain, 1990: 128).

Sexual harassment and rape as specific elements of relationships of gender are here understood as real 'objects', as material (though not necessarily universal) facts of life which are not necessarily perceived as such. They are constituent elements of an intransitive reality. They may be part of our experience and identity but we may not be conscious of them at all.

Just as 'intellectuals' may be ignorant of the material realities of the lives of many peoples, and make unwarranted and inaccurate assertions about, say, 'criminals' or 'New Age travellers', so too the knowledge of 'non-intellectuals' is bounded. No-one is all-knowing or all-seeing, even in relation to their own experiences. Although feminism starts with and aims to express women's experiences, it cannot logically depend just on women's personal experiences. The 'intellectual' is likely to have at her disposal knowledges about (some, not all aspects of) reality which may well not be apparent to individual women as general issues. Feminists cannot logically be subjectivist nor utterly deconstructivist. Feminist politics depends on concepts which are not in most women's vocabularies (Ramazanoglu, 1989). Indeed, as I have already argued, one of the points of feminism is to produce for women ways of thinking about their experiences which are not knowable through ordinary means (Smith, 1986; Ramazanoglu, 1989). Feminists must engage in the hazardous strategy of reconstruction (Cain, 1989).

As Cain (1990: 129) argues,

The realist position leaves open the possibility of 'correct understanding'. 'to say that there are realities which exist whether we think about them or not is not to say that we can ever be *sure* that our knowledges correspond' exactly or properly. However, the postulated existence of intransitive realities does amount to a claim that feminists/sociologists can have more objective knowledge than the 'woman in the street' whose account of her situation *is* shaped by particular sets of ideas or, as I shall argue, patriarchal ideologies. That is, I believe the concept of power, as both agency and structure, and the associated notion of ideology are central sociological concepts which I am not prepared to jettison in favour of a power/knowledge 'fusion' which endlessly deconstructs.

Theorizing Power and Reconstructing Gender

This section, as the subtitle indicates, focuses on two primary concepts - power and gender - which have yet to be successfully 'married'. Ironically, given that feminism is a theory of women's oppression, the literatures on power and gender remain largely distinct from one

another, although there have been some important recent attempts to bring the two together (Connell, 1987; Davis et al, 1991). Certainly, it can be argued that there has been surprisingly little feminist work directly on the analysis of power (Ramazanoglu, 1989). I do not claim to resolve the difficulties involved in attempting to produce a coherent theory of gender/power or gendered power or the gender of power. My aims in this section are more modest. First I outline a social theory of power which draws primarily on Giddens' work. This is contrasted briefly with Foucault's conceptualization of power. I argue that the former better approximates a theory of oppression and resistance. I then note some of the difficulties surrounding the concept of gender before arguing that it is both logical and necessary to reconstruct it as a feature of power relations. Empirical data on sexual harassment will be employed to specify some of the conceptions between gender and power. The concept of patriarchy will then be introduced.

Power as Ubiquitous

By way of introduction to this thesis, I asserted that power is not inevitably negative. Foucault is perhaps the most well known of the power theorists who rejects the idea that power is inevitably negative or repressive in its effects. Giddens (1981) has also long since argued power has to be seen as singularly double edged since it involves both repression and coercion and a productive or transformative capacity. Feminists have implicitly and explicitly accepted the transformative or enabling dimension of power in the use of the concept of empowerment (Hudson, 1989; Kelly, 1988; Ramazanoglu, 1989). Secondly, whereas at one time the existence of more or less overt forms of conflict (primarily over economic resources) was viewed as a starting point for the analysis of power, power came to be viewed as existing in contexts and relationships where no overt conflict is present. Power is ubiquitous (Foucault, 1980). It inheres in all social practices (Giddens, 1981), including intimate, even friendly relations, as feminists have long been asserting. Power can be construed as part of the fabric of the system, operating in routine and mundane ways in the context of everyday life. Power can *prevent* the outbreak of

overt conflict such that opposition or resistance may be unarticulated or scarcely perceived (Lukes, 1974). However, the mechanisms of power can also create resistances and local struggles (Foucault, 1980).

Thinking about the mundane exercise of power in everyday life in general rather than gendered terms, we can turn to the 'micro-sociological' literature, Goffman's analyses of non-verbal behaviour are (often implicit) analyses of the way power is suffused in everyday life. In 'Civil Inattention and Face Engagements in Social Interaction' (reprinted in Giddens, 1992), for example, Goffman discusses how staring, in particularly the 'hate-stare that a Southern white sometimes gratuitously gives to Negroes (sic) walking past him (sic)', constitutes 'non-person treatment'. Similarly, he comments that 'in public places (physically disabled people) will be openly stared at, thereby having their privacy invaded'. Staring is theorized as a form of social control, a negative sanction in Goffman's analysis rather than as the mundane and, in this case, the repressive exercise of power but it amounts to the same thing. Staring can prevent the outbreak of conflict, reducing those so targetted to silence and, perhaps, fear. It need not have this effect, however. Indeed staring itself may become a sanction against staring, as illustrated in Goffman's paper by an excerpt from the 'autobiography of an ex-dwarf' whose 'standard defense' to such 'non-person treatment' was a cold stare. In this case the mechanism of power creates resistance - a local - one-to-one - struggle. However, even where the repressive and mundane exercise of power is met with resistance in specific instances, Goffman notes that certain people are subjected to such 'non-person treatment' repeatedly and 'feel powerless because they cannot change the general state of affairs'. This kind of treatment is contrasted with 'civil inattention' which constitutes a 'minimal courtesy' in that one person gives to another enough visual notice to demonstrate that one appreciates that the other is present but attention is withdrawn at the next moment thus communicating to the other that she or he 'does not constitute a target of special curiosity or design'. In either case, Goffman argues, 'we have here what is perhaps the slightest of interpersonal rituals, yet one that constantly regulates the social intercourse of persons in our society'.

Smiling is not discussed by Goffman in this paper, but it could usefully be added as another dimension of a slight but significant interpersonal ritual which 'regulates social intercourse'. I do not know how frequently, in comparison with instances of mutual 'civil inattention', there is momentary and mutual smiling between strangers, but I do know that this occurs and that it can 'empower' if only in the most mundane and momentary way of making one feel 'at home' or 'at one with' others rather than threatened or ignored. Smiling can be understood as both the productive/positive exercise of power (as, for example, when a tutor greets a new and nervous tutee) and as reproductive of imbalances of power. Although the whole issue of smiling is under-researched, what limited research there has been suggests that smiling is associated with subordinate status amongst humans and other primates (Henley, 1977).

Goffman, in 'The Nature of Deference and Demeanour' (cited in Henley, 1977) argues that superordinates can often be identified by the way in which they exercise familiarities which the subordinate is not allowed to reciprocate. He cites these familiarities as touching, teasing, informal demeanour, using familiar forms of address and asking for personal information. Argyle (1976) establishes bodily contact, physical proximity, gestures, posture, nodding and smiling, silences and interruptions as further clues to the communication of power between individuals. Henley (1977) describes all such non-verbal and verbal communications as the micropolitics of human interaction.

Power, then, is ubiquitous: integral to social interaction at all levels of social life and, since it is involved in the very constitution of social life, it has to be construed as productive, enabling and even positive (Davis, 1991: 74, following Giddens, 1984). However, to construe power as both ubiquitous and as not inevitably linked either to overt conflict or to oppression or repression, is not to suggest that power is simply 'free floating' and completely amorphous, as implied by the selection of the above illustrations relating to interactions between white and black people, able bodied and disabled people, and between tutors and tutees. It is socially structured.

Power as 'Commodity' and 'Mechanism'

Power is viewed both as something which is exercised in relation to others and as something which some people, more so than others, 'possess' and 'abuse' by virtue of their being members of certain groups or collectivities. Both conceptualizations have a long sociological history. In the latter conceptualization, power is viewed as a structural property or a commodity which exists independently of the wills of individuals, as in the work of Marx, Durkheim and Poulantzas, whilst in the former it refers to individual action, in Weber's view to the *intentional* activities of individuals, and is centrally linked to agency therefore. In recent years there have been various attempts to resolve both the inadequacies of either conceptualization taken on its own and to resolve the 'tension' between the two perspectives.

Foucault largely, though not completely, rejects the 'commodity' view of power which links power to 'judicial rights' which some people 'have' and others do not have, as an 'old' form which is diminishing in significance. Of crucial significance for Foucault is power as a mechanism or process (of normalization). Concentrating instead on the growth of the disciplinary society, he selects out of his analysis the 'old' questions of who *'has'* power (Smart, 1989). According to some readings, Foucault also responds to the problem of how historical change is linked to 'intentional' activity and consciousness by declaring the subject 'defunct': history is made 'without a subject' (Davis, 1991). Power becomes part and parcel of the micro-process of everyday life, assuming primacy over everything else. It therefore becomes 'a mysterious phenomenon, that hovers everywhere and underlies everything', a view which is every bit as reductionist as Marxist formulations of the primacy of class (Giddens, 1984: 226), but also a view which is blighted by the tyranny of structurelessness. Power has no discernible structure or pattern. He fails, in his analysis of power, knowledge and sexuality, for example, to explain why women have so consistently lost rather than gained power in sexual relationships.

Others, notably Giddens (also Bourdieu, 1977), have called for a reconceptualization of agency which can link individual activities and broader social processes. That is, shifting the focus to the 'routine, habitual and practical features of human conduct in the constitution of social life ... the reproduction and transformation of social structures in patterned ways could be accounted for without having to rely on the *intentions* of individuals or groups as explanation' (Oldersma and Davis, 1991: 10). Giddens views power as intrinsic to human agency. In its most general sense, power *is* agency: it is the 'can' and the 'could have done otherwise' which is implicated in every situation, even the most restrictive and oppressive (Giddens, 1976: 11). People are never completely governed or determined by social forces or structures. 'The analysis of power entails uncovering the subtle mix of what actors (sic) do (and refrain from doing), what they achieve (and fail to achieve) and what they might have done (but did not do)' (Davis, 1991: 73).

However, whilst Giddens properly rejects the notion that individuals can ever be completely powerless, he argues that social action is always bounded by 'unacknowledged conditions' and 'unintended consequences', that is, by conditions lying outside the self-understanding of the persons involved. Like Cain (1990), Bauman (1990) similarly argues the case for 'intransitive' realities: whilst action must in part be construed as the result of motives, choice and decision making, it must also be acknowledged that some actions are unreflective or unthinking. They may be habitual or affective. Thus it is not sociologically justifiable to build a definition of sexual harassment around the notion that a person 'ought reasonably to know' (Grahame, 1985). Farley (1978) found that failure to recognize their own behaviour as sexual harassment was not untypical of the men she spoke to on the subject. Her Mr Hubbard, the President and General Manager of Hubbard Broadcasting, a 'family man' of 42, is one example:

> 'so you're the sex-in-the-office girl!', he said while he leaned back in his
> swivel chair. 'There isn't any problem here. There's really no problem - or

if there is, I'm not aware of it'. At that moment an adolescent girl walked in to leave some papers on Hubbard's desk. 'Now here's a very sexy girl', he bellowed, staring at her. Blushing she looked away. 'Oh, c'mon now', Hubbard boomed, 'isn't that what you're always telling me?'. She shrugged, averting her eyes. It was a few more moments before the girl darted from the office. Hubbard was shaking his head and laughing very loudly. It never occurred to him that he was engaging in sexual harassment, and a few minutes later he told me he was unequivocally opposed to any such practices. (Farley, 1978:151-2)

As Ball (1987: 196-7) observes with regard to what he calls 'institutional sexism', it 'cannot simply be reduced to the wilful acts of individuals; it is structured into the daily practices of organizational life'. Thus, further, power is not simply interactional, whether reflective or unreflective, it is relational. It involves relations of dependence, domination and subordination. People engaged in interactions, exercising power reciprocally,

> do not have equal access to resources for effecting the outcome of the interaction. Resources are asymmetrically distributed in accordance with structures of domination. Despite this asymmetry, however, power relations are always reciprocal, involving some degree of autonomy and dependence in both directions (Davis, 1991: 73).

Giddens' attempt to formulate a theory of power which attends to both agency and to relations of domination and subordination is better, in my view, than Foucault's conceptualization which jettisons both the subject/agency and the idea of structure. In Giddens' work, structure and agency are 'fused', not posited as opposites. They presuppose one another. He has formulated this dialectic in a variety of ways in his various works. He writes of the need to grasp the 'double involvement' of individuals and societies (1982); that we cannot comprehend the nature of (social) institutions unless we understand how they are organized in and through individual action (1992); he writes of the 'duality of structure':

> Structure (is) the medium and outcome of the conduct it recursively organizes; the structural properties of social systems do not exist outside of action but are chronically implicated in its production and reproduction (Giddens, 1984: 374).

This, like Cain's, is a model of reflexivity. It does not construe 'ordinary mortals' as 'cultural dopes'. On the contrary, 'a realist ontology which views the world as configurations of *relationships*, some intransitive, others transitive, creates a space in which human agency can change the sites people speak from' (Cain, 1990: 137). In Giddens' formulation, sociological knowledge spirals in and out of the universe of social life, reconstructing both itself and that universe as an integral part of that process (1990: 15-16).

Thus, power is processual: structured relations of power involving domination and subordination are produced and reproduced and/or subverted, transformed and changed through the situated practices of individuals and groups of people. Power is exercised in everyday situations *simultaneously* contributing to the process of (re)constructing or deconstructing power *relations* or structures or, as Connell (1987: 108) expresses it, 'the structure of power is an object of practice as well as a condition'.[8] Sexual harassment is understood in these terms, as the situated and often mundane power practice of individuals and groups which simultaneously reconstructs or reproduces power relations or structures.

Sexual harassment is conceptualized as the exercise of power in much of the literature, but in a variety of ways. For Mackinnon (1979) it is understood as behaviours in which men utilize power in order to gain sex, a not so useful approach since it assumes that sex is the goal. For Farley (1978) and Wise and Stanley (1987) sexual harassment is the exercise of power as conceptualized above: as an end in itself. A number of authors (Kelly, 1988; Ramazanoglu, 1987) view sexual harassment as an exercise of power which constitutes violence. Here, the definition of violence 'differs from many common sense definitions' in that it includes 'any action or structure that diminishes another human being' as well as the more widely accepted forms of violence: physical assault, restraint or the obvious use of force (Ramazanoglu, 1987: 63-64).[9] In Kelly's (1988) account the idea of continuum of sexual violence is employed to explain the connections between more 'obviously' violent events like rape, and less 'obviously' violent like obscene phone calls and sexual

harassment. Whilst I am much in sympathy with this approach in that I also view many instances of sexual harassment as violence and as reproducing a structure which, in myriad ways, is violent, I regard power as the 'primary' concept for analytical purposes.

Although power is never a simple matter of 'haves' and 'have nots', a matter of whose power is institutionalized such that, by virtue of their place within the structures of domination, some people have (access to) more or fewer resources, including sanctions. As Bauman (1990: 113) expresses it, 'different people have different degrees of freedom'; this is 'the essence of social inequality'. One resource is the power to define or name (Lukes, 1974). Another, often, is wealth and/or income. Access to resources may spring from the status which individuals have within hierarchical organizations. These resources are not wholly dependent upon the autonomy of individuals. People can be viewed as 'having' or 'lacking' power within social structures which institutionalize the powers of one group more so than, or rather than those of others. The power which some people 'have' need not be abused in particular circumstances, however. Nor is it appropriate to assert that those who are structurally disempowered by the asymmetrical distribution of resources, those who 'lack' power or who are relatively powerless, do not have *any* means at their disposal to exercise control over their own and others' lives. What they lack is *institutionalized* power. One of the means by which power is institutionalized is through ideology. I discuss the institutionalized nature of masculine power and the concept of patriarchal ideology shortly.

Power, Oppression and Resistance

In conclusion, Giddens, like Foucault, refuses to adopt a simplistic 'top down' repressive model of power, but unlike Foucault he retains a focus on both agency (of 'subjects') and structure. Whereas for Foucault, history is made 'without a subject', for Giddens (and for me),

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history is made through the active involvements and struggles of human beings, and yet at the same time both forms those human beings and produces outcomes which they neither intend nor foresee (Giddens, 1982: 166).

Because he retains a focus on both power as process and (unlike Foucault) power as 'commodity', he recognizes that 'the dice are loaded' as Brittan and Maynard (1984: 223) put it. Giddens' dialectical theory therefore amounts to a theory of oppression and resistance:

> oppression can never be simply defined as though it was merely an acting out of the wishes and power of the oppressors, for it is a two-way process in which both parties are engaged in a continuous struggle to establish the terms of their existence. To be sure, at the moment, the dice appear to be loaded against a great proportion of the world's population, both women and ethnic groups, but this does not mean they are the inevitable playthings of ineluctable forces.

There are some unresolved difficulties regarding the idea of resistance. To assert that people 'could have done otherwise' or 'think otherwise', that people are not inevitably constrained either by institutionalized structures of power or by dominant ideologies, is not fully to explain *why* this is so.

In many respects, I believe it is beyond the scope of sociology fully to explain resistance. Psychoanalytic theory offers some general clues about the complex constitution of individuals as 'predisposed' both to conform *and* not to conform - to 'struggle' their way through the social process of identity formation.[10] It also offers some more particular clues about why some people rather than others might be 'predisposed to fight' rather than accommodate themselves to the oppressive exercise of power. As sociologists we can, in a sense, simply observe that resistance is a significant feature of social life, build the concept into our theorizing about power such that oppression/resistance are seen as products, in part, of structure/agency and note some of the social conditions under which peoples are empowered to resist, leaving the debates about why some individuals, more so than others, seem to be 'born kicking' to the psychologists.

Problems with Giddens

Although I find Giddens' theory of structuration valuable, it is fundamentally problematic in two major ways: first, it is an abstract 'grand theory'; second, it is devoid of any references to gender, gender relations or power relations between women and men. Purporting to be applicable to 'all the concrete processes of social life' (Giddens, 1984: xviii) the theory is not, as Davis (1991: 83) observes, connected with concrete contexts or situated practices; it is general, highly abstract and, at best, a heuristic framework. It needs to be grounded or 'anchored in our experiences' with full recognition that, although power is ubiquitous, it is 'always and everywhere *contextual*. It entails a relationship between specific actors or groups, drawing upon specific rules and resources, organized in specifically structured ways. Power cannot be analysed (in the abstract) without reference to sex, class, religion, historical period' (Davis, 1991: 83), and so on. Given the complexity and diversity of social life, one 'grand theory' purporting to 'explain all' is not what feminists need or want.

Gender and Power: Some Preliminary Observations

The relationship between gender and power is far from simple. Power is not a simple matter of 'haves' and 'have nots'; nor is gender a simple matter of 'us' and 'them'. In common sense ways and within sociology, gender, like sex, is often construed as a nominal and dichotomous scale (Morgan, 1986). In much feminist theory gender is construed in this dichotomous way: men are represented as an undifferentiated mass - the enemy - who oppress a categorically different mass - women. Sex, gender and power are conflated. Gender is perhaps better construed as a continuous and ordinal scale *and* as having *some* degree of independence from sex. The social experiences of being a woman or man in a given culture at a given time are complex and often contradictory. There are 'masculine' women and 'feminine' men within one culture and definitions of 'masculine'

and 'feminine' vary cross culturally and historically (Oakley, 1972). There are, that is, gender based divisions amongst men and amongst women. Connell (1987), for example, has usefully critiqued 'categorical' theories of gender, noting that, as gay liberation points out, the existence of a gender based hierarchy amongst men.[11] There are 'stigmatized outgroups', notably homosexual men. Connell distinguishes hegemonic masculinity (the dominating and combative 'shock troops' of patriarchy), conservative masculinities (complicit in the collective project of subordinating women but not its shock troops) and non-hegemonic and subordinated forms of masculinity (including effeminate or feminine men as well as those who are genuinely engaged in the struggle for women's and gay liberation).[12]

Gender and power cannot, therefore, easily or inevitably be conflated. To be a man is not inevitably, always to be powerful or to have limitless 'degrees of freedom'. As Connell (1987: 108) observes, in relation to straight men, 'the practice of those who hold power is constrained as well. Men are empowered in gender relations, but in specific ways that produce their own limits.' A culture which values monogamous marriage based on the idea of woman as a kind of property, for example, renders men liable to reprisals for theft, thus affecting the freedom which men have in practice to act on adulterous desires. Women as a gender do not inevitably and always lack power either. In the domestic sphere, the contestation of men's power is widespread and there are genuine reversals of power in this context: 'it is not a question of women being conceded an apparent power which can then be revoked, but of the hard relational outcomes of domestic conflicts and negotiations over years or even decades' (Connell, 1987: 111). Women can and do exercise power, however precariously, in other respects also. Madonna and Tank Girl are 'representatives of a version of femininity which stresses female heterosexual "power over" men; they are both sexual women who are definitely pulling the strings to get what they want' (Hawkins, 1992).[13] Further, gender is not an independent but an interactive variable; it cross cuts with other attributes such as age, class, ethnicity, sexuality. Genders (plural) are again the result. In some cases, the gender dimensions of an interaction or phenomenon will be far

less clear or less significant than others. When gender and, say, class interact, a *new* status may be formed which is not reducible to either class or gender (Morgan, 1986).

Viewed critically, then, gender is a descriptive (and often an overly simplistic) rather than an explanatory concept (Oldersma and Davis, 1991). It is appropriate to 'deconstruct' gender and to note its interactions with other 'variables'. However, notwithstanding the diversity of genders as they are lived and expressed, there is evidence that it is appropriate also to engage in the 'hazardous strategy of reconstruction' (Cain, 1990). In some cases, gender is the 'exaggerated' or most crucial variable; relations of class, age and ethnicity may pale into *relative* insignificance as, for example, with regards the deployment of violence against others. Gender remains a meaningful concept. Thinking about sexual harassment, the evidence for 'reconstructing gender' in the analysis of power is both 'factual' (behavioural and attitudinal) and theoretical.

Who 'In Fact' Sexually Harasses Whom?

As was clearly implied in chapter two, in the overwhelming majority of cases for which some evidence exists, men/boys harass women/girls. Lott et al provide clear evidence of this in their analysis of the genders involved as victims and perpetrators in relation to some specific offences. These are summarized in Table One. The data resulted from a random, stratified 14% sample of all staff and students at the University of Rhode Island in 1980. 1954 questionnaires were distributed. The response rate of 47.7% produced a sample of 927. The incidence statistics are low in each category of offence (6% and 26% of the sample reported sexual assault[14] on and off campus respectively) but the victim/offender statistics are startling: 95% of those with experience of assault on campus were women; in 95% of the reported cases, the perpetrators were men.

Table One: Gender and Experience of Sexual Assault

Offence Category	Women N	Women %	Men N	Men %	Total
personal experience of sexual assault on campus	52	95	3	5	55
sex of assaulter	3	5	52	95	55
personal experience of sexual assault elsewhere	211	88	28	12	239
sex of assaulter	8	3	228	97	236

Source: Bernice Lott, Mary Ellen Reilly and Dale Howard (1982) 'Sexual Assault and Harassment: A Campus Community Case Study', Signs, 8(2): 296-319.

Additionally, of the 68 reported cases of 'personal knowledge or experience of sexual intimidation', defined as 'a threat or bribe by a person in a position of authority to coerce sexual contact' (7% of sample), 93% involved a female target of intimidation and 94% of cases involved a male intimidator (Lott et al, 1982:308). Notwithstanding the difficulties referred to above regarding measuring incidence, Lott et al's data are supported by a wealth of other data on the gendered nature of such interactions.[15]

It is, therefore, meaningful to conclude that there is a significant connection between masculinity and sexual harassment and no significant connection between femininity and sexual harassment. To take the latter point first, although women do assault others, they do so only in a tiny minority of overall cases of assault. The argument that 'women do it too' is hardly supported at all and certainly not profoundly supported by the empirical data.[16] Sexual harassment, even for those, like Lott et al, who do not in principle prejudge the phenomenon as, by definition, masculine behaviour, is demonstrably an overwhelmingly masculine activity. The exercise of power through the means of sexual harassment is gendered.

Clearly this is not to assert that all men sexually harass, still less to assert some 'causal' relationship between masculinity and sexual harassment. There is a gap in the literature

about the precise nature of the connection between masculinity and the exercise of power in this way. There is next to nothing on *which* men harass. Apart from noting that men who harass may be peers, superiors or subordinates relative to the age, occupational or other status of the women concerned, there has been no empirical analysis, to my knowledge, of 'men who do' and 'men who don't' sexually harass. Such an analysis is not provided in this thesis but is clearly required, if only to add weight to what many of us know from experience: that some men of our longstanding acquaintance have consistently not exercised power in this manner. Such an analysis need not (indeed should not) be based on a simplistic (and inherently conservative) 'two kinds of men' argument, which presupposes a minority of harassers and a majority of men who are OK (Wise and Stanley, 1987). It might be that Connell's threefold distinction between hegemonic, conservative and subordinated masculinities proves useful in this regard. It may be that an empirical analysis of the concrete practices of men does not support such an analytic distinction.

Gendered Perceptions of and Attitudes Towards Sexual Harassment

I have already asserted that gender is 'the factor that most consistently predicts variation in people's identification of what constitutes sexual harassment (Thomas and Kitzinger, 1992). It is clear from reviewing the literature by men that a number of them, to greater or lesser extents, have accepted feminist accounts and definitions of sexual harassment as valid (Hearn, 1985; Rubenstein, 1981 and 1988). Connell (1987:132-4), in his account of the street as 'a definite social milieu, with particular social relations' notes that

> the street is the setting for much intimidation of women, from low level
> harassment like wolf-whistling to physical manhandling and rape. Since it
> is not always predictable when the escalation will stop, in many parts of the
> city, women rarely walk, especially after dark. The street then is a zone of
> occupation by men.

Connell's account of hegemonic and non-hegemonic forms of masculinity is useful in alerting us to the dangers of assuming that men constitute an undifferentiated mass who share in common 'a masculine' perception or attitude towards sexual harassment.

However, some men have a demonstrably 'bad attitude' towards women. Wood (1982 and 1984) has provided a valuable account of one (hegemonic) form of masculinity, noting its connections with contempt for women:

> For the boys I worked with, it was clear that learning to inhabit their form of masculinity invariably entailed, to a greater or lesser extent, learning to be sexist: being a bit of a lad and being contemptuous of women just went 'naturally' together ... (T)hey are encouraged to measure their masculinity via a woman-hating, rapacious sexuality. This pressure to be a sort of Tarzan-cum-Ripper is sedimented into the history of how to be male (or, as I prefer, hegemonically masculine). (Wood, 1982:41-2).

It is sometimes objected that the boys in Wood's study are atypical 'disruptives' who cannot be construed as representing boys more widely (Wolpe, 1988: 160). Hegemonically masculine views of women and definitions of situations are I would argue far more widespread than amongst the young men in Wood's 'sin bin'. Fewer behaviours in general are labelled sexual harassment by men (Kenig and Ryan, 1986; Powell, 1986) and, in particular, sexual teasing, looks or gestures are less likely to be seen as harassment by men (Adams et al, 1983; Collins and Blodgett, 1981).

Lott et al describe as one of their 'most striking' findings, evidence that 'women and men differ substantially in their perceptions and attitudes regarding acceptable sexually inviting behaviour and in their perception of each other as sexual objects' (Lott et al, 1982:311-2). Attitudes were assessed by analysing responses to eleven statements with which respondents were asked to indicate their degree of (dis)agreement on a five point scale. There 'was variation amongst women and men but their average responses were reliably different in every case'. Thus, although we need to be wary of transforming average differences into *categorical* differences (Connell, 1987), we can accept as valid Lott et al's conclusion that on average, 'men consider sexually related behaviour on the job and at school more natural, more to be expected, and less problematic and serious than do women ... (there is a) greater acceptance by men than women of sexual harassment' (p.312-3).

Thomas and Kitzinger (1992) argue that whilst many of the women they interviewed stressed the sheer pervasiveness of the problem, viewing it as mundane, routine or a normal feature of social interaction, 'many of the men expressed the view that such routine incidents could not be sexual harassment on account of their frequency' (p.5). Thus they argue,

> we found that the very same feature of sexual harassment - its sheer pervasiveness - is used in feminist discourse to stress the importance of acting to stop it, and in an anti-feminist discourse (here endorsed primarily by men) to discount it (p.6).

In an anti-feminist 'discourse' the 'truth' about sexual harassment is that it is rare or 'aberrant' rather than 'typical' behaviour (Herbert, 1989). In discounting the pervasiveness of the problem, the men are discounting their own involvement: it's something that a minority of *other* men do; it has no bearing on their own behaviour. This has a specific power effect: it recreates men's 'licence' to harass: it refutes feminist definitions of the situation and, thereby, invalidates both women's experiences of sexual harassment and their attempts to resist it. This I therefore read as evidence of the manner in which gendered relations of power are reproduced.

Masculine Responses to Women's Resistance: Reproducing the Social Structure

In this section, I consider the literature on how (some) men and boys have responded more collectively when women and girls have 'asserted themselves' for it is on occasions when 'women speak out' that the state of conflict between masculine hegemony and women's resistance becomes clarified. Most publicly this occurred in 1991, when Anita Hill made a courageous stand to testify against Clarence Thomas who was 'let off the hook' (Cockburn, 1991) and confirmed as a Supreme Court Justice. The social structure through which Hill was sexually harassed was daily reproduced during the hearings in several ways: first, in the discrediting of Anita Hill through 'insinuation, disbelief and laughter from the senators (which) enraged women the world over' (Coverdale Sumrall and Taylor,

1992). Secondly, there was a 'steady refusal of the press and the politicians to believe that people are made up of contradictory elements. Witnesses stoutly maintained that Thomas was "incapable" of such conduct' (Cockburn, 1991:13). He was not a monster but a principled and respected individual, therefore (because of the belief in the unitary subject) he could not have done it. Of the panels of women who were brought forward to testify that Thomas did not sexually harass them, Dworkin (1992:9) writes with irony: 'when I rob my neighbour, I want all the neighbours I did not rob to be asked to testify'. The assumption during this (and any) hearing is that there is just one 'truth', which can be established by 'impartially' hearing the 'facts'. Women's knowledge that 'ordinary' and respected men can and do sexually harass is not accepted as valid; it is *invalidated* and often through the discrediting of the women who speak their truth, as Smart (1989) and Lees (1989) have argued in relation to rape trials.[17]

Questions of who has most authority to 'establish the truth' are discussed by Jones (1985) who writes of the response to a campaign by women and girls to have an oil painting of a dismembered woman's body removed from the foyer of their school. 'Male teachers, who were overwhelmingly in positions of authority ... united to defend the painting as "art" and belittled the women's complaints'. Boys in the school responded to the girls' growing confidence by writing 'we're here to stay' and drawing erect penises on a 'Girls are Powerful' poster. Other pictures of women 'were generally covered by drawing of erect penises entering any available orifice' (Jones, 1985:28). Through this assertion of 'penis power', the socially constructed, symbolic and sexualized power of men over women, the boys effectively express their contempt for women, reassert their dominant view that women should 'put up and shut up', and so reproduce the social structure which the girls and women sought to challenge.

Ramazanoglu (1987) has discussed how, in the university, with its liberal and democratic ethic, women who challenge men's taken-for-granted 'techniques of subordination' are met with comparable, though not so obviously obnoxious, attempts to silence feminist views

through pathologizing women who express them as cranks, freaks, unprofessional, sexually deprived and man-hating. Campaigns against sexual harassment lead many men to see themselves threatened *as men*; their normal behaviour circumscribed by women's (feminist) definitions. It is hardly surprising that such campaigns are in practice transformed 'into a female assault on the rights of men' (Ramazanoglu, 1987:66), indeed how women's labelling of behaviour as sexual harassment is transformed into violence by women against men (see also Dworkin, 1992).

Who 'In Theory' Sexually Harasses Whom?

It is clear from some of the survey data presented in chapter two that some men regard themselves as victims of sexual harassment. Many researchers on the subject have operationalized the concept in a gender neutral manner, or, as Wise and Stanley (1987) put it, sexual harassment has been 'de-sexed'. I will cite here just two illustrations of case studies of men (apparently) being sexually harassed by women. Edward (Read, 1982:82) is a 30 year old executive of a car manufacturer:

> I started working here when I was 16. It was my first job working on the factory floor. After I'd been here a few days the women on the production line put me through (what I learned afterwards was an) initiation ceremony. I was literally chased down the production line by the crowd of female workers, all shouting very rude things and banging hammers ... (it) was very frightening. Then one of them took down my pants and put them on her head. They all thought it was great fun ... Afterwards they let me go, but for weeks they all whistled and shouted at me whenever I walked anywhere round the factory, just the way that men whistle at women. I was very embarrassed. I suppose when I stopped shaking I thought it wasn't too bad.

Rayner (1992) recalls an incident which occurred when he was 18 and travelling on a bus in Turkey. An older woman (mid/late thirties), sat next to him and began, in faltering English, to chat him up. She began to touch him on the arm and knee. Eventually, feigning sleep, she slid her hand under his clothes and, whilst he was 'frozen', grasped his penis. Rayner states that he was 'unnerved': 'this is a gross invasion of my personal space' he thought, 'I am being assaulted'. More or less immediately, his assaulter 'opened

her eyes, cackled with laughter and let go. (He) tried to laugh too but it may have come out as a scream'.

In both of the above incidents, the men concerned felt justifiably disconcerted, as did the male lecturers and professors discussed by Dziech and Weiner (1984) who found themselves subject to the unwanted sexual overtures of female students. As distressing as such incidents may be at the time, there are fundamental differences in the nature of the interactions and I do not, therefore, include them in my definition of sexual harassment. In the first place, as Rayner notes, although he

> realised what it must be like to be a woman groped by a strange man who won't take no for an answer ... for a man it is no threat at all ... (W)hat it never was, was physically threatening. I never felt out of control about what was happening to my body for, at the back of my mind, there lay the knowledge that I was bigger than she was, that I could throw her off ... (S)exual harassment works one way: it is something men do to women. Women only feel men up. (Rayner, 1992)

It is not Rayner's (or men's) size alone or most significantly which renders women's unwanted sexual advances insignificant or non-threatening, it is men's socially constructed and institutionalized power as men. Women's power is not institutionalized, nor is it abused with violence, anywhere near so frequently, to the degree that men's power is so abused. The likely degree of escalation (Connell, 1987:132) is therefore predictable for men. They do *not* live in a culture in which men are, alarmingly frequently, killed, sexually or otherwise violently assaulted *by women*. They have every reason to expect that they are not in real danger. 'There is no balance in the fear' (Zahavi, 1992:108).

In the cases of women students developing 'crushes' on or even seducing male staff, Dziech and Weiner argue that harassment suggests misuse of power and women students simply do not have enough power, either as students or as women, to harass. Thus, they label such behaviour 'sexual hassle' for 'ultimately, the professor has the power to control the situation'. Incidents such as those described by Edward and Rayner are 'one-off'

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incidents, they do not occur repeatedly. They do not constitute one element of a continuum of behaviours which serve repeatedly to reproduce men's powerlessness. They do not constitute part of the fabric of men's lives as men (although comparable forms of behaviour may constitute the fabric of some men's lives as *gay* men or as *Indian* men, for example, in most of which cases the aggressors are other men).

Related to this is the age variable. It is the relative *youth* of Edward and Rayner which rendered them susceptible to 'sexual hassle' not just their gender. Women are susceptible to sexual harassment well into, if not throughout, their adult lives. Such quantitative data as exists suggests that the incidence of victimisation of men decreases with age, with adulthood. Anderson et al (1990:16) report, in relation to harassment of an overtly sexual nature by adult *males*, that 'for boys, victimisation fell with age (15% of 12 year olds compared with 3% of 15 year olds, while for girls it rose from 17% of 12 year olds to 30% of 15 year olds). Edward, despite his distressing experience, rose within the hierarchy to become an executive, where his power as a man was reinforced by his occupational status and by his age. The women who subjected him to 'sexual hassle' did so as older persons and as a group. They neither had at the time, nor had access to the privileges of power which, as a man, he was to enjoy. Whereas men like Rayner can 'soon afterwards' decide 'it had all been rather a lark ... (soon to become) a gag; my Turkish Bus Tale, to be told at dinner parties and down the pub', women find such behaviour constitutes a real threat and there is much more often *shame* rather than humour in the telling of the tale, if the tale ever is told.

'De-sexing' sexual harassment *individualizes* the phenomenon. Whilst there is *some* commonality of experience at the level of individual discomfort, defining sexual harassment as something which some 'people' do to other 'people' neglects the structural context within which interactions occur and is thus *a*sociological. Sexual harassment is, by definition, in my view, the exercise of masculine power. It occurs within and reproduces structured relations of domination and subordination.

I have argued that the relationship between gender and power is not simple but we have to have some means of describing and analysing these patterns, these gendered power processes, interactions and structures. The much disputed concept of patriarchy has been employed to describe such patterns.[18]   Patriarchy is not here understood as a unidimensional ahistorical and essentialist concept but as a convenient label for describing gendered structures and exercises of power, structures in which the power of men and the subordination of women is sustained or reproduced. Thus, I prefer the phrases patriarchal social relations and patriarchal ideologies to the implied 'monolith' of patriarchy (although I use the latter as a shorthand).

I take it as read that although the power of men 'is not spread in an even blanket across every department of social life' (Connell, 1987: 109), it is institutionalized in a variety of ways in specific historical circumstances which must be identified and explained. Patriarchal social relations is as good a phrase as any to describe the institutionalized power of hegemonic masculinity and the institutionalized subordination of women. This approach, as Ramazanoglu (1989) observes, counters to some extent the charge of biological determinism, since patriarchy refers to social institutionalization rather than to 'innate' characteristics. Patriarchy is viewed as an historical product, (re)created by the situated activities of people in the course of their everyday lives.

Structures of power or hierarchical social relations are always accompanied by the development of ideas. Now the concept of ideology is yet another much disputed one, not least because it has been understood as being inextricably linked to the idea of 'false consciousness', that is, as a distorting world view which (only or simply) conceals 'real interests'. Ideology is here understood as dialectically related to material social relations and may serve both to conceal 'real interests' and to reify difference as intrinsic and natural

(Harvey, 1990). Discussing the distinctions between sociological knowledge and common sense 'knowledge', Bauman (1990: 15) highlights the way in which 'familiar things are self-explanatory; they present no problems and arouse no curiosity'. In a way they remain invisible. Questions are not asked, as people are satisfied that 'things are as they are', 'people are as they are' and 'there is precious little one can do about it'. Common sense 'knowledge' is, therefore, so imbued with ideological content that it cannot count as knowledge. Knowledge 'reveals' relations of power. Ideology mystifies, represents as natural and inevitable relations of power. Ideology conceals contradictory interests: it propagates representations of material reality which work in the interests of the dominant class.

Women do not constitute an undifferentiated class (any more than 'the working class' is an homogeneous entity) but the concept of ideology can usefully be employed to account for the ways in which general relations of domination and subordination between women and men are represented as natural and legitimate, even desirable. Patriarchal ideology conceals interests which women share in common, despite their many differences. It creates and emphasizes divisions between women, divisions between 'sluts' and 'slags' on the one hand and 'nice' women or 'good girls' on the other; it creates and emphasizes the idea that 'male sexuality ... has a vector which negates (moral) obligation ... that men are the victims of a (destructive) impulse' (Scruton, 1983), for example.

Ideology is composed of ideas (plural) not a single and unified idea. The specific content of patriarchal ideology varies historically and cross culturally in ways which must be specified as too the similarity or continuity must be explained (Ramazanoglu, 1989; Walby, 1989). The specific ideas about sexual harassment are not unitary. They vary. They may conceal real interests in a liberal manner by presenting sexual harassment as a personal and untypical, rather than a structural problem, which is best dealt with by individuals, the victim talking to the perpetrator for example, as if those individuals had equal power to define phenomena and to effect change. Alternatively, ideologies about

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sexual harassment which fail to problematize it at all, which regard it as 'innate' and/or inevitable, reflect a conservative approach. Either way, the interests of the powerful are served. Both approaches reproduce the licence to harass in the first case, free from any 'serious' intervention, in the second, free from any intervention at all. Both sorts of ideas can be discerned within patriarchal ideology about sexual harassment.

Linking the concept of patriarchy to what has already been discussed in relation to power and gender, we have to recognize that women are not completely disempowered in patriarchal relations; that women's experiences of patriarchal social relations are not wholly negative, they are contradictory; indeed, that women have investments in some aspects of patriarchy. The idea of investments and contradictions is taken from Hollway's (1984) work on women's power in heterosexual relations. Hollway uses the term investment (with a theoretical framework based on discourse analysis) as a way of avoiding a deterministic analysis of gender relations, as I see it, as a way of discussing human agency. She argues that 'the forces propelling human actions' are not reducible to biology, nor to 'ideological conditioning', nor to rational decision making. By claiming that people have investments, she means simply that there is some satisfaction or reward or pay-off, although the satisfaction may well be in contradiction with other resultant feelings. Ramazanoglu (1989) similarly begins, actually builds, her analysis of the oppression of women and of feminism on the idea of contradictions and, therefore, although more implicitly, on the idea of investments.

I have already mentioned women's power in the domestic sphere and in relation to 'dressing to kill' like Madonna. Let us throw caution to the wind and take the latter as one illustration of women's power, positive experience and investment. I feel ambivalent about 'the Madonna phenomenon' and agree with Hawkins (1992) that young women who seek to ape her but who are unprotected by her privileges face many dangers, but I do not take a 'purist' view. One of the pleasures and powers which many women, young and older, are privileged to enjoy in western culture is getting dressed up. Contradictory the experience

may be, but 'dressing to kill' (with its inherent pleasure and potential for self-gratification which can be empowering) and getting men (the dopes) to buy all your drinks and so on is a (precarious) form of the exercise of women's power within patriarchal social relations (in which women often have much less than men in the way of economic resources), as separatists implicitly acknowledge in their critiques of the privileges of heterosexual relative to lesbian women.

This, then, implies another investment which many women have, not in patriarchal social relations as such, but in men who are, after all, an important 'aspect' of patriarchy. The investment is not simply a sexual one, although this has to be recognized as an investment for many women. It is emotional also. That women love and care for their supposed oppressors (sons, fathers, brothers, friends) is a central feature of the complex and contradictory rather than uniformly oppressive system of patriarchy (Ramazanoglu, 1989: 84). Indeed some feminists have argued that conceptual space must be found for love in our theoretical notions of power (Jackson 1992) and, further, that it is the specific intertwining of power and love in gender relations which makes power gendered (Meyer, 1991).[19] Whatever the theoretical connections between love, power and gender, as feminists we do women a very great disservice if we construe women's emotional investment in men as 'false consciousness', and uniformly advocate separatism. One very obvious problem with this approach is that it neglects the many and varied ways in which women of varying classes, ethnic and religious groups, nationalities and so on, share in common with men the need to struggle against other forms of oppression which are not reducible to gender.

To be sure, all this makes women's experiences of patriarchal social relations profoundly contradictory. To acknowledge all of the above does not *weaken* a radical feminist analysis of patriarchal social relations of violence against women, and of sexuality, any more than a sophisticated Marxist analysis of late capitalism is weakened by acknowledging that an oppressive system which has dispossessed thousands of employment and shelter,

contradictorily has historically produced for masses of working people such important phenomena as leisure time and indoor toilets. It does make the business of understanding patriarchal social relations and working towards or fighting for women's liberation much more complex, however. The discovery or acknowledgement of contradictions and investments has obviously, 'proved something of a two edged sword for feminism' (Ramazanoglu, 1989: 83). On the one hand it highlights the need for feminists to be much more sensitive to the complex and contradictory experience of being a woman in patriarchal society and suggests that there are no easy answers to the questions of how women's liberation is to be achieved in practice. Such an analysis in part means transforming men so that they better suit our needs and desires, no easy task that! It also means it is far from easy to distinguish 'real' or 'legitimate' investments or interests from ideological mystification.

In another sense, though, some of the questions and answers remain as crystal clear and as simple as they were before we acknowledged the contradictory nature of women's experiences within patriarchal social relations: whether or not we dress like Madonna, whether or not we go out on the town and have men friends buy our drinks, we are not 'asking for trouble' and it is not in our interests to be sexually harassed or beaten or raped and, further, blamed or held responsible for the violence on the grounds of 'provoking' the 'natural' inclinations of men. Even recognizing contradictions and investments, we can still demand and fight for an end to physical and sexual violence against women by men, and to the social construction of sexuality in relation to masculine dominance.

Conclusion

I have found this chapter extraordinarily difficult to write. I have reviewed and discussed my way through some diverse (and some unremittingly complex and/or abstract) literatures in order to make some coherent analytical points about the substantive issue of sexual harassment. Although, for the sake of clarity, I have addressed the somewhat autonomous

literatures each in turn, I have attempted to 'weave together' the epistemological, the substantively theoretical and the substantive issues. To begin with, my focus was on the epistemological literature. From this, I deduced that although knowing is inevitably an uncertain business, feminists have no greater problems in arguing the case for 'objectivity' than any other 'scientist' or intellectual, and that, on balance, we serve our purpose (the liberation of women from oppressive realities) better by not succumbing to 'impossibilism'. On the contrary, I argued a case for adopting a realist philosophy which views relationships of gender and power as real, respectful of but not bound by the perceptions of the individuals engaged in the unselfconscious reproduction of those relationships.

Notwithstanding the remaining problematics of, first, relativism and, second, the precise and in some respects contradictory nature of the relationship between ontology and epistemology, I argued a case for taking a feminist standpoint in relation to this analysis of sexual harassment. This does not mean that in more general terms I do not see or respect the idea of 'multiple realities'. It simply means that I do not regard any and every definition of the situation (or claim to truth) as equally worthy. Nor do I accept the idea that knowledge is *only* politics (Cain, 1990: 137).

Moving on to the sociological literature on both power (abstractly conceived) and on 'everyday life', I have attempted to outline a theory of power which succumbs neither to endless deconstruction nor to the (implicit) idea that power is *only* knowledge. Power is viewed as material and profoundly linked to structures of domination and subordination. The exercise of power can empower but, in the situated and concrete practices (whether intentional or unintentional) of individuals and in the context of dominant ideologies, it disempowers or oppresses individuals and groups of people, thereby reproducing the social structure. Noting the necessity of doing some deconstructive work on gender, I argued a case for reconstructing gender as a significant variable in the analysis of sexual harassment, and, therefore, of power. The concept of patriarchal social relations and

patriarchal ideologies was introduced as a convenient means of focussing our attention on

the gendered exercise and structures of power, notwithstanding the complex and often

contradictory nature of the social relationships between women and men.

Introduction

The purpose of this and the following chapter is to describe how this research project was designed 'in principle' and conducted in practice. The account provided goes beyond mere description however, and is lengthy, first, because 'method' is not viewed as a relatively insignificant matter which can be dealt with briefly before the 'real' substance of the thesis is presented. The shape and nature of the data or knowledge is a product of the manner of its investigation: questions of 'what' is known are 'indissolubly interconnected' with questions of 'how' it came to be known (Stanley, 1990). Secondly, my knowledge of · 'how' (not) to do research has inevitably developed since 1983 when this research project was first formulated. Although it was my intention from the outset to conduct feminist and ethnographic research, my conception of both, like that of many novice researchers, was somewhat naive. In writing now what can only be described as a retrospective first person account, I am attempting not to give too coherent a gloss on my experience of research which was a 'voyage of discovery' during which 'much of the time was spent at sea' (Hammersley, 1984). Inevitably and appropriately I present a critical analysis of my research design, processes and practices in terms of what I *now* consider to be important principles for the conduct of feminist research on sexual harassment. In the first section of the chapter, I focus on methodologies, outlining what it means to describe the research as both feminist and ethnographic 'in principle'. In the second section, I begin to focus on my research design and research processes: initial decisions; 'sampling' or selecting the school and negotiating access; early days in the school; research roles.[1]

Methodologies

Methodology is not an easy term to define with precision. It has been employed in a variety of ways. In some accounts methodology has transmuted into method (Clegg, 1985;

Kelly, 1988; Herbert, 1989). In others it is 'broadly conceived' as dealing with 'the general grounds for the validity of social scientific propositions' (Bulmer, 1982) and more approximates my understanding of, or is conflated with, epistemology. Since methodology exists at the interface between methodic practice, substantive theory and epistemological underpinnings (Harvey, 1990) it cannot easily be distinguished from either method or epistemology. However, I understand method(s) to refer simply to technique(s) of data collection, interviews for instance. Methodology refers more broadly to questions of principle: how research should proceed, what its aims are, the overall conception of the research project. Methodology means thinking about research design, methods and research practices in terms of social, political and ethical considerations as well as in terms of substantive theory, epistemology and the substantive issues under consideration. It can be summarised as a series of interconnections between:

My choice of methods and methodological perspective(s) were informed primarily by the substantive issue under investigation. In chapter one I specified that the primary aim of the research was to explore the significance of sexual harassment in the everyday lives of young women; what strategies they employed to cope with it. Like Herbert (1989), I anticipated that researching the experiences and understandings of sexual harassment of

very young women was going to be a difficult issue: the issue was conceptualized as likely to constitute a component of young women's 'normal' or 'normalized' rather than 'problematized' experience. I have already argued, specifically, that the social survey can be something of a blunt instrument rather than a sufficiently sensitive research tool for exploring an 'everyday' issue of which the researched may not have explicit knowledge or consciousness. I have established a conceptual framework which understands sexual harassment as the situated and often mundane power practice of individuals and groups which simultaneously, and, *often unselfconsciously* reconstructs or reproduces patriarchal power relations or structures. 'The postulated existence of intransitive, unthought about realities requires a methodology appropriate to their discovery' (Cain, 1989: 129). It was primarily for this reason that I elected to conduct *ethnographic* feminist research. Secondly, my choice of ethnography was influenced by my definition of the research as *exploratory*.

Ethnographic Research

The term ethnography very generally refers to the detailed empirical study of small groups of people such as 'deviant' subcultures (Whyte, 1955; Willis, 1977; Campbell, 1981 and 1984), often within particular social institutions or small-scale societies such as factories (Pollert, 1981) and schools (Lacey, 1970; Ball, 1981). The specific purposes of ethnographic research varies but the general emphases are on studying social phenomena 'first hand', in their natural setting with a view to providing a detailed account of forms of social interaction and the meanings which lie behind these (Burgess, 1983; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Hammersley, 1983; Woods, 1979, 1986). Edwards and Furlong (1978, cited in Herbert, 1989: 41) describe ethnographers as researchers who quite deliberately adopt a 'catch what they can' approach. It is a long established 'style' of investigation that is also referred to as 'fieldwork', 'field research', 'qualitative method', 'case study method', and 'interpretative research' (Burgess, 1982). It is a style of research that aims to employ a variety of techniques of data collection including interviews, analysis

of personal and other documents, life histories, and observation. These are adopted and adapted according to the specific requirements and preferences of ethnographic researchers. Participant observation is often regarded as the exemplary ethnographic method but it need not be employed in ethnographic research, nor are the terms synonymous, although they are sometimes used interchangeably.[2] The great advantages of ethnography are the diversity of methods of data collection, each having particular strengths which compensate for the weaknesses of others,[3] the use of these methods in the everyday lives of the researched and the flexibility afforded the researcher.

Ethnographic research is not fully 'designed' in advance of data collection in the same way as experimental or survey research is 'designed' with reference to well-worked-out hypotheses to be tested, and to data gathering instruments purposely designed to secure information relevant to these specified hypotheses. Nevertheless, it is often designed in advance (although it is frequently ongoingly redesigned) in the sense of specifying not only the likely means of collecting data and the conceptual or theoretical framework, but also practical/pragmatic and ethical/political issues.

Thinking first about theoretical frameworks, it must be observed that although ethnographic research has some unity at the level of 'methodic practice', in that a variety of techniques are valued and deployed, research is conducted in the natural setting of the researched, and the researcher is recognized as 'the main instrument of social investigation' (Burgess, 1982), the purposes of ethnographic research vary and there is a plurality of theories and underlying implicit or explicit epistemologies. There are ethnographies (Burgess, 1982; Hammersley, 1990; Stanley, 1990). ⹀ ✶ see note overleaf I do not have the space here to do justice to the variety of ethnographic works and will simply characterise two broad approaches, defined by Harvey (1990) as 'conventional' and 'critical' ethnographies.[4]

Conventional or traditional ethnography is littered with comments about *not* 'developing vested interests', of *not* 'committing one's loyalties', lest they 'enter into observations'

* Stanley (1990b: 621) makes this exact point, 'for the single term ethnography, rather like 'sociology' itself, acts as a gloss which gives a unity, not altogether spurious, to different concerns, methods and epistemologies.

and make it 'impossible to objectify experiences for research purposes' (Vidich, 1955,

cited by Jarvie, 1969/1982). As Harvey (1990) explains, whilst aiming to be responsive to

subjects' conceptions and useful in constructing an understanding of a social setting,

participant observation/traditional ethnography has striven for 'validity', according to

conventional accounts which require 'adequate safeguards' against 'contaminating factors'

such as the 'reactive effects' of the observer's presence, and the 'distorting effects of the

observer's selective perception and interpretation'. He argues:

> It is crucial, according to the conventional wisdom, for the participant observer to maintain a balanced perspective ... The conventional approach to ethnography emphasizes detachment ... (as) crucial for an 'objective', systematic and valid analysis of a social setting ... Conventionally, the researcher-respondent relationship is hierarchically structured with the researcher directing the exchange and extracting information. The retention of control by the interviewer/researcher and the compliance of the respondent/subject is intended, conventionally, to ensure minimum contamination by the researcher, thus maintaining the validity of the research situation. (Harvey, 1990: 10-12)

In essence, critical ethnography differs from conventional ethnography in that 'it is

indifferent to "value freedom" and does not consider it necessary for the researcher to be a

neutral observer' (Harvey, 1990: 14) and in that the probing of subjects' meanings is

neither the beginning nor the end of the story. Critical ethnographers 'begin with the

structural relationships' and aim to:

> keep alert to the structural factors while probing meanings: to explore, where possible, the inconsistencies between action and words *in terms of* structural factors; to see to what extent group processes are externally mediated; to investigate how (or, I would add, if) the subjects see group norms and practices constrained by external social factors; to see how prevailing ideologies are addressed; to analyse the extent to which subversive or resistant practices transcend prevailing ideological forms; and so on. (Harvey, 1990: 13)

Although both modern conventional and critical ethnographers are 'involved' in something

of a reciprocal relationship with the researched, and 'reflexive' about the degree of

involvement, the 'digging deep' to elicit frames of reference has different political

implications in each case. The critical ethnographic interview is not 'neutral' but 'directs

attention at oppressive social structures', involves both researcher and respondent in a 'real dialogue' which informs both parties.[5] Critical social research does not simply acknowledge the 'self-reflective process that the imparting of information involves', it assumes and values the idea that 'digging deep' to reveal the, often implicit or 'intransitive' political frame of reference of the researched is 'not meant to be an oppressive hierarchical process but a liberating dialogical one' (Harvey, 1990: 12-13). In this sense, research both reveals *and engages* prevailing social structures and constitutes praxis.

Designing ethnographic research (whether of the 'conventional' or 'critical' variety) practically/ pragmatically and ethically/politically involves specifying, as far as possible: boundaries or demarcations to the field of study; how researchers are to 'orient themselves' or operate during the early days in the field; whether the research is to be conducted in an overt or covert manner; research roles (Burgess, 1982). Ethnographic methodologies do not prescribe hard and fast rules about how to proceed ethically or with political integrity but discussions of deception, honesty, neutrality, validity, accountability, degrees of detachment and involvement of the researcher are addressed in the 'conventional' and 'critical' ethnographic literatures and in comparable ways in the literature on feminist research.

Feminist Research

Debates about whether there is a distinctive feminist methodology have been conducted since the late 1970s (Eichler, 1980; Roberts, 1981; Stanley and Wise, 1979, 1983a and 1983b; Mies, 1983; Duelli Klein, 1983; Graham, 1983). Although initially many feminists, myself included, perceived a 'natural' affinity between feminist goals and principles and qualitative methods, it has long since been established to my satisfaction that this is not the case (Scott, 1985) and there is no one method which is inherently more feminist than any other (Harding, 1987; Kelly, 1990; Stanley, 1990). The same method or technique can be employed in a variety of ways which reflect different methodological

perspectives. Thus interviews can be conducted from a 'detached' and 'scientific' methodological perspective or from a methodology which values reciprocity and attempts to 'democratize' the relationship between the researcher and the researched. All methods pose particular problems of principle for feminist researchers as well as, contradictorily, contributing to 'the goal' of feminist research. But is there a single 'goal' and are there common principles which justify the use of the term feminist methodology rather than feminist methodologies?

Since I have already argued that methodology, substantive theory and epistemological underpinnings are intimately interconnected and that there are profound epistemological and substantively theoretical differences amongst feminists, it follows that there is no single feminist methodology (Ramazanoglu, 1989 and 1992). Thus, for example, the idea that feminist methodology means 'assuming a perspective in which women's experiences ... are valid in their own right' (Duelli Klein, 1983) is not shared by all feminists. As I have already argued, feminism cannot logically be subjectivist: 'the sum of personal accounts does not necessarily constitute a feminist understanding of social life' (Ramazanoglu, 1989: 52). Methodological unity is achieved for feminists neither at the level of method nor of theory. The term feminist methodology (singular) is something of a 'red herring' (Dickens, 1983) or a 'fiction' (Clegg, 1985).

However, there is some commonality. Feminist methodologies share much in common with other emancipatory or critical methodologies and are perhaps distinctive *only* in that they are based fundamentally on the belief that women are oppressed as *women* and on a commitment to ending that oppression (Kelly, 1988 and 1990) or to empowering women (Ramazanoglu, 1992; Cain, 1989; Hudson, 1989). The guiding principle of a feminist methodology is, therefore, that the issues researched should be of concern to women and in some way contribute to the goal of women's emancipation. I have already described how this project was formulated in direct response to my own experiences and my observations of other women's experiences of sexual harassment as an oppressive feature of everyday

life, and by a desire to 'do something' about this state of affairs. The research is feminist according to this broad definition, therefore: it is premised on the assumption that 'succinctly the point is to change the world, not only study it' (Stanley, 1990: 15).

Exactly how research and the concern with women's oppression and emancipation should connect remains a matter of dispute, however. Some argue that whatever the particular methods employed, the research itself should constitute feminist praxis (Lather, 1986 and 1988) in the action research tradition (Kelly, 1985; Ebbutt, 1983). Here research, support, consciousness raising and practical or material change for women go hand in hand, contrasting somewhat with the more usual (in principle) 'detachment' of the simultaneously 'involved' conventional ethnographer. Like the critical ethnographic argument that the research process should itself both reveal *and engage* oppressive social structures, in this sense, feminist research is very directly construed as being 'for women'. Others argue more pragmatically that whilst research may not itself *directly* be productive of change, it ought to be non-oppressive of women/the researched; that feminists must research with a particular kind of integrity and sense of accountability. This can mean, in relation to survey research on child sex abuse, for example, being concerned to construct questionnaires which neither presume shared meanings nor unduly distress the young people who are filling them in *and* being concerned that support is available for any one who, as a consequence of participating, needs it (Kelly, 1990).

Although not peculiar to feminist research, reflexivity, honesty and reciprocity have been identified as of particular significance. Feminist research, like critical ethnographic research, centrally involves reflexivity, defined by Cain (1990: 139) as involving the now more conventional practice of 'making the particular circumstances of the knowledge production public'. Like 'democratic research' (Norris, 1977; Macdonald and Walker, 1974, cited in Herbert, 1989) and critical ethnography, feminist research prescribes a more equal, non-hierarchical and reciprocal relationship between the researcher and researched (Oakley, 1981). This is sometimes expressed as 'locating the researcher in the same critical

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plane as the overt subject matter' (Eichler, 1985; Cook and Fonow, 1986; Harding, 1987).

Also, 'getting and staying involved' (Kelly, 1988) rather than conducting research according to what has been described as a 'hit and run' model (in which the researcher uses the researched for a specified period defined by the researcher and then disappears, satisfied, with their 'booty'/data) has been identified as an important feature of feminist methodologies, again casting the researcher, to some degree, in the role of friend/ supporter rather than stranger/outsider.

In sum, then, feminist research and ethnographic research can be regarded broadly as two (internally diverse) methodologies which 'converge' in the sense of being centrally concerned with common (and inter-related) principles: praxis, political/ethical involvement, honesty, reciprocity, accountability, reflexivity, and so on. Neither provide hard and fast rules for transforming principles into practice, however. Both recognize that the craft of doing research can be a messy business, involving both compromise and failure to 'do in practice' what 'in principle' is thought to be 'correct' or 'desirable'. My research project, defined as beginning in 1983 and coming to an end as I write this thesis, has been guided in principle by a convergence of ethnographic and feminist methodological considerations. Quite how these were dealt with in the practices and processes of 'doing' the research is the subject of the remaining sections of this chapter.

Research Design, Processes, Practices and Problems

I mentioned earlier that designing ethnographic research minimally involves making some practical or pragmatic decisions: specifying boundaries to the field of study and the methods of data collection. It also involves deciding where the research is to be conducted, how access to a research site is to be negotiated and how one orients oneself or operates during the early days of fieldwork. This section focuses on these issues. Inevitably, ethical/political problems arise at these early stages in the research process and will simultaneously be discussed.

Despite the fact that I had no primary interest in the sociology of education and schooling, the decision to conduct the research in schools was made before I submitted my proposal for consideration in April 1983. I had considered various other ways of getting to know a group of young people for the purpose of researching their perceptions and experiences of sexual harassment in everyday life: through one or more youth clubs; snowball sampling from teenage daughters and sons of friends and acquaintances; simply by attempting to 'hang out' with a group which I might be able to locate on a 'street corner' (Whyte, 1955) or in some other public space, such as a shopping precinct or city centre venue. I decided against attempting to 'sample' young people in any of these ways for a variety of pragmatic reasons: I anticipated the economic necessity of continuing to teach evening classes and could not contemplate evening youth clubs or night time 'street corners' as possible sites, therefore; I knew I would have to move to another town and could not rely on having access to friends' children; I was concerned about my own safety.[6] I elected to sample young people from schools because I considered these convenient and safe locations for getting to know young people during the day. The project was soon reformulated into a more manageable size: one school, I was advised, would be more than sufficient.

The second initial decision concerned the age of the young people. I believe that the basis for the kind of behaviour under consideration is laid quite early on. I had learned from a friend's daughter (then aged eight) that she and her friends had to have someone to 'stand guard' whilst they did handstands against the walls lest the boys turn up and either 'just' jeer at the sight of underwear, or both jeer, chase and attempt to molest. Later, I was to read about such phenomena (Herbert, 1989; Dworkin, 1986). My interest, however, was in 'young women' and I decided to sample in the twelve to sixteen age range. The pragmatic reason for this related to the choice of a school as a research site. The other reason was more 'theoretical'. The various works I had read on the processes of gender

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socialization (Sharpe, 1976; Oakley, 1972) suggested that adolescence is a crucial time for the development or confirmation of gender. In particular, these works suggested that adolescents themselves exert considerable pressure upon themselves and upon one another to conform to adult gender stereotypes. Since I was interested in relations between peers, I considered that young teenagers might both be experiencing gender in 'new' or 'transitional' ways and, importantly, be able to articulate their experiences and perceptions to a researcher.

The third decision related to the gender of the young people concerned. My original proposal was utterly vague in this respect. I did not specify that I wanted to work *only* with young women (cf Herbert, 1989) although it is clear that young women's perceptions and experiences were my primary interest. I had no specific desire or intention to work with young men. The decision to include boys in my sample was made later, partly as a result of definitional dilemmas and theoretical issues which arose during my first term of study. I have already defined sexual harassment as being a *gendered* power practice, as something which men/boys do to women/ girls. When I wrote my first working paper on the subject in November 1983, however, I was thrown into a major quandary about whether, for example, the pervasive use of terms such as 'poof' and 'queer' by both boys, girls and adults constituted sexual harassment of boys. I resolved to interview boys too, partly for this then unresolved definitional reason.[7]

Boys were included within the boundary of my research design for another reason. Although I had come to critique the idea that feminist research is 'by definition' research 'on women' as well as 'by and for women' (Stanley and Wise, 1983), I designed the project more in accordance with the principles of the conventional ethnographer, who does not *explicitly* have 'vested interests', rather than those of a feminist for whom researching women and only women is a perfectly legitimate undertaking. I presented my research interests to those who had the power to grant or deny me access to a research site in this less threatening, 'non-partisan' manner.

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The process of selecting and negotiating access to Henry James School began in February 1984 following discussions with my supervisors about the practical advantages of doing some exploratory pilot studies. To this end, I compiled a list, using the telephone directory, of co-educational secondary schools located in a neighbouring country and somewhat arbitrarily selected Henry James on the grounds that it was the only one which would require just one bus journey from my home. Since Henry James School was intended only as a site for practicing research skills, the method of selection hardly mattered.

Between June and September 1984 I was engaged in negotiating access to four other schools, all of which came under the jurisdiction of a different Education Authority. The details of these negotiations are provided in Appendix Two. Briefly, what happened was as follows. Two Headteachers referred me to the Director of Education, another forwarded my letter there. One dealt with me directly but in such a way that I had every reason to believe I should not be welcome in his school: he disapprovingly described my project as 'contentious' and was, in general, hostile. Although negotiations in specific relation to one of these schools were still ongoing, when the end of August came I became anxious that they were likely to be unsuccessful and again contacted Henry James School regarding the possibility of their being able to accommodate me in their 'field' for a full academic year. In the event this proved a wise and timely decision. In mid-September I learned that access had been denied to the school with which I had made some progress. The selection of my research site was, in large measure, the result of unsuccessful negotiations to conduct research elsewhere. However, since all four of the other potential sites had been approached because they were 'not untypical', Henry James, I decided, would do just as well. Unlike Hammersley (1984) I had no qualms about returning to the site where my exploratory fieldwork had been conducted and, fortuitously, I had detailed fieldnotes about

what I had learned there.

Retrospectively, then, I regard the process of negotiating access to Henry James School as a two-stage process. I provide details about exactly how this was done with reference to both of these periods, during neither of which was I *completely* honest about the aims of my project.[8] Given the substantive concerns of the research project, I had anticipated difficulties in gaining access to a school. Unlike Herbert (1989) who was able honestly to secure permission to conduct research on sexual harassment in a school as a result of falling into conversation at a conference with a sympathetic headteacher, I was not completely overt nor explicit about the aims of my research. I wrote to the Headmaster of Henry James School, Mr Fraser, as to other potential sponsors, requesting that I be allowed to spend a day or two conducting observational work to help me 'formulate research questions' and in general to help me prepare myself for longer term research on 'the way in which sex roles are learned and acquired'. This, not sexual harassment specifically, was the *overt* substance of the project.

I subsequently received a telephone call from the Deputy Head, Mr Tate, (in fact, as I later discovered, one of three Deputy Heads) and arranged to meet him in early March. I anticipated having to explain my interests in greater detail and, if necessary, to defend the project. I made some notes prior to the interview to assist me. These constitute part of the research design and included specifying that I was interested less in the school curriculum, teacher/pupil relationships, the part played by schools in gender socialization processes all of which had been quite extensively researched (Clarricoates, 1978; Whyld, 1983; Spender, 1982; Deem, 1978 and 1980; Delamont, 1980 and 1983; Spender and Sarah, 1980; Marland, 1983). My focus, I hoped to explain was: on the ways in which young people might exert pressure upon each other to 'conform' to the demands of masculinity/femininity (pressure to be a 'real lad' rather than a 'cissy'; pressure to be a 'good girl' rather than a 'slag'); on how gender affects patterns of communication and interaction between the sexes (in what ways do young people treat their same-sex peers the

same as, and differently from, peers of the 'opposite' sex). I noted that I expected 'enormous variation' rather than overwhelming conformity to 'stereotyped sex roles'. However, I made explicit mention of 'teasing' and antagonism between young women and young men, *implicitly* referring to sexual harassment. I was prepared to be drawn into a discussion about these particular aspects of my research interests despite my unwillingness to include the phrase sexual harassment on the written materials I produced for prospective sponsors.

Mr Tate seemed friendly and interested upon the occasion of our first meeting. I was understandably nervous. He immediately put me at my ease by saying, as he looked at my letter, 'What a fascinating subject!'. When I said I had come prepared to give him a few more details he said, 'Well, I assume ...' and launched into a lengthy monologue about 'sex role stereotyping', during the course of which I nodded, smiled or frowned as appropriate. I found that Mr Tate was well acquainted with at least some of the issues and eager to talk about *his* understanding of the general subject matter and my project. During this 'conversation' (I barely got a word in!) Mr Tate talked about family background, commenting that Brickford was 'practically untouched by twentieth century values' in relation to sex roles although, contradictorily, he mentioned the high rate of male unemployment in the area and the fact that increasing numbers of children are from families in which the sole breadwinner is their mother. He described Brickford women as 'strong' and cited, with some humour, the 'two militant women' who head the school cleaning team who had successfully called a number of strikes: 'it's down tools, girls, at the drop of a hat!'. In a sense he was on the defensive, emphasising the traditional values which the school had to 'battle against' and illustrated the point by quoting parents who ring up to say, 'my lad's not doing needlework'. He was concerned to establish that I did not assume that schools alone are responsible for sex role stereotyping but he was candid about in-school sexism. For example, he said, 'we do have some sexist teachers' and told me that he himself had been accused of setting sexist examination papers. He did not volunteer any information about how he had responded to the accusation and I did not ask.

I interjected at one point to say that my focus was on interactions amongst pupils. He agreed this was 'interesting' but did not attempt to draw me out on the subject. He continued to define the project primarily in terms of the school and to 'put me in the picture' about the school. He was aware of continued sex segregation in subjects which girls and boys studied, despite school provision for both sexes to do home economics and design technology and commented that the school had a 'significant male under-achievement problem'. He gave an example from his own second year German group where there was a complete polarization of grades: all the girls had gained higher marks than all the boys. I became convinced that this was one of the reasons why there was some interest in my project amongst the senior management team in the school. Certainly, this helped to facilitate access, which I barely had to 'negotiate' during this interview. Indeed, the focus of my project was subtly transformed during the interview. I defined it explicitly as being primarily about gender; implicitly (for I was not given an opportunity to elaborate) about sexual harassment (threatening). He defined it as being primarily about schooling in relation to achievement and stereotyping (relatively non-threatening).

The gendered dimensions of the interaction described above will come as no surprise to anyone who has thought or read about such matters in general terms (Spender, 1980b; Tannen, 1992) or in particular relation to interviewing 'the powerful' (Scott, 1984; McKee and O'Brien, 1983). I went prepared to talk, discuss, elaborate, inform, but *he* talked, elaborated and informed. He demonstrated *his* command of the issues (as he defined them). Paradoxically, however, because I was prepared to 'play the gender game' by nodding and smiling 'as appropriate' rather than interrupting him, elaborating and informing him what the research was 'really' about, access to his school was easily facilitated. The interview with Mr Tate was a success to the extent that he happily agreed that I could spend three days in the school towards the end of March, which I did. I spent some of this time interviewing Faculty Heads, attending lessons with second, third and fourth form pupils and chatting informally with young people whenever I could. Thus the

pilot study work provided me with a valuable opportunity to practice both observational and interview techniques and generally to 'get the feel' of doing research. Since it had explicitly been decided that I should conduct pilot study work in a different school to the one which would become the site of the fieldwork proper, I was able to do this without being unduly worried about making mistakes.

My second 'access' interview with Mr Tate in mid-September was short and quite boring in contrast.[9] He had been very warm on the telephone - he remembered me from the pilot study and asked how I was - and was very pleasant to me when we met but the purpose of the meeting, as he saw it, was not to 'negotiate access' nor to discuss the substance of the research, but to decide upon my starting date and how practicalities like the school timetable might affect which class I would be attached to. As far as he was concerned, access had been 'negotiated'; the project had been approved. The Head, he said, was 'very interested and supportive'. They - the senior management team - were not in the least threatened or worried. In their view, the main problem in the school was 'male underachievement' he reiterated; Brickford was again represented as a 'matriarchal society'! (The empirical data on these issues do not, in my view, support these assertions. Thus neither the school nor Brickford are untypical in these respects.) When access to another school was formally denied, I rang Mr Tate and confirmed that I would start the fieldwork at Henry James School at the beginning of October, initially for two full weeks, thereafter for two days a week for the remainder of the academic year.

Although negotiating access to this school proved exceptionally easy, in general the process was both time consuming and tortuous. In one sense, it was tedious administration work; compiling lists, drafting and redrafting letters, making telephone calls. It also required certain other skills and attributes: patience, tact, diplomacy, persistence, the ability succinctly to explain one's work. It requires one to present oneself often to more powerful others, even despite understandable nerves, in an 'acceptable' way. What counts as 'acceptable' to a feminist researcher on the one hand and to a variety of unknown

'gatekeepers' or potential sponsors on the other varies considerably, however. Clearly I did not present myself as a radical feminist. I represented myself both as a much more liberal individual and as someone with teaching experience: respectable and able to empathize with the problems faced by teachers. I felt pressured to conform to certain feminine norms: being quiet and listening, not challenging, not asserting myself 'unduly' and dressing differently. I wore a smartish skirt and jacket and 'girlie' shoes instead of my then usual jeans, denim jacket and desert boots. This may seem a trivial point but I experienced the wearing of different clothes as quite a burden. It did not feel like 'me' at all.

Although I have indicated some willingness to discuss 'teasing' and 'antagonism' between girls and boys, in general I was 'economical with the truth'. Such deception may well be considered unethical by some readers. In view of the fact that successful research projects with comparable aims have been conducted much more overtly (Herbert, 1989; Mahony, 1985) it may be considered unnecessary. Regarding the ethics of the matter, ethnographic researchers have established contradictory principles. Some argue that 'if falsehoods would be necessary to fieldwork in a particular place, it would be better to go elsewhere to avoid compromise of the value that science is a public process, honestly discussed and conducted' (Williams, 1967, cited by Jarvie, 1969/1982). This 'conventional' approach neglects to acknowledge that 'science' is a political process and that the process of negotiating access frequently involves one in hierarchies. Certainly the (prospective) researcher must be held accountable but the immediate and inevitable question is accountable to whom? Burgess (1980 and 1982) has properly raised questions both about whether, or how far, researchers have obligations to gatekeepers and about what right any individual has to grant or withhold access to a researcher who wants to conduct research with other informants.

I justify the deception primarily on the grounds that this is a logical feminist response to the necessity of negotiating access to young women for the purpose of researching a

'contentious' issue, through a hierarchy of 'gatekeepers' comprised almost exclusively of men. Honesty, where it is identified as a virtue in feminist methodologies, means honesty in one's dealings with the women/disempowered individuals who are the major focus of and participants in one's research. In view of what I had learned from my own experiences and my reading about sexual harassment, it would have been naive to assume that 'the powerful' were likely to be sympathetic to the real and specific concerns of the research project. I pragmatically assumed the absence of sympathy and, therefore, adopted a political/ethical stance on dishonesty in relation to gatekeepers. I was determined to conduct the research regardless of the *fully* informed consent of gatekeepers and I had few qualms about the necessity, as I saw it, of not telling the whole truth to 'the powerful'.

Despite locating myself as relatively powerless in relation to the various headteachers/ gatekeepers, it must be observed also that negotiating access through the most powerful individuals in a hierarchy gives researchers power in relation to 'other informants' to whom access has been granted. I was not required to present or justify my research to the staff at Henry James School. Neither they nor the young people had a formal opportunity, prior to or upon my arrival, either to find out about the research or to deny me access (cf. Herbert, 1989). On the occasion of our meeting in mid-September, Mr Tate, as I recorded in my field notes, said he would 'see the Year Tutor and the Faculty Heads to explain that I was coming'. I met with another Deputy Head, Mr Wilson, on 24th September, the week prior to my first whole week in the school. He told me that he would 'give notice to staff about my arrival in the school via the (weekly) school diary'. More particularly, Mr Wilson was solely responsible for the decision about which specific class of young people I should be 'attached to' in the first instance. Since fourth and fifth year students were 'never together except for registration' they would be difficult to get to know as a group. Therefore, it seemed sensible to sample young people from one of twelve third year classes. Form 3RL was suggested by Mr Wilson as an 'unexceptional, mixed-ability group' of thirteen/fourteen year olds.[10] I was supplied with a list of the names of the pupils and with the name of their form teacher, Mr Lever, who was not consulted in advance of this

decision. I was also supplied with a copy of the staff handbook which contained a list of the school rules. Divesting myself of 'badges that imply anti-social and aggressive attitudes[11] in accordance with Dress Rule number three, indeed, divesting myself of the denim jacket to which they were attached (Dress Rule number one),[12] I dressed in my conventional attire on the morning of 2nd October and set off to 'the field'.

Early Days in the School: more access negotiations, initial orientations and methods

Since I had conducted one of my pilot studies in Henry James School, I was not a complete stranger when I reappeared in October. However, most staff knew only that I was a researcher. Very few people knew why I was there. On my 'first' day, I met Mr Wilson in his office. He passed me on to Mr Roberts, the Senior Head of Faculty. He took me to meet Mr Lever in the hall where everyone was gathering for morning assembly. He asked whether I wanted a boy or a girl to escort me round. Not wishing to appear 'partial' or 'biased', I said since I had had a girl escort me round last time (during the pilot study) I should perhaps be escorted by a boy now. Mr Lever picked one boy from the row in the hall, introduced me as Miss Halson and the boy as Ralph. Thus through a hierarchy I was 'dumped', without explanation, on Ralph who accompanied me to all his morning lessons. At first break I noted, 'Ralph seems nonplussed. But he obviously hasn't got a clue why I'm here'. He did not question me.

I knew 'in theory' that access has continually to be negotiated throughout a period of fieldwork, that at any stage people might decline to become involved and at any stage those who are involved may withdraw their consent to participate (Burgess, 1982). I made every effort both on that first day and subsequently to explain who I was, what I was doing and that they had every right to refuse to participate. Just before afternoon registration, I asked Mr Lever if I might take a few minutes to talk to him and to the class. I introduced myself as Jacqui (not Miss) Halson. I was keen to distance myself from the role of 'teacher'. I said I was a student at the University and that I was doing research on 'how the girls and

boys get along together'. I said I would want to come to their classes and talk to them outside of class time; that anything they said to me would be in the strictest confidence; that they did not have to talk to me if they did not want to. 'Doing research' it soon transpired was not a meaningful phrase for the young people. During the first week, several of them questioned me further. I explained that I hoped to find out what they thought and did so that I could 'write a book' about them. This they understood. During the second week, in the girls' changing room at the beginning of a games lesson, I overheard a girl I did not know ask another girl if I was somebody's mother, to which one of the girls from 3RL replied, apparently with pride: 'No. She's writing a book about us!'.

I spent my first two weeks attending classes accompanied by a variety of different pupils from form 3RL, both girls and boys. I availed myself of opportunities to explain my presence to staff and to request their co-operation. For example, during the first few minutes of Ralph's English lesson on the first day, whilst the pupils were seating themselves, I introduced myself to Miss Jay and was met with a blank face. Whether this was because she knew nothing about me or because she knew and had been hoping that I would not 'bother' her, I did not know. She said the lesson would be boring, which, together with her expression, I understood to mean 'please go away'. I was sensitive to the fact that Miss Jay was a young and inexperienced teacher (I later learned that she was at the beginning of her probationary year) and I really empathised with her. I tried to reassure her that I was interested in 'how the kids relate to one another rather than the content of the lesson'. She consented to my sitting 'unobtrusively' at the back of the class but I could sense her anxiety about my presence. Other teachers invited me into their classes half way through my explanatory introduction without any discernible anxiety. Others initiated conversations with me over lunch and in the staff room where, during the first few weeks, I spent most of my break time. I stuck to the same basic account of the nature of my research although the wording varied.

I made very few notes about what happened in the various classes I attended to begin with

since I was more concerned with attempting to find out who was whom. I had 'sampled' a group of young people 'in the abstract'. I did not yet know them. 3RL, it transpired, were together as a group only for English, History, Geography and Social and Religious Education. Thus, during the first two days, I was confused about the immense variety of young people I saw in various other classes and made notes like 'Who is Dawn? Why is she here?'. Quickly realizing that the timetable and setting system was more complicated than I had imagined or been led to believe, I obtained copies of it and ploughed through the endless third form lists and eventually managed to compile lists of which pupils were in which sets for Maths, Physics and so on. This meant I could sort out where specific members of form 3RL could be located at any one time, and helped my classroom observations since it meant I could note the names of pupils under observation instead of writing 'the boy on my left' or 'girl 9'. I made room plans of where people were sitting, what their names were and what they looked like so that I could begin to distinguish 3RL members from other pupils in the various lessons.

I conducted no 'formal' (tape recorded) interviews with students until the beginning of November, contenting myself initially with ad hoc conversations with as many of the sample as I could until I felt I knew each of their names and a little about them. At the beginning of the second week I felt I had to start spending more 'interview time' with them if I was to get to know them better. At the end of an English lesson, I asked a few of the girls if they would be free to 'have a chat' during the dinner hour and arranged to meet them in the Youth Area. I had no specific ideas about what to ask or attempt to discuss. I just wanted to get to know them better. Since I was having some difficulty working out who was friends with whom I decided to solicit their help on this matter and 'just see what happens'. I asked them each to draw me a diagram about who their friends were. I demonstrated the kind of diagram I had in mind: self at the centre of the page, good friends in an immediate circle, other friends in the next circle. They were relaxed and we all conversed during the task in a naturalistic way, about hobbies, for example, because one of the girls had a passion for horse riding.

When they had finished I said, 'that's interesting. There aren't any boys in your diagrams. Is that because you've forgotten them or ...'. Fiona interrupted to say 'I walk home with some of them sometimes but they're not important friends'. She, together with two of the others talked about the boys being 'immature' and 'still rushing about playing football'. Meanwhile, Jenny added the names of nearly all the boys in the class to her diagram. Some lighthearted teasing and laughter followed. This was my first group interview. Whereas in Carrie Herbert's first interviews, sexism, sexual harassment and feminism were all explicitly raised by the researcher for the young women to respond to with their views, for the purposes of (de)selecting them as participants in the research (Herbert, 1989), in my first interviews gender issues - here, gender segregated friendship groups - were raised explicitly as a result of what they said and, in this case, did. This sort of conversation represented the mundane beginnings both of getting to know the young women and encouraging them to talk about the significance of gender in their lives.

Although I directed attention to relationships of gender, as in the illustration above, my initial orientation more resembled that of the conventional ethnographer in that I aimed to immerse myself within the culture of the school to 'catch what I could' by means of informal conversations, documentary data analysis and observations in the classroom, corridors, staff room and playground. I attempted to 'fit in', find my way about and, along the way, to establish friendly relationships with the various members of 3RL and with the staff I came into contact with. I attempted *both* to 'be myself' as far as possible *and* to appear 'impartial' and 'non-threatening' to *all* concerned. I adopted an overt role as researcher but I was not completely candid, neither about my specific interest in sexual harassment nor about, in more general terms, whose 'side I was on', about which I shall have more to say shortly.

Although I appeared to be calm and in control (Mr Tate remarked during my second week that I 'always looked very business like' whenever he saw me), I felt that I was 'in a fog' and I was profoundly ill at ease. I experienced, like Hammersley (1984), 'a rapidly

mounting sense of my own incompetence' as illustrated by my fieldwork notebook entries on October 5th and 7th:

> I feel estranged from the teachers. No-one's hostile but I don't feel 'at home' in the staff room. I don't have much in common with any of the staff ... I don't know what sort of questions I should be asking the kids or how to generate 'useful' discussions ... I don't feel as though I'm any good at this fieldwork lark. At least it can't get any worse.

Although my sense of incompetence resulted from my inexperience of specific tasks like interviewing young people, clearly, from the beginning, I experienced the negotiation of the more general role(s) of ethnographer or participant observer as inherently difficult and discomforting.

Research Roles and Relationships

A great deal has been written on the diverse roles which ethnographic researchers play, the role conflicts they experience whilst they are 'in the field' and the resulting anxieties and 'crises of integrity' (Burgess, 1982; Jarvie, 1969/1982). As in everyday life, roles are related both to personal characteristics (such as gender, class, age, dress, political views) and are relational (teacher/ student, mother/daughter). In ethnographic research, where the principal method of data collection is participant observation, there is a fundamental requirement to be *both* a 'detached' stranger/outsider and an 'involved' friend/insider. Thus, the participant observer is inherently caught in an ethical dilemma because no-one can play either role simultaneously with integrity (Jarvie, 1969/1982). Such a dilemma 'confronts every participant observer and indicates the complexity of the task that is involved in taking field roles in order to gather data' (Burgess, 1982). The dilemma also creates stress for the researcher. In hierarchical institutions, fear of being rejected by opposing groups, for example on the grounds of spying, is a common experience (Frankenberg, 1963/1982; Pollert, 1981). An important component of ethnographic research is to evaluate the roles and relationships and the influence that researchers' role

performance may have on the data that they collect (Burgess, 1982: 46).

Given my consciousness of the profoundly hierarchical institution in which I was working, I was uncertain about how best to present myself, how to cope and how to cope with integrity. There were several inter-related dimensions to the role conflict. First, there was the problem of appearing to be reasonably conformist, responsible and 'adult' in my dealings with staff within a culture imbued with values which conflicted my own (Gans, 1968/1982). Second, there was the conflict between being one of the adults (like a teacher) and being 'on the side of the kids'[13] for the purposes of securing their trust. In my dealings with the senior management team and with many other members of staff I felt I was attempting to present myself as mature, respectable and conformist in relation to the evidently conservative/liberal values of the school culture whilst in relation to the young people I wanted to be *unlike* a teacher or a parent so they would begin to see me as someone to whom they could 'say anything'.[14]

Hammersley (1984) has written about the difficulties he had in feeling 'adult' in relation to teachers. Despite his political views, he felt 'deferential' in part because of his own experience of being a secondary school pupil not that many years prior to his period of fieldwork. I, on the contrary, felt echoes of my 'anti-establishment' high school days on occasions. Having presented myself as a 'responsible adult' with Mr Tate, for example, I unintentionally 'blew my cover' a little by responding spontaneously and 'inappropriately' during the second week whilst he told me about the girls smoking in the toilet: 'they make such a mess - fag ends and packets all over the place'. When he said, 'they set fire to the toilet rolls too', I could not help laughing. Although he was not being overly serious, he was clearly of the opinion that this was not a laughing matter so I had to cover myself with a somewhat lame, 'I don't know why I'm laughing. I suppose it's reminiscent of my own school days'. Although I hoped to imply that I had 'grown out of' such 'delinquent' behaviour, it was clear that I was on the 'wrong side' in my views about rules and non-conformist behaviour of this kind, since I much more empathised with the young women who 'needed' somewhere to smoke, even though I appreciated that someone had to clean

up the mess.

The most obvious and everyday role conflict occurred in my dealings with subject teachers and pupils. I needed to secure the 'approval' of staff, since they could so easily refuse me access to their classes and/or refuse me permission to conduct interviews with pupils during class time which was my intention. But I needed also to secure the trust and confidence of the young people. The latter was not facilitated by some of the teachers who presented me or related to me as 'one of them'. For example, one of the girls told me that Mr Lever had said to the class that I was 'looking out for bad behaviour'. Another teacher 'compromised' my position by coming to stand by me (I had just entered the classroom) while she spent the first ten minutes of her lesson berating the pupils for their 'lack of consideration' and 'selfishness'. I felt she was tacitly assuming that she and I were in agreement over the issues. In any case, there was I standing beside a teacher, not wanting to be regarded as an authority figure. The problem was compounded by the fact that, like some of the kids, I had trouble keeping my face straight and had to repress the urge to giggle, again as much a hangover from my own 'delinquent' past, I suspect, as due to nervousness on the occasion.

My 'adult' role changed during the course of the research period. As I got to know the kids better, I spent more time with them and became less concerned about what 'the hierarchy' thought. This was reflected in the clothes I wore: I began fieldwork travelling on a bus, wearing skirts and other conformist feminine attire and finished it travelling on my motorbike, wearing cord trousers and a denim jacket which, out of courtesy to the school regulations, I stuffed in my helmet as I entered the premises. Three of the girls asked for a ride on the bike on one occasion in May. I was vaguely anxious that I would be 'caught' and reprimanded but I duly obliged by taking them once each around the school playground. I was similarly anxious about the (very few) times one of 'my' girls disappeared during an interview on the pretext of going to the toilet, clutching a cigarette which she had cadged from me. On this score we were never found out but there was one

occasion, towards the end of the year, when I was 'caught' by a Faculty Head heading for the dining hall with some pupils seven minutes before the dinner bell. We had had a lengthy group interview which had come to a natural close so we went off for lunch. The Faculty Head told me off in the corridor in front of the kids for breaking the rules about not 'wandering about' during lesson time and for 'failing to set a proper example'. I apologised of course and said it would not happen again but I did not experience the incident as humiliating. On the contrary, it served to underline the idea that I was by then 'one of the kids': surreptitious non-conformity to seemingly 'petty' rules and regulations was something we shared in common. We all had a rueful giggle about it afterwards.

For the most part, however, I 'managed' the role of conformist adult apparently without too much difficulty. The 'hidden' cost was my ongoing sense of estrangement from the staff 'en masse'. Although as the fieldwork progressed I established warm and friendly relationships with some members of staff, notably with two lively women gym teachers who were a bit older than myself, I continued to feel ill at ease in the staff room. I felt the major reason for this was my personal inclination to non-conformity compared with their *apparent* conformity and the broad political differences between us. In general I felt like a displaced 'outsider'. For example, the miners' strike was ongoing at that time. This issue cropped up in conversation just once in my presence in the staff room, because of an item in a teaching union newspaper suggesting that schools should raise money for the miners. The suggestion was met with horror. One teacher said, 'I make sure I walk straight past them when they're collecting in the street'. Another said, 'Bloody cheek! Who do they think they are?'. No-one spoke up either in favour of the strike or of the collections.

Now, I had no specific desire to become involved in 'heavy' political debates with staff but the facts that, first, such discussions rarely took place and, second, when they did, the overwhelming opinion was conservative, served as a reminder of the distance between myself and the staff, my sense of 'not fitting in' despite my best efforts: I was not amongst peers (Scott, 1984), I was discomforted by the need, as I then saw it, constantly to be

careful about what I said. Having had a great deal more experience at being something of an 'outsider' working in an institution imbued with conservative and liberal, individualist and masculinist values, I now consider my self-imposed silence to have been unnecessary. As Jarvie (1969/1982) argues, argument, dispute, criticism and censure play an important role in normal relations between human beings. Failure honestly to comment in situations where values clearly clash can be construed at best as patronising. It can also be construed as a failure to act with political and ethical integrity as a feminist researcher: I did not challenge or in any way intervene when, for example, a male member of staff made lewd and obviously discomforting comments to a female colleague about peeling and 'sucking' a banana either. Playing the role of the 'detached' observer, at the time I felt I had no place speaking up. However, the stress of feeling oneself an 'outsider' in a culture where men can make such remarks and 'get away with it' remains, regardless of whether one speaks or remains silent.

I did not invariably 'sit on the sidelines' in a participant-as-observer role, however. I more fully participated in the everyday life of the school as both a 'teacher' and as a 'pupil'. Although I refused to go along with a suggestion by a Faculty Head that I do some supply teaching, there was one occasion when a teacher failed to turn up to a Social and Religious Education class and I was asked to remain 'in charge' of 3RL. Having established myself as 'not a teacher', I was completely unable to control their noise although, fortuitously, they were otherwise well behaved. I was pleased and proud to be invited to join the small team of teachers who were accompanying a coach load of third years, including some of my own sample, to a seaside resort for the weekend. On the other hand, there were occasions when, in class, I joined in with what the pupils were doing. In March, for example, Carol took me to her Art class. 'I've brought a friend for you' she said by way of introduction to her teacher, whom I did not know. 'She means me', I said, a bit sheepishly, 'may I join the class?' He grinned. 'What a very good idea! It'll be a great pleasure!', he said. Apart from this exchange and a seating plan, my notes record only that 'I had a wonderful time in this class. I painted a picture!'.

Conclusion

Given the constraints of space, I have not been able to give a full account of every aspect of the nine-month period of fieldwork. My aim has been to convey a sense of how I 'oriented myself' as an ethnographer through the selection of illustrative examples relating to roles and relationships, how access was negotiated and so on. It is clear that in common with many ethnographers, I used a variety of data collection techniques; including classroom observations, observations elsewhere in the school and unstructured interviews with staff and students. I derived both qualitative and quantitative data from examining school documents: the prospectus, staff handbook, computer printouts on subject and ability sets and on examination performance. I also interviewed all seven members of the school's senior management team.[15]

One of my major conclusions about the processes of doing research is that the need to *focus* is paramount: my project remained too broad in scope. I spent hours of the research period engaged in collecting data which were not of *central* importance to my interest in sexual harassment. In part this was an almost inevitable result of having gone along with my sponsors' definitions of what the research was about: gendered patterns of achievement and option 'choices' made by girls and boys, for example. I now consider that had I been a more experienced and confident researcher, I would have made 'rather fewer curriculum analyses of girls studying physics and boys parentcraft' (Jones and Mahony, 1989: xv).

Given the variety of methods employed, the length of the period of fieldwork and the 'catch what you can' approach of the conventional ethnographer which I adopted throughout the period of fieldwork, I left the field with a veritable mass of data, only a fraction of which appears in this thesis. As Harvey points out,

> a major problem for ethnographers is the sorting, coding and organizing of
> ethnographic material, as ethnographic research leads to the collection of an
> enormous amount of (material). The production of a finished ethnographic

report requires ... a selection from the empirical data for illustrative purposes. (Harvey, 1990: 13).

The data were analysed at (infrequent) intervals during the years which followed the completion of the fieldwork. Some interviews were transcribed in full, others were partially transcribed. In both cases, a process of *selection* of 'relevant' data occurred as is inevitable in ethnographic research. I adopted a similar approach with my three fieldwork notebooks, each of which I photocopied in their entirety. I read the data through chronologically and

segmented it into different themes with items carefully sourced and cross-referenced ... a process sometimes referred to as *pile building* because (ethnographers) literally cut up their material and arrange it, according to themes, in piles on the floor. (Harvey, 1990: 13)

I ended up not only with too many piles later to be transferred into files, but also with piles and files which were enormous. In the process of drafting the outline of the thesis, I progressively eliminated some of the themes, not only those to which I have just referred, but also: physical education and gender; interaction in the classroom; romantic love and relationships; single sex and mixed sex friendships; masculinities.

Selection for the purposes of discussing methods and research practices has proved an inevitability also. Since interviews with young women proved to be by far the most important means of collecting data on sexual harassment, I have selected *out* of this account a detailed discussion of how classroom observations were conducted and recorded and how interviews with subject teachers were conducted. I have been primarily concerned in this chapter to highlight, first, how my roles in the school varied along a continuum of 'detached' observer to much more fully involved, though never 'complete' participant, and second, how my relationships with the young people changed over time. My role altered in significant ways from being an 'outsider'/'stranger' who was uncertain even about how to start a discussion, to being something of an 'insider', an involved 'friend'. The manner in which this was achieved is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Interviewing Young Women: Feminist Research Practices, Validity and Ethical and Political Integrity

Introduction

It was primarily during interview time that relationships between myself and a group of young women developed and were consolidated as we talked in depth, at length and over a period of months during which everyday interactions, including observation in selected classes, continued. In this chapter, I first outline the practical aspects of interviewing, my sampling strategies and introduce the young women. I then discuss my style of interviewing and the nature of the relationships which developed. Finally, I focus on the specific issue of talking about sexual harassment (and sex) and address issues of validity, reciprocity and ethical integrity. Throughout this final section, I highlight the tensions which I experienced in being both an ethnographic and a feminist researcher and conclude with some critical remarks about the extent to which feminist researchers can and 'should' be 'interventionist'.

Interviewing Young People: Some Practicalities

Having had several informal and inevitably short conversations with various girls in between lessons, including during lunch hours, in November I secured the permission of the Senior Deputy Head to interview students during lesson time if I first obtained the consent of the class teacher concerned. Interviews thereafter lasted thirty or eighty minutes (the length of a single or double period respectively). Initially, I approached teachers personally and verbally secured their permission but this proved difficult and time-consuming in many cases because the teachers were located all over the school. Thus I designed and, from January onwards, began to issue interviewees with 'consent notes' to be signed by subject teachers to release them from specified classes on specified days. For

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the most part this system worked efficiently. On just a few occasions, young people turned up for their interview without a signed consent note. Interviews took place in a variety of locations: the empty dining hall, the drama room separated off from the dining area by means of a heavy curtain, the TV room, empty classrooms, outside on the grass when the weather was fine, less often in the Youth Area, the school foyer and the girls' changing room.

Forty-five tape recorded interviews with young people were conducted, the vast majority from December to July. The young women had seemed comfortable talking informally in small friendship groups and when I began to request interviews with individual girls, a number of them asked whether their friend(s) could come too. They were nervous of one-to-one interviews. A great deal has been written about women interviewing women. Oakley (1981) and Finch (1984) have produced valuable accounts of some of the principles and practices but in stressing the features which they shared in common with their women interviewees they underplay the extent to which the interview is still a power relationship. I considered the small group interview a good way of attempting to renegotiate the imbalance of power within the research relationship which inevitably resulted from me being some twelve years their senior as well as the researcher. I happily consented to this arrangement when they suggested it and 'new' interviewees happily consented when I suggested it thereafter. For the most part this method worked extremely well. Since they were in self-selected friendship pairs or groups they were able both to feel empowered by having their friend(s) around and to be candid, within obvious limits. That is, I was aware that a minority of young people rarely talked at all in the small groups. I was also aware of occasions when the talkative ones were anxious about saying what they thought. Not talking candidly can be a feature of *all* interviews and since many similarities and differences of experience and opinion *were* shared and discussed, the advantages of group interviews, I felt, outweighed the disadvantages, including the disadvantages which arise at the transcribing stage.[1]

On only five occasions did I interview young people alone. The first two of these (one with a girl, another with a boy) occurred because the person they were supposed to be interviewed with did not turn up and we carried on regardless. Both interviews were difficult. The young people concerned were clearly uncomfortable and despite my best efforts to put them at ease, the occasions turned into stilted question and monosyllabic answer sessions. The other three one-to-one interviews went far better, not least because they were reciprocally arranged as such beforehand and because a good relationship with the young people concerned had been established prior to the interview. Of the forty paired/group interviews, just ten were conducted with boys and thirty-one with girls. Five of the ten interviews with boys took place after the Easter vacation during which I had done some adding up and 'noticed' my bias for spending interview time with young women. Four interviews were mixed, the first of these at the request of two girls, in March. Since it worked well enough, I was happy to accommodate subsequent requests for interviews 'with the lads'.

Sampling

In all, I interviewed nineteen girls. They are listed overleaf, rank ordered in terms of the number of times they took part in group interviews (Table 2). As is perhaps clear already, the process of selecting people for one or more interviews constituted further sampling, of the non-probability variety, characteristic of field research, a major facet of which is the collection of data from particular informants in depth (Burgess, 1982). In selecting form 3RL, I had an 'abstract' or 'school sample' of thirteen young women,[2] all of whom I interviewed at least once. As I have already indicated, I met or came across quite a large number of other young women as I attended classes and otherwise immersed myself in the everyday life of the school: in the youth area, classrooms, corridors, the playground and so on. Three of these (Mandy, Jill and Janet) became 'key informants', major participants or, as I quickly came to think of them, 'my' girls. Three other girls (Debra, Chris and Belinda) were interviewed once or twice because they were friends of and were invited

by girls from 3RL. The first eleven of the girls on the list can appropriately be described as major participants.

Table 2: List of Young Women Participating in the Research

Name	No. times interviewed	3RL member?
Mandy	10	X
Jill	9	X
Janet	7	X
Liz	7	√
Tracy	7	√
Lindsey	6	√
Fiona	6	√
Linda	5	√
Lynn	4	√
Carol	4	√
Wendy	3	√
Lorna	3	√
Ann	2	√
Pauline	2	√
Jenny	2	√
Vicky	2	√
Debra	2	X
Chris	1	X
Belinda	1	X

It is appropriate to reflect briefly on and make public how my major participants were selected. Burgess (1982) identifies several non-probability sampling strategies which are commonly employed in field research. I used a combination of 'accidental/opportunistic' and 'opportunistic/judgement' sampling. The former description is employed to suggest both that my initial sampling 'strategy' followed no strict logical plan and to allow for the idea that my sampling was as much a product of who wanted to avail themselves of opportunities to talk to me as it was to do with my own choices and selections. Two of the girls in 3RL - Fiona and Carol - took a particular interest in my presence from the start. They wanted to talk with me. They asked questions, showed me around and invited me to accompany them to their lessons. They were thus 'accidentally' selected. During early tape recorded interviews they were comfortable about talking and therefore remained in the sample.

In contrast, Fiona's 'best friend' Ann was 'backward in coming forward' both in the sense of seeming to shy away from me during the first few weeks of fieldwork and in that on the two occasions she was included in a group interview, she was relatively uncommunicative. She would answer direct questions briefly but did not comfortably participate in the general conversation. Since I was both concerned not to coerce the participation of anyone and recognised that no matter how skilled the interviewer, some individuals are of less value to the research because they are either unable or unwilling to express themselves (Whyte, 1960/1982), Ann did not become a 'key informant', nor did Lorna who was similarly quiet during group interviews. Vicky and Pauline were 'accidentally' *not* selected as *major* participants for no better reason than I seemed never to see them.[3] They were happy to talk during their two interviews, however, and data from these interviews are included in the thesis.

Judgement sampling essentially means that the selection of major participants is informed by the researcher's sense of the importance of more or less well specified criteria and is thus theoretically directed (Denzin, 1970). Since I was (and am) convinced that sexual harassment affects women of varying 'types', my basic criterion was difference or diversity. Whilst I cannot claim to have found a representative sample of young white women, I was keen to work with as heterogeneous a group as possible. Intuitively, rather than with a predefined list, I sampled with reference to the following differences: pro/anti-school; bright/not so bright; older/younger; (un)conventionally feminine. With respect to the latter, my sample comprised girls whose overt presentations of self varied along various continua. Some were aggressive 'tomboys';others were unassertive or shy 'wallflowers'; some were 'rough', others 'respectable'; some were sexually active, others inexperienced. Whilst none wore particularly unconventional clothes or hairstyles, some were more conventional or 'modest' than others in this respect.[4]

A simplified friendship/interview group 'map' of my sample of young women (Figure 3) is provided overleaf. Essentially, four groups of girls can be identified. Groups one and two

are clearly defined both as friendship and interview groups. They represent different ends of the continuum of some of the characteristics identified above. Mandy, Jill and Janet were streetwise extroverts. Mandy struck me as 'interesting' when I first saw her at the start of a games lesson. She walked all the way to the pitch with her hockey stick deliberately lodged, phallus like, between her upper thighs. Her first words into my tape recorder were, 'Hello! My name's Mandy. I've got a really sexy body!'. Mandy was candid, even before I asked any questions, about her 'sex life'. She was aggressive both verbally and physically and was widely regarded as 'rough' rather than 'respectable', although she came from a relatively better off home.[5]

Figure Three: Interview Groups
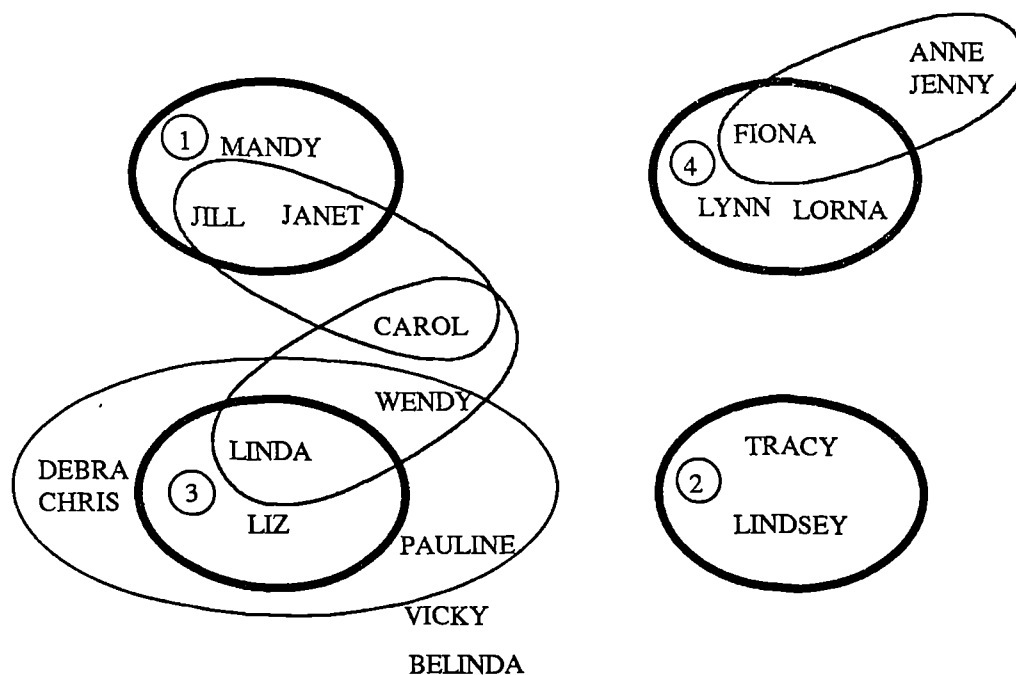
Jill was a fast talking and witty young woman. Together with Janet she assertively joined in a 'getting to know you' conversation I was having with Tracy and Lindsey and invited me to her Home Economics class where she had Janet and myself 'in stitches' with her jokes about the mess they were making of their scones. Jill was less aggressive than Mandy, although I observed both of them hitting a smaller boy, about which they were

unashamed: 'he asked for it'. 'Unconventional' with regards femininity in respect of violent behaviour, Mandy and Jill were *heterosexually active*. Janet, the third in the friendship triangle, was also unconventionally feminine but much more of a 'tomboy' in dress and demeanour. She too had a reputation for toughness. My first sighting of Janet was during a fracas with a boy: she had him pinned against a wall outside a classroom and was punching him hard whilst he cowered. The girls in group one were not-so-bright academically, bored-with-school, non-conformist pupils who were 'lippy' with teachers. They aspired to be an actress (Mandy) and to 'work with animals' (Jill and Janet).

Tracy and Lindsey (interview group two) were 'younger', less sophisticated and much more conventionally feminine girls. Both were shy with me to begin with. Inclined to be quietly spoken, they became much more animated, relaxed and 'louder' as our interviews progressed. In their everyday lives, Tracy in particular was timid; neither was aggressive physically. They were inseparable in and out of school. They had a habit of following boys about, keeping their distance, longing, unassertively, for attention. They both hated their clothes which they defined as boring and old-fashioned, and they both hated Mandy whom they defined as a slag and a bully. Neither was especially bright academically but they were conformist pupils and 'respectable' girls who aspired to work in a shop (Lindsey) and to work with children or in a hospital (Tracy).

Groups three and four are less clearly defined as interview groups because the friendship allegiances were more fluid than fixed. Some girls (Carol and Wendy in particular) remained on the boundaries of two or three more established friendship groups. However, interview group three had as its 'backbone' Linda and Liz who were good friends. They were in the middle range of abilities, found school boring and were sometimes reprimanded by teachers because, as their friend Debra explained, 'we just sit there talkin' in the lesson'. Both aspired to traditionally feminine occupations ('helping other people' and hairdressing respectively). They were 'older', streetwise, assertive individuals and both were heterosexually active but they were much more concerned about their 'reputations' and

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were more cautious about talking than Mandy and Jill. Both treated the boys in their class with a mixture of 'maternal' loyalty/affection/concern and with disinterest and neither had a reputation for being particularly 'troublesome', 'rough' or tough. Both came from relatively poor homes.

Group four was more diverse, except in that all these girls had relatively well off backgrounds. Fiona was the major interviewee. Both Fiona and Lynn were assertive, articulate, academically bright and well motivated, conformist pupils. But where Lynn was giggly and flirtatious, Fiona, like Nicola and Ann, had a much more 'restrained' and platonic manner of relating to the boys in the class, although both Fiona and Lynn displayed caring, maternal qualities in relation to the boys. All the girls in this group were conventionally feminine in that they were both physically and verbally unaggressive. They aspired to white collar careers in banking (Fiona), secretarial work (Lynn), and teaching physical education (Jenny).

Conversational Interviews

Given the diverse characteristics of the major participants, the interviews varied in terms of content. For example, I had lengthier conversations with Fiona and Jenny about post-school education because they were interested in such matters, and no such conversations with Mandy and Jill, both of whom planned to leave formal education at the earliest opportunity. Mandy and Jill talked much more about sex, contraception and pregnancy and much less about sexual harassment, the reverse being the case in all the other interviews. In this respect, therefore, the interviews must be regarded as non-comparable or 'inconsistent' and, therefore, unreliable by positivist standards. In line with the well established critiques of the greater reliability of the structured interview, I would argue that high reliability is no guarantee of validity (Bailey, 1982; Hughes, 1976), a point to which I will return shortly in direct relation to interview data on sexual harassment. First, some more general points about interviewing are addressed: purpose, preparation,

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control, flexibility, confidentiality and trust.

My interviewing style was informal or conversational. Together with the young women, interview situations in which they talked naturally with each other as well as responding to my questions were created. This technique conforms to what is often described as 'unstructured' interviewing which is something of a misnomer since, as Burgess (1982) notes, although it appears to be without structure, the unstructured interview is both flexible and controlled. It is 'conversation with a purpose' (Webb, 1938, cited in Burgess, 1982), the purpose being to

> keep the informant relating experiences and attitudes that are relevant to the
> research problem and (to) encourage the informant to discuss these
> experiences naturally and freely. (Burgess, 1982: 107)

I prepared for many interviews by jotting down, in a spiral bound notebook, a short list of areas I wanted to cover during the interview. These lists, where I used them, were intended simply as an aid to my memory but they were a means of controlling or directing the discussions in a very flexible manner. I did not stick rigidly to the lists. When the young women introduced other issues I went along with the flow of their conversation and refrained from always imposing my own agenda. However, I glanced at my lists during the course of interviews on occasions when one 'topic' seemed to have been exhausted or when the discussion seemed to have gone off at length on a complete tangent, as, for example, when Tracy and Lindsey's story about having found an injured bird on the way to school provoked a lengthy conversation about all the animals they had ever owned or desired. Sometimes the young women consulted the list themselves (I made no secret of it) and *they* moved the conversation on. Control of the conversation was thus shared so that interviews were as much like ordinary conversations as possible. The general atmosphere of informality was maintained in other ways too: we passed mints round; we got up to look out of the window if some noise distracted us; we made daisy chains while we were talking outside on the grass during the summer.

I listened carefully during interviews and made mental notes of things that had been raised but not explored so that I could re-introduce them at a suitable moment. I listened to the tapes as soon after the interview as possible and made notes on large index cards so that I could 'follow up' subsequently, aiming to maintain some control over interview content, to structure the apparently 'unstructured'. Towards the end of the fieldwork period, however, some interviews required no special preparation and could begin in the most informal manner: 'Right then! Tell me the latest!' I said to Fiona in July. No more specific a question was required because we both knew we wanted to carry on talking about her three-week-old relationship with John. Indeed, Fiona had requested the interview alone with me for this purpose.

Informality, flexibility and shared control over what happened in interviews were key features of my feminist ethnographic research practice; so too was an explicit emphasis on confidentiality and trust. At the beginning of all my first tape recorded interviews with young women, I made a point of telling or reminding them that whatever they said to me was in complete confidence. Some girls, Carol, for example, very quickly felt that I was trustworthy (notwithstanding the fact that at this time she still called me 'Miss'). Others (Ann and Janet) had to be reassured at appropriate moments during interviews, as the following conversations, taken from two first interview transcripts, demonstrate:

Carol:	(of a teacher) she's a right old ratbag isn't she?
Ann:	Carol! (shocked laughter)
Jacqui:	It's all right! Whatever you say -
Ann:	You won't play it to the teachers will you?
Jacqui:	(to Ann) I won't play it to *anybody*! I won't tell anybody!
	(to Carol) Has she always been 'a ratbag'?
Janet:	(loud whisper) Sshh! Don't say anything (about smoking).
	She's got the tape on.
Carol:	Yeah. But she don't say nowt.
Mandy:	Who don't?
Carol:	Miss. She don't play it to nobody else.
Jacqui:	No. Nobody.

Trust, however, is not an inevitable consequence of specific utterances about respecting

confidentiality: anyone can say 'trust me'. In other imperceptible ways I was able to communicate my trustworthiness to at least some of the girls. They were astute enough to use their judgements about whether what I said was reinforced or belied my general character. It may be that Ann declined to speak up significantly - to trust me - because she was horrified that I should say 'it's all right' to say 'whatever', including calling a teacher a 'ratbag'. Perhaps she was horrified that I should appear to collude with Carol's definition by using Carol's phrase. Respect and trust are clearly related to perceptions of whose 'side' one is on; perhaps I came across as insufficiently 'respectable' in Ann's eyes.

Although I came to be well trusted with information which would perhaps not have been given to someone who was perceived as a teacher, there were points at which I was questioned further about confidentiality in respect of my relationships with other girls. Lindsey and Tracy, for example, knew that Mandy was a member of one of my interview groups. On one occasion they started to tell me something about Mandy and were reluctant to continue. They asked to be reassured that I would not tell her what they said. They also asked whether Mandy talked about them. I responded to their questions by saying 'I honestly can't recall her saying anything about you. But if she did, I'd have to keep it a secret just as I keep secret what you say'. Keeping secrets proved to be a contradictory matter of ethical integrity as I shall argue shortly. First, the issue of the validity of the data on sexual harassment must be addressed.

Talking About Sexual Harassment, Thinking About Validity

The adoption of the interviewing style described above implicitly amounts to a theory about ways of producing valid data. In essence, the issue of validity is addressed by asking two related questions: first, how do I know the girls were telling the truth, rather than 'distorting their responses' (Bourque and Back, 1966/1982)? Second, are their accounts valid 'indicators' of the phenomenon under investigation, sexual harassment? There are, as Hughes (1976: 158) observes, no glib answers to either of these questions. There are

several points to be made in response, however. The first and most important is that the basis of the claim to validity is not fundamentally empirical but political (Harvey, 1990): validation is as much a conceptual as an empirical process (Ramazanoglu, 1989). I was concerned to elicit the young women's frames of reference for understanding everyday occurrences but I did not base my analysis on their subjective definitions of situations which excluded the concept of sexual harassment. I *interpreted* their personal experiences in terms of sexual politics (Ramazanoglu, 1989). That is, I dealt with the problem of 'how to manage differing 'realities' and understandings of researchers and researched' (Stanley and Wise, 1990: 23) by both respecting *and problematizing* the young women's definitions of situations. I listened for and respected their expressions (both verbal and non-verbal) of despair, humiliation and lack of control over intimacy. I problematized both their woman blaming and self blaming analyses and their representations of phenomena as 'natural' and inevitable. I tried to steer an appropriate course between, at one extreme, 'denying' completely the subjectivity of others' (Brittan and Maynard, 1984) and, at the other extreme, being utterly 'subjectivist'. The data presented in this thesis, then, constitute sexual harassment according to my definition of the situation as specified in chapter two. They are presented not as indisputable 'proof' but as valid evidence which is strongly indicative of who does what to whom and whose interests are served by prevailing social practices and ideologies. Like Mills (1973, cited in Harvey, 1990), and characteristic of all critical social research, I have been less concerned with the details of traditional empirical validation techniques such as 'triangulation' and more concerned with the holistic (and feminist) analysis of a substantive issue.

Whether the data are accepted as valid 'indicators' or instances of sexual harassment is one issue. Whether the disclosures about phenomena which I interpreted as sexual harassment are valid can be addressed in several ways. First, it is pertinent to note that the girls would have had to engage in systematic deception had they wished to fabricate stories, for the data were collected over a period of many months. Second, the validity of their accounts can be assessed by focussing on the manner in which the interview data were collected.

Interviewing can never pin down with absolute certainty 'what actually happened', nevertheless, there are arguments about the merits of unstructured interviews as a means of producing accurate empirical data (Gordon, 1969, cited in Bailey, 1982; Hughes, 1976). Since the case for validity in part depends upon the mutual understanding of the meaning of language, there are more grounds for confidence in assuming that some mutual sense of meaning can be achieved in unstructured interviews which allow for probing differences of understanding (Hughes, 1974) or, to adapt Gordon's points, unstructured interviews are superior in producing valid data when the 'universe of discourse' of the researcher differs from that of respondents or informants, when 'the universe of discourse' varies from one informant to another and when one is dealing with unselfconscious experience or 'normalized' experience (Gordon, 1969, cited in Bailey, 1982).

Although my purpose was to encourage the young women to relate experiences of and attitudes towards sexual harassment, I did not direct their attention towards this phenomenon in an 'unnatural' or 'forced' or 'biased' manner. I did not prompt disclosures by providing the young women with definitions, nor did I for the most part ask specific questions about sexual harassment, named as such (cf Herbert, 1989). The claim that the young women 'made up stories' because of a 'desire to please' (Whyte, 1960/1982) is almost totally unfounded because I was infrequently explicit about exactly what data I 'wanted'. Many young women's accounts of sexual harassment (by my definition) arose much more conversationally but in a variety of ways, not least, with complete spontaneity, through 'the natural paths of free association' characteristic of unstructured interviews (Gordon, 1969, cited in Bailey, 1982). For example, during a conversation about 4th year options, Lindsey mentioned Child Development about which she commented that 'everyone has to learn to bring up a child - but I think it's all girls (in the CD class) to tell you the truth'. She then made an association with her own experience: 'my little brother's always pestering to be looked after' which provoked Tracy to relate, quite spontaneously and matter of factly, a recent incident of sexual harassment perpetrated by Lindsey's brother which in turn developed spontaneously into an account of other everyday

experiences of being sexually harassed by 'little lads', about which I questioned them in detail.

Apparently spontaneous accounts of experiences and attitudes of sexual harassment arose as a result of my asking non-specific questions but ones which I knew might produce an association with sexual harassment. For example, having been alerted to the mundane activities of a teacher by one group of girls, I subsequently slipped into a general conversation about option choices and teachers with another group of girls, the seemingly innocuous question, 'Have either of you ever had Mr Ryder as a teacher?'. In spontaneous response, I was provided with data on sexual harassment. I also asked more specific, 'leading' questions, however: 'someone told me something the other day about some boys grabbing them in the street. I wonder whether anything like that has happened to you as well?' In some respects I was unintentionally assisted in my research by one of the girls' English teachers who had shown them a video to provoke a debate about 'sex discrimination'. Wolf whistling, rape and other aspects of gender relations were discussed in the debate. Some of the young women brought this up in their interviews. In other interviews, I asked them to tell me about 'the sex discrimination debate and video in English', knowing that issues of direct relevance to my research would crop up alongside other issues of less direct relevance such as the sexual division of labour at home.

In many respects, then, by asking the girls to focus on and tell me about general aspects of their everyday lives, in an informal setting in which they knew confidences would be respected, data about sexual harassment came to the surface of the conversation in part simply because these experiences are mundane features of young women's lives and some of them relate them as matter of factly as they relate stories about finding injured birds. Noting the manner in which disclosures were made amounts to a mundane 'verification procedure' which can help us weigh the validity of statements made by informants (Whyte, 1960/1982). Matter of factness was one characteristic mode of relating accounts of what happened, embarrassment and shame were others. That is, two further points can be made

about validity. The first is, as Herbert (1989: 104) has argued, despite popular myths, there is no kudos for a woman or girl in making up stories about sexual harassment. On the contrary, women who report incidences of sexual harassment (and rape) are often disbelieved and stigmatised as a result. Despite my best efforts to convey to them that I was 'on their side', a number of the girls were so influenced by dominant ideas which stigmatise girls that they *underplayed* rather than exaggerated the significance of the events which they described: they were *reluctant* to go into detail. They said 'I've got over it now', wanting to put the past behind them rather than to elaborate. Second, reiterating a point also made by Herbert (1989), my findings are consistent with those of Kelly (1989) and Hanmer and Saunders (1984). The disclosures made ranged along a continuum of frequency (not of trauma or seriousness): more girls made disclosures of the more mundane forms of sexual harassment. Had the young women been inclined to exaggerate or fabricate one would expect the reverse to be the case.

A final point about validity is that, in the absence of traditional validation techniques, there are other ways of knowing if the young women's experiences are credible. Many women and girls who have access to the data presented in this thesis will find resonances with the girls' accounts because something similar has happened to them or people they know. Although the problem of exactly how to validate knowledge remains unclear (Ramazanoglu, 1989: 55), 'measuring' it against our own experience and that of other women amounts to a form of 'face validity': it 'rings true', even if it (truth) is, ultimately 'a matter of judgement' (Bailey, 1982).

Such experiences as the girls disclosed were, in large part, related because of who I was and the manner in which I asked questions or probed gently. They might well not have surfaced 'naturally' in conversations with a male researcher or another 'type' of female researcher. My age, gender, personality, general presentation of self and ability to empathise helped to facilitate both the spontaneous and the more directed disclosures of such incidents. Comparable points can be made about the various ways in which

disclosures of a more intimate nature were made. One feature of my personality which is clearly relevant to my role performance and, therefore, to the data that I collected is my ability to engage in explicit conversations about sex and other 'intimate' matters like boys assaulting girls without embarrassment. Mandy was in a minority of girls who 'tested' me with 'shocking' revelations before she knew me well; others much more hesitantly disclosed experiences of which they were ashamed. They judged for themselves that I could 'take' what they wanted to say and that I could be trusted with the information. They were *enabled* therefore to speak of such matters.

Reciprocity

This enabling was facilitated also by another feature of my research practice: honest reciprocity. Conversational interviews are not *inevitably* 'real' dialogues. Indeed, Burgess (1982: 109) describes this situation in which the researcher actively participates in the conversation and records the dialogue in the published account as 'the far end of the spectrum of interview technique'. For feminist researchers reciprocity in interviews is more mainstream than 'far out' (Oakley, 1981; Kelly, 1989; Herbert, 1989). For the most part, I asked the questions but, when asked, I answered questions and provided information and advice. I answered questions about and volunteered information on pregnancy and contraception, for example, on occasions when the young women requested such information or said something which indicated ignorance or uncertainty. I also answered questions about my age, marital status, where I lived and so on. Occasionally, more intimate questions were posed, as, for example, during one interview in which Wendy responded to my request for information about the quiz I had observed her and Debra doing during their Information Technology lesson by declaring, 'Oh, I can do it on you now! Name ten lads you know. D'you like ten lads?'. Debra protested that the quiz was 'a bit dirty' and said, 'she won't know what half the things *mean*!' whereupon Linda and Liz (who knew me better) exclaimed in unison, 'She does!'.

The purpose of the quiz was to 'find out who your favourite boy is'. This was achieved, first, by me naming 'lads' who were randomly numbered one to ten by Wendy (the girls assisted by suggesting teachers at this stage as I had some difficulty thinking of *ten* men I liked). Second, a list of ten activities, the least intimate of which were dance, hold hands and kiss, were read out and I had to assign numbers. Third, Wendy asked a series of questions based on linking the numbers, for example, if 'Albert' and 'kiss' had both randomly been assigned number two, the question would be 'would you kiss Albert?'. If the answer was 'yes', a tick was placed against Albert/kiss on the list. The final stage of the quiz is counting up the number of ticks. The resulting number is said to correspond with the 'lad' to whom that number was randomly assigned in the first instance; he is declared 'your main guy'.

The quiz proceeded amidst great hilarity, during which I protested at various stages: 'I'm not telling you! I'm gonna say 'no' to everything!' whereupon I was cajoled:

Liz:	Aw! Come on, tell us!
Debra:	Aw! Go on! Please! We tell *you*!
Liz:	We tell you *everything*!

I consented, answering Yes or No as required although in such a way as to communicate that my answers should not be taken too seriously: 'If I was in a good mood, I might!'; 'Definitely not! I don't know him well enough!'. My active participation in this dialogue had the effect of breaking a few taboos about what they felt they could talk about with me and resulted, later in the interview, both in a specific disclosure about a sexual incident of which Liz was deeply ashamed and in a more general, candid conversation about heterosexual norms. An additionally significant feature of my personal characteristics which clearly influenced roles, relationships and data was my (presumed straightforward) heterosexuality. This facilitated the collection of some data whilst it no doubt inhibited the collection of other data.[6]

The above illustration is the most 'extreme' example of a dialogue occurring during an interview which had an 'all girls together' feel to it. In much more mundane ways, however, I attempted to help create reciprocal relationships, adopting the role of 'friend' or 'older sister' as well as the role of 'stranger' collecting data. That this worked effectively is supported by the following extract from an interview with Tracy and Lindsey which took place in July. These and other girls, by then, routinely *treated* me like a friend:

<pre>
Lindsey: I like your hair, Jacqui.
Jacqui: It needs cutting. It's getting on me nerves. (laughter) I'm
            going to Leeds over the weekend. I've a friend there who
            does it for me.
Lindsey: You're going to see Springsteen aren't you?
Jacqui: Yeah. That's right.
Lindsey: I wish I was comin'.
</pre>

However, the creation of 'friendships' within the research relationships resulted in something of an 'uneasy compromise' (Jarvie, 1969/82) and has ethical implications.

Ethical and Political Integrity

I hope I have already conveyed a sense of how the research relationships I helped to create were non-oppressive and involved. They were as reciprocal and as honest as I felt they could be, thus clearly approaching if not conforming absolutely to the requirement that feminists do research with a particular kind of integrity and sense of accountability. Some ethical matters have yet to be discussed, however. One of the most obvious of these is that which relates to discussing unlawful sexual intercourse which I discuss first. Secondly, there are a range of matters relating to *degrees* of honesty, detachment, involvement and 'intervention' or 'praxis'.

Some readers may be horrified that not only did I listen to very young women talking about sex, I implicitly and explicitly encouraged them to do so and I told no-one in the school, not even when one of them had a pregnancy scare.[7] I felt very ambivalent about this aspect of some of the relationships which developed and the role I played. On the one hand,

foremost in my mind was the knowledge that 'sexual promiscuity' stigmatises young women (Lees, 1986 and 1989) and is frequently used as a reason for putting 'troublesome' girls into 'care', in effect controlling adolescent female sexuality, whilst adolescent male sexuality goes largely unchecked (B. Hudson, 1989; A. Hudson, 1989), and I had no wish to be party to this control culture. I aimed to create a research relationship which was non-oppressive of the girls and thus at no time did I consider I had a responsibility to 'inform' on them, not even to a sympathetic Year Tutor. I had promised them I would respect their confidences and so I kept their secrets.

Further, although I was and remain uncertain about where lines of principle should be drawn (Nava, 1984), I had no definite moral objection to thirteen and fourteen year olds having sex. The fact that I am not a parent perhaps most significantly influences my views here, as does my class background possibly. Also, I was well aware that of the four to five thousand per annum births to young women, some one thousand new mothers are under sixteen (Holly, 1989). *Not* talking about sex in circumstances where young women are engaged in heterosexual practices which put them at risk of unwanted pregnancy, not to mention HIV infection[8] and other sexually transmitted diseases, is unethical in my view. I have already mentioned the manner in which I responded to requests for information about contraception and so on.

However, I was utterly dismayed and angered both by the quality of the intimate sexual relationships and encounters and the more public interactions which young women described and by my feeling of powerlessness to *do* anything which might help to create significant changes in what I considered to be an *oppressive* heterosexual reality, and one which was largely taken for granted. That is, I was and remain concerned about the *degree* to which I was or ought to have been honest, by the extent to which I 'intervened' or ought to have intervened. In chapter nine, I consider the extent to which and the ways in which participating in the research (might have) helped to effect changes in the young women's perceptions of their everyday reality of both sex and sexual harassment. Here I

present a critical appraisal of how my role performance fell far short of constituting feminist praxis, defined as involving (explicit or intended) consciousness raising and practical or material change. To a limited extent only did I intervene and actively engage with 'prevailing social structures' (Harvey, 1990). I represented myself as a 'friend' and yet, although I gave advice and support in the form of a sympathetic listening ear, I constantly felt myself to be a 'stranger' who failed to act *for* the young women.

Jarvie writes about the friend/stranger 'identity crisis' which provokes an 'integrity crisis' as follows:

> to some extent the success of the method of participant observation *derives from* exploiting the situations created by the role clashes insider/outsider, stranger/friend. (Jarvie, 1982: 68, emphasis in original.)

The idea that ethnographic research depends for its success on *exploiting* 'role clashes' poses profound dilemmas not only for the feminist ethnographer but also for the traditional ethnographer as Jarvie goes on to argue in relation to some concrete illustrations relating to the general issues of trust, honesty, reciprocity, intervention and non-intervention. The traditional ethnographer is not a disinterested, exploitative 'fly on the wall' for whom 'anything goes' so long as data are collected. However, I felt then and remain convinced that, although it was not my intention to exploit 'role clashes', this is, arguably, in effect what I did. I became involved but shied away from 'over involvement' (as it is called in the traditional ethnographic literature). I 'made friends' but I offered little in the way of 'involved support'. I mention here, as an illustration of what I did *not* do, the specific issue of the one young woman's aforementioned pregnancy scare which serves as an illustration of how I could have acted with far more feminist integrity, of how I could have 'done better'.

Contrary to the principle of 'getting and staying involved' which Kelly (1989), at some cost to herself in terms of time and energy, put into practice and to the feminist practice of

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Herbert (1989) who, in a variety of very material ways helped the members of her research sample, I *merely* listened, was sympathetic and gave advice. Having heard the news about the possible pregnancy just before the Christmas vacation, I did not offer to accompany the depressed and anxious young woman to a BPAS clinic for example. I went home at the end of my day like the 'stranger' I was 'really' and recorded in my fieldwork diary:

> I'm feeling really uptight/disturbed/worried/depressed/sad/angry. I feel like a wally academic who sits and listens, nods and smiles, goes home, transcribes the tape and files it under neat headings like 'sex' or 'teenage pregnancy' or Ethical Problems in Sociological Enquiry. (She) is not an 'ethical problem'. She's a thirteen year old kid who may now be pregnant.

It transpired, after Christmas, that the young woman's grandmother had been a valuable source of support and practical help and, eventually, that she was not pregnant. It remains the case that, despite my feminist principles, our friendly relationship and the affection I felt for her, and despite my feelings of guilt and anger, I offered very little in the way of involved, sisterly support.

Questions about how far a feminist researcher can and should both be engaged (always, by definition) in the business of consciousness raising and be required to offer ongoing, involved, 'interventionist' support are both crucial and thorny. The fact that not all researchers are prepared, willing or able to offer ongoing support should lead us, Kelly observes, to question the unproblematic endorsement of face-to-face interviews.

> While they undoubtedly offer the potential for more accurate findings and for reflecting the complexity of experiential knowledge, they also raise the possible problem of bringing to the surface distressing experiences which were previously suppressed. What responsibility do we have as researchers for dealing with this? Might an impersonal questionnaire allow participants more control over their emotions and memories? While I have no easy answers to these questions, they are ones which feminist researchers must address (Kelly, 1990: 110).

Throughout the fieldwork period, in mundane ways, some distressing experiences were brought to the surface in what was, essentially, a research relationship rather than a 'therapeutic' or 'counselling' relationship. Although I 'did my best' and largely succeeded in probing gently and responding supportively, reading through a minority of the transcripts, I noted occasions upon which a distressing experience or a depressed mood was ineffectively dealt with. For example, shortly after Liz had disclosed the incident of which *she* was ashamed (even though it was not her responsibility), Wendy whispered something to Linda who laughed. The interview proceeded as follows:

Liz:	What did they say?
Jacqui:	Come on, Wendy. It's rude to whisper in company.
Wendy:	(to Liz) You're always talking about sex.
Linda:	We're not talking about sex, we're talking about lads.
Jacqui:	I want to talk about IT (Information Technology) sometime today. Shall we change the subject now?
Wendy:	Yeah.

I now read and recall this exchange with shame. I ought to have been more concerned with Liz's needs than with Wendy's desire to change the subject which is what I responded to. This was a 'mistake', a clear error of judgement on my part, but one which was more likely to have occurred because of the *manner* in which I interviewed: a) in groups, and b) 'conversationally' rather than 'therapeutically'.

In conversational group interviews, as in conversations, abrupt changes of subject and the unintentional neglect of one person's views or needs whilst responding to the views or needs of others are not uncommon features. I now consider that more 'therapeutic' and one-to-one discussions (not necessarily tape recorded interviews) *ought* to have been a feature of my research practice. 'Mistakes' of this kind aside, I now think that in more general terms the *uncritical* adoption by feminists of qualitative methods is unwarranted and, like Kelly, argue that there are no easy answers: *all* methods pose problems of principle for feminist researchers. Conversational group interviews with young women effectively facilitated the disclosure or surfacing of experiences of sexual harassment and related phenomenon, thereby providing me with data. However, since some of these

experiences were distressing, the cost to the young women of collecting data in this way was that distress surfaced, only to be left 'stranded' sometimes, as the conversation moved on.

Another source of anxiety over whether I acted with the kind of integrity demanded of and deemed appropriate for feminist researchers relates to questions of what happened *after* the interviews were conducted. Unlike Herbert (1989) and Kelly (1989), I did not return interview transcripts to the young women. Nor did I duplicate drafts of the data analysis chapters and send them to the young women (Herbert, 1989). The principle of locating feminist researcher and women subjects of research on the same critical plane is, as Stanley and Wise (1983) and Stanley (1990: 9) argue, a complex matter because 'it is the production of the written texts that give feminist researchers ultimate 'power'. More than this, in fact, once the period of fieldwork ended, I never saw, heard from or attempted to contact the young women again. I 'hit and ran'. Exhausted and relieved that it was over, I left, shortly afterwards to be offered a half-time lectureship which threw me into a new, but still demanding and stressful environment. I always meant to get in touch with the girls but first the months and then the years flew by. It is only since the period of fieldwork and in discussion with other women similarly concerned with researching issues of violence against women[9] that I have come to a few tentative conclusions about my role performance which do not amount to major guilt tripping.

The first of these is that the whole question of the researcher as a prime mover in and primarily concerned with 'consciousness raising' must critically be examined. Where researchers are inevitably or very likely to collect data and then move on, they have a responsibility *not* to 'rock the boat' too much in my view. The changing of a woman's consciousness, the development of a feminist consciousness can take years and is almost inevitably associated with distress. On the one hand, there is, as New (1991: 3) notes, inevitable loss (of important people whose disapproval has to be faced), on the other is the fear of being wrong and, therefore, of 'madness' because 'to set oneself against society

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and to be wrong is akin to being mad'. Ramazanoglu (1989: 191-2) similarly notes how struggles for liberation are painful and how the prospect of change can seem fearful and dangerous. The feminist researcher who actively encourages, as a matter of principle, profound changes in the way that women think, must appreciate a) that such research must carefully be designed in advance and b) that she must emotionally be capable of providing the necessary support.

My project was designed as an *exploratory* one, not as an action research project. This was a legitimate and necessary choice in 1983 when we (feminists in the UK) were in the early stages of thinking about sexual harassment and when I in particular was: both certain *and uncertain* about the 'validity' of my then relatively recently acquired knowledge about the oppression of women by men. If there is such a thing as a feminist consciousness 'learning curve' I located myself at different positions on it, sometimes feeling 'high up' (I *knew* that rape and domestic violence were widespread phenomena, that misogyny and sexism were rife - no question about that!), at other times feeling 'low down' and confused: there were occasions and experiences when I could not distinguish between intimacy (sex and friendship) with men on the one hand and oppression on the other *and yet* I knew that separatism was not an *emotional* possibility for me. I had barely begun to resolve such contradictions. Not surprisingly, in view of this, I was uncertain about my and other women's perceptions of our intimate relationships and more everyday encounters with men and, therefore, uncertain about how best - that is, with sensitivity - to present for discussion and reflection, feminist perspectives on intransitive realities without threatening and harming young women. I erred on the side of caution: I did challenge views but not *profoundly*.

Secondly, ethnographic research, like depth interviews, on issues of violence against women calls for very particular skills, knowledge and emotional resources which I simply did not have during the period of fieldwork. I had *no* experience of counselling or counselling-type relationships. I had no experience of being in a consciousness raising

group. I therefore lacked the necessary experience to be supportive in anything but the most mundane of ways. I was insufficiently equipped to deal with the enormity of the task of coping with the distress *I felt* upon hearing some of their accounts, as evidenced by the plethora of psychosomatic illnesses and bouts of depression I experienced during the fieldwork period. That is, I lacked the necessary experience of creating 'boundaries' between the young women's *muted* distress and the distress and rage of my own that our conversations put me in touch with and, therefore, I was not in a fit emotional state to be properly supportive of others. I did the best that I could in these circumstances to create non-oppressive relationships which caused no apparent harm. However, 'making the best of a bad job' is not good enough for the women who are the 'research subjects' of inexperienced researchers like myself. We perhaps have a responsibility either to attempt to ensure that would-be researchers have the necessary experience and emotional resources and/or to prepare or 'train' future researchers more specifically in the skills required for such research and/or to discourage them from undertaking such research as their first ever research project.

Whilst it is undoubtedly the case that in the course of informal conversations and interviews some aspects of the intransitive realities of some girls became transitive and to a degree consciousness did change, no revolutionary change occurred! My 'digging' and focussing for political frames of reference fell neither at the oppressive nor at the (profoundly) liberating end of the *continuum* of possibilities which Harvey (1990), like Lather (1988) represents as a categorical choice. This, then, crucially calls into question what we mean by 'feminist praxis'. For Lather (1988) praxis means a feminist variation of action research. For Stanley (1990: 15), 'praxis cannot and should not be reduced to a gloss for any one particular feminist position. Praxis remains an indicator of a continuing and shared feminist commitment to a political position in which 'knowledge' is not simply defined as 'knowledge *what*' but also as 'knowledge *for*'. My research, I hope, has produced knowledge which will contribute to the general struggle for women's liberation, though it failed *significantly* to contribute to the personal struggles of the young women of Henry

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James School.

In part, and not insignificantly, this process has begun to occur already in that the research 'raised my own consciousness'. When asked, I have tended to stress (because I most vividly recall) the 'downside' of doing this research project. I recall the stress (and poor stress management), the tears, the angst, the 'flashbacks'. Like Kelly (1989) I had sudden recollections of experiences from my childhood, adolescence and young adulthood which I had forgotten. These were triggered as a direct consequence of working on this project. I remembered eleven separate incidents of assault or harassment. I recorded them in my fieldwork notebook and began to record in writing other experiences of harassment as they occurred, lest I forget them again. This personal experience of forgetting and remembering raised my consciousness about how women *routinely* have 'difficulty in recalling not simple details, but sometimes entire events' (Russell, 1982, cited in Kelly, 1989: 143). It raised my consciousness about how painful the process can be, of how knowledge and emotion are inseparable. I recall the fieldwork as a period of renewed distrust brought on by being surrounded by the words, both spoken and written, of women who had experienced the contempt and physical violence of men. Like Kelly (1984: 17), I was almost daily reminded of 'how overwhelming the ever present threat of violence is; how women could be driven mad by this fear'. Like her I was outraged by people who did not take the threat nor the fear seriously, basing it entirely on paranoia, over-reaction and/or projection.

On reflection and with hindsight I consider this research project in its entirety just one part of my personal struggle for liberation. I learned invaluable lessons, not 'just' about how (not) to conduct interviews in particular and how (not) to design and practice the craft of ethnography, although I undoubtedly acquired research skills. My understanding of what it means to conduct research with feminist integrity developed, in part through 'making mistakes' and reflecting critically upon these, and I gained some deeper understanding of how women, including myself, manage to survive our complex and contradictory lives. I

became more self-confident, more of an 'activist' and an active disseminator of feminist knowledge about violence against women. I made myself available for students who needed to talk. I became and have remained involved with a Rape Crisis Line. Doing research has contributed to changing me. Like Kelly:

> I certainly understand myself much more. There are many things I wish at times I hadn't uncovered, but there is no going back ... I'm sure my experience of research isn't unique: that many other women have been changed by the work they do ... It was one of feminism's first principles - that in changing the world we would be changing ourselves, and that changing ourselves was part of changing the world. (Kelly, 1984: 20)

Chapter Six: Patriarchal Social Relations in Henry James School

Introduction

There is a well established literature on the part played by schools in reproducing the social structure (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Illich, 1973; Bourdieu, 1986, 1988; Ball, 1987), specifically the structure of patriarchy (Delamont, 1980; Mahony, 1985; Deem, 1980; Davies, 1984; Wolpe 1988). As a backdrop to examining some of the oppressive everyday realities of young women, my aim in this chapter is to describe and analyse the particular social context in which gender relations were both observed and discussed. I begin with a brief history and description of some general features of the school. Secondly, I focus on the organizational features of the school - the staff hierarchy - and present a statistical analysis of the gender of persons occupying different status positions within the school. Here, as in the first section, the purpose is to specify gendered patterns, in what the Head referred to as 'the whole hidden ethos of the school', the 'things which are not explicitly laboured (but which) are just implicit in the organization and structure of the school'. Since I have agreed that power is not best conceptualized as referring *only* to status position, that power is *exercised* through the everyday activities of people and is institutionalized in part through ideologies, I include some 'pen portraits' - based on observational and interview data - of the senior staff.[1] In short, a combination of quantitative and qualitative data are presented as indicative or illustrative of the patriarchal social relations in Henry James School.

Some General Features of the School

Henry James Comprehensive School is situated on the outskirts of Brickford. It serves the north-eastern section of the town and several nearby villages. The school was opened in 1952 in new buildings, the final installment of the building programme being completed in 1960. In its early years Henry James comprised a grammar school and a secondary

modern on the same site, pupils belonging to each wearing distinctive uniforms. This, as one of the present Deputy Heads commented, was 'enormously divisive'. The present Headmaster abolished school uniform upon his arrival in 1970. In 1973, with the reorganization of secondary education along comprehensive lines, Henry James became part of the third tier of a three stage system of first schools for 5 to 8 year olds, middle schools (9-12) and secondary high schools (12-18). It now has on roll some 1500 pupils (see Table 4).

Table 4: Number of Pupils on Roll

Year*	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Girls	195	164	175	179	85	798
Boys	194	176	172	179	46	767
Total	389	340	347	358	131	1565

*Note: Pupils enter the school in year two.
Source: Standard LEA return on absentees.

The school is approached by a 15 minute walk from the modern shopping precinct at the centre of Brickford. Beyond the precinct, the main road on which the school is situated is lined by pre-war terraced houses, older shops, pubs and an industrial estate. As one nears the school, glimpses can be caught of the sprawling council estate from which many children are drawn, an estate which includes the notorious Acacia Crescent, down which one is advised to walk 'before dark', otherwise 'in threes!'. However, it should be noted that 'the council houses are of a comparatively good standard and parts of these roads are owner-occupied'.[2]

Standing at the main school gate one can see two large three-storey red-brick buildings separated by a playground. To the left of the playground is West Block, standing behind the Bungalow Block. The latter houses several design and technology workshops; the former contains many conventional classrooms, some with science workbenches, music

rooms, the school library and the sixth-form common room. To the right of the playground is the main school building. The girls' gym and main assembly hall, however, obscure the North and East Wings of the school which contain most of the classrooms, including science laboratories, art and home economics rooms, administrative offices and the boys' gym. Between the girls' gym and the assembly hall is the main entrance where several glass doors open onto a large brown-carpeted foyer. This contains a central display cabinet of lower-sixth form students' 'A' level design work. Two wall cabinets display various cups, shields and other awards for a range of sporting activities. One of these also houses a plaque with the school motto, 'Virtuti Nihil Invium'.[3] On the walls of the foyer are displayed samples of the students' art work: pencil and charcoal drawings; colourful abstract paintings and watercolours of wildlife.

Beyond the foyer, a visitor to the school would see a dining area with tables and chairs for perhaps 100 pupils. Cold lunches are consumed here. The main dining area and kitchen lie beyond. This area is rather drab in contrast to the foyer, as is the corridor leading off to the right, flanking the assembly hall. It is wide, uncarpeted and initially had drab beige plaster walls which were re-painted white in the spring. At intervals along the walls are framed collections of photographs of students and staff taking part in a range of school theatrical and operatic productions: 'Noyes Fludde'; 'Calamity Jane'; 'Oh What a Lovely War!'. One collection shows colour prints of the 1981 Staff Charity Christmas Concert and includes a photograph of several male members of staff wearing white vests, tights and tutus. They have their arms linked and sport self-conscious smiles. They are, ostensibly, dancing!

At the end of the corridor are two sets of double doors marked 'Staff Only'. Beyond these, to the right, is the 'master' timetable. To the left, off the corridor, is the General Office, (known as Room One) and the offices of the Headmaster and Deputy Heads. The whole of this area is out of bounds to pupils except those who are late and have to complete a 'late slip' in Room One or those who are 'in trouble' in which case they sit at one of the several

desks strategically placed in the vicinity of the Senior Deputy Head's office. At the far end of the corridor through double doors, is the Youth Area which, at breaktimes, is full of young people and, during lessons, looks as desolate as an empty pub.

Henry James Comprehensive School is a 'perfectly ordinary' or 'unremarkable' institution. Like other schools, it appears quiet and orderly during lesson times. At the beginning and end of the school day, and of classes, as well as during breaktimes, it teams with life and noise, the din of the bell punctuating and regimenting everyday life in school. Patriarchal ideologies of gender are subtly communicated, however.

First, we can note that the school is named after a man, as is conventional (Mahony, 1985). Secondly, the photograph of men teachers in ballet costumes is the only 'reversed' representation of gender. It thus features and functions, like the pantomime, as a contemporary form of carnival which, in pre-modern popular culture represents a 'world turned upside down', the *opposite* of a ritual inversion of 'official' culture (Scribner, 1978), in which 'men wear pants'. Thirdly, as in other schools, when pupils wish to attract the attention of a teacher, they say (or shout) 'Miss' or 'Sir'. These titles are used *as if* they were equivalent since they refer to individuals of the same *supposed* status: teachers. However, they are not equivalent in *meaning*: 'Sir' is a polite form of address and has overtones of respect for an authority figure; 'Miss' literally means girl or spinster. Thus, their use underlies the authority of men relative to women as Spender (1980) has argued.[4] Finally, if we look beyond the dining hall and into the servery area, we realise that all the people serving school dinners are women. If we peer behind the door of the General Office, we see that all three secretaries are women. The vast majority of the non-teaching, that is, lower status employees in the school are women. It is to the gender of the persons working in the offices of the Headmaster and Deputy Heads that I now turn as I begin to focus on the teaching staff hierarchy at Henry James School.

Administrative Organization: The Head and Deputy Heads

'The Deputy Heads and Heads of Faculty, under the Chairmanship of the Head, constitute the senior management team' (Staff Handbook, p.1). During my first few weeks in school the Head, Mr Fraser, struck me as a somewhat elusive figure, I saw him so infrequently. He is a tall, slim, white man, has greying curly hair and wears a conventional grey suit. I would guess that he is in his 50s. Twice observing Mr Fraser in morning assembly, I noted that his role there *seems* entirely passive. He enters the hall after the students have been organised into their seats by their form teachers, under the watchful eye of, and occasional stern reprimand from the Senior Deputy Head, Mr Tate. He sits silently on the platform whilst a short assembly takes place and leaves quietly and apparently unassumingly before Mr Tate reads out any notices. This is not at all to suggest that he is a weak or insignificant individual. He has a certain 'presence': an air of authority. He is not passive; he is powerful. He maintains a 'distance' between himself and staff. By convention he and staff address one another formally, as two men teachers commented:

> The Boss (...) never calls anybody in the school (...) by their first name (...) Even the Deputy Heads are not called by their first name. And no-one would ever call him Robert.
>
> No-one's *dared* to yet! (laughs) (...) It's just his way of formalizing it. It's just his style. I don't think he really thinks about it.

I was not to converse personally with Mr Fraser until the end of May when we had a brief, though amiable, conversation over lunch. In July, I interviewed him for over an hour, during which time several of his comments, in addition to his general demeanour, led me to believe that he is a sensitive, compassionate individual. He 'democratized' or 'informalized' the interview by ensuring we were *both* in easy chairs, across a low coffee table; he had coffee brought in for us. He illustrated his discussion of boys' shyness of girls, for example, with reference to his boyhood experiences of 'being shy with girls'.

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His compassion was illustrated by his abhorrence of corporal punishment which he 'personally has never used in the whole of (his) career'; his sensitivity by his comments on the importance of caring, affectionate fathers. Thus, in sum, Mr Fraser's presentation of himself *to me* was a kind, concerned, 'gentlemanly' or non-hegemonically masculine presentation.

This is not, however, the only 'truth' about Mr Fraser. Ms Brown wrote to me as follows:

> Most staff would not agree with this description of the Head - as he runs the school on very autocratic lines. Staff opposition to his policies are (therefore) mainly channelled through the union ... (he) attempts to undermine sanctions in pay disputes and action over cuts in education, conditions of service issues ... etc. The recent school day dispute was a classic example of how he operates: the unions were not properly consulted; he refused to hold a vote of the whole staff. Departments and form teacher groups were asked to discuss the matter at their meetings. Having 'consulted' in this manner (totally phonily) he then argued that he was not bound by what the majority thought ...

What emerges from this account is a quite different account of Mr Fraser's 'presentation of self'. More *usually* Mr Fraser is, in Ms Brown's view (and, if we are to believe her, 'most staff's' view) an autocratic and aggressive Headteacher who confirms to the 'authoritarian' identified by Ball (1987) as one of four 'style types in performances' of Heads. Ball argues that the 'leadership styles':

> are not of a piece and neither are they fixed and unchanging. There may be situations where Heads, willingly or of necessity, temporarily abandon their normal style. Some members of staff may have privileged access to interactions with the Head which are 'out of style'. (Ball, 1987: 84)

In view of both Ms Brown's comments and those of the two male teachers who stressed the social distance which Mr Fraser ordinarily maintained, I now consider the interaction between myself and the Head to have been 'out of style'. However, during the interview, Mr Fraser firmly expressed the view that 'schools are reflections of society' which cannot nor should 'act as agents of deliberate social change' - a point to which I shall return in relation to gender segregated patterns of option 'choice' and achievement. As a 'critical

reality definer' (Burgess, 1983), the Head of Henry James takes an overtly *laissez-faire* view which in effect, I shall argue, amounts to an conservative argument for reproducing existing relations and structures of power.

Next 'in command' to 'the Boss' are the Deputy Heads who are 'responsible for the conduct of, respectively, the lower, middle and upper schools' (Staff Handbook, p.7). All three are middle -aged, white men. They each have specific education and administrative duties. Mr Tate is Senior Deputy Head and Head of Lower School (second year forms). His administrative responsibilities include student admissions and student discipline. Mr Tate is a well built though not a tall man. I doubt whether I would have noticed his height were it not for the fact that he seems to be acutely aware of it: he wears shoes with two-inch heels, which one cannot help but notice. He is in his 40s and has thick wiry hair. Mr Tate is 'hegemonically masculine': his face often wears a stern expression; his demeanour, the way he holds himself and walks about, is forthright, or aggressive; he speaks deliberately, authoritatively and loudly. However, his manner towards me was always pleasant (not only during pre-arranged meetings but also during impromptu conversations in the corridor). Although in general terms, Mr Tate seems to take himself rather seriously, he and I enjoyed a few light-hearted exchanges. His sense of humour, I gather, does not come across so noticeably to students by whom he is regarded as rather stern, intimidating and unwilling to listen, in contrast to Mr Wilson (yet to be introduced) whom they (the students) seem generally to like.

Mr Tate's attitude towards girls/women can be illustrated by means, first, of an off-hand remark. During the first few days of fieldwork, some graffiti appeared on one of the playground walls. It read, 'MARY IS A SLAG' and was painted in large white letters. Mr Tate had been involved in discovering who the culprit was. It transpired that he was Mary's boyfriend, a boy from another school. Mary's mother was, according to Mr Tate, 'threatening action' unless 'something was done' about the incident. Mr Tate commented to me,

I don't think she realizes that 'slag' is a very common term of abuse. It doesn't have the overtones of prostitution that it used to have. It seems to have replaced 'cow'.

In a sense, Mr Tate is correct: 'slag' *is* a very common term. It is nonetheless abusive for being common, however, as I shall argue in chapter seven. Mr Tate implied that Mary's mother was 'over-reacting' to the abuse of her daughter. He was non-committal when he said that Mary was 'a bit upset' (her friends, with whom I later discussed the incident, described the floods of tears Mary had shed). In short, a violation of a young woman's dignity was not, in my view, taken at all seriously by Mr Tate.

Secondly, a chance observation further illustrates Mr Tate's views. Leafing through some student records, I came across a note written by Mr Tate about Mandy, who had been involved in an act of bullying and had been reprimanded by Mr Tate. The note described the incident and the action taken. Assessing Mandy's character, Mr Tate had written 'real fishwife material', a derogatory term for which there is no masculine equivalent. In sum, then, my view of Mr Tate's ideology of gender is that it is imbued with mundane forms of contempt for women and *their* definitions of situations. It is patriarchal. As a second 'critical reality definer', here, in relation to what constitutes abuse and what counts as 'worthy' of serious consideration by the person responsible for discipline, Mr Tate effectively reproduces, through minimal intervention, the patriarchal social relations of which the graffiti are a component part.

Mr Wilson is Head of Middle School (third and fourth forms). His principal concern is with the 'accurate assessment of pupils' potential in each part of their educational programme ... the relating of this to career prospects and life style capacity, and the consequent placing of pupils in the appropriate subject courses in the fourth form, together with the following up of their actual suitability and adaptation where necessary' (Staff Handbook, p.7). Mr Wilson is quite new to the school. At the start of the study he had been *in situ* for just over a year. He is younger than Mr Tate (mid-thirties?) and more

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often dresses more casually. Though he does appear in a suit and tie from time to time, he generally wears corduroy trousers and a jumper.

His manner is much less 'conventionally masculine' than that of his colleagues. He makes good use of 'engaged' eye contact and smiles a lot, both of which are more feminine than masculine behaviour patterns (Henley, 1977). He takes himself rather less seriously than Mr Tate also. For example, at the end of our interview (which he both appeared to enjoy and *said* he had enjoyed) he joked that he was 'quite a gossip!'. That is, he was comfortable using, in relation to himself, a term which is often used to denigrate the conversation of women. I gather from students that he is generally regarded as someone who is willing to listen to, chat and laugh with them. Mr Wilson has some sympathy with feminism. He was the only one of four senior staff who mentioned it specifically. He asked me one lunchtime whether I 'felt qualified' to talk to his sixth form English group about feminism. He explained that they were studying an E.M. Forster book which might be considered to be 'feminist'. I had not read the book (*A Passage to India*) but I asked for his opinion of it. He replied that he thought it a very compassionate and humanitarian book. The point is, however, that he regards 'feminism', or gender issues of sufficient importance for explicit discussion with students. Mr Wilson's ideology of gender is, I would argue, 'pro-feminist'.

Mr Jackson is Head of Upper School. He is responsible for the detailed planning of internal and external examinations and is generally concerned with the examination performance and career prospects of fifth and sixth form students. He is in his 40s, always wears a suit and tie, is of average height, slim build and has very fair hair. He is sometimes to be found in the staff common room (a place not much frequented by Deputy Heads) where he sits and chats with teachers. Mr Jackson is 'conventionally' - indeed aggressively - masculine in that he *both* holds certain conservative views on gender, sexism and the (un)desirability of change *and* he is unashamed of them! That is, in contrast to individuals who might hold such views but would not *express* them, for fear of

'disapproval' by someone holding more 'liberal' or 'radical' views, *my* views were clearly of no consequence to Mr Jackson! One lunchtime, he brought up the subject of 'sexism in schools', mentioning the fact that in ILEA schools,[5] students may report teachers for using sexist language. I said, 'Oh! Really!', unselfconsciously indicating my approval; thinking, or rather, *assuming* (stupidly in retrospect) that we were of like mind. On the contrary, he was singularly unimpressed, and said so! He 'didn't see the point', it was 'silly'. I tried to engage him in a serious, person-to-person conversation on the subject by saying, 'Don't you think words have *symbolic* power ...' and mentioned police *man* versus police *officer* as an example. He clearly did not understand, did not *want* to understand, would not listen and ended the 'conversation' quite abruptly! On a few subsequent occasions, Mr Jackson was 'off hand' with me.

In sum, then, the data presented here indicate that Mr Jackson's ideology of gender, like that of his colleague Mr Tate, but unlike that of Mr Wilson, is anti-feminist: it is based on implicit notions of feminine inferiority and masculine hegemony.[6] Having provided illustrative evidence of the persons who occupy the senior administrative positions within Henry James School, I turn now to a similar analysis of the academic organization.

Academic Organization: Faculty and Department Heads

The academic departments are grouped under three faculties: arts, humanities and science. The responsibilities of Faculty Heads include syllabus co-ordination, the management of faculty teaching, curriculum continuity and the assessment and recording of individual students' progress and needs (Staff Handbook, p.8). Of the three Faculty Heads, one, Mr Roberts, heads the Science Faculty and is *Senior* Head of Faculty. The women, Mrs Davies and Mrs Carter, are Heads of the Humanities and Arts Faculties respectively. I introduce the women first.

The Head of the Humanities Faculty, Mrs Davies (Shirley), is a good looking woman in

her early 30s. She is slim, tall and has dark, well cared for straight hair, cut in a long bob.

She is a smart, stylish but feminine 'power dresser', most often wearing a tailored skirt suit

with unfussy, silk blouses. She is newly married - her 'maiden name' had not yet been

removed from her office door. She is an *assertive* (bordering on aggressive) woman. For

example, she

> enters the staffroom, stands and talks loudly to a young male teacher who is
> seated. She tells him (loudly) she wants him to give her 'something in
> writing about the criteria you use for selecting reading materials' for
> Monday's meeting. He is 'apologetic' (he ought already to have done this?)
> - almost deferential, certainly respectful. She is clearly his superordinate:
> organized, in control, authoritative.

Mrs Davies asserted her right to know who I was, which department I came from and what

degree I was 'doing research' for. She assertively *volunteered* information relating to her

ideology of gender. Upon our first meeting, she announced,

> You won't want to come into my class! I say, 'come on girls, behave like
> young ladies', and I tell the boys to act like gentlemen.

This is both a humorous and a 'pointed' remark, I note. Later the same day she sat down

next to me in the staff room and started talking, for example, about 'some boys who did

typing' (when the school taught it, which it no longer does): 'they *were* poofy, you know!

I suppose that's sex stereotyping, isn't it?' I laugh and nod agreement. Again she talks

about her husband (as newlyweds will?!). She had already 'confided' in me that, with

regard to cooking, 'he's a "don't have a dog and bark yourself" type'. Then she makes the

quite unsolicited comment that 'the worst thing in his book is a left wing feminist'! I ask

what *she* thinks of his views. She laughs and says she regards him as an 'eccentric

bigot'. I note, 'I suspect she agrees with *him* more than she agrees with me!'.

Mrs Carter, or Janet or Jan as she is known, is about 40. I recorded my first meeting with

her (in March 1984) as follows:

> Jan comes into the staff room to take me to her office to talk. She's lovely!
> Bright and really friendly. She is wearing a black loosely pleated 'full'

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skirt, black tights, and high-heeled black shoes. A multi-coloured expensive looking striped jumper. She walks 'energetically', purposefully. She gives the impression that she is a) interested and b) eager to help.

Jan has been a member of staff at Henry James for just two terms. I asked her how she had felt 'about coming from a single sex school to a mixed one'. She said:

> it was a problem, mainly due to the coarseness and joking of male staff here compared with (my previous school) where nearly all the staff were women and the men behaved differently because they were outnumbered by women staff. So it was scary for me to begin with - not professionally but personally - I find it difficult to cope with or combat. I 'shrink away' rather than deal with it. I wish I could combat it more effectively.

Later in the day, Jan accompanies me to observe a design and technology class and we talk further:

Jacqui: Remember you said earlier that when you first came here, some of the men's comments made you feel uncomfortable? Well, I've been reading some stuff lately about sexual harassment. Have you heard of that?

Jan: Yes.

Jacqui: Was it anything like that?

Jan: Oh yes. But I feel I should be able to handle it ... but I can't. Y'know when I see some of the younger girls dealing with the boys like that (assertively), I think 'good for them!'. Not all of them can, though.

Jacqui: D'you think it happens much to the kids?

Jan: Oh yes. More so in the younger age groups. Especially in the lower ability groups.

Although Jan views her own inability to cope 'more effectively' as something of a personal inadequacy, she is both aware of and implicitly critical of sexual harassment. She is supportive of girls who deal assertively or aggressively with boys who harass them. Jan's ideology of gender is clearly pro-feminist. This ideology is explicitly indicated in many more ways during the course of our conversations. For example, following our interview, Jan stops to talk with a man in the staff room. He has his small child with him. She tells him that she wants a man to demonstrate child care in class. Would he be willing to do it?

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He is nodding in agreement. As we leave the staff room she says to me, 'that's what's important: getting *men* to counter sex stereotypes!'.

Jan's manner or 'presentation of self' during the exchange described above was assertive and warm. She was warmly supportive of a male member of her faculty who 'popped his head round the door' of her office during our interview to consult her briefly about a problem. After he'd gone, she commented that 'the most important thing when in charge of people is to treat them like a person'. She said 'I can't understand how some faculty heads will show up their staff in a bad light'. Whomsoever Jan has in mind here, it is clear that she does not favour an authoritarian, aggressive or traditionally masculine style of management. She manages her staff effectively but with kindness and (feminine) concern.

Mr Roberts, whom I later came to know as David, the (Senior) Head of the Science Faculty, is a 'conventionally attractive', dark-haired man in his late 30s - a bit like Rock Hudson though slimmer, less muscular, and balding on top. He usually wears a dark grey suit, quite often with a waistcoat and, towards the end of the first term, he took to wearing a bow tie, or, rather, one of several bow ties of varying colours which are much commented upon with humour by staff and students alike. During my pilot study, I observed one of Mr Roberts' chemistry classes and noted that he has a good relationship with the students: he was willing to banter with them, including at his own expense.[7] In short, he is a well liked and respected teacher. In comparison with Mrs Davies and Jan Carter, he is difficult to write accurately about, however. Initially, I found him 'excessively polite' or 'chivalrous': he opened doors for me all along the corridors from his science laboratory to his (faculty) office. I was struck by his nervousness or shyness. Unlike his two women colleagues, he did not *say* much about gender (or 'sex stereotyping'). After much reflection, I came to the conclusion that he was 'fearful' of saying the 'wrong' thing and opted to say as little as possible. He volunteered that he was pleased his two colleagues were women. He said, 'I enjoy working with them although my male colleagues sometimes tease me'. When, in my presence, he rang Mrs Davies to

arrange for me to meet her, there was a brief exchange, initiated by Mrs Davies, about sex roles and stereotyping. Mr Roberts responded by saying 'she's here with me now, and getting embarrassed'. This was not quite the case. I felt OK. The embarrassment was his own. Thus, I concluded that he both likes and is nervous of 'strong' women. He was courteous to *and* nervous of me. He exhibited similar 'timidity' in his face-to-face contact with Mrs Davies: his facial expression (smiling but 'anxious') as well as his self-deprecating though humorous comments ('don't ask me (about sex stereotyping), I'm only a man!') are indicative of this.

Uncertain as he is about how best to present himself 'appropriately' with women, Mr Roberts comes across as a 'nice person' who respects his women colleagues and his students. He is, however, unselfconscious about the *gendered*[8] nature of his informal interactions with young women students. During an interview about 'the Blackpool weekend' he agreed when his colleague commented that one of the good things about being with kids 'in an outside of school situation', is that 'they see you as a person.' 'Yeah', said David Roberts, 'as opposed to just a teacher.' This may be so, but what was also significant, to my mind, was that the girls were relating to him as a *man*. Mandy 'punctuated' a short conversation with Mr Roberts by putting her hand on his knee which unnerved him. Both Mandy and Jill secured piggy-back rides from Mr Roberts and his colleague, on the 'pretext' that there were puddles on the beach. When the girls were accompanied by myself and a woman teacher, they seemed to negotiate the puddles without difficulty!

To summarize: I have established that, with regards to ideologies of gender amongst senior members of Henry James School staff, the data are indicative of some *diversity*. Mrs Carter and Mr Wilson express views which are pro-feminist. Mrs Davies, Mr Jackson and Mr Tate express views which are anti-feminist or patriarchal in that they propagate representations of reality which effectively reproduce masculine hegemony. Mr Roberts and Mr Fraser are more difficult to locate, the former because of his nervousness and

uncertainty, the latter because despite the views expressed to me during a single interview, I have reason to believe that, like the authoritarian Head style type described by Ball (1987: 109) Mr Fraser would 'be likely to be a high scorer in measures of machiavellianism'! I shall have more to say shortly about the culture of the school. First, so far as gender *divisions* in the staff hierarchy are concerned, I have thus far established that men outnumber women by 5 to 2 in the 'senior management team' and that, within this team, the women are the least senior members. Nowhere is the preponderance of men more apparent than at the level of Department Head, however. Of thirteen Heads of Department, twelve are men. The one woman heads the Art Department. Taken alongside the distribution of the sexes according to subjects taught, there is evidence of a marked imbalance in the power/status hierarchy at department level, as Table 5 shows.

Table 5: Sex of Staff Teaching Different Subjects[9]

Department	Women			Men		
English	11	)		1	)	
Modern Languages	8	)	22	1	)	3
Home Economics	3	)		1	)	
Art	3			3		
Physical Education	2			2		
Music	2			3		
Geography	2			3		
History	2			3		
Mathematics	4	)		8	)	
Design	1	)	6	5	)	27
Science	1	)		14	)	
Total	39			44		

Sources: 'Intake Prospectus'; document issued to parents, giving names of staff, by subject, in advance of parents' evening; Staff Handbook listing all staff.

In the first place we learn that not only do men head departments, such as Maths, Design and Science, where they *outnumber* women (in Science by 1 to 1), they *also* head the English, Modern Languages and Home Economics departments where women teachers are in the majority. In these departments, women teachers have as their Head the *only* man *in*

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the department. All things being equal, one might reasonably expect a ratio of 1:1 of women to men Heads of Department. Clearly all things are *not* equal. Patriarchal social relations are much in evidence in the academic hierarchy.

The subjects/departments listed in Table 5 are deliberately listed in order of the ratio of women to men teachers, rather than in faculty groups. It shows marked gender differentiation according to subjects taught. This is particularly acute in those subject areas traditionally regarded as 'gender-appropriate', namely English, Modern Languages and Home Economics (grouped together as E/ML/HE) on the one hand and Mathematics, Design and Science (grouped together as M/D/S) on the other. Analysing the proportions of women to men teaching in these *combined* subject areas (E/ML/HE and M/D/S), we can see that the ratios are statistically significant. In E/ML/HE, the ratio of women to men is 22:3 (7.3:1), whereas in M/D/S, the ratio is 6:27 (1:4.5). In addition to the fact that these combined subjects are predominantly taught by members of the 'right' (gender-appropriate) sex, note also the *difference* in the ratios. Women are almost twice as likely to be teaching in subject areas traditionally regarded as 'masculine' than men are likely to be teaching in subject areas traditionally defined as 'feminine'.

Pastoral Organization: Year Tutors and Form Teachers

It is in the *pastoral*, rather than the administrative or academic organization of Henry James School that women staff begin to appear in greater numbers: as year tutors and as form teachers of *lower* forms. Year tutors 'are responsible for the academic and social supervision of their pupils as individuals. They are the continuous element in the school's pastoral care, receiving pupils from middle school and seeing them through their secondary education up to the 5th form' (Staff Handbook, p.7). Of eight year tutors, four are women. Each year group has (by design rather than by accident) one woman and one man. Each is responsible for a half-year group. Sue Morris, one of the present third form year tutors, described year tutors as the school's 'disciplinarians'. One of their functions is to

reinforce, verbally, what subject teachers and form teachers have written on students' reports, either by praising them or by 'giving them a telling off'. Sue commented, however, that year tutors are 'used as dogsbodies which undermines (their) status in the school'; they are '*supposed* to be quite high up the hierarchy'. Ms Brown confirmed this view of year tutors as 'dogsbodies' in practice.

Year tutors 'look after' students in collaboration with form teachers and 'attached staff', the latter being new staff members who are 'attached' to particular year groups. They 'assist with the general administration and pastoral care of the year group', for example, by taking form registration when form teachers are absent. The period of attachment also serves as a period of induction into the school's pastoral system. Equal numbers of women and men act as form teachers in years two, three and four. In the fifth and sixth forms, however, men form teachers predominate. When the ratio of women to men form teachers *plus* attached staff is analysed by year group, the gender differences are even more significant.

Table 6: Form Teachers and Attached Staff[9]

| Year | Women | | | Men | | |
	FT	AT	T	FT	AT	T*
2	7	2	9	6	-	6
3	6	1	7	6	2	8
4	6	-	6	6	3	9
5	4	1	5	8	2	10
6	3	1	4	5	-	5

* Note: FT = form teacher; AT = attached staff; T = total
Source: Staff Handbook.

Table 6 shows a significant *decline* in the numbers of women (from 9 to 5) and a significant *increase* in the numbers of men (from 6 to 10) *acting* as form teachers (i.e. *including* attached staff) from year two to year five. That is, the ratio of women to men form teachers/attached staff *decreases* as one moves up the school: second year students

have *women* form teachers/attached staff in a ratio of 3:2 whilst fifth form students are *twice* as likely to have *men* form teachers/attached staff (ratio of 1:2, men to women).

Of course it must be noted that since the school policy is that teachers take their forms through from second to fifth form the pattern in evidence here may not hold for *each* academic year. However, as Ms Brown commented (in writing),

> obviously teachers move to other schools in the middle of this (progression from second to fifth year as form teachers) so individuals are sometimes slotted into the system at levels other than the second year. *The Head decides this.* This may create a certain gender pattern. I don't know. (My emphasis.)

Despite Ms Brown's and my uncertainty on this particular issue, it is appropriate to draw some conclusions on the basis of these data about 'who does what' in Henry James School.

There are, I would argue, two basic 'messages' or two elements of the ideology and *practice* of gender which are, to quote the Head, 'just implicit in the organization and structure of the school'. The first of these, most obviously, is the institutionalization of gender difference. The second is that men have more authority:

> if authority is defined as legitimate power, then we can say that the main axis of the power structure of gender is the general connection of authority with masculinity. (Connell, 1987: 109).

Women and men are not equally represented as teachers across the range of subjects. Nor are they equally represented at all status levels within the school hierarchy. Women lack power within the social structure of Henry James which institutionalizes the power of men. Further, the legitimate power of men is reproduced in the form of mundane activities of some male staff, described by Mrs Carter as 'coarseness' and 'joking', defined at my *prompting* as sexual harassment. There is evidence of a patriarchal culture at Henry James which, first, discomforts at least one woman member of staff. She used the word 'scary'

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and the word 'combat'. Second, Mrs Carter's *feeling* of being unable to 'cope with or combat' sexual harassment is not a personal or individual 'failing': she is not *structurally empowered*, despite her high status in the school hierarchy, to combat sexual harassment. When women speak out and demand that something is done, as Mary's mum did, 'critical reality definers' like Mr Tate are non-committal: women are 'over-reacting'. Ramazanoglu (1987: 62-3)   argues that 'these experiences indicate structural mechanisms in academic life which... reveal the secret sexual politics of higher education'. Power is not just about status, it is about gender. The 'things' which are not explicitly laboured but which are just implicit in the organization and structure of the school' are patriarchal 'things': patriarchal structures and ideologies.

Before I address myself in the next chapter to sexual harassment in the everyday lives of the girls who attend Henry James School I shall first note how 'the whole hidden ethos of the school' has some impact on its pupils. Mr Fraser, sceptical 'as to what schools can do as agents of deliberate social change', expressed the view that

> schools can have a tremendous influence upon individual youngsters, both
> directly and indirectly. And we do both here obviously.

On Being a Pupil at Henry James School

Pupils do not have explicit and detailed knowledge about how many men and women Heads of Department there are. However, they do unselfconsciously 'absorb' the *general* connection of authority with masculinity, the general legitimate power of men and, conversely, the general absence of women's legitimate power. They may observe (though they may not reflect upon the observations) that: the lowest status positions - office staff and canteen workers - are occupied by women; that, in morning assembly, the procedure is overlooked by, and notices and reprimands are issued by men; that men occupy 'centre stage' (Mahony, 1985). Although when students are 'in trouble' they may be referred to year tutors, half of whom are women, when they are 'in *real* trouble' they are referred to

men: either Heads of Department or Deputy Headteachers, ultimately to the Head himself.

Whilst students do not have access to the statistical data relating to who does what in their school, they do have an unselfconscious knowledge that certain subjects, Design, Maths and Science for example, are mostly taught by men and that others, notably English, Modern Languages and Home Economics, are mostly taught by women. They learn that some subjects are 'more for boys' as one third form girl put it. I do not have the space in this thesis to provide a detailed analysis of gender and option 'choices', nor on differential patterns of achievement. However, Figure 7 shows, in summary form, a gender segregated pattern that has been established nationally (see, for example, Mahony, 1985).

Figure 7: Distribution of Girls and Boys in 4th Form Subjects 1985

%		%
100.0	Needlework	Nil
100.0	Childcare	Nil
82.1	Music	17.9
76.1	Biology	23.9
70.7	Home Economics	29.3
67.3	German	32.7
57.0	Economics	43.0
56.7	French	43.3
49.4	P.E.	50.6
48.3	S.R.	51.7
47.8	History	52.2
43.9	Chemistry	56.1
43.1	GIRLS Geography BOYS	56.9
42.9	Art	57.1
31.1	Physics	68.9
24.1	Science	75.9
19.9	Design	80.1
19.0	Rural Science	81.0
2.5	Technology	97.5
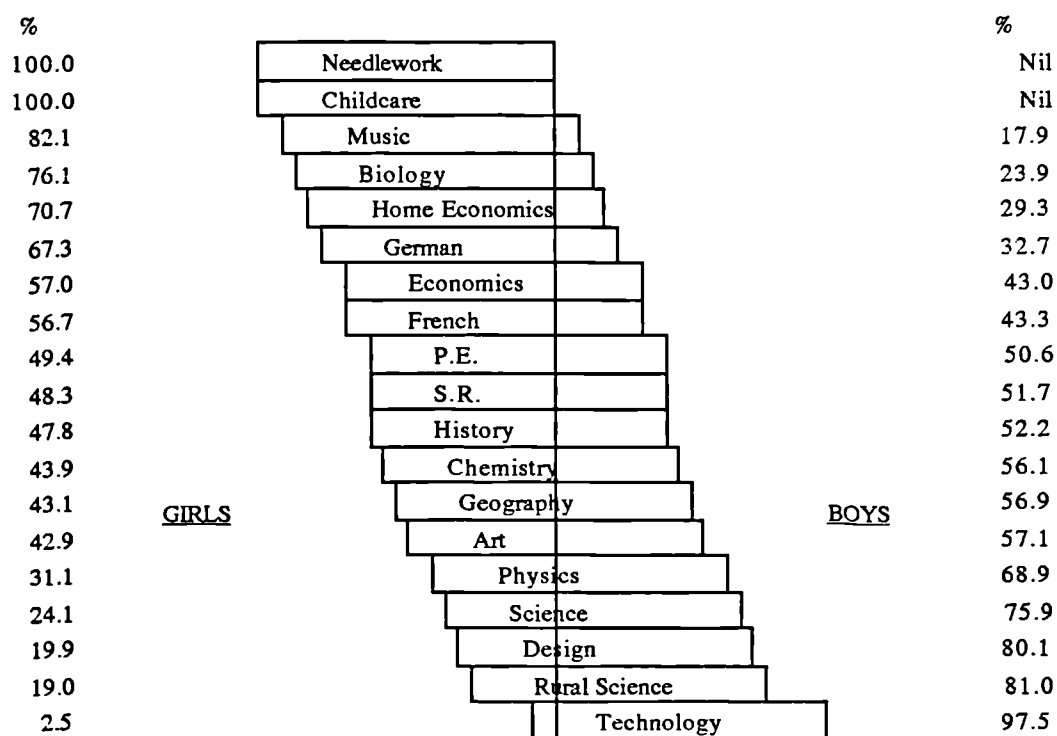
Source: School computer print out.

The Head's view on this state of affairs is, first, that the school has a duty to ensure that all subjects are formally offered to both girls and boys. For example, Mr Fraser was responsible for developing a programme of mixed classes in Home Economics and Design

and Technology for *all* second and third form pupils at a time when such provision 'was not entirely the commonplace that it's now becoming'. However, he continues,

> in fact that hasn't helped as much as we wanted. We do that in the second and third years but then, you see, the influence of society comes in and what we've set up formally is eroded by expectations.

The implication here is both that pupil's expectations are of crucial significance (girls 'opt out' of Design and Technology whilst boys 'opt out' of Home Economics, for example) and that the school cannot and should not aim significantly to impact on existing 'choice' patterns: 'the influence of society comes in'. My analysis of students' perceptions suggests some degree of 'societal influence' on young people's assessments of which subjects are 'more for girls or boys' as Figures 8 and 9 indicate.[10] However, pupils are not solely and not even primarily responsible for 'choosing' their fourth form options. Mr Wilson describes the process of decision making as:

> a sort of balancing act between what the Heads of Department and the subject teachers recommend for individual pupils; balancing that with what those pupils want and what their parents want for them. Now what happens in *practice* is that something like 75% of them accept our recommendations and about 25% *don't*. And of the 25%, most of those question it in perhaps one or two subjects.

He describes many of these cases as being 'neither here nor there'. Often, for example, involving a change from Geography to History. The picture which emerges, then, is one in which teachers, rather than pupils, are primarily responsible for option 'choices'. My data confirm Woods' (1976) argument that teachers are 'important *choice mediators* operating within a framework of *institutional channelling*' (emphasis in original).

The fourth form prospectus details the three principles upon which subject decisions are said to be based. The first of these is that: the course of study must be educationally balanced. The result of the decisions made within a framework of institutional channelling is that, although all pupils take at least one subject in each faculty (in addition to English and Maths), the 'balance' of their individual programmes of study is gendered in much the

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Figure 9: Boys' Mean Rating of Subject Importance for Girls and Boys
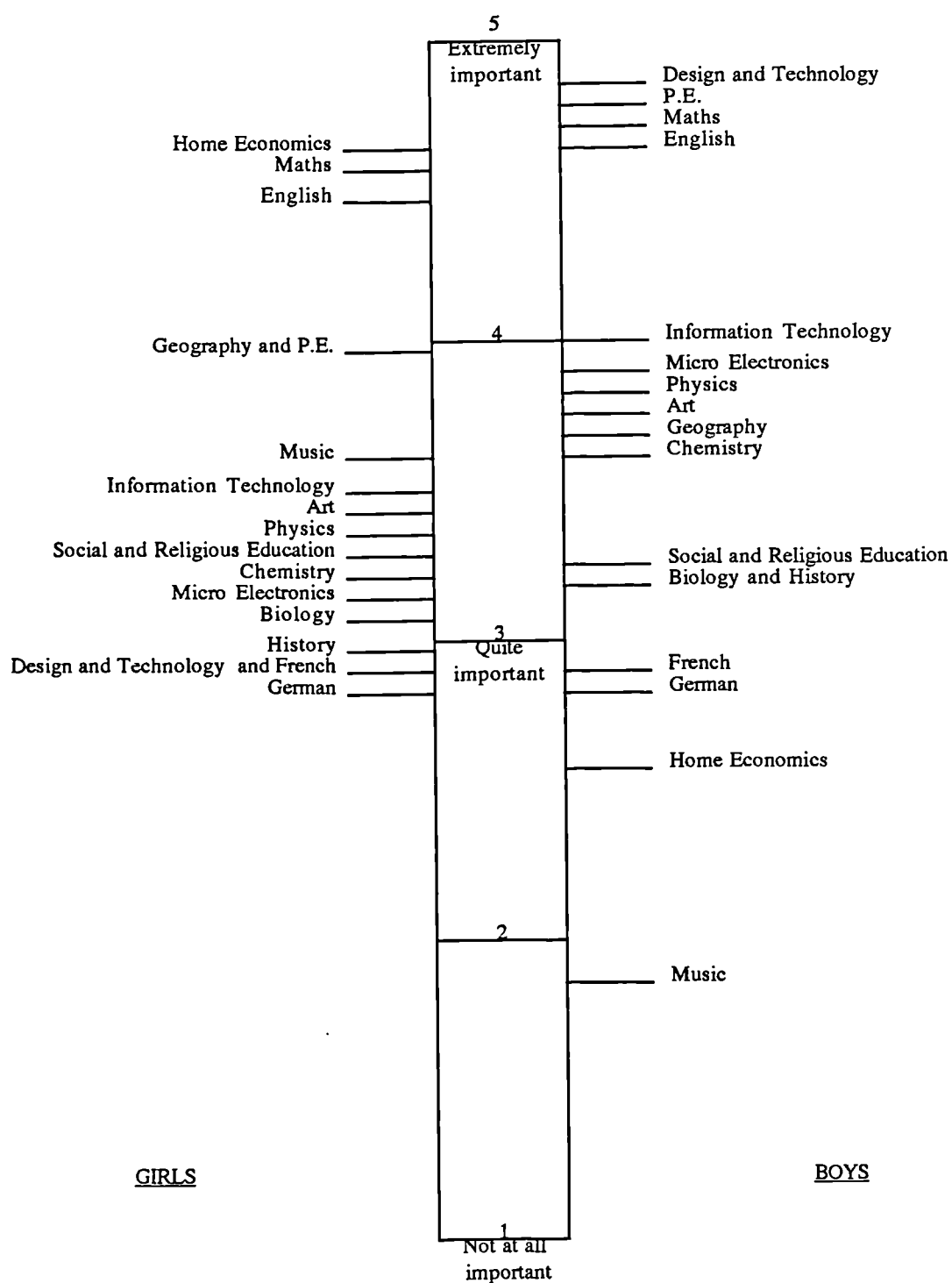
Source: Questionnaire completed by 25 third form boys.

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same way as the 'balance' of staff teaching different subjects is gendered. A detailed. analysis of 3RL's 'chosen' fourth form subjects showed that the girls' 'balance' of subjects is heavily weighted towards the humanities, whilst that of the boys is heavily weighted towards the sciences and arts. Eight of the thirteen girls in 3RL were to take *three* humanities subjects and only *one* science subject upon entering the fourth year. *None* of the boys were to follow a similar timetable. In particular, girls are *not* recommended to study physical sciences, *despite their competence or ability relative to the boys in this subject*.[11] All but two of the girls were recommended for biology; all but one of the boys were recommended for physics. A similarly gender segregated pattern exists in the recommendations for Child Development and Home Economics on the one hand and Design on the other.

A gender segregated curriculum, then, is as much in evidence at Henry James School, as in many other schools. This, as I have argued, is *represented* as resulting from 'the influence of society' *rather than* institutional channelling. There were no attempts within the school to counter *this* state of affairs. There was, however, a concerted effort to counter 'the problem of male under-achievement', notably in respect of modern language study.

Regarding the general problem, Mr Tate explained that 'whereas the girls do very well and as well as can be expected given their capabilities, the boys consistently under-achieve', a remark which can be construed as very patronising of the girls' capabilities. Broadly two reasons were proposed as to why boys 'under-achieve': firstly, middle schools are not 'hard enough' on the boys, according to Mr Tate; 'they don't push them enough'. Secondly, Brickford culture is said to mitigate against boys regarding educational achievement as an appropriately *masculine* activity. Mrs Davies explained the cultural norms in Brickford thus: 'if you can fight, drink and womanize in Brickford, you're a man!'. Mr Jackson, in discussion of this issue with me, quoted a rhyme told to him by some pupils which is said to describe local men:

Thick in t'arm
Thick in t'head
Aye, that's Brickford
Born an' bred!

The school's response to the particular problem of masculine disaffection for and low

levels of achievement in modern languages is evidenced by the following extract taken from

a memorandum which had been circulated to modern languages staff by their Head of

Department:

1. Positive Discrimination of Boys
   When creating the top set in the French and German half of the
   second year, the best 15 boys and the best 15 girls should be put
   together. The boys' IQ and reading age should be taken into
   consideration as well as their test result.

2. Staffing
   The top set in each language in the second year should be taught by a
   male modern language teacher. Hopefully bright boys may begin to
   perceive modern languages as a *legitimate male pursuit*. (My
   emphases.)

The implication of point one is that boys whose language test result is poor should

nevertheless be placed in the top set, in effect meaning a) that the pass mark for boys is

lower than for girls and b) that more able girls are excluded from the top set in order to

make room for less able boys. The implication of the second point is clear. Two women

modern language teachers were unimpressed that they should, as a matter of policy, be

excluded from teaching the top set. The more general points, of course, are first that such

intervention amounts to a clear example of the school acting as an 'agent of deliberate social

change', a role which the Head *professes* is inappropriate. Secondly, no such

interventions were discussed *even as possibilities* in relation to girls' science or

design/technology education. Here, the 'influences of society' are left to have their

patriarchal effects and the gender segregated curriculum is reproduced.

Gender segregation is in evidence and routinely reproduced in other ways too. In morning

assembly, girls and boys customarily occupy separate rows. They are organized into their

seats by teachers in this fashion. Form registers record pupils' names first by sex and then alphabetically. Thus, as a matter of daily routine, pupils hear first the boys' names being read out, second, the girls' names. Girls and boys conventionally sit in classrooms both in same sex pairs and grouped by gender, as the following two, not untypical, room plans illustrate:

Figure 10: Two Classroom Seating Plans

```
| G   G |     | B   B |     | B   B |
|     G |     | B   B |     | B   B |
| G   G |     | B   B |     | G   G |
| B   B |     | B     |     | G   G |
                              | G   G |
              |   T   |       | G   G |
```
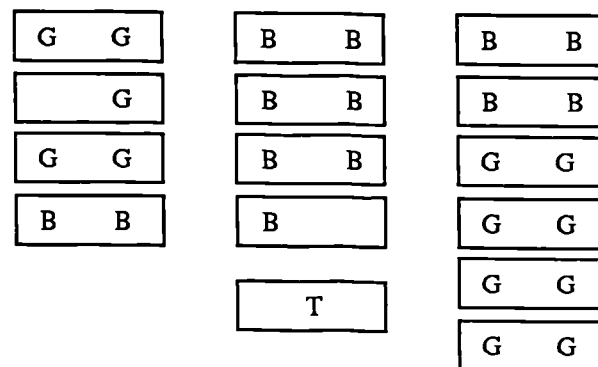
3RL Registration Period, October 1984.

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| G   G |     | G   G | G   G |     | G   G |
| B   B |     | G   G | G     |     | G   G |
| B   B |     |   B   |   B   |     | B   B |
| B   B |     |       |       |     | B   B |
                    |   T   |
```
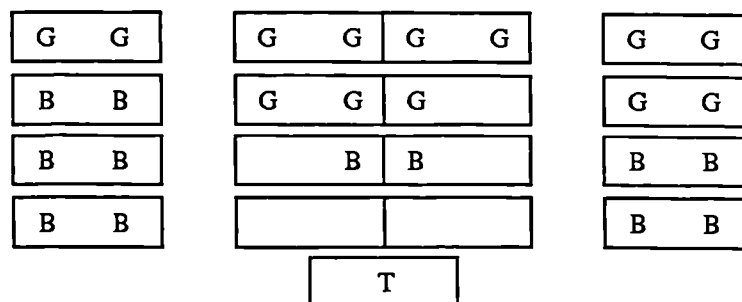
3RL in a Social and Religious Education Lesson, March 1985.

Conclusion

The qualitative and quantitative data which form the basis of this chapter have been selected and employed in combination for the purposes of illustrating the idea that the social relations in Henry James School can logically be described as patriarchal. I have already argued (in chapter three) both that the relationship between power and gender is not simple

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and that the power of men is not 'spread in an even blanket'. Nevertheless, the power of men and the subordination of women in Henry James School is institutionalized in a variety of ways: in the institutionalization of gender difference which is intimately inter-connected to the institutionalization of masculine authority within the teaching and non-teaching staff hierarchy and in the ideological perspectives of senior staff in the school which serve to reproduce existing gender divisions and mundane power practices. A high degree of gender segregation amongst pupils is evident. Whether girl pupils are, like Mrs Carter, subjected to sexual harassment in their everyday lives is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Seven: Sexual Harassment in Everyday Life

Introduction

In this chapter, I present data on sexual harassment derived both from my interviews with and observations of young women. All sixteen of the young women I interviewed more than once had experienced some form of sexual harassment, whether visual, verbal or physical, by known and unknown men in their everyday lives. In the vast majority of cases the perpetrators were not strangers. The data have been selected to convey the variety of forms of sexual harassment. I begin with a consideration of the slightest of interpersonal rituals which constitute the sexual harassment of girls by a teacher, described by Pauline as 'a right Casanova', whom the girls despise. This man's behaviour is contrasted with that of another teacher, which is deemed mutual and is appreciated but which unwittingly but irresponsibly reproduces a culture of which sexual harassment is a component feature. In the second section, the much less subtle, indeed, often quite brutal physical sexual harassment by lads of varying ages will be discussed. The third section focuses on name-calling and on humour as sexual harassment.

The analytic aim of the chapter is to locate the girls' experiences within patriarchal social relations. I argue that sexual harassment must be understood as one of the everyday means or mechanisms by which boys/men exercise power in relation to women and, thereby, through their actions, reproduce structured relations of masculine domination and the oppression of women. In analysing and interpreting some everyday events in terms of oppression, however, I have attempted to respect the subjective definitions of the young women and mention some interactions which, though evidently comparable to those which I define as sexual harassment, cannot easily be construed as such. 'Drawing lines' is a precarious business and inevitably so since, as I have argued in chapter three, the experience of being a woman in patriarchal society is both complex and contradictory.

This chapter then focuses more on what sorts of experiences of sexual harassment the young women have, on what sorts of experiences can be interpreted as sexual harassment. One of the important issues which is *raised* in this chapter but not discussed in detail is young women's *perceptions* of their experiences. In a short concluding section, I summarize the various ideas, responses, interpretations of the young women, which for the most part amount to what Kelly (1988) has called 'the despair of the oppressed'. This despair - and young women's more active compliance with patriarchal ways of seeing and behaving - is discussed in chapter nine, once some of the oppressive continuities between sexual harassment in everyday life and everyday experiences of heterosex have been analysed in chapter eight.

'Casanova' Teachers

Before any of the girls talked frankly to me about Mr Ryder, I had met him several times and had interviewed him once. Like his colleague, Mr Newsom, Mr Ryder was approximately thirty years old, reasonably good looking and 'well turned out' in that although neither men wore a suit, both dressed carefully in shirts and ties, smart trousers and sports jackets. My impression of Mr Ryder was that 'he is pleasant enough but he seems very nervous about my research'. Although a few teachers understandably reacted with apprehension to my presence in the school, Mr Ryder seemed to have particular cause for concern and not, it seemed, as was the case with Ms Jay mentioned in chapter four, because he was an inexperienced and/or anxious teacher. Mr Ryder was the only teacher who accused me - albeit jokingly[1] - of being 'a spy for the Head'; he asked me twice in passing, 'How's the world of spying going?'. He was also the only teacher who asked me what the girls had been saying about him specifically. At first, sensing his nervousness, I was concerned to 'put him at ease', to allay his fears that I was spying. As the girls began to take me into their confidence, I began to understand why Mr Ryder was worried and I became much more concerned for the girls he taught.

During an interview with Fiona, Lynn and Lorna, the conversation turned to subjects and teachers. I simply asked whether anyone had Mr Ryder. Lynn immediately exclaimed, 'No! Oh, no! Not him!' and all three girls laughed. 'Why do you say that?' I asked, 'What's wrong with Mr Ryder?'. There was a short pause:

Lynn:	Well. When I was in (the lesson) he just kept lookin' at me all the time and it was *embarrassing*!
Jacqui:	Really? Lookin' at your face or -
Lynn:	No!
Jacqui:	Lookin' you up and down?
Lynn:	Yeah! It's *embarrassing*!
Fiona:	He sort of stands too close
Lorna:	He gives me the creeps.

I asked other girls whether they were taught by Mr Ryder and received similarly emphatic responses:

Pauline:	Yeah! He's a right Casanova. I hate him.
Jacqui:	Why d'you say he's a Casanova?
Pauline:	It's the way he sits on the table with his legs up. It's just the way he sits there with his feet on the table, givin' you really sly smiles. It really bugs me!
Liz:	... he sort of put his arm round me ... I don't think he meant it but I didn't like it.
Pauline:	Makes you feel a bit ... uneasy.
Liz:	It shocked me a bit.

My interpretation of the young women's statements is that they can be understood as articulations of the way in which Mr Ryder routinely uses gestures and postures which subtly but effectively assert, in a sexualized manner, masculine dominance: he stares and leers; he invades the physical space of young women, neglectful of their autonomy, with his proximity and his 'sort of' touching; he sexualizes the classroom situation by using the tables like a sofa, spreading his body out, prone, in front of them, the meanwhile 'giving really sly smiles'. In short, Mr Ryder routinely engages in a mundane form of sexual harassment. His gestures and postures are micro-political rituals (Henley, 1977) which reflect, occur within and reproduce structured relations of power, making those on the receiving end feel 'uneasy' or threatened. Mr Ryder's constant use of the slightest of

interpersonal rituals, discussed in chapter three, creases an oppressive everyday reality for the young women, although the very ordinariness of the behaviour makes it difficult for them to define it in terms other than 'just looking', 'just sitting', 'sort of' standing too close and 'putting his arm around me'.

The oppressive nature of everyday life is compounded by the absence in the girls' vocabulary of an appropriate label or name to describe the behaviour, which so discomforts. The label 'Casanova' captures the 'seductive' or sexualized nature of Mr Ryder's behaviour but it seems to transform him into a 'lover' of women. It does not capture the evident contempt for the young women's feelings nor the absence of reciprocity in the interactions: the 'ladies' man', 'womaniser' or 'seducer' does not inevitably embarrass and threaten.[2] Further, Liz's phrase, 'I don't think he meant it' captures one of the dilemmas for girls and women in defining discomforting behaviour as unambiguously unwarranted: the issue of self-conscious intent. I have already argued in chapter two that the *intentions* of the powerful are not, to my mind, a defining issue. Young women like Liz would be more empowered to condemn the behaviour of the likes of Mr Ryder if they were encouraged to prioritize the *effects* upon themselves rather than the intentions of the perpetrators of sexual harassment. Nevertheless, the girls express their condemnation with some certainty: 'I hate him'; 'it really bugs me'; 'he gives me the creeps'. Finally, the girls' relative powerlessness is reproduced by the structurally created and maintained silence about sexual harassment. They are not empowered to challenge his behaviour:

> Liz: You can't tell him to get lost.
> Fiona: As soon as you see Mr Ryder you think 'oh, dear'. You
>   don't say anything.

Given Mr Ryder's relative power as an adult, a teacher and, more importantly, a man operating within a patriarchal culture, it is no great surprise to learn that the young women are both humiliated and *silenced*.

Despite their relative powerlessness, however, the girls use such resources as they have to help one another 'cope' with teachers who sexually harass them. Their resources are each other, the 'grapevine' and the 'rumours' that pass along it from one group of girls to another: 'people tell you to watch out for him'. Older girls warn new girls what they might expect from Mr Ryder. The warnings help the girls define which teachers they can trust and which they cannot trust. This does not prevent them from being sexually harassed but it at least forewarns them about the possibility. It publicizes teachers' inappropriate and offensive behaviour amongst the girls, giving them a shared, collective definition of 'problem men'. 'It makes you think what teachers are like when you're on your own with them', according to Liz. In view of the data on attempted and actual sexual abuse of schoolgirls by male teachers provided by Kitzinger (1988) and Herbert (1989), cited in chapter two, Liz and her peers are astute in 'reading into' Mr Ryder's *public* expressions of masculine dominance the threat that his subtle behaviour might be less subtle in more 'private' circumstances. His mundane but evident contempt for young women's autonomy is both discomforting in itself and it threatens. The girls both feel embarrassed and shocked by and hate the oppressive forms of behaviour to which they are subjected in everyday situations *and* they fear more intrusive forms of oppressive behaviour. Hence the rumours abound that Mr Ryder 'kept a girl in after school and had sex with her'.

Mr Ryder has been selected for discussion here because the girls singled him out as a particularly offensive character. As Fiona said, 'He's the worst one', and Lorna agreed, adding, 'There's a teacher like that in every school'. In classrooms where girls are in a minority, the effects of such harassment compound girls' alienation from subjects like Design and Technology which are traditionally masculine. There are many factors which influence option 'choices'. Having a man teacher who is well known throughout the school (at least amongst the girls) for sexual harassment is one factor. Asked if she enjoyed the traditionally masculine subject taught by Mr Ryder, Lynn said, 'Yes'. Then she added, 'If I had him, I think I'd drop out'.

The young women contrast Mr Ryder's behaviour with that of Mr Newsom who jokes and flirts with them: 'but in a nice way, not like Mr Ryder', Lynn said. The classroom interactions with Mr Newsom are not physically intrusive; none of the girls complained that he 'stands too close' or touches them inappropriately. Neither does he stare or leer. He does, however, engage in sexual banter, making jokes, for example, about the importance of 'rounded bottoms' in drawings of glass jars, the *double entendre* being that rounded bottoms on girls are preferable too. Fiona, Lynn and Lorna are of one mind in defining such exchanges as both pleasurable and mutual: 'we tease him too'; 'he can take a joke'; 'we call him Streaky' because he has greying hair. So far, no discomfort, offence or threat. The sexual banter is occasional *and* occurs within the context of a warm and mutually respectful teacher/pupil relationship, although it must be observed that the flirtatious interactions are gendered. Mr Newsom 'jokes more with the girls' according to both girls and boys and 'it's only the girls who have the cheek to call him names 'n' everything', according to Fiona. The label 'Casanova', interpreted as 'ladies' man', fits Mr Newsom it seems more so than it accurately describes the 'creepy' Mr Ryder.

Mr Newsom is said to have engaged in more intimate and 'romantic' though not secret interactions with Lynn who described how she had enjoyed dancing with him at the school Christmas disco: 'smooching, not dancing apart; he's a real go-er' she said. I had heard that they had kissed so I asked:

Jacqui:	Did you kiss?
Lynn:	Yeah! At the Christmas disco! (laughs)
Fiona:	And she dreamed about it all the way home! It was only a peck on the cheek wasn't it?
Lynn:	No! God! It was a proper smooch.

Lynn also described how Mr Newsom had sent her a Valentine card the following February: 'it was in the (form) register. Everyone knew who it was from!' she said with delight. Lynn fancied and flirted with Mr Newsom (by her own account and that of her peers) and was clearly appreciative of his attentions.

A number of girls and boys confirmed the story about the Valentine's card. I have no reason to doubt Lynn's story about the dancing and kissing but I have no means of verifying the information. However, what is important for the purposes of the following analysis is that the above is widely *thought* to be true. In a chapter entitled 'sex and everyday life' Wolpe (1988) discusses comparable interactions in which teachers treat girls 'as adults and not as school children, a fact', she argues, 'which the girls clearly appreciate and of which they approve'. Wolpe is keen to point out that girls 'collude in constructing' personal relationships with their teachers: 'they are as much involved' (Wolpe, 1988: 157). However, she fails to discuss such 'involvement' in terms of power relationships and to problematize the *risks for girls* of becoming 'involved' in relationships with teachers who treat them 'like adults'. They are not ungendered adults; they are young *women* living in a patriarchal culture which judges and condemns *their* 'involvement' with teachers, *not* the male teachers' involvement with them. Even though Wolpe quotes her interviewees as saying 'it didn't worry him (their teacher) that everybody *accused us* of sleeping with him' (p.157, my emphasis) and despite her comment that 'boys gain from having a reputation' (p.167), she nevertheless fails to analyse male teacher/female pupil relationships in terms of power and to note the differential consequences for each of the persons involved. Thus, although Wolpe describes her chapter as 'largely descriptive', her 'refusal' to locate the interactions 'described' *implies* an individualist and voluntarist analytic framework.

Discussing name-calling with Lynn and her friends, I asked whether they had ever been called a slag or a bitch. Lynn said, 'Yeah. Quite a few times' and described one recent and specific incident:

Lynn:	Last night. I was just walking down the road and (Rob) was behind me and he just started calling me names.
Jacqui:	Like what?
Lynn:	Bitch. And he goes 'oh, there's that slag'. They were in a gang and one of 'em says, 'oh, there's that girl that Mr Newsom thinks is the most beautiful blonde in the world'. And then Rob started calling me names - slag. An' it isn't as if there's anything going on between us. 'Cos I wouldn't want that to happen. Because he's married. We're just good friends.

Lynn is active in constructing her relationship with Mr Newsom and she constructs it as 'mutual' (good friends) in much the same way as Wolpe writes *as if* male teacher/female pupil personal relationships were mutual. However, Mr Newsom's flirtatious involvement with Lynn degrades *her* in the eyes of others - her male peers. Quite apart from the facts that Lynn is thirteen and a pupil whilst Mr Newsom is thirtyish and a teacher, their relationship cannot be construed as 'mutual' within the structural relations of patriarchy which condemn Lynn's and not Mr Newsom's 'involvement'. Although Mr Newsom's behaviour is subjectively perceived as friendly and flirtatious rather than offensive, it can be construed as *irresponsible*. He is the more powerful person despite Lynn's active involvement in constructing the relationship. If he were able and willing to consider the structural context within which 'the personal' is constructed and, therefore, the consequences for Lynn of his flirtatious behaviour he might recognize that Lynn's 'investment' in having a more personal relationship with a teacher, poses 'contradictions' which are 'resolved' by many of her peers by condemning her. He might then, to use Giddens' (1976) language of power as agency 'do otherwise'. As it is, he unwittingly reproduces a culture of which sexual harassment is a component feature. His behaviour has the unintended consequence of degrading Lynn: she is a slag, he is a stud (Lees, 1986) or, as Lynn describes him, 'a real go-er'. She is held 'responsible' for the mundane transgressions of a 'Casanova' teacher.

Interestingly, the knowledge of Lynn's 'involvement' with Mr Newsom is much more public. The girls do not discuss Mr Ryder with the boys: 'they'd just laugh', 'they wouldn't take it seriously'. *Lynn* is therefore made vulnerable to the sometimes harsh scrutiny and judgement of her peers although she is not structurally empowered by her age, status and gender to oppress. *Mr Ryder* is protected by the public silence which surrounds his oppressive behaviour.

Sexual Harassment by Lads you Know

Whilst Mr Ryder's behaviour is subtly oppressive and that of Mr Newsom evidently non-oppressive but unwittingly reproductive of patriarchal social relations, other boys and men with whom the girls come into everyday contact threaten and oppress much more obviously. Their harassment of young women is far from subtle. Many of the girls I spoke with have experienced what they call being 'got'. This involves one or more of the following: being chased, being grabbed or groped, being pushed to the ground, pinned down or sat upon, having clothing disarranged, being sexually assaulted. Often, these physical assaults are preceded by leering and accompanied by verbal sexual harassment. The assaults are usually perpetrated by lads whom the girls know; they occur with regularity, often in the street, sometimes in or around their own friends' houses.

Tracy and Lindsey describe the traumas of negotiating the short cut to Lindsey's house which takes them through a group of lock-up garages:

> Tracy: I've got to walk through the garages to get to her house ...
> There's loads of lads - little lads - round about there. And
> when you go down there they all get yer. Y'know and - er
> (laughs, embarrassed) they've got their hands everywhere.
> It's *horrible*!
>
> Lindsey: I were walking through the garages ... and I didn't see 'em
> and they all came over to me and I *couldn't* control 'em. I
> had about sixteen hands on me. And I didn't know *what* to
> do. They just pushed me on the floor.

The 'little lads' referred to here are between 6 and 9 years old. They are the sons of Lindsey's neighbours. Liz and Pauline confirmed that such assaults by younger boys were not uncommon. Sometimes the girls are 'got' by older boys and such assaults are more humiliating, more explicitly sexual and more threatening than the 'hands everywhere' referred to by Tracy and Lindsey. Liz describes an incident which involved herself and two lads (aged about 16) whom she knows 'really well':

Liz:	They got me on the floor 'n' everything. Eugh! I hated it!
Jacqui:	What did they do?
Liz:	They just sat on me and pulled my skirt up 'n' all that. An' it was horrible 'cos I was right in the middle of the street. But you can't do nothin' about it.

The next incident happened to Pauline when she was at her friend's house. Her friend's brother 'had all his mates in as well'. The lads 'got' her on the grass. What shocked her most was 'when it was Pamela's *brother* that got his hand up me - tried to get his hand up me. It really shook me up that did'. It is the myth of 'stranger danger' (Ward, 1984) which causes Pauline to be 'most shocked': she has not been led to believe that the persons most likely to assault her *are* those whom she knows, including her friends' brothers. On another occasion Liz went with a girlfriend to give a birthday card to a lad she knew who was having a party. The two girls were invited in and found they were the only girls. There were about twelve lads. Almost immediately the lads:

Liz:	... were all on top o' me, trying to get me knickers down 'n' everything. I hated it. I was screamin', kickin' everybody. Can't do nothin' about it ... They didn't properly get 'em down ... 'cos I was kickin' everywhere. I just blew! They were teasing me about it at school 'n' everything.
Jacqui:	Who teased you? The boys that had done it?
Liz:	Yeah.
Jacqui:	What were they saying afterwards?
Liz:	Calling me 'knickers'. Things like that.

The first and most obvious point to be made is that these accounts of being 'got' are descriptions of some of the cruder, more obviously violent manifestations of sexual harassment. Such experiences blur into sexual assault, attempted rape and rape forming a continuum of interconnected behaviours which cannot easily be distinguished and which share a basic common character: masculine coercion, threat and force (Kelly, 1988). They are particularly oppressive manifestations of patriarchal social relations. The fear or threat of rape exists on many of the occasions when girls are 'got' by lads they know. As Linda expressed it: 'you don't know how far they're gonna go before they stop'. One of the young women, Vicky, *was* raped by three lads whom she knew (as 'friends'). This is discussed in chapter nine. The point to underline here is that fear of rape is based on the

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reality of rape, not on young women's 'paranoia'. Sexual harassment of the more brutal kind described here is not a rare occurrence. These are incidents which several young women have suffered repeatedly. They create for young women a humiliating and threatening everyday environment. This behaviour horrifies them.

The second point is that these more intrusive forms of sexual harassment underline and reproduce young women's relative and *real* powerlessness.[3] The girls are not passive victims of these assaults but they are, as individuals, in a very real sense, powerless to stop the lads in mid-assault and powerless to prevent them from occurring. Pauline fought but ultimately relied on the lads themselves to stop assaulting her when they decided they were 'going too far'. In Liz's case, all the screaming and kicking she described did not in itself stop the lads. The older brother of the one whose party it was 'came in and stopped it in the end'. One fourteen-year-old girl is no match for a gang of fourteen to sixteen-year-old lads. Sexual harassment of individual girls by groups of lads is one of the most vivid illustrations of the violent exercise of collective male power.

One of the strategies which girls adopt in an attempt to protect themselves from assault is to police their *own* behaviour, employing routine precautions (Stanko, 1985 and 1990). Tracy told me that she had opted out of the short cut to Lindsey's house because of repeated harassment by gangs of young boys en route: 'I make sure they don't come round me 'cos I go the long way'. This is one of the very obvious ways in which sexual harassment controls girls' lives. It affects where they feel they can, with safety, walk alone. Such 'avoidance strategies' are one of the few *perceived* alternatives available to the girls but they do not ultimately protect them from assault, even where such strategies are practicable, because the responsibility for sexual harassment is not theirs: whichever route they take, wherever they go, whatever they wear, there is a risk that they will be sexually harassed because they are young women living in the everyday reality of patriarchal social relations.

The illustrations of physical sexual harassment provided thus far are features of the everyday lives of girls outside school. Masculine forms of exercising power are not transformed beyond recognition when they are at school, however. Sexual harassment at school occurs with regularity though less often in the more 'obvious' or more brutal forms described by the girls earlier. Verbal sexual harassment, however, and some of the less brutal forms of contact harassment are as common in school as they are on the streets. Frequently the lads who assault the girls on the street or at home or at parties are the same lads they know in school, as was the case with Liz, taunted by the comment 'knickers'. More short-lived groping features as a component of the everyday school lives of young women:

> Fiona: There was these two fifth formers behind me. One of them
>   just came up behind me and felt my bum! They were makin'
>   comments like 'Hasn't she got a lovely arse!' ... But I didn't
>   take any notice of it.

Asked whether she felt flattered or complimented by the fifth formers' comments and gropes, Fiona quickly dispels such myths: 'No. I just thought "Oh, they're being stupid again". I just walked off'.

On this occasion Fiona knew who was responsible and was in the *supposedly* 'safe' environment on the school. Yet she 'chose' to 'ignore' the incident rather than expressing any opposition. Speaking of her reaction to this and to other similar incidents, Fiona said, 'we don't say much back do we? We're not so horrible', a point to which I shall return in chapter nine. Sometimes, there is a desire to retaliate but little opportunity because the girls cannot identify the person who harasses them. In one such case, I observed a young woman, a sixth former, walking up a crowded staircase at school en route to an afternoon lesson. She was groped suddenly by someone behind her; his hand darted through her upper thighs and he grabbed her crotch. She wheeled round, her face a mixture of shock, anger and embarrassment but she could not identify the guilty boy, there being a crowd of

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them in the immediate vicinity.[4] She muttered 'bastard' and continued upstairs, her flushed

cheeks burning evidence of her humiliation. Comparable incidents of 'unidentifiable' and

known boys lifting - or attempting to lift' the skirts of girls seated on laboratory stools were

mentioned by several girls as further evidence of the opportunistic exercise of power

through sexual harassment at school.

The patriarchal structure and the culture of the school, documented in relation to its formal

organisation in chapter six, is actively reconstructed in mundane ways through the

mechanism of sexual harassment. Schools are more than passive 'reflections of society'.

They are chronically implicated, through the everyday actions of their members, in the

reproduction of patriarchal social relations. Lindsey is convinced that her five-year-old

brother first learned about sexual harassment when he went to school:

Tracy:	I was standin' in the garden, playing ball and he (Lindsey's brother) came up behind me and put his hand up my skirt! I felt really silly!
Lindsey:	I think he gets it from school. He's only started doin' it since he started school.
Jacqui:	Does he do it to you?
Lindsey:	Yeah! I smack him though. He don't do it [to me] no more. He used to. When he first started school he were terrible - really dirty.
Jacqui:	And he's only five? And he's picked that up from school?
Lindsey:	He must've done 'cos he never did it before.

Name-calling and 'Only Joking': Labels, Humour and the Reproduction of Patriarchal Social Relations

As I have indicated, physical harassment is often accompanied by verbal harassment. In

the case of Liz, the repeated taunt, 'knickers' served to remind her of the humiliation and

fear she experienced at the time of the assault, to embarrass her further by making her

humiliation more public and to reinforce her status - in the lads' eyes - as a sexual object.

Itself an expression of contempt, the name-calling has the effect of degrading her and it

threatens (further) violence. The lads have assaulted her once, their verbal abuse reminds

her that they could - and probably will - do it again. Names with which the girls are most

frequently taunted include 'slag', as in the case of Lynn described in the first section, 'bitch' and 'dog'. 'They (the boys) go "woof woof" and "look at those dogs"' Pauline explained. These words are shouted in the street and used more routinely in everyday interactions: Fiona described how her classmate and friend John had not wanted to 'take his coat off in English this morning, Vicky said something and he said, "shut up, you dog!"'. When asked about being called such names as dog and bitch and slag, all the girls have recent and mundane examples to report. Although a few young women 'defend' boys, their classmates especially, when they use such labels by saying as Fiona did, 'they don't really mean it', Lynn was of the opinion that such pervasive name-calling 'is *not* funny either'. Regardless of whether lads purposefully or selfconsciously employ such language I think Lynn is right. It is *not* funny. This is a language of contempt *for women*.

Since the 'vocabulary of abuse' (Lees, 1989) has been discussed at length by Lees (1986), I will make just three brief points here. First, there is a 'lack of symmetry in the *variety* of names to call a girl', as one of the young women cited by Lees (1989: 21) put it: 'you might make a dictionary out of the names you can call a girl'. Second, slag, bitch and dog are just three of a long list of derogatory names which describe *only women*, as the entries in Collins Dictionary make plain:

> bitch: *slang, derogatory* a malicious, spiteful or coarse woman
> cow: *informal* a disagreeable woman
> dog: *slang* an unattractive or boring girl or woman
> slag: *Brit. slang* a coarse or dissipated girl or woman.

That 'slag' is a derogatory and abusive label is further indicated by the definition of the (slang) verb: to slag means to 'give a verbal lashing to'. It means 'to rubbish' (informal): to criticize or attack verbally. Third, the label 'slag' 'functions as a form of generalized social control' (Lees, ibid). Thus, although we can challenge Mr Tate's assertion that slag no longer has 'the overtones of prostitution' since 'dissipated' is defined as 'indulging without restraint in the pursuit of pleasure; debauched', we can agree that, *in a sense*, Mr Tate is correct. The young women in my study confirm Lees' observations, the term is

defined so imprecisely and covers such a range of 'female misdemeanours' that it effectively embraces and condemns *many*, if not all, women.

However, since the label slag does effectively police women's sexuality, it must be noted, fourth, that there is a lack of symmetry or comparability in the labels which are employed to describe men's dissipated behaviour. I mentioned earlier that the label 'Casanova' does not seem to capture the contempt for young women. There are no derogatory words for active male sexuality. Just as when women subject men to 'sexual hassle' (Dziech and Weiner, 1984), there is, as I argued in chapter three, no balance in the fear or threat. There is no balance in the condemnation of the labels. The derogatory term 'prick' was not used at all in my hearing by the young people of Henry James School. The equivalent (anatomically, though not semantically) 'cunt' was everywhere in evidence, however. In view of the non-reciprocal, sexually oriented use and degrading nature of the names which boys call girls, I regard them as forms of verbal sexual harassment which effectively reproduce the social structures of patriarchy. The labels condemn women. The absence of comparable labels for men's comparable *and* more threatening behaviour reproduces the idea that men are not responsible nor held accountable nor culturally condemned.

Of course, it can be objected that girls use these labels too. Since I have defined sexual harassment as a masculine power practice, what then do I call girls' use of such labels? I call it lack of solidarity: the compliance of young women in the idea that the divisions between them are profound. I discuss this further in chapter nine. Not insignificantly, when girls engage in such behaviour, it is, and has long since been, labelled 'bitchiness'. When boys do it, it had, until feminists labelled it sexual harassment, no name.

Name-calling which degrades women is a more self-evident form of sexual harassment. Joking is a more complex matter. Clearly not all joking or 'larking about' is offensive. On the contrary, humour, including sexual humour, can be a very positive feature of everyday interaction. Thus, when Mike, in the company of several classmates one breaktime,

arranges the jacket on his lap so as to suggest he has a large, erect penis, and Lorna, giggling, hits and deflates the lump, all the young people 'crack up' (as Linda put it) with laughter. No-one is offended, not even when Mike then declares that Lorna is 'trying to wank (him) off'. There is no malice in the joke and the humorous exchange takes place in an informal setting, amongst friends. Mulkay (1988, cited by Fox, 1990) distinguishes 'pure' and 'applied' humour. The former is produced 'for its own sake'. 'Applied' humour, by contrast, 'usually has a serious point to it'; 'it is produced for a hidden or veiled purpose such as to put down, sarcasm, reprimand'; it serves to 'sustain the social order and hierarchy' (Fox, 1990: 432-4).

I am confident in asserting that the above joke does *not* constitute sexual harassment because although it is initiated by a boy and is 'phallocentric', Lorna reciprocally and actively engages in the joke, there was no perceived threat, humiliation or invasion and *all* the participants enjoyed the humour. I am less confident about quite where on the pure/applied dichotomy the joke ought to be placed, however. Although it has no veiled *purpose* (no intended put down, sarcasm or reprimand) it does implicitly serve to sustain a social order in which women service men's 'natural', 'inevitably spontaneous' and 'irresponsible' sexuality, casting woman, through Lorna's response of deflating the 'erection', in the role of 'phallus tamer' (Scruton, 1983)! Mr Newsom's joke about rounded bottoms can be similarly interpreted: it is the shape of *women's* bottoms/bodies that is important The point here, is that sexual harassment *blurs into* or is continuous with the subjectively *appreciated* normality of patriarchal social relations. 'Drawing lines' is a complex matter because the social relations of patriarchy are complex. Patriarchal social relations are less ambiguously reproduced through applied humour, however, as the following examples serve to illustrate.

In one classroom I observed a girl and a boy 'fighting' over a ruler: the girl was attempting to retrieve the ruler which the boy had borrowed; the boy was holding it at arm's length. The teacher had not observed the cause of the dispute; he simply became aware that a

dispute was ongoing, whereupon he responded by saying, 'Put him *down*, Karen!' as if Karen were a sexual aggressor and the boy an unwitting victim. This caused a guffaw of laughter. Karen was one of only two girls in this 5th form Design and Technology class. She was immediately silenced. She blushed and lowered her eyes in embarrassment. The boy returned her ruler, laughing at her. She had publicly been held responsible for the affray and the interaction had been 'sexualized' at her expense.

One afternoon, as I headed for the bus stop straight after school, I observed a girl walking towards me on my side of the street, two boys on the other. One of the boys *repeatedly* shouted 'Wiggle yer bum then! Go on, wiggle yer bum!'. His companion, another boy aged about fourteen, was highly amused at 'the joke'. It elicited no laughter from the young woman. She was stoney faced. Another young woman responded similarly when she found herself on the receiving end of some 'applied' humour shouted from the back of a crowded bus: 'drop your drawers and ten p's yours!', his friend 'correcting' him and, thereby, reinforcing the comment, equally loudly: 'drop your drawers and ten *bob's* yours!'. Also on a crowded bus, I observed and overheard a conversation between another young woman, offering the last third of her cigarette to one of her school 'mates'. 'Peter', she said 'do you want this?', to which he loudly replied, 'I don't mind, Marianne, seeing as you're not going to give me your virginity', and then 'Play your cards right and you can have your clothes off tonight.' The serious point of this humour is that it defines young women primarily in and through their bodies (Wood, 1982) and reflects and reproduces the idea that servicing male sexual needs is an appropriate and necessary role for 'the women in the street' to play. The 'jokes' had the effect of degrading the young women and of taking away their ability to control intimate contact; in this instance, removing their right to control with whom, where and when (if ever) they wish to 'discuss' their bodies, their underclothes, their sexuality. In this way, the social relations of patriarchy are sustained and reproduced.

None of the three young women observed made an obvious response to this 'applied' humour. They ignored the comments but their fixed expressions and their tight lips suggested that they were offended and embarrassed by these 'jokes' which publicly drew attention to their gendered bodies, to their sexual identities. As Stanko has argued, 'silence, contrary to popular belief, does not mean tacit acceptance' (Stanko, 1985: 19). However, there are occasions when young women respond with laughter to 'applied' humour, seeming to accept it. Walking down a corridor at school with Jill and Janet, we came across a young man whom Jill seemed to know. She looked at him and was smiling as he came towards us. As he passed by he said, 'dirty little fucker!' He was not laughing or smiling. I was shocked, both by the accusation and by Jill's immediate and apparently genuine laughter. I asked 'don't you mind him saying that?':

Jill:	No! He was only joking.
Janet:	He's a mate of the lad that fucked Jill last week.
Jill:	Well, I *think* he was only joking!

To my mind, the interpretation that this was 'only' a joke, neglected to take into consideration its very serious point: a condemnation of Jill's sexual activity. 'Dirty little fucker' was barely if at all delivered with humour. It's purpose was quite evident, not hidden. And yet Jill 'took it as a joke' although her second statement suggests some uncertainty about the purpose of the young man's passing comment.

The above illustrations are of limited duration. This does not mean that they are trivial and of limited importance, however. Such humour creates for women a hostile and intimidating everyday reality because it is *commonplace*. What I came to record in my notes as 'the Polo "joke"' was, like the taunting of Liz with the label 'knickers', a more prolonged affair. It transpired that Lindsey had become the butt of the Polo 'joke', now widespread in the school, since the Christmas vacation when a young man, whom I call 'Wicker', attempted, unsuccessfully, to have penetrative sex with Lindsey, as Janet explains:

Janet:	But y'know he couldn't get a hard on ... an' he couldn't get up her ... so that's why he called her 'Polo hole'. But it ain't her fault because he never got a hard on so they were all takin' the piss out of her ... Wicker started it off 'cos he *said* he couldn't get it up ... he was incapable. Y'know what I mean? It was *his* fault.
Jacqui:	So *she* got called names because *he* couldn't?

Instead of replying 'Yes', Janet idiosyncratically responded: 'Well he's a loudmouthed cunt anyway'. Noting the use of the pejorative term 'cunt' rather than the more appropriate though much less frequently used terms 'wanker' and 'prick', I continued:

Jacqui:	What does Lindsey think about the Polo 'joke'?
Janet:	She don't mind. She takes it as a laugh. 'Cos she knows it ain't true. That's how we know it ain't true, 'cos she takes the piss out of herself 'n' all, don't she? (laughter).

The 'joke' was, from Lindsey's position unsolicited and non-reciprocal. It publicly had the effect of degrading her and took away her ability to control intimate contact. Lindsey, some time later, confirmed the details of her own story: Wicker tried to penetrate her, couldn't do it and called her names. Interestingly, she confirms also that her response was to tell her friends by 'taking the piss out of herself' rather than 'taking the piss' out of Wicker. I asked whether she called him any names and how she felt about it:

Lindsey:	No. He didn't like it in front of his mates so he called me it. An' every time I go down the street he shouted it in front of his mates ... I just stood there and didn't say anything. It don't bother me though. All his mates call me it.
Tracy:	You get used to it.
Lindsey:	Yeah. It don't bother me.

Conclusion

One aim of this chapter has been to make visible some of the all too frequently hidden yet everyday experiences of a small group of young women. In documenting girls' experiences of men leering at them, standing too close, joking at their expense, calling them names, groping them in passing and 'getting' them or subjecting them to more prolonged

and invasive sexual assaults, I have conveyed the variety of forms of sexual harassment. Centrally, I have identified sexual harassment as one of the ways in which the power of boys and men is deployed with the effect that women are oppressed. Sexual harassment, I have argued, is best understood as one of the mechanisms through which boys as young as five, as well as youths and adult men, actively and routinely create and reproduce patriarchy in everyday life. Sexual harassment, from the more subtle (or 'creepy') kind practiced by Mr Ryder to the more brutal kind practiced by the girls' peers, can be understood as a partial operationalization of the concept of patriarchy (Ramazanoglu, 1989).[5]

Reconsider in the context of applied humour, Mr Ryder's jokes about me being 'a spy for the Head'. Since I was *overtly* a researcher, the accusation cannot be interpreted as meaning that I was keeping a *secret* watch on others, although it clearly was a sarcastic put down of my activities about which, initially, I felt responsible, hence my concern to put him at ease. The alternative definition of a spy seems to be the serious point behind the humour: a person employed to obtain *secret information* from rivals (usually countries, companies, and so on). That there was a secret or hidden information to be discovered about Mr Ryder is evident *from his own use of humour*. Interestingly, he construed the Head as his 'rival'. The secret information which he feared I might discover and pass on to the Head, he know to be *unprofessional* behaviour. He does not appear to regard me directly as his rival. And yet, since I critique and condemn his behaviour as oppressively *masculine* as well as unprofessional, I am his rival. He was engaging in a patriarchal 'cold war' against the girls: practicing routine hostilities which sustain the social structure of patriarchy. My 'spying' - my discovery and propagation of information that ordinarily remains hidden - threatens to disrupt this structure.

In presenting and providing illustrative evidence for this central argument, I have raised but not detailed an important issue: the young women's perceptions and practical negotiations of their experiences. Is there much evidence of what in chapter one I described as

'oppositional consciousness', of resistance to oppression? There is evidence of oppositional behaviour: Liz repeatedly kicked out at the young men who assaulted her at the party; Lindsey smacked her little brother and so successfully stopped him from groping her. There is also evidence of strategic avoidance: Tracy opting for the long way round to Lindsey's house; Fiona walking away. The sixth former who muttered 'bastard', Lynn saying emphatically of being called 'slag' and 'bitch', 'it's *not* funny either', and the girls' despising Mr Ryder all suggest some opposition amongst at least some young women to their lot.

In addition to listening for evidence of opposition or resistance, however, I also listened for and was particularly struck by the more common articulations where an absence of resistance was evident. In particular, I would highlight the number of times the young women said, 'you can't do nothin' about it', 'you get used to it', 'it don't bother me', 'we don't say much back do we?' and 'they don't really mean it' and 'he was only joking'. Very few of the girls, on very few occasions said anything like 'why do they do this?', still less, 'how *dare* they do this?'. I have already argued in chapter three that the existence of power can prevent resistance and that common sense 'knowledge' is so imbued with ideological content that questions are *not* asked. The absence of questions, criticisms and organized protest does not, however, mean that young women contentedly accept their oppressive everyday realities. Material social relations and ideology are dialectically related: the young women's expressions of resignation can be understood as evidence of the oppressive power of patriarchal ideology. This will be examined in chapter nine. First, I shall document some of the oppressive continuities between sexual harassment in everyday life and everyday experiences of heterosex.

Chapter Eight: 'Going With Boys': Not so much a Mystery, More a form of Patriarchy

Introduction

The title of this chapter is adapted from Lown's (1983) paper. It reflects my reaction upon reading Measor's (1989: 42) comment that for 'adolescents ... the sexual world was covert and mysterious ... its rules had to be discovered and negotiated.' For several of the young women I came to know, much of the 'mystery' of heterosex had gone. Many of the 'rules' they had to negotiate, I argue in this chapter, are patriarchal. Using Mandy's experience as a case study, together with some supporting evidence derived from interviews with several of her peers, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a critical analysis of the routine reproduction of patriarchal social relations in heterosexual encounters and relationships.

Drawing some parameters around what is and is not addressed in this chapter, it must be noted that I do not discuss sexuality in all of its dimensions. The formation of sexual identities (Mitchell, 1974; Sayers, 1982 and 1986; Weeks, 1985 and 1986), long term relationships, romantic love and its relationship to heterosexuality (Lees, 1986; Jackson, 1992; Giddens, 1992b) are not explored, for example. In view of the fact that sexuality has been one of the most divisive issues upon which feminists have reflected, it is pertinent to note that I cannot hope - and do not attempt - to resolve the many problems related to questions of power in sexual relations.

The content of the chapter has been influenced, first, by the kind of sexual experiences which a few young women voluntarily described.[1] These were largely experiences of going *with* boys rather than going *out* with boys. The meaning and significance of this distinction is explored in the first section of the chapter, where I outline the ideology of libertarianism. The content of the chapter has been influenced, second, by my specific purpose which is to document the oppressive continuities between sexual harassment in everyday life and the more intimate experiences, encounters and relationships which young

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women more or less willingly enter into: heterosex and heterosexuality. To argue that the 'personal' is socially constructed, that men's power is often, though not invariably nor inevitably, institutionalized in heterosex, is not to deny the agency of young women, nor that young women may derive satisfaction from as well as be oppressed within heterosexual relations. Thus, in the third section, I employ the idea of investments, taken from Hollway's (1984) account,[2] to analyse what Mandy 'gets' out of 'going with boys'. In the third section, the contradictions for Mandy and her peers are discussed. One feature of the oppressive reality of heterosex - the 'requirement' that girls *actively* service male sexuality - is documented in section four.

Going 'With' Boys: The Ideology of Libertarianism

There are a variety of ways in which young women define and practice their sexuality. Some young women do not countenance the idea of 'having sex' outside of romantic relationships. The sexual practices of others are influenced by the ideology of libertarianism. In essence, libertarianism proposes that sexual desire is 'natural' and should not be 'repressed', nor confined to marriage in particular, nor monogamous relationships in general. It advocates permissive heterosexual (and, though not invariably, homosexual) practice. If, following Nava (1984), we understand feminist positions on sexuality as distributed along a continuum from sex-as-pleasure to sex-as-danger, libertarianism clearly lies at the former end of the continuum. The emphasis is on sexual pleasure which women are encouraged to explore creatively (Vance, 1984; Snitow et al, 1984; see also Campbell, 1980). Permissive heterosexuality, in theory, enables women to engage in sexual encounters as active, pleasure-seeking participants, 'free' from the constraints of more conservative sexual mores.

That Mandy's and Jill's sexual practices are constructed by libertarianism may be illustrated in a number of ways. First, both girls have had a number of sexual partners: Jill (aged 14) has had sex four times, on each occasion with a different partner. Mandy's sexual

experience is more extensive. She mentioned by name three different recent partners, each of whom she has 'been with' for one evening. The girls distinguish between 'going *with*' someone and 'going *out* with' someone. These two expressions were used by many girls without an explicit definition. Having known Mandy for several months, I asked her to clarify the distinction between the two phrases, as *she* understood them. She said,

> 'Going *out*' means when you're going *out* with someone. It means, say, like if you're going *out* with a lad, it means 'got a boyfriend'. That's what it means, y'know. You don't go out with him *all* the time but, y'know, you're kissin' him n' all that. D'you gerrit? An' goin' *with* somebody means when you're not goin' *out* with 'em all the time. You're just goin' *with* 'em on the odd night or summat, y'know.

Since Mandy's distinction was not entirely unambiguous, I attempted to clarify issues further:

Jacqui:	Yeah. So goin' *with* somebody means having sex?
Mandy:	Yeah! Sort of (to Jill) ain't it, really? When you put it like that!
Jacqui:	And 'going *out* with' means 'having a boyfriend'?
Mandy:	Yeah.

Although Mandy *had* explicitly defined 'going out with' as 'having a boyfriend' she did not, until prompted by me, define 'going *with*' as 'having *sex* with'. Conversations with other girls suggest that 'going *with*' a boy need not involve intercourse. It can 'just' mean 'kissin' 'n' all that'. However, for Mandy and Jill, often, though not invariably, 'going *with*' someone *does* mean that they have sexual intercourse with their partners - whether or not that partner is their 'boyfriend' in the longer term.[3]

Secondly, neither Mandy nor Jill regard virginity as a virtue and they are quite candid about their non-virgin status. During my first taped interview with these and two other girls, *they* brought up the subject of sex and virginity. Once it had become evident that Mandy and Jill were 'sexually active',[4] I asked their friend Janet if she were a virgin. Janet nodded whilst Mandy confidently asserted, 'I'm not! No way!'. Shortly afterwards,

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Mandy aggressively put a few questions to Carol who had been silent throughout the preceding discussion:

> Bet you're still a virgin, ain't ya? (Carol nods her head). Are you pure? (Carol nods). Been fingered? (Carol shakes her head). Tight cow! (Mandy laughs).

Mandy is uncompromisingly derisory in her judgement of Carol's sexual inexperience.[5] The girls' identification with libertarianism is illustrated, thirdly, by the manner in which they talk about *initiating* encounters with boys and, finally, by the manner in which Mandy (in particular) describes her enthusiastic participation in her sexual encounters. Again during my first interview with these girls, Jill had been talking about her parents. She suddenly turned to Janet and Mandy:

Jill:	Whatever you do, don't say to mum that we had cider ... because she goes to me ... "I bet you had a quick drink before you went out". I went, "I never!". She went, "If you've lied to me you won't go up the (club) next week". Cos I could say I'm going up the (club) y'see, an' then go down your house. Get three boys in!
Jacqui:	What? Get three boys in at Janet's?
Mandy:	That's if her mum ain't in.
Jacqui:	Are these regular boyfriends -
Mandy:	No!
Jacqui:	- or just any old lads?!
Jill:	No. Just picked up from last night.

Where 'waiting to be asked out' is the more conservative option available to girls, Mandy and Jill are *planning* to 'get three boys in'. Initiating encounters with boys is a practice constructed by libertarianism. So, too, is Mandy's assertion that she has more than one 'boyfriend':

Mandy:	I've already got one!
Janet:	(laughs) She's got about another ten 'n' all!
Jacqui:	You've got two now after last night?
Mandy:	Yeah! This first one, right, he's really nice. Fuckin' 'ell, he's gorgeous! (slobbers enthusiastically).
Janet:	Is that the one with the - the one you was dancin' with the other night?
Mandy:	No. I'm on about Downie now ... Oh! Fuckin' 'ell! (snorts) I sent him this massive card ... an' I put "thanks for a good time on Friday cos ya fucked me!" (raucous laughter).

Jacqui:	Did you mean it? You mean you actually wrote that?!
Mandy:	Yeah! He fucked me on Friday! Yeah!

Mandy had no hesitation in expressing her delight at having had sex with Downie. Her reference to the card she sent him is an interesting reversal, too, of more traditional practices whereby boys/men send greetings or flowers to thank women.

The girls continued to talk about their sexual practices in an uninhibited manner. The fact that I was taken aback by their engaging frankness is evident from some of my incredulous responses. Nevertheless, their conversation indicates that, far from being reluctant, even passive, participants in sexual encounters with boys, they experience themselves as active sexual subjects. The significance of 'he fucked me' aside for the moment, Mandy talks *as if* she is a free agent engaged in mutual and mutually pleasurable sexual encounters.[6] Janet, though not herself sexually experienced at this time, was keen to relate to me information about the other girls:

Janet:	And you got up to something else you dirty bitch! And she did something else with him ... Excuse me! ... and she did something else with him ... (pause)
Jill:	(to Mandy and Janet about me) She's going "What? What? What?"!
Jacqui:	I'm thinking "What? What? What?"! (laughter) I was bein' too polite to ask!
Janet:	Gobbed him off!
Jacqui:	I see! At his request?
Mandy:	Yeah!
Janet:	Sucked him!
Jill:	That's what I was doin' *at his request* ... he goes, "you'll like it!". I goes, "will I?" (doubtfully) ... Fuckin' 'ell – under your nose ... it was about that big ... couldn't get me mouth round it ... I bit it!
Mandy:	I love it! I love it! ... I was nearly sick on 'is! He kept goin' (indicates thrusting) and I kept goin' (indicates puking) ... But I like it! Ooh! (makes gobbling noises) Lovely!

Having conveyed something of the flavour of what 'going with boys' - of how heterosex is constructed and experienced by Jill and Mandy, I move on to consider their accounts in terms of investments and contradictions, to analyse their experiences as features of patriarchal social relations.

Hollway (1984) uses the term 'investment' in order to account for 'the forces propelling people's actions'. These are *not* reducible to biology, nor are they (totally) determined by 'social forces'. She says,

> by claiming that people have investments, (she) mean(s) that there will be some satisfaction or pay-off or reward ... for that person. The satisfaction may well be in contradiction with other resultant feelings. It is not necessarily conscious or rational. But there is a reason.

To claim that there is no good reason or no reason at all would be to deny completely Mandy's subjectivity. Mandy's options and experiences are, like those of us all, circumscribed by material conditions and by common sense ideas but she is not to be dismissed as a 'cultural dope', 'a passive object' (Holly, 1989: 6 and 14) or a falsely conscious victim of patriarchy who cannot see where her 'real interests' lie. There are some satisfactions or pay-offs or rewards for Mandy in her identifications with libertarianism. Power, of sorts ironically, and guilt-free pleasure are key pay-offs for Mandy. Both Mandy's and Jill's descriptions of their sexual activities were light-hearted and uninhibited. They do not feel guilty or ashamed of their sexual practices, of their sexuality. In a culture which still, despite the sexual revolutions of the past thirty or more years, manages to produce many individuals who are weighed down with feelings of guilt and shame about unextraordinary sexual desires and practices, Mandy's and Jill's uninhibited, shame-free and guilt-free sexuality can be considered in a positive way.

Then there is the pleasure of sex itself. Mandy, in particular, expressed some considerable satisfaction with aspects of her sex life: 'I love it! I love it! Lovely!', all accompanied by various enthusiastic slobbers and snorts. The pleasure and excitement of the sex *and* the recounting of their experiences afterwards seem to be two of the obvious pay-offs for the girls. The important idea that Mandy's definition of what constitutes sexual pleasure may

change, either when (or if) alternative material realities of sex become a part of her, as yet limited, experience and/or when (or if) her *perceptions* of her experiences alter significantly, does not alter the fact that her current investment in heterosex is in one sense simple: she enjoys it. Related to this is Mandy's general 'non-conformism'. She *hates* school. It bores her. Sex is much more exciting. This case study - Mandy's experience - seems to support Wolpe's (1988: 158) assertion that 'there is no doubt that an inverted relationship exists between commitment to school and (girls') emerging sexuality'. However, I consider this relationship to be far from proven.[7]

Continuing with the theme of Mandy's investments, additionally, engaging in sexual encounters with boys affirms Mandy's perception of herself as sexually desirable. I have already mentioned that her first words into my microphone were, 'Hello! My name's Mandy. I've got a really sexy body!'. Another of her favourite phrases was, 'I'm gorgeous!'. For many young (as for many older) women being attractive, being desirable offers status and power. Mandy's sense of self - her gendered subjectivity - is intimately connected with her desirability and her 'rampant heterosexuality'. A further advantage for Mandy of investing in libertarianism is that her sexual experience and her unashamed 'immodesty' gives her certain 'powers', at least in relation to boys her own age. For want of a better phrase I shall refer to this as her 'power to shock'. Two examples will suffice to demonstrate what is meant by this. The first example is an incident which I observed whilst on a school-organised coach trip to Blackpool. I sat at the back of the coach with Jill, Mandy and several other 'non-conformist' kids. Mandy was sitting in the middle of the back seat. She was wearing a short skirt. At one point, she very deliberately widened her legs and exposed her crotch to two boys who were sitting, facing her, on the row in front. She looked directly at them and smirked as she did it. They were embarrassed, lost for words and looked away. Mandy then resumed a more 'modest' pose.

Discussing Mandy with two other girls at a later date I was told of another, similar incident. Tracy and Lindsey did not like Mandy. They had been talking about her 'anti-social'

behaviour towards them - her bullying - and about her wearing such short skirts. Lindsey said,

Lindsey:	D'you know what she done in biology once? She undid her top and flashed her bust!
Jacqui:	Were you there?
Lindsey:	Yeah! An' she called Tracy a lez cos Tracy - well it's obvious ain't it -
Tracy:	I looked up!
Lindsey:	If someone's goin' like that! And she was showin' this lad, she says, "Go on! Feel me!". The lad didn't know what to do, right, and erm Tracy looked over to see what everybody were laughin' at. An' everybody else was starin' at her ...

Mandy's 'flashing' of her body to boys her own age can be understood as a less sophisticated version of what one might call a 'Madonna factor'.[8] We *can* dismiss her exhibitionism as the unambiguously 'bad' behaviour of a 'bad girl' in which case Mandy becomes a 'slag' as she is so defined by Tracy and Lindsey in much the same way as Madonna is defined by many as 'that slut'.[9] We can pathologise her exhibitionism as a perversion. However, if we employ the language of perversity, we are obliged, I would argue, to acknowledge Freud's (1905/1975) insight that

> the sexual traits associated with perversions, far from being restricted to small categories of abnormal people, are qualities common to the sexuality of everyone (Giddens, 1992b: 32).

Mandy, like Madonna, unashamedly visibilizes 'subterranean' desires in much the same way as 'delinquent boys' are understood by Matza (1964: 28) to exaggerate and flaunt widely circulating 'subterranean' values, including the pursuit of excitement. Mandy's flaunting of her body illustrates that she has, and uses, the power to shock, tease and/or excite. This 'power' is explicitly used both to reaffirm her sense of self and to tease boys who are less sexually experienced than herself. She knows that many boys are 'flummoxed' by 'immodest' - that is, explicitly sexually provocative - behaviour in girls. She exploits their naivety and/or their conservatism by challenging their preconceptions of girls' sexuality with the result that the lads 'don't know what to do'.

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In sum, I have claimed that Mandy has certain investments in libertarian sexual politics. I have described the satisfactions or 'pay-offs' for Mandy as shame-free and guilt-free pleasure and an albeit precarious 'power to shock'. However, the satisfaction which Mandy derives is in contradiction with other resultant feelings. Although libertarianism constructs sex in an *apparently* egalitarian way in that, for example, young women can initiate sexual encounters and express their sexual desires 'free' from the guilt-inspiring constraints of more conservative sexual politics, the development of libertarianism did not suddenly transform gender differences in heterosexual relations as Hollway (1984) and others (Campbell, 1980; Jeffreys, 1990) have argued. Men's relative power and women's oppression were never banished in reality in the *supposed* egalitarianism of permissive practices. In the following section, the disadvantages, the *contradictions* for Mandy and her peers will be examined.

Before I engage in a critical analysis of these contradictions, however, I stress that what follows should not be misunderstood as a critique solely of 'permissive' heterosexual encounters. For many of the oppressive heterosexual realities described here by Mandy and her friends have been well-documented in long-term heterosexual relationships which are little (if at all) influenced by libertarianism (Hite, 1976 and 1987; Kelly, 1988). Thus, my interpretation and analysis differs markedly from that of both traditional moral authoritarians and of the New Right (Weeks, 1985 and 1986). The meanings of heterosex are multiple and the practice of heterosex remains contradictory for *women*, not just for 'permissive' young women like Mandy and Jill. It is not libertarianism *per se* which oppresses women, although this ideology most effectively conceals and mystifies underlying oppressions. It is patriarchy.

Contradictions

Despite the girls' investments, Mandy and her friends are *not* 'going with boys' on equal

terms. In view of my understanding - that heterosex can be and often is a site of oppression

and struggle for women - of what the girls had said, in their lighthearted and uninhibited

way, about their sexual relations with boys, I subsequently asked them, in a fairly casual

manner, the following question:

Jacqui:	D'you think the girls enjoy going out with the boys as much as the boys enjoy going out with the girls?
Jill:	(Emphatically) No. No. The boys enjoy it more. Definitely.
Jacqui:	Why?
Janet:	The boys only wanner go out with you for a quick - for a fuck.
Jill:	Cos they do! That's why the thing's called 'go with people' instead of going *out* with them. It's an excuse.
Jacqui:	So what d'you get out if it then?
Jill:	(Matter of factly) Not a lot ... The girls don't really get a lot out of it, do they? Well, a good time and then bye bye!
Mandy:	Good time and then tara!
Janet:	It's true ... they find you, they follow you, they feel, they fuck you. Then they fuck off!
Jill:	Five Fs: find, follow, finger, fuck, forget.
Jacqui:	D'you think most of them are like that or -
Jill:	All of them. Nine out of ten.

This illustrates that the meanings of sex *are* more complex and contradictory than the girls'

previous, lighthearted comments might have indicated. Given the opportunity to focus on

the relative enjoyment derived by girls and boys from sex, Jill's response was immediate

and emphatic. The girls' critique raises two immediate issues: first, that despite Mandy's

and Jill's professed active initiation of sexual encounters with boys ('get three boys in' at

Janet's), reference to the 'five Fs' suggests that it is the *boys* who initiate and control the

duration of sexual relationships; in Mandy's words, it is 'a good time and then tara!'. The

boys, according to these girls' accounts, construct their sexual practices in accordance with

the tenets of patriarchal ideology. When the boys 'are desperate' - when their 'natural'

sexual urges, unfettered by emotional considerations, such as any regard for the girls'

feelings, dictate that they want sex, they find themselves a girl, any girl whom they know

will 'oblige' them. Mandy and Jill experience themselves as objects who are picked up and discarded at the boys' convenience.

Secondly, and related to this, is the question of who controls the *quality* or *nature* of the sexual encounter, that is, who controls what happens and in what circumstances? How much of a 'good time' do the girls really have? When Janet says that the boys *only* want the girls 'for a fuck' and Jill agrees that going with people is 'an excuse', both girls imply that *their* reading of the situation is different. What they want is not *just* 'a quick fuck'. I asked,

Jacqui:	What do you want out of it? What would make it better?
Jill:	Somebody nice. A nice face ... a nice personality ... Someone who treats you not like shit, y'know what I mean?
Mandy:	Who dun't treat you like shit? I mean, c'mon, tell me!
Jill:	I know!
Jacqui:	What? Most of them do? What d'you *mean* when you say they treat you like shit? What do they, y'know, what kinds of things to they do or not do that makes you say that?
Mandy:	They don't speak to you. Then when they wanna fuck they come an' grab you, take you down the nearest alley, leave you for a couple of days -
Jill:	Then come back when they're desperate.
Mandy:	If they know they can gerrit, then they take you for granted.

What Jill and Mandy *want* is 'somebody nice', somebody with a 'nice personality', somebody who treats them like human beings. What they have *got* is boys who take them for granted, who don't speak to them, who treat them with contempt.

Mandy's full account of her encounter with Baz amply demonstrates the inegalitarian nature of their brief encounter, her relative powerlessness and his relative power within heterosex and the contradictory feelings which Mandy therefore has. The interview from which the following transcript is taken occurred towards the end of January, some six weeks after Mandy had both spent the evening with and sent the card to Baz:[10]

Mandy:	(Uncharacteristically subdued) People say you can't be in love when you're young but you can.
Jacqui:	You've been in love then?
Mandy:	Still am.

Jacqui:	Who with?
Mandy:	Not sayin'.
Janet:	Tell *me*!
Mandy:	Yeah. I think I will. She (Janet) knows. She knows every single thing about me.
Janet:	That's right! Is it Baz then?
Mandy:	Yeah. He's a wanker an' all. I hate him! (angrily) Well you don't. You just say that but it's only cos he hurt me, ain't it? (subdued)
Jacqui:	How did he hurt you?
Mandy:	Oh! The bastard! He fucked me and left me. What was it? ... Find me, follow me, finger me, fuck me, finished with me ... He's one of them. He gets what he wants and fucks off. I'll tell you about it ... It was on a Friday night (the Friday before school broke up for Christmas). An' he comes up to me. He goes, "You comin' down my house?". I goes, "Yeah. All right then". He never broke my heart, d'you know what I mean? It's only cos he hurt me ... *I hate him. I detest him.* (Recently) he goes to me ... "Oh - er - you comin' outside for a minute?". I goes (defensively) "What for?", y'know, cos I *knew* what he wanted me for but I wouldn't, I *wouldn't* accept it at the time, d'you know what I mean? (Subdued, here, Mandy returns, more animatedly, to the account of her first, and only, night with him) An' I thought, "Oh god! This is my big chance! An', right, he says, "Come upstairs". So I went upstairs. He put his arms round me an' started kissin' me, right ... I took me tights off. I took me pants off. Whatever you call 'em. We call 'em trollies ... or grundies or undercrackers! ... Anyway I took me trollies down (laughs) he got on top of me an' just did it! An' then we went downstairs. I gobbed him off downstairs in the front room. I gobbed him off in the kitchen ... where *didn't* I gob him off! (laughs) An' anyway he wanted to fuck me again but I had to go, an' he wouldn't let me go. He goes, "Gob me off just once more an' I'll let you go". He goes, "*You ain't goin' yet*". An' I thought, "Fuckin' 'ell, I'm gonner get - " this is twenty to twelve at night. I'm supposed to be in for half ten. Me dad went *mad* at that. Anyway, I went in the end an' I was walking up the road - it was me an' Mary cos Sharpy had just been fucked - I mean Mary had just been fucked by Sharpy ......

Mandy's account[11] is imbued with contradictory feelings about Baz. These feelings are illustrated as much as by *how* she related her story - at times subdued, at others angry, and at others quite animated - as by what she actually said. Mandy 'loves' Baz: she cares about him; she has an affection for him. He didn't 'break (her) heart' but because she likes him and he treated her badly, she is hurt. She hates how he behaved towards her. At the *time*, she 'loved' him. When he invited her back to his house she thought 'this is my big chance!'. Mandy does not exactly explain what she means here: she wanted to have sex with him, certainly, but in view of her assertion that she loves him, it is possible that her

'big chance' was not *simply* an opportunity to have sex with Baz, but also, perhaps, an opportunity to become his girlfriend, to go *out* with him, as opposed to just going *with* him. Mandy never said that she wanted a long term relationship. She once asserted, 'I don't want to get married. I just want to have kids (and) to be on me own'.

However, Mandy realized that *all* Baz wanted her for was immediate sexual gratification, not only without the implication of an ongoing relationship but also without any real affection either at the time or subsequently. On the contrary. Baz was contemptuous of Mandy, as she was later to understand. Several girls said that, having 'been *with*' a boy, he subsequently *ignores* them. Mandy said of Baz, 'for some time he didn't look at me or speak to me or anything', even though she saw him often around school. In view of this I asked Mandy how Baz had reacted to the card she had sent him,

Jacqui:	What did he do?
Mandy:	Nothin'. He told everybody he ripped it up. But I *know* Baz and he wouldn't.
Janet:	He did. I was there when he ripped it up.
Mandy:	He probably said he did but -
Janet:	That great big one? He did. I were there.
Mandy:	What's he say then?
Janet:	I mean everybody was takin' the piss out of him: Wicker an' that lot. He got embarrassed. You know how lads are. In front of his mates you have to act hard. He ripped the back off it, just the back. I think he kept the picture of it.
Mandy:	I don't care anyway.[12]

Not only did Baz ignore Mandy, he demonstrated his disregard for her feelings by ripping up the card she had sent him, thus humiliating her in front of several mutual acquaintances. He demonstrated his contempt by telling everybody. Janet's comment, 'you know how lads are', suggests that, whether or not she *condones* Baz's behaviour, she finds it understandable. It is entirely consistent with her view of boys that they should be contemptuous of the girls with whom they have sex, because, after all, it is 'only natural' that their sexual encounters with girls should be (or should *seem* to be) unfettered by emotional considerations for those girls: boys 'have to act hard' in front of their mates.

Being contemptuous of women is a component of being a 'real lad' (Wood, 1984).

Mandy's description of her encounter with Baz illustrates that she is, in fact, *less* in control of her relationships than he is. Baz initiated the encounter by asking Mandy back to his house. He coerces her into remaining with him despite the fact that she was worried about being out later than she should have been. He controls the *duration* of the encounter. He also controls the 'quality' of their encounter: he defines the meaning of sex; he defines the particular *form* of heterosexual practice. *He* fucks Mandy: 'He got on top of me and just did it'. Mandy 'slips up' when she says, 'Sharpy had just been fucked -'. She immediately qualifies this or 'corrects herself', albeit in an unreflexive manner - by saying, 'I mean, Mary had just been fucked by Sharpy'. Boys do not '*get* fucked' in Mandy's world; *girls* do.

Servicing Men/Boys

Further, Mandy is not simply required to be sexually available - 'yielding and submitting' to boys/men - in a passive manner. She is required to take an active part in servicing their sexual desires. Baz coerces Mandy into a non-reciprocal activity which further illustrates the non-egalitarian nature of heterosex, namely, 'gobbing him off'. Mandy seemingly engages in this activity with 'gay abandon'. However, it would be erroneous to assume that she initiates or controls her sexual practices with complete autonomy. Sex does not take place in a vacuum; it is socially constructed and it is largely constructed in terms which reproduce the systematic inequalities of power between women and men. This power may be exercised in a variety of ways: for example, by brutal/physical coercion, by mild, if repeated, verbal pressure, or by strong expectations. Mandy's expectations about what constitutes 'appropriate' sexual behaviour are constructed in terms of giving pleasure *to* boys, performing *for* boys. Thus, she (seemingly) *spontaneously* 'services' Baz: 'I gobbed him off ... in the front room! ... Where *didn't* I gob him off?'. However, Mandy's willingness to do this is reinforced by Baz's expectations *and* by his verbal commands: 'Gob me off just once more an' I'll let you go'.

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Having listened to Mandy's account without interrupting her, I subsequently engaged her in a frank discussion about oral sex; in the first place to establish what the practice entailed for her, and secondly, to determine whether the practice was reciprocated:

Jacqui: The other thing I wanted to ask you ... I can see me gettin' embarrassed now! A personal question: you know when you talked about gobbin' him off, right? Erm ... do you actually make him come?

Mandy: Sometimes. It all depends. If he's just come he won't come again, but if he ain't, he will.

Jacqui: In your mouth?

Mandy: No! Pissin' bore that is! Yuk!

Jacqui: Is Baz the one that offered to 'muff-dive' you?

Mandy: Mmm.

In our December conversation Mandy had said of Baz's offer to reciprocate ('muff diving' is the colloquial expression for cunnilingus) that *she* did not want him to: 'I like fuckin' an' all the rest of it ... I just don't like that'. In *this* conversation she said that she *did* like it:

Mandy: but not all the time. It depends what mood I'm in ... you gotta be in the right mood, y'know what I mean? Can't just do it whenever you want.

Jacqui: Does it depend on who you're with?

Mandy: It depends *very much* on who I'm with. I'm dead fussy on things like that, ain't I?

Jacqui: Mmm. So ... why wouldn't you want Baz to? Or was it just that you weren't in the mood at the time?

Mandy: I dunno. I dunno. (long pause) I mean you can't just do it with any old Tom, Dick an' Harry can you?

Mandy was very rarely uncomfortable or embarrassed during our conversations. She more often accused *me* of being embarrassed. On this occasion she *was* uncomfortable. There was another long pause. I did not question her further. Mandy broke the silence by 'cadging a fag' which she then took to the toilet to smoke. Such comments as Mandy was prepared to make on the subject of oral sex, however, clearly show that the practices - 'gobbing off' and 'muff-diving' - have different meanings for Mandy. Whilst she is quite happy to perform oral sex for Baz, even though she finds it in part, or potentially,

distasteful ('Pissin' bore, that is. Yuk!'), she is *not* happy about having Baz reciprocate. Whist Mandy is 'fussy about' who *does* 'muff-dive' her ('You can't do it with any old Tom, Dick an' Harry'), Baz and the other boys seem to have no similar hesitation. On the contrary, they *demand* that the girls do it. In this respect, also, the girls' sexual encounters are non-reciprocal and non-egalitarian.

Jill and Janet take turns to recount an experience of Jill's in which she was similarly coerced:

Jill:	When Rich was trying to get off with me, he goes, "Put the drink down". I goes, "No!". He goes, "Put the drink down" -
Janet:	Oh! Yeah! Yeah! You told me! She gobbed him off!
Jill:	Who? Me?!
Janet:	Yeah! Yeah! He fucked you. Then you gobbed him off! ... He goes, "Lick it!" Aahrg! Yuk! Yuk! Puke!
Jill:	I went, "Er, no thank you!" ... He makes this stupid noise in your ear. He goes (pants, heavy breathing)!
Janet:	An' he starts goin', "Gob me off, Jill! Gob me off, Jill!"
Jill:	An' I'm goin', "Get out of it!"

Nevertheless, despite her reservations and despite saying 'No', Jill *did* respond to, was coerced by, the *commands* of her partner. As she said earlier, 'that's what I was doin' at his request ... couldn't get me mouth round it!". Liz further illustrates how boys sometimes more brutally coerce girls into performing oral sex for them and how ashamed of this some girls feel:

Liz:	I've changed I have cos -
Linda:	You've changed a *lot*, you have!
Jacqui:	Changed in what way, Liz?
Liz:	(Embarrassed) I can't say!
Linda:	She's changed her little girlish ways! D'you know what I mean?
Jacqui:	No! (Linda laughs)
Liz:	(To Linda) *You* know about it, don't you?
Linda:	Yeah! But I ain't sayin'!
Liz:	Go on! *You* tell her because I can't. I'm embarrassed!
Jacqui:	Linda, you start off an' see if Liz'll join in?
Linda:	Aw!
Liz:	I'll start! But I'll let her finish! ... I went out with this lad called Steve. Well, I didn't go *out* with him. I'd finished with my boyfriend three nights before ... an' I went up his

	(Steve's) house and he asked me to go out with him ... I've made a start! ... I can't tell you!
Linda:	She done summat naughty with 'im! In the kitchen!
Liz:	I done summat!
Wendy:	Wanked him off?
Liz:	(Shakes head. Laughing but embarrassed)
Wendy:	Gobbed him off?
Liz:	(Nods) Right! (To me) Don't hate me!
Jacqui:	(Shocked) Why should I hate you?
Liz:	Anyway I done that, right ... he said come round the next day. And he wanted me to gob him off an' I kept sayin', "No". He goes, "Wank me off". An' what he did, he got really vicious then cos I wouldn't gob him off. He kept tryin' to put me head down an' I wouldn't do it. I was really upset about it. So I pushed him off an' that was it. An' then I was walkin' home. An' Charlie took me home in the car.

Liz and I had many conversations during which she was neither inhibited or embarrassed. This was the only occasion on which Liz was extremely reluctant to describe what had happened and how she felt. She was able to do so only with the assistance of Linda and Wendy. In some respects Liz's experience differed from Mandy's. Liz had been coerced - *not* by mild, if continued, pressure but more brutally *forced* - into performing an act which she had repeatedly refused to do. Steve 'got really vicious'. Liz was an unwilling participant. She was 'really upset'. Nevertheless *she* was ashamed. She feared that I would 'hate' *her*, an important point to which I will return in chapter nine where the significance of Linda's comments that Liz has 'changed' and that Liz 'did summat naughty' will also be considered.

There *are* differences in Mandy's and Liz's sexual meanings and practices: Liz is ashamed; Mandy is unashamed. Mandy goes with boys; Liz goes *out* with boys. Sexual acts, when Liz is able to exercise some measure of control in this sphere of her life, take place within longer term relationships. However, *like* Mandy, Jill and Janet, Liz affirms that this is one activity into which the girls are, in various ways, coerced. Having ascertained that on this particular occasion Liz was violently coerced, I wanted to establish whether these girls also felt coerced in more subtle ways and, again, whether the girls have similar expectations of the boys. I asked,

Jacqui:	It seems ... one of the impressions I'm gettin', the more people I talk to ... it seems like the boys *expect* that?
Liz:	Yes! ... That's all he wanted to go out with me for. Cos after that (i.e. after she had refused) he didn't speak to me. He probably wouldn't speak to me now. I dunno. I ain't bothered. I don't care any more.[13]
Jacqui:	Would they do the same for you?
Linda:	Yeah! The boys would!
Liz:	Yeah but the girls don't *expect* it. The girls sort of don't *want* the lads to, do they? They don't say, "Fuck me!" do they?!

Whilst Linda acknowledges that whilst the boys *would* reciprocate, Liz affirms that not only do the girls not *demand* reciprocity, they also 'don't expect it', they 'sort of don't *want* it'.

That the girls do not expect to be similarly 'serviced' by boys is consistent with a patriarchal ideology which constructs women as objects who *respond to* men's sexuality. Boys are not considered to be available to cater for girls' sexual desires, even if the girls *did* 'sort of ... want the lads to'. That the girls do not *want* it, or that, as Mandy said, they are 'fussy about' it is perhaps related to the differential value attached to women's and men's bodies as well as to heterosex being experienced and defined primarily as for men's sexual pleasure. Again, the position for women is complex and contradictory. On the one hand women's bodies are displayed as objects of beauty/desire/lust. Nevertheless they are considered to be impure and flawed. Julian Wood's study of teenage boys indicates that,

> for the boys ... in their relation to women's bodies fear and disgust were in tension with lust. They made up for their lack of actual biological knowledge with a crude mythology about what to them were strange, alien, impure bodies ... (The) notion that women ... are handicapped by possessing a flawed, female body is built into our patterns of consumption. Whole industries, especially certain cosmetic and health products, largely survive in their present form because of the assumption that women are not quite nice without 'aids'. (Wood, 1984: 42)

The notion that women's bodies are impure and/or disgusting becomes deeply integrated into women's subjectivity. This inevitably colours/influences girls'/women's expectations and desires, as one further conversation illustrates.

The conversation with Liz, Linda, Wendy and Debra (during which Liz described her encounter with Steve) was preceded by 'the sex quiz' described in chapter five. As I mentioned there, the process of doing the quiz on me was conducted amidst great hilarity - *except* when the subject of 'muff-diving' arose. This was the only activity which Wendy would not read out. Having read out nine of the ten activities, to which I had assigned numbers as required, Wendy wrote down the only remaining number next to the only remaining activity: 'muff diving'. Observing her, Debra said, 'You don't wanner say that one do you?!'. I asked, 'Which one won't she say?' to which Wendy replied, 'It's disgusting!'. In circumstances where such attitudes are commonplace and taken 'on board' by girls, it is hardly surprising that the girls are reluctant to be 'muff-dived'. The form of heterosexuality into which girls are coerced is one which is constructed by, and *reproduces* boys'/men's pleasure/power at the expense of the pleasure/power of girls/women.

It is also constructed in such a way that the girls continually risk pregnancy. The particular form of heterosexuality in which they engage - penetration - and the expectations which surround it determine that the girls are deemed responsible for contraception. Although both sexes are at risk from sexually transmitted diseases, now including HIV infection, the boys described by these young women do not themselves take any responsibility, nor do the girls *feel able* to take responsibility for boys wearing condoms or 'noddies' as the girls call them. I do not have the space here fully to document the ways in which safety is deemed the girls' responsibility and this *despite* the general lack of power which young women have over sexual practices within patriarchal social relations. As Holland et al (1990: 508) argue, 'where sexual safety is seen as the concern of the subordinate, rather than the dominant, partner ... there is no certainty that sex will be safe' (see also Holland et al, 1987).

Conclusion: Oppressive Continuities

I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter that the girls described have an interest in boys and sex which is neither prudish, nor wholly passive, nor wholly 'romantic'. Mandy, in particular, unashamedly and actively participates in having sex with boys. There are 'rewards' or 'satisfactions' for her and for the other girls. They have certain 'investments' in heterosex. However, the meanings and practices of heterosex are complex and contradictory for girls. Thus the girls' investments exist alongside other resultant and *oppressive* experiences and negative feelings. A radical feminist analysis of young women's experiences reveals the routine reproduction of men's power and women's oppression in heterosexual relations. 'Going with boys' - heterosex - as here described is a *form* of patriarchy. There are oppressive continuities with sexual harassment in everyday life.

That this is the case has been amply documented. First, by showing that, despite the *apparent* control over when and with whom they have sex supposedly afforded them by libertarianism, they do not, for the most part, initiate or determine the duration of their sexual relationships: the boys do. Young men have and young women lack control over intimacy. Second, despite the libertarian ideology of pleasure, the girls suggest that *their* pleasure is *less* significantly enhanced in heterosex: 'the boys enjoy it more. Definitely'. That is, a rhetoric of 'pleasure' surrounds both heterosex and sexual harassment. In respect of the latter, the rhetoric is of fun, flattery and flirtation. Third, ritual humiliation features as an integral part of both the more intimate and the more everyday experiences. Fourth, despite the *apparent* mutuality, the girls' accounts show that most sexual encounters are *not* a mutual exchange of pleasurable activities: expectation, verbal pressure or overt/physical force effectively ensures that boys are actively serviced by girls. Finally, the intimate sexual encounters, like more everyday interactions, occur within structured relations of power which define and, thereby, condone the behaviour of the male participants as 'natural' and 'only to be expected': 'you know what lads are'. Whilst men

are thus rendered irresponsible and unaccountable, young women are routinely held responsible[14] and condemned. The names which the girls call one another 'in fun' are indicative of this. Mandy is a 'dirty bitch'. This, together with the alternative, 'tight cow', effectively reproduces patriarchal definitions of women as either virgins or whores.

Thus, it can be argued that although libertarianism presented women - in theory - with certain options and certain powers, it did not challenge *men's* sexual practices or masculinity itself. Permissive heterosexuality, as Campbell (1980) argued, is a 'celebration of (hegemonically) *masculine* sexuality. Woman is still its *object*' (see also Smart, 1989). Whether or not girls actively engage in permissive heterosex, like Mandy, or prefer, like Liz, to have sex only within the context of longer term, monogamous and romantic relationships, heterosex itself can disempower women. It is both the mechanics of sex and men's power within the institution of heterosexuality which makes sexuality a site of oppression for women. Coercive sex and rape are part of the same continuum; indeed Kelly introduced the former category in her analysis to cover experiences which the women in her research described as being 'like rape' (Kelly, 1988: 109). In mundane ways the young women in my research sample recognize the pertinence of this continuum, as for example, when Jill joked that she 'was being raped next door'. She used the word rape to describe an unextraordinary sexual encounter characterised by the forms of coercion I have described in this chapter. The serious point of this 'applied' humour is clear: as a result of their experience, the girls described in this chapter - at age *fourteen* - feel to their cost that they are 'being had'. What they lack, as yet, is the *knowledge* and the support and the power to challenge, critique and radically change the oppressive reality of heterosex.[15] They do not appear to believe in the possibility of change, as Mandy once said, philosophically, though with resignation: 'I don't care ... make the best of it, don't you? While you can'.

Chapter Nine: Oppression, Despair, Compliance and Resistance

Introduction

The young women I have been describing in the preceding chapters of this thesis are lively, very likeable, often animated in conversation, sometimes very amusing. Some of the girls are assertive, others aggressive on occasions. However, get them talking about some of the things which boys and men say and do to them and many of them become 'uncharacteristically subdued'. They articulate resignation: 'you can't do nothin' about it'; 'you get used to it'. They are *not* passive objects or victims (Holly, 1989). Although the oppressive structures of patriarchy, routinely reproduced in and through everyday interactions, reconstruct young women's relative and very real or material powerlessness, the girls are not 'cultural dopes', blindly driven by social forces completely beyond their control (Davis, 1991). They employ avoidance strategies, they resist some oppressive encounters by kicking and screaming and they express some opposition: 'it's *not* funny either'. They do what they feel they can to 'make the best of it', as Mandy said. They survive.

However, what young women feel they can do is circumscribed by 'the chain of ideas' (Servan, cited in chapter one) against which they make sense of their experiences. Social action, as I argued, following Giddens (1976), in chapter three, is always bounded by 'unacknowledge conditions' and 'unintended consequences', by conditions lying outside the self-understandings of the persons involved. The analysis of power, of oppression and relative powerlessness, entails uncovering the subtle mix of what people do and refrain from doing, what they might have done but did not do (Davis, 1991) and the ideological context which structures human agency. In her chapter on the transition 'from individual survival to collective resistance', Liz Kelly records the transformation of a group of women who identified as *survivors* rather than victims of sexual violence. The women:

recalled 'the despair of the oppressed' - feelings of hopelessness, self-blame, negative coping strategies - being overtaken by the possibility of change when someone showed they cared, when they were able to name and talk about sexual violence, when they placed responsibility for the abuse on the abusive man and when they recognised and validated actions they took whilst being abused which were based on hope and self-respect. (Kelly, 1988: 235-6)

Kelly notes the importance of several (interrelated) factors which affect the likelihood of such transformations occurring: a) talking (expressing anger, sharing experiences, giving and receiving support); b) personal and relevant contact with feminists; c) time; d) participating in the research; e) support from voluntary and other organisations (Kelly, 1988: 217-233).

This chapter analyses the manner in which young women perceive and negotiate their experiences of sexual harassment, rape, coercive heterosex and 'normal', or more routinely oppressive heterosexual encounters and relationships. In the first section, I focus on 'the despair of the oppressed', noting how the intransitive realities of some young women are characterized by feelings and responses of hopelessness, self-blame and negative coping strategies. In the second section, I consider in more detail the issues of responsibility and divisions between women, noting the manner in which some young women, sometimes act in accordance, that is comply with the 'rules' of patriarchy and actively reproduce patriarchal relations by blaming women for the more or less oppressive transgressions of men and boys. This is construed as 'being fair'. In the third and final section I consider the extent to which both participating in this research project and the classwork of one feminist teacher might have helped to facilitate changes in young women's perception such that they became more empowered to resist oppression. This final section concludes both the chapter and the thesis.

That many young women's perceptions of their experiences of sexual harassment and coercive heterosex are characterized by 'the despair of the oppressed' is most vividly illustrated by Liz's self-blaming, ashamed and desperate expression, 'don't hate me'. Initially shocked that Liz would feel for a moment that I would think badly of her (I thought she knew I liked her and respected her), I later appreciated that it is entirely consistent with her, and the other girls', way of thinking that even I should condemn her. That is, first, since I had not explicitly identified myself as a feminist and explained that respect and compassion rather than stigmatizing contempt for women survivors of men's violent abuses of power were central to my way of thinking, Liz had no reason to think otherwise. That is, second blaming and stigmatising themselves is part of Liz's and the other girls' 'normality', a component of the intransitive reality of patriarchy.

Consider in this context the comments made by Linda prior to the disclosure: 'she done summat naughty with him'; Liz has 'changed her little girlish ways'. No doubt these statements can be read in a variety of ways. Confident that no personal malice was intended, my interpretation is that they effectively, albeit unselfconsciously and unintentionally, deflect responsibility from men, transform an oppressive encounter into a 'mutual' one and stigmatize the women who are oppressed *both* by sexual assault/coercive heterosex *and* by the pervasive categorization of women into sexually inexperienced 'virgins' or sexually experienced 'whores'. Steve's 'vicious' coercion of Liz is represented as something naughty *she* did *with* him rather than something violent *he* did *to* her. Both girls' accounts suggest that no distinction is made between the coercive nature of Steve's behaviour and the specific sexual experience - fellatio. Linda's phrase 'little girlish ways', with its implied sense of 'purity' or 'innocence' further stigmatizes her. Liz 'changes' from 'little girl' to 'naughty', from 'pure' to 'impure'.[1] In Linda's *and Liz's* understanding, Liz has 'crossed over' the virgin/whore 'divide'. A collective denial of the validity of 'good girl/bad girl' criteria for judging women has not *occurred* to these

young women (Lees, 1986 and 1989). Liz is more ashamed by having fellated Steve than she is angry at having been forced:

> *Jacqui*:   Why did you say, 'Don't hate me for it'? Is gobbing him off something that you think is dirty or -
> *Liz*:   Well it is afterwards. You regret it, d'you know what I mean? ... Well (a little more defiantly), there's loads of girls that've done it. Have *you* done it? (Linda nods) See! *She's* done it ... but ... (becoming more subdued) I don't know, I'm just embarrassed about it. If people ask me I normally just say that I ain't. Unless it's me mates. (Subdued) I've got over it now ... I ain't bothered. I don't care anymore.

Both girls make sense of their experiences in terms of patriarchal ideology which: exempts men from responsibility; deflects responsibility on to women resulting in self blame and great shame; creates and reproduces spurious divisions between women, perpetuating the myth that sexual assault and sexual harassment only happens to certain 'types' of women reinforcing the sense of shame.

Of equal significance in Liz's account are the subdued assertions that she has got over it, is not bothered and does not care any more. Assertions such as these are common. Mandy said much the same when she heard from her friend Janet that Baz had contemptuously ripped up the card she sent him. Lindsey's and Tracy's comments about the 'Polo joking' were 'it don't bother me' and 'you get used to it'. I interpret these assertions not as expressions of genuine disregard and/or recovery from oppressive experiences. The resigned or subdued manner in which the girls articulated such ideas belies the validity of such an interpretation. Also, it is evidence elsewhere in Liz's and Mandy's accounts that they *did* care. Mandy explicitly said that Baz had hurt her and she vented some anger about it. Alongside their expressions of despair, there was *some* condemnation: both girls said of the lads who had treated them with contempt, 'he's a bastard'. Why would they say this if they were genuinely 'not bothered'?

Rather, I would argue, these assertions about not caring are more appropriately understood

as evidence of what Kelly (1988) calls 'minimizing' the significance of oppressive events, a common response by women to their experience of a variety of forms of sexual violence which has been detected in a number of studies, (McNeill, 1987; Radford, 1987). Adapting Matza and Sykes' (1957: 132) account of 'techniques of neutralization' which aid young offenders' 'drift' into delinquency, we can regard the young women's assertions as techniques of neutralization: they discount or deny the injury or hurt; they discount or deny their victimization. Asserting that they 'don't care', later, undoubtedly to forget about the experiences, is one of the means by which young women cope with boys' and men's oppressive behaviour and yet it aids their drift into despair. Minimizing, then, is here, as in Kelly's account, understood both as a coping strategy, albeit a negative one, and as the individualized articulation of patriarchal ideology.

'Coping' is defined as actions taken to avoid or control distress; the particular manner in which a woman copes is dependent upon the material resources available to her, how she defines her experience and the context within which it occurs (Kelly, 1988: 160). One of the important insights of psychodynamic psychotherapy is the idea that one cannot fully experience nor articulate despair in a hostile environment. Repression of experiences of oppression and feelings of despair is the more likely outcome. The young women I interviewed are living and defining their experiences within the hostile structures of patriarchy which conventionally and routinely trivializes or minimizes or denies what radical feminists know to be the reality of the oppression of women through the mechanisms of sexual harassment, sexual abuse, coercive heterosex and so on. They are neither materially nor ideologically empowered to express or do much about their distress, other than neutralize or minimize it. This is defined as a negative coping strategy because the hurt or the distress does not *disappear* when women assert that they don't care. In ways more complex than a sociologist alone can explain, the hurt is 'buried' but it has negative consequences for self esteem.

The girls' expressions of resignation, of hopelessness - 'you can't do nothin' about it' - are

also individual expressions of patriarchal ideology which represent men's dominance and women's oppression as natural. The 'inevitability' of patriarchal relations in sexuality, for example, has been argued by Scruton (1983) and Storr (1970), cited earlier in this thesis. Both of these respected academics have propagated the idea that men are intrinsically predisposed to aggression in sexual relations:

> (M)ale sexuality - who would deny it? - has a vector which negates (moral) obligation, a permanent impulse to set sail. This impulse saturates man's attitude to women ... Men are the victims of an impulse which, left to itself, is one of the most destructive of human urges, and the true cause of rape, obscenity and lust - the lust that seeks, not to unite with another person, but to relieve itself upon her body (Scruton, 1983).

If personal experience of sexual harassment and coercive heterosex is thought to be caused by 'natural' impulses rather than oppressive social structures which, because they are historical can be changed, there can be no thought of change. The girls are not empowered to 'break free from the straightjacket of thinking only in terms of the type of society (they) know in the here and now' because, through patriarchal ideology, they have been led to believe that we *are* 'condemned to be swept along by forces that have the inevitability of laws of nature' (Giddens, 1982: 26). A precondition of resistance is belief in the idea that social change is both necessary and *possible* (Kelly, 1988: 228).

There is yet another reason for the marked absence of resistance to oppression amongst young women: the aforementioned idea that 'nice girls don't ...'. Fiona, quoted in chapter seven, said, 'We don't say much back do we? We're not so horrible'. The responsibility placed upon young women to be 'nice' rather than 'horrible', again a feature of patriarchal ideology, leads them to refrain from doing some things that they *might* do. They might, for example, meet sexual harassment with verbal aggression, even physical violence in circumstances in which they are *physically* enabled to do so. I have mentioned in passing that Mandy, Jill and Janet all use their fists against boys their own age when, as Jill expressed it, 'they deserve it', when, that is they, for example, shout 'you slag'. Such behaviour is defined as bullying and the girls risk formal reprisals, as was the case with

Mandy who, having been caught beating a boy who called her a slag, was sent to Mr Tate. Her *defence* of her aggressive, *retaliatory* behaviour led to Mr Tate's remark in Mandy's school file: 'real fishwife material'. Mandy is not a 'nice girl' to Mr Tate's (patriarchal) way of thinking. 'Nice girls' by definition don't swear at boys and hit boys when they are subjected to this 'very common term of abuse'.

Lindsey and Tracy are two girls who self identify in *opposition* to 'that slag', Mandy, as 'nice', indeed, as 'normal'.[2] They are both older and bigger than the five to eight year old boys who 'get' them in the vicinity of the garages. Yet Tracy says:

> Trouble is, they're little kids ... They know you can't hit them back because you're bigger than they are ... I'd never hit a little kid.

Despite the repeated verbal and physical assaults which Tracy vehemently described as 'horrible', she refuses to retaliate 'in kind', perhaps with her fists, because her code of acceptable behaviour dictates that she does not hit 'little kids'. Lindsey, who showed no compunction about hitting her little brother in response to his sexual harassment of her, said that she had threatened to hit two and pushed one of the gang when they approached her once as a pair but she was reluctant to hit them. Fear of reprisals might be part of the reason she and Linsey refrain from hitting individual boys. They may feel that if they were forcibly to confront one or two of the boys when they are few in number, they risk being 'punished' subsequently when the whole gang reconvenes. Neither girl mentioned *this* fear as a factor which circumscribed their options, however. The reason Lindsey gives is that she risks and fears being reprimanded both by the boys' mothers and by her own mother, all of whom she regards as unsympathetic to her predicament. Both girls said, several times, 'their mums don't care'. When she pushed one of the pair of boys, 'he started crying'. She continued defensively:

> Lindsey: And if his mum had've come round our house I'd have told
>   her. I told my mum. She just sat there laughing.
> Jacqui: What did you tell your mum?
> Lindsey: If I told her they done that ('got' her; had their 'hands all

over' her) *she'd kill me!* She seen 'em chasin' me. They chased me home. And she says, 'what were they doin'?'. I says (casually) 'Oh! They just attack yer'.

Lindsey is less principled than Tracy about the morality of hitting 'little lads'. She is fearful of maternal responses which would, like Mr Tate's response to Mandy, regard her retaliatory action as inappropriate and indefensible. Note also that Lindsey, like Liz, implicitly minimizes the harassment as does her mother's laughter, and she unselfconsciously attributes to her mother a way of thinking that blames victims rather than perpetrators of harassment: 'she'd kill me', not the boys.

The patriarchal ideas about the inevitability of boys' and men's contemptuous attitudes and oppressive behaviour conceal real interests which women share in common. It is not in women's interests either to be coerced into servicing men's sexual needs or to be blamed and despised by others or to *feel* culpable and ashamed. It is not in Liz's and other young women's interests to feel that they cannot do *anything* other than resign themselves to inevitable oppression in their everyday lives. Such despair 'can do nothing against the habitual union of ideas, except tie them more firmly still', as Servan put it. Dialectically related to the material oppression of young women, patriarchal ideology is itself oppressive. It circumscribes the possibility of change. It becomes constitutive of the material reality it portrays or represents. It structures young women's resignation, despair and their restraint in relation to boys/men. It structures young women as responsible. It structures young men as inevitably irresponsible and unaccountable.

Nice Excuses

One of the other 'non despairing', rather forgiving ways in which girls routinely 'let lads off the hook' (Cockburn, 1991) for verbal sexual harassment in the form of calling girls slag, dog and bitch, is by asserting repeatedly, as Fiona did, 'They don't mean it. They're nice really'. These oft repeated assertions can be interpreted as commendable evidence of

Fiona's loyalty to her classmates, in particular her loyalty to John, whom she fancied and went out with in June and July. John routinely expresses anger by saying 'you slag', 'you bitch' and 'you dog'.

However, Fiona's assertions effectively excuse the behaviour of boys who are, in many other respects, 'nice' and can be viewed as a component of the excusatory ideology (Edwards, 1985) of patriarchy. It reinforces the idea that otherwise nice boys and men cannot be held to account for their oppressive actions. It implicitly unites with and reproduces the idea that only 'horrible' men and boys sexually harass and otherwise oppress women, as was the case with Clarence Thomas, cited in chapter three, Fiona's 'refusal' to believe that people are made up of contradictory elements, that some of John's behaviour is contemptuous of girls, despite him otherwise being 'nice', is continuous with the widespread refusal to believe that respected individuals are capable of such conduct. The fact that boys and men, *including* 'nice' ones, remain unselfconscious of the (possibly) unintended consequences of their words (and actions) does not alter the oppressive reality of the situation. The words (and actions) effectively reproduce patriarchal social relations in which women are routinely labelled slags, dogs and bitches and otherwise sexually harassed. Thus, excusing and forgiving rather than challenging and condemning such behaviour can be construed as another negative coping strategy.

Compliance: Girls Against Girls

Promoting solidarity with boys and men *despite* their oppressive behaviour, patriarchal ideology undermines the possibility of solidarity amongst young women who, despite their differences, share in common many experiences of oppression. One of these experiences is being 'two-timed', that is, suffering the experience of their boyfriend going with another girl. This is one of the everyday events which leads girls to fight with one another (Wolpe, 1988). That is, they routinely hold the *girls* to account and *not* their boyfriends. Belinda said, 'I hate it when lads do that'. When I asked, 'Do they do it often? I mean, is it quite

normal for boys to two-time girls?' she and her three friends replied, 'Yes'. However, having said that she 'hated it when *lads* do that, seemingly attributing responsibility to the boys, she immediately described a situation in which a boy she 'went with' at a party, then 'went with' another girl the same evening. She had 'liked him for about a year before that. An' I went mad. I started throwing beer and crisps *at Jane* when he'd gone'. She is mad at the boy but she vents her anger at the girl.

During another interview with three different young women, similar woman blaming assertions are made and defended. Wendy gave a long account of how she and her friend, Mary, had verbally berated and physically assaulted another young woman, Cath, who, they asserted, had had sex with two boys, one of whom was Mary's boyfriend, the other was Wendy's. They shouted at Cath: 'You're the biggest slag that I've ever fucking known and I know quite a few slags'. They hit her and they continued to call her a slag:

Wendy:	... and I was telling everyone just to get it around to show what a fucking old cow she was.
Jacqui:	I understand the story and I understand why you were cross with Cath. Well I think I do anyway. Why erm ... how did you feel about (your boyfriend) and the other lad?
Wendy:	I asked them why they'd done it and he (Wendy's boyfriend) says ... I mean, *be fair*, what would you say if a girl's stood there stripped naked and she wanted you to fuck her and you was a lad? You wouldn't turn it down would you? Not if you was a lad?
Jacqui:	So you don't blame the boys at all?
Wendy:	*No!*

'Being fair' means *not* blaming the boys. In particular, I asked why no-one seemed to be blaming the boyfriends for 'cheating on' Wendy and Mary. Liz said, 'it's hard to mouth it at your own boyfriend', then, 'she'd hate to lose him', suggesting that fear of *losing* their (unfaithful) boyfriends is one of the factors which circumscribes young women's option to challenge their behaviour. The girls, that is, seem to be 'policed with the terrifying and mythological imagery of unmanned life' (Cain, 1989: 17). Such a strong investment they have in having a boyfriend they tolerate and excuse *their* less than perfect behaviour whilst condemning the less than perfect behaviour of other girls. Wendy asked her

boyfriend whether he'd been drunk, 'and he said yes so I couldn't really do a lot about that, I mean, if he were drunk', she said, by way of excusing his infidelity. 'The point that got me', she said, was that Cath had been 'trying to split Mary and (her boyfriend) up for ages ... that's why we had *her*'. Wendy constructs neither her own nor Mary's boyfriend as active and responsible; she constructs Cath as active and responsible. Both this and Liz's phrase 'it's hard to mouth it at your own boyfriend' are evidence of the asymmetry of power in heterosexual relationships, which young women 'resolve' by calling *girls* names and beating *girls* up.

Rather than 'giving and receiving support' and naming and talking about shared experiences of oppression by boys, *left to their own devices* these young women label each other 'slags', thus reproducing rather than challenging the power these labels have to define who they are and what they may and may not do. They blame young women for actions which they do not consider reprehensible in boys. They unselfconsciously assert the legitimacy of 'the sexual double standard'. They do not consider that the boys have any responsibility, accepting as inevitable their infidelity. Girls set themselves against girls. They lack solidarity, again, consistent with patriarchal ideology which creates and emphasizes differences of 'type' amongst women which are largely spurious. That is, in some situations differences, of class, ethnicity and so on, between women *are* crucially apparent but women only *appear* to be divided in heterosexual relationships because they fail to recognize their common oppression beneath apparent differences.

Additionally a few girls seem to delight in the oppression through sexual harassment of other girls as the following account illustrates:

Lindsey: (Animatedly, even excitedly) This gal, right. She - I had to laugh at this but it weren't really all that funny. Her name's Tanya. She's a fifth year ... An' they (the little lads) got this inner tube out of a bike and they put it round her legs and they were pullin' her (laughs). They were pullin' her along the car park (laughs) on a board ... And they tied her up! *There weren't nowt she could do*! (laughs) And they got oil all over her sheepskin!

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During another interview with Lindsey, Tracy (inevitably) and two other young women, the conversation about sex turned to rape:

Belinda:	Vicky wants to say summat. Go on.
Vicky:	I got raped one night.
Jacqui:	You did?
Vicky:	Yeah.
Lindsey:	It weren't nice either. I was there.
Jacqui:	Can you tell me about it?

Vicky described the rape. In essence, what had happened was that she and Lindsey had been invited to the house of a friend, a boy some two years older than herself, who was there with his brother and another lad. She went upstairs to the toilet, leaving Lindsey downstairs. Upon her exit from the toilet, the three boys 'just jumped out on (her) and dragged (her) into the bedroom'. Speaking very quietly, Vicky explained how, despite her struggling, two of the boys raped her, taking turns to hold her legs. The third sat on her chest. Throughout, Vicky screamed for Lindsey to help her:

Vicky:	I was screamin' for her and I dunno - she couldn't hear me or summat. (Lindsey laughs) So she *says*.
Lindsey:	Well, I didn't know, right! She was screamin' and I didn't know what she was on about. She were shoutin' and I went to the bottom of the stairs and I goes, 'What?'. An' er one of 'em shouted 'Oh! It's all right, she's only -' (laughs) an' he goes, 'shout me when me dad comes'. An' I goes, 'who's your dad?'. An' he goes, 'not really! Me dad won't be in for ages yet!'. And I though, 'Oh God!'. I didn't know what to do. An' this woman came out the door and looked round and I went out and I had to quick go back in (sic) 'cos she seen me.
Jacqui:	What woman?
Lindsey:	A couple of doors away. She seen me come out the house so I had to quick go back in. And she (Vicky) kept screamin' an' then - they just pinned her down and raped her didn't they? There weren't much you could do really (matter-of-factly).

Standing by and laughing while one young woman is tied up and pulled across the ground by a gang of little lads and standing by while her friend is being raped and screaming for help are not events which Lindsey felt in the least ashamed or guilty about. She related

both events quite animatedly, in both cases asserting that there was nothing she could do. Whilst doing nothing *may* have been her only perceived option in relation to the first incident where there was a whole gang of boys and, as far as I know, no-one else around to whom she could have appealed for help on behalf of the girl whom the boys were assaulting, it was evidently not her only option on the occasion of the rape. She could have done otherwise. She could have asked the woman two doors down for help. Yet she either chose not to or did not perceive this as an option, instead going quickly back indoors. Vicky said again 'I was cryin' and screamin' but she didn't come and help me'.

I did not quiz Lindsey about why she failed to help her friend. It was just before Vicky's disclosure that Lindsey made the remark (see note 2): 'me 'n' Tracy are the only one's here that's normal!'. I consider Lindsey's failure to take any form of interventionist or supportive action as an unextraordinary or 'normal' feature of patriarchy. Although we are, arguably, living through a period of *some* significant social change, the civil and criminal 'justice' systems remain 'relatively immune to women's suffering in (their) provision of impotent remedies' (Edwards, 1985: 183). In myriad other ways, members of patriarchal societies remain immune to women's suffering and fail to intervene. Why should we expect significantly different attitudes and behaviour from Lindsey? I have already argued, following Giddens (1967) that power is intrinsic to human agency, that, in its most general sense power *is* agency: the 'can' and the 'could have done otherwise' which is implicated in every situation, even the most restrictive and oppressive. Although people are never completely powerless nor completely governed by social structures, Lindsey is, at this time, so governed by the force of patriarchal ideologies and structurally, in very material ways, restricted that she does not experience herself as having any power to do other than what she did: nothing. The ideological context in which the rape of her friend occurred structures Lindsey's inactivity, her failure to support her friend.

Although Lindsey asserted that Vicky 'weren't askin' for trouble' and 'it weren't her fault', I recalled that in a previous interview she had said that girls 'shouldn't go out on their own

'cos if they do they're asking for trouble'. I reminded her of this and asked:

Jacqui:	Why do you say that?
Lindsey:	Well, because some people do ask for trouble don't they though, really?
Jacqui:	I don't know. Do they?
Lindsey:	Yeah!
Jacqui:	If you're walking around at night are you askin' to be raped?
Vicky:	(quietly) No.
Lindsey:	Depends how I walk! (laughter)
Jacqui:	Does it? Really?
Lindsey:	I don't know! If you walk with your hips swinging ... I'd say I should be in before dark - I'd expect it (otherwise) wouldn't I?
Jacqui:	You seem to blame the girls, like if they get -
Lindsey:	(Emphatically) Well some ask for trouble and some don't really do they?
Jacqui:	Well, I'm not convinced -
Lindsey:	When I walk through a street -

Since Lindsey had interrupted me, I interrupted her and, in the manner of the critical ethnographer, I attempted both to reveal and *engage* Lindsey's political frame of reference which was here focussed on stranger rape and on the idea of women's culpability. I said:

> D'you know that most rapes happen - it's mostly men that women *know* that rape them. You know this idea that we have about rapists leaping out of the bushes and what have you? That's not a true picture. Of all the rapes that happen, they're rapes that happen in the same kind of situation that you (Vicky) have. Rapists are more often men that you know or boys that you know. So y'know, it's not your (girls') fault. You (Vicky) didn't *expect* that, but that's what *happens*.

The girls, on this occasion (as on others) elected not to enter into a 'liberating dialogue' (Harvey, 1990). They immediately returned to what had happened after Vicky had been raped: the boys had laughed at Vicky. Responding to this, rather than attempting to lead the conversation back to the politics of rape, I said, gently, 'that must have made you feel really horrible'. We talked about how she had felt (ashamed, embarrassed, humiliated, upset but *not* guilty) and whether she had told anyone (she had 'kept quiet about it'). She did not say she had 'got over it' or that she 'didn't care about it'. Nor did she represent the events she experienced as anything other than rape. Unselfconsciously this young woman,

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unlike her friend Tracy and unlike Liz cited earlier in the chapter, had used a concept provided by feminism - rape - to interpret her experience. And she was enabled to speak about the experience when someone she barely knew had, in an interview, showed they cared. And yet she felt no sympathy for no solidarity with another young woman who had shared a similar experience which Vicky and Belinda took turns to describe later in this interview. They said Mo had been staying overnight at Linda's house where the rape had occurred. The several boys involved included one of the boys who had raped Vicky. They were all fifteen/sixteen years old. One of them having raped Mo, the boys are said to have proceeded as follows:

> Vicky: ... anyway they had Mo - spread her legs open and tried to
>   ram a cider bottle, weren't it?, up her.
> Belinda: Yeah!
> Jacqui: (Angrily) Jesus Christ!
> Belinda: What gets me was her brother was there, weren't he? Was
>   Mo screamin? What was she doing?
> Vicky: I reckon she was enjoyin' it meself!
> Belinda: Yeah.'Cos she came and *told* everyone, didn't she?
> Vicky: Yeah.

Both Vicky and Belinda, despite Vicky's comparable experience, are quick to represent the assault as an event which Mo had enjoyed and they quickly condemn Mo and not the boys, thereby. They imply that she should have kept quiet about it, as Vicky had done.

Let me be quite clear that in providing an account which describes - even highlights - young women's adherence to patriarchal ideas, I am doing so, firstly, because I sense their feelings of powerlessness to do otherwise and their despair and I do them no justice if I produce an account which glosses over this. Secondly, for pragmatic or even tactical reasons, I emphasise where the young women are 'at', politically, so that interventions, initiatives and support can be 'pitched' appropriately. Thirdly, I consider it important to comment on the extent to which girls do verbal and sometimes physical violence towards one another in order to *counter* accusations that 'girls are as bad as boys' or, as Kelly and Scott (1989) comment: feminists' refusal (with a few important exceptions) to honestly explore the issues of violence *by* women has left us vulnerable to the 'women do it too'

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attack on our analyses. Such assertions neglect both the form and the context of the oppressive ideas and practices: both the girls and the boys blame and 'oppress' *women* (or 'types of women') not each other equally.

Set against the routine and often quite brutal ways in which young men treat young women, the girls' contempt for one another pales into *relative* insignificance. But it is not insignificant. Girls calling each other slag and holding one another in contempt effectively, though unselfconsciously, reproduces patriarchy. Their ideas and actions, bounded as they are by 'unacknowledged conditions' reproduce largely spurious differences between then, concealing interests they share in common and undermining the possibility of solidarity and, therefore, of collective resistance. The development of a sense of *shared* experiences which are the product of oppressive social structures and the development of respect for and solidarity with women can be both a pre-condition of and an integral part of negotiating the transition from individual survival to collective resistance. Hence, in short I am arguing that it is important to understand the ideologies which inhibit young women's options, in particular their option to resist and to challenge oppression. Young women's *agency* - their power to do and think 'otherwise' is circumscribed by patriarchal ideology: they are bound in some measure by chains of ideas which are not of their own individual making. Whilst time, in and of itself, and despair cannot be productive of change, support from agencies which act in girls' interests and personal and relevant contact with feminists can be productive of change. And it is to the role of the school, of feminists within the school and my own role as a researcher that I now turn.

Resistance: Creating the Possibility of Change?

I have documented, in chapter six, the male dominated structural features of Henry James School and I noted there that although there are competing ideas about gender amongst senior members of the school hierarchy, the dominant ideology is patriarchal: boys are considered as 'victims' of the local culture which mitigate against their educational

achievement and a policy of positive discrimination in favour of boys was adopted to attempt to remedy this 'sorry' state of affairs. No comparable initiatives were aimed at girls who, relative to the boys in general, do well at school but who are under-represented in traditionally masculine subject areas, over-represented in the low status, traditionally feminine subject areas and who 'under-achieve' in their post-school aspirations and outcomes. Mrs Davis commented that of pupils with comparable 'A' level results, the boys 'go off to university, the girls get jobs in local banks'. The Headteacher's view that schools cannot, nor should, 'act as agents of deliberate social change' is belied by the modern languages initiative *for boys* but reflected in the absence of educational initiatives *for girls*. There are no official policies on 'equal opportunities' issues, still less on sexual harassment. Through *selective* (non)intervention, the school largely fails either to support young women or to challenge young men's oppressive behaviour and attitudes.

I have documented some of the ways in which men teachers routinely exercise their own power as men in ways which create oppressive experiences for both their women colleagues and their young women pupils. From Mr Tate's dismissive attitude to the writing about Mary 'the slag' on the wall and his condemnation of Mandy as a 'fishwife', to Mr Ryder's 'creepy' - that is, subtle - sexual harassment of the girls he teaches, to Mr Newsom's unwitting but irresponsible behaviour, there is evidence of active reproduction of patriarchal social relations. Henry James School, through its organizational structure and through the routine actions and mundane views of its members, reflects and actively *reproduces* a patriarchal society. However, there are, as one might expect, a few feminists working in this patriarchal context. There is Mrs Carter, for example, who mentioned 'the coarseness and joking of some male staff here' which had made her transition from a single sex to a co-educational school difficult to negotiate.

Another teacher who identified as a feminist to the extent that she felt 'sex discrimination issues' were 'close to (her) heart', raised *some* of the issues I have been discussing in this thesis in one of series of classes which were designed to develop the students' debating

skills. The teacher, Ms Jay, had focused the students' attention on contemporary issues such as 'bloodsports', 'the nuclear issue' and 'sex discrimination'. In each case, some 'stimulus material' was presented (video, a written account) before the students were asked to discuss the topic. I use this illustration not because I consider English lessons to be the most appropriate forum for the discussion of sexual harassment and so on but because, first, it was the *only* event during the course of the year which approximated a positive *'school intervention'* on 'gender issues' with third form pupils - my sample. Second, it is illustrative of the *kind* of feminist interventions and support which were evident in the school. These were liberal rather than radical feminist interventions.

The 'sex discrimination' debate followed a video about two sisters, one of whom was described by Ms Jay as 'stereotypically feminine': she is unassertive, coy with men, engaged to be married and initially accepts the sexual division of labour in her home in which men do not bear responsibility for domestic chores. This sister *never* drives her boyfriend's car despite the fact that she is a competent driver. The other sister is, in Ms Jay's words, 'a bit of a rebel'. The video charts 'a day in the life' of these two women as the rebellious sister persuades the other to 'pinch' the prospective husband's car for a 'joy ride' to the seaside. On the trip, the car breaks down, they encounter a group of young men and

> Ms Jay: the girl who's engaged uses her feminine wiles - looking helpless to get help (which) the other one completely quashes by being aggressive towards the boys which doesn't suit them at all so they drive off ... During the day they're sort of pursued by the same boys (who) try to chat them up. And it's the same sort of thing: the one girl is quite flattered; the other one just finds it completely obnoxious and makes it clear. It's quite amusing as well. And then ... because she's quite, probably, anti-male ... she's probably too extreme ... but towards the end she mellows a little because she meets a boy who actually *apologises* for his behaviour ... she sort of realises that men are human, y'know ...

The class discussion which followed covered a range of issues raised by or alluded to in the video. These included: whether it is flattering or offensive to be 'wolf whistled' at; whether it's OK for boys to express emotions/cry; whether girls feel safe walking home at night; whether rapists should be hung. There are a number of observations one could make about all this. I begin with the question of 'impact' before considering the 'pitch' of the intervention and whether it goes far enough.

Briefly, there was *some* impact on the young women's ideas arising from this teacher's classwork *and* from my 'interventions' in the form of informal interviews, during which, I offered information and I asked lots of questions which focussed the girls' attention on the intransitive reality of patriarchy. Young women 'noticed' or named things they had not noticed or named before, for example. At the level of 'knowing' about the space the boys/men occupy (see Mahony, 1985), one young woman, two days after I had asked her about 'where the girls go at break times - the lads seem to monopolise the playground', said she'd never *noticed* this before, nor how they keep the girls off the playground by kicking the football at them and jeering at them. Following Ms Jay's class, during an interview, Liz declared that boys calling girls slags 'isn't fair!' and that she was 'going to call *them* slags now!'. Another young woman reflected on a comment that Lindsey had made during the discussion in Ms Jay's class about (not) feeling safe on the streets. Lindsey had said to one of the other girls, 'you'd be alright', meaning that the girl in question was 'unattractive' and would be an 'unlikely victim'. Linda said:

> that's not the point though ... say there's a rapist on the street ... he's gonna
> get the *next* gal that walks by on her own ain't he? And that could be
> anybody - whether they look stupid or not.

The subsequent discussion, transcribing on to eight sheets of A4, was *all* about their fears on the streets and at home (how their brothers 'play on' their fears), more experiences of 'ordinary violence' (being followed, being flashed, being 'cruised' by men in cars, being shouted at and commented upon) and 'normal precautions' (Stanko, 1985, 1987).

Thus, for some girls, both the 'space' Ms Jay and myself helped to create for them had the positive effect of 'breaking the silence' (Herbert, 1989) and of *creating* and validating a sense of *injustice*. Liz, who, on so *many* occasions, had articulated the despair of the oppressed said 'IT'S NOT FAIR'. In this significant way, Liz took a step forward into the *possibility* of an alternative future. She broke *one* of the links in the chain of ideas by which she had been bound in despair. Similarly, Linda, who previously had deflected responsibility for a violently coercive sexual encounter, here, places responsibility on men who oppress women through rape. Whereas previously she had implicitly and unselfconsciously talked about 'types' of women, here she stresses *'that's not the point'*. There is, then, evidence that personal and relevant contact with feminists, participating in the research and talking helped some young women to see what they could not see before. The intransitive reality of patriarchy, concealed through mystificatory and excusatory patriarchal ideology, became transitive in *some* measure. There is then evidence of the possibility of creating change through resistance to oppression. However, many of the young women's views recorded earlier in this chapter were expressed *after* Ms Jay's class and after I had been in the school for several months suggesting that in many respects, for many young women, the impact had been limited. I have already discussed *my* failings at length in chapter five.[3]

One crisis of political integrity which I did not discuss there was my failure to tell anyone in the school about Mr Ryder. Fearful of 'rocking the boat', like the 'detached' or 'impartial' traditional ethnographer who is concerned with the reactive effects of her presence, I colluded in the public silence about Mr Ryder. In retrospect I see clearly that I *could have done otherwise*. I could have told the Head or Mrs Carter, the feminist Arts Faculty Head. I could have mobilized a 'speak out', some collective resistance amongst the girls. My failure to do otherwise was not a simple matter of my having behaved more in the manner of a traditional ethnographer than a feminist researcher, however. The more complex matters are ones of validity and the structured disempowerment of women who speak out.

I felt, at the time, that the likely reaction would be dismissive of my evidence. I had nothing 'concrete' in the way of 'hard evidence', 'only' a few young women's words. The likely consequence, I felt at the time, of speaking out would have been that I risked being asked to leave the school for 'causing a fuss about nothing'. In effect, then, I failed to meet the young women's real interests.

Thinking about the way in which the 'sex discrimination debate' both met and failed to meet the real interests of the young women, I first observe that the issues were pitched at a level the students could 'relate to', the video resonated with their experiences and so a space was provided for them to explore some gender issues. However, the time provided was limited to one double period, the space was mixed and the 'pitch' was one which, although it resonated with *some* of the experiences: of wolf whistles, 'sex roles'/the domestic division of labour, 'boys crying'. It excluded other experiences and, therefore, did not resonate with the girls' full range of experiences of sexual harassment in everyday life. 'Wolf whistling' was 'on the agenda' and the young women were able to explore their feelings about how they felt (some 'embarrassed'; others 'flattered'). The discussion about rape was almost exclusively about whether (stereotypical) stranger rapists should be hung rather than about: how ordinary young women like themselves are raped by ordinary lads/men whom they know (see Warshaw, 1988); how other forms of sexual harassment form a continuum which daily oppresses women and which some women collectively resist as well as individually survive.

Further, nothing was said, for example, about the way the young women in the video *and* in the class room risk *rejection* from men if they challenge rather than go along with their behaviour. As Ms Jay said, the 'rebel' young woman's aggressive response to their normal masculine behaviour, 'doesn't suit them at all'. As I said, in chapter one, resisting the normal behaviour of men constitutes a challenge to the whole way in which women and men relate to one another. Resistance constitutes a challenge to patriarchy. It is defined as 'probably too extreme', as 'probably anti-male' as Ms Jay said of the rebellious sister.

This intervention, then, only *approximates* meeting the real interests of young women. It is not fair harshly to judge Ms Jay's intentions for failing to fall short of a more radical feminist agenda. Her work (and mine) had *some* impact as I have mentioned above and her intentions were not primarily to raise issues of violence, oppression and resistance. The *purpose* of the classwork was to develop debating skills. What her work and mine illustrates is that much more - and special - time is required, for women to talk with women and about oppression, about the power of labels and of men, about their own strength and independence of spirit as well as about their despair and about the possibilities for resistance and for change. Kelly argues that the process of development of an oppositional political consciousness and organised resistance involves at least three stages of understanding and action:

> Individuals must see that the cause of their personal experiences is oppressive social relations. This understanding must be accompanied by a belief that social change is both necessary and possible. Individuals must then come together in some form of collective organization which is directed towards achieving the necessary change. (Kelly, op cit., p.228)

Unlike the (older) women whom Liz Kelly interviewed, most of whom saw their experiences as being caused by oppressive social relations, the young women I interviewed, for the most part, drew on the dominant ideology of patriarchy, 'buried' rather than validated their experiences and felt hopeless or relatively powerless to challenge men's behaviour. The 'despair of the oppressed' was much in evidence. This is not very surprising since they were fourteen years old and had not, therefore, had much time to reflect, to name and talk , to express anger and to compare their own and other women's experiences of oppression, survival and resistance.

The young women also feel and are *rendered* relatively powerless because the school - one potentially important social agency which could act in their interests - does not support them by challenging ideologies and practices which circumscribe their choices and

reproduces their oppression. Others have reflected on some of the initiatives which have been or might be taken to tackle the problem in schools: initial and in-service teacher training which includes compulsory components on the subject of sexual harassment; school policies on sexual harassment, together with publicity/'education' and punishment; helplines; girls only groups; boys only groups; improved 'sex education' which does not simply 'prepare pupils for the life they are most *likely* to live' (Holly, 1989, p.7) but which presents them with critiques of and alternatives to 'conventional' and 'coercive' heterosexual encounters and relationships (not an easy task in the present political climate) (Mahony, 1985, 1989; Herbert, 1989 and 1992; Kelly, 1989). Whilst schools assert through silence and non-intervention that they 'don't care', young women will perhaps continue to assert that they 'don't care', 'get used to it' and 'have to make the best of it'. They deserve better.

NOTES

Chapter 1

1. National Association of Local Government Officials.

2. From research proposal, April 1983. See Appendix One.

3. This and all other names are pseudonyms.

4. Given the difficulty of determining precisely when children become adults, I use the terms girls and young women interchangeably in this thesis.

Chapter 2

1. That is, I found the experience of reading endless accounts of sexual harassment and related forms of violence against women distressing. The effects of doing research on the researcher will be discussed in chapter 5. See, for example, Kelly (1984).

2. Primarily, I draw on the definitions of sexual harassment offered by Farley (1978) and Grahame (1985), and the definition of sexual violence provided by Kelly (1989).

3. I am thinking here of divisions such as those between 'radical' and 'liberal' black people over, for example, questions of 'incorporation' of black 'community leaders' into negotiations about 'community policing'. As one Chief Constable following the Scarman Report said, 'it's OK to 'consult' if they are on the same side and believe in the rule of law'. For 'radical' black critics of the police, this is racism by 'incorporation' (see Scraton et al, 1987). In respect of gay men, I am thinking, for example, of contemporary disputes about gay skinheads which some gays argue is an anathema, the skin *style* being so connected with homophobia that adopting it *constitutes* homophobia (see *Out*, Channel Four TV, 29.7.92).

4. As firmly argued by two of my (male) colleagues who asserted that 'lads' who sexually harass girls are members of an anti-school working class sub-culture and that 'you (feminists) only ever cite the surveys which have produced high incidence statistics'.

5. Comparable 'anomalies' (more middle class respondents reporting experiences of violence) have been discovered in crime victimization studies.

Chapter 3

1. Regarding my choice of terminology (postmodernism and 'modernism') rather than post-structuralism and structuralism: I follow Smart's (1989 and 1990) use of the terms. I am aware that: postmodernism and post-structuralism are not inevitably coterminous as implied here; both terms have been employed in a variety of ways; modernism has quite a different meaning in literary theory. Also, a caveat is in order. I cannot hope to detail the enormous volume of recent writing on epistemologies in this one chapter. I content myself, and, I hope, the reader, with drawing on Smart's (1990) succinct critique of 'modernism' and summary of her

feminist postmodern epistemology, and Giddens' (1990) summary of how and why these apparently recent epistemological developments do not take us 'beyond modernity'. I also rely, in the main, on the 'reconstituted standpoint' (sociological) works of Ramazanoglu (1989) and Cain (1990).

2.   Cain (1990), with much the same aim in mind, identifies a 'new conception of stand- point', one which is 'not vulnerable to the Smart/Harding critique'.

3.   It must be stated that both standpoint feminisms and postmodern feminisms contain contradictory tendencies and problems. 'The contradictions and problems do not originate in the feminist discourses, however, but reflect the disarray in mainstream epistemologies and philosophies of science since the mid-1960s' (Harding, 1986: 28). In view of the points of similarity between and contradictions within each feminist epistemology, it is not my intention to reject one perspective as unambiguously flawed and to accept the other uncritically. Broadly speaking I tend towards a standpoint on sexual harassment. However, in more general terms, like Harding (1986) I remain open minded and think that at this stage in the struggle for women's liberation, 'successor science projects' and postmodern deconstructivist projects require each other's success. Like Cain (1990: 130-1) I believe that feminist (and sociological) thought can usefully contain 'both objectivized knowledge and knowledge scepticism and so, for the time being, attain the best of both worlds'.

4.   Smart views as implicit in modernist thought the idea of history as linear and evolutionary. Modernist thought is, therefore, reductionist, unidimensional and universalizing. Modernity in this respect is synonymous with racism, sexism and Euro-centredness. In attempting to 'reduce cultural and sexual differences to one dominant set of values ... modernism ... has been identified as male or phallogocentric ... and as white'. However, as Giddens (1990: 47) argues, 'anyone who sees in this (break with foundationalism) a basic transition from modernity to postmodernity ... faces a great difficulty. One of the main objections is obvious and well known. To speak of postmodernity as superseding modernity appears to invoke that very things which is declared (now) to be impossible: giving some coherence to history and pinpointing our place in it.' This does not, I appreciate, resolve the problems regarding the conceptualization of history as linear, which Smart and others have properly raised, this being well beyond the scope of this thesis.

5.   Cain (1990) makes, as one of the key ingredients of an argument for a successor science, the case for the 'disjunction between ontology and epistemology', whereas Stanley and Wise (1990) argue, in relation to the plurality of feminist standpoints, that ontological validity gives rise to epistemological validity and thus to 'contextually grounded truths'. No disjunction between ontology and epistemology is posited here and black feminist, lesbian feminist standpoints are identified. Cain questions this claim through the concept of intransitive realities: epistemology is grounded in women's experience, but ontology is not the be all and end all. For experience of being in the world may be intransitive experience. I feel ambivalent about this problematic. One the one hand I agree with Cain (and Ramazanoglu, 1989) in this regard. However, I still assert that knowing from (reflected upon rather than reflexive) experience does lead to a special kind of knowing. A woman (or indeed a man) who has been raped knows what it was like. Someone who has not been raped can at best, on the basis of hearing or reading the accounts of others who have been raped, know what it 'must have been like'. Similar observations can be made about knowing poverty or racism from experience. There is 'insider' and 'outsider' knowledge cross cutting with transitive and intransitive (experience of) realities.

6. See, for example, Herbert's (1989) accounts of the footbinding of girls among the upper class in ancient China and of female circumcision. For an account of the latter practice which usefully distinguishes between cultural relativism and respect for cultural differences, see Ramazanoglu (1989), Thiam (1986) and Saadawi (1980). Infanticide of girls, mentioned by Connell (1987: 108) is another case in point. For a cross cultural and non-universalizing account of rape see Sanday (1981).

7. Here I am understanding postmodernism *as* post-structuralism (see note 1). I appreciate that the two developments have a certain autonomy. However, they do overlap in this regard. Claiming that there is no reality 'structured' by relations of power between 'classes' of persons, and masked by dominant ideology, amounts to the same as arguing that the reality of social relationships cannot be distinguished from the concepts with which people think about them. Both views allow for multiple realities and both are opposed to the 'old-fashioned' idea of social structures.

8. Connell's (1987) attempt to connect gender and power concludes with a practice-oriented conception of gendered power which is reminiscent of the work of Giddens and Bourdieu.

9. Comparably and comparably useful redefinitions of violence have been employed in the criminological literature. Chibnall (1977) for example, in his analysis of media reporting of violence, notes the limited conceptualization of violence which stresses the relevance *only* of the 'visible and spectacular' violence of bombers and muggers, neglecting to cover as violence unsafe working conditions resulting in death or injury, large-scale poisoning of the environment by industry, and the 'mental' violence involved in boring and repetitive jobs, inadequate housing and so on, as well as 'privatized' violence within the family.

10. See, for example, Mitchell (1974).

11. Connell argues that the creation of a gender-based hierarchy amongst men is an *essential* part of the overall subordination of women, that patriarchy by definition involves the creation of *both* hierarchies. I am not sure that I agree with this view.

12. This may or may not prove useful typology for understanding masculine *practices*. The point remains that men do not constitute an undifferentiated mass, all of whom either share power equally or equally abuse power in relation to women.

13. Hawkins, it must be stated, does not argue this position. She states this as a position of which she is critical.

14. Lott et al's definition of sexual assault approximates my definition of physical sexual harassment.

15. See, for example, Dobash and Dobash (1980) and Edwards (1991) on 'domestic violence'.

16. That women can and do use violence is not disputed. See, for example, Bell (1989), Kelly and Scott (1989), and Ramazanoglu (1989). Women's use of violence against others is not, however, institutionalized.

17. It has been argued that the coverage of this case had the unintended consequence of pushing 'wavering female voters into the Democratic camp' thereby helping to secure Bill Clinton's election to the Presidency of the United States (Burgess, 1992).

18.   I do not have the space here to review the literature on patriarchy. See Walby (1989) and Ramazanoglu (1989).

19.   Others argue that the mechanisms, socio-cultural manifestations and social consequences of power operate in a similar fashion for all asymmetrical powers relations (Komter, 1991).

Chapter 4

1.   Although I organise my account of research processes into something of a chronological order, I do this for the sake of clarity. I do not subscribe to the view that research proceeds in a series of logical, clearly defined stages where research design precedes data collection, for example, as I hope will become clear.

2.   Ethnography encompasses a wider range of methods than participant observation and observation in ethnographic research need not involve active participation as in the 'curious' case of the man in the Wendy house (King, 1978 and 1984).

3.   Notably, the opportunity afforded for establishing what is 'really going on' by combining interviews (which provide accounts of what the interviewee thinks is the case) with observation (which may not alone provide the researcher with an unambiguous definition of the situation).

4.   These terms are not ideal (they are 'ideal types') because the term 'critical ethnography' has also been used to refer to modern *conventional* reflexive ethnography (see Harvey, 1990: 214).

5.   Thus 'real dialogue' means a two-way exchange of ideas not question and answer (Harvey, 1990: 214).

6.   Other women have commented on how issues of fear and personal safety have arisen during the course of designing and conducting research (Hammer and Saunders, 1984; Kelly, 1984; Laws, 1990; Scott, 1984; Stanley and Wise, 1983a).

7.   Although I have now taken a standpoint in relation to this issue, I remain keen to explore the links between sexual harassment (as here defined) and the pervasive harassment of boys by means of homophobic labels. Since the homophobic labels implicitly associate homosexuality with a perceived 'lack' of masculinity, with femininity, there are connections to be explored. Such an exploration inevitably calls into question whether 'patriarchy' ought to be defined *both* in terms of the oppression of women by men *and* the oppression of subordinated forms of masculinity (Connell, 1987) and is beyond the scope of this work.

8.   'Incomplete' honesty is not unusual. Roth (1962, cited in Burgess, 1982) maintains that a clear or categorical distinction between 'secret' and 'non-secret' research cannot be sustained because it is never possible to tell the researched 'everything'. The deliberate withholding of significant information is another matter, however.

9.   By August I had written a two page document which described the aims of the project in much greater detail than in my letters requesting access (Appendix Three). Still I neglected to mention sexual harassment in particular and, in general, I underplayed the extent to which I was interested in specifically 'sexual' interactions.   I stated that the object of the research was to investigate the significance of gender on behaviour and attitudes of teenagers. My focus, I

explained, was on the day-to-day interaction between boys and girls in a variety of settings (in and out of school). I emphasised my interest in relationships between pupils and deliberately underplayed any interest I had in relationships between staff and pupils.

10. 3RL refers to year(3), House (Rutherford) and the initial of the form teacher.

11. 'If we all work together we can totally disrupt the system'; 'support the police - beat yourself up'.

12. The school had no uniform; denim clothes were not permitted.

13. If Paul Willis (1977) can employ the informal term 'lad' to describe the young men with whom he worked, I see no earthly reason why I should not employ the informal term 'kid' to describe the young people with whom I worked. The term may be considered unacceptable by 'Queen's English) speakers/writers, but using the Queen's English is a bourgeois practice which implicitly relegates to second class status both working class language codes and regional (especially Northern) codes, of which 'kid' is a component.

14. Third, and most importantly, there was the problem of being both a 'stranger' and a friend in relation to the young women I came to know, which I discuss in chapter 5.

15. Data deriving from these sources are presented in chapter six.

Chapter 5

1. It is far more difficult to transcribe tapes of conversations between three or four persons because inevitably there are occasions when everyone speaks at once, despite one's best efforts to ensure that this does not happen. Occasionally also, it proved impossible to attribute a statement to a particular individual.

2. In the discussion which follows, I refer only to the sampling of and interviews with girls, which form the basis from which the data in chapters seven, eight and nine is drawn.

3. This is not because they were persistent truants! It was a consequence and an inevitable feature of non-probability sampling which does not, by definition, give everyone an equal probability of selection. Whilst my attention was focussed on the girls I had already sampled, these other potential participants were neglected in much the same way as occurs in quota sampling in 'street' surveys.

4. In order to ensure the anonymity of the girls, I have not included physical descriptions.

5. I made no attempt to define the class and/or status of the girls in relation to one or more of the conventional classification systems. I devised my own very simple classification which was based on: data provided on self-completed questionnaires, about number of incomes, mother's occupation, father's occupation and number of children in the family. None of the girls came from *wealthy* homes. The schematic classification is as follows:

'relatively better off'
parental occupations (indicative of incomes) included: mobile hairdresser/own business selling commercial vehicles; machinist/mechanic; machinist/foreman;

book-keeper/ equipment tester at GFC; embroiderer/sheet metal worker; midwife/inspector (no. of children in family = 2 or 3); unpaid domestic labour (UDL)/truck driver (one child only); Mandy, Fiona, Jenny, Lorna, Pauline, Ann, Debra, Lynn and Jill were placed in this category.

'relatively poor'
part-time cleaner/engineer (3 children); UDL/lorry driver (4); cleaner/fitter (5); traffic warden/unemployed fitter (5); UDL/unemployed labourers and miner (2 to 4 children); single parent on SB (2 children); Vicky, Lindsey, Tracy, Linda, Liz, Belinda, Janet, Wendy and Carol were placed in this category.

6. A lesbian friend who read an early draft of a chapter which included an account of this quiz commented that she would not have been able to participate in such a quiz and doubted her ability to have a candid conversation about, for example, fellatio or, as the girls called the practice: 'gobbing off'. However, lesbianism was one of the issues which remained 'taboo' in my research. Neither the young women nor myself introduced it into the discussions. The other significant issue which we did not address was orgasm (cf. Herbert, 1989).

7. I have been challenged to defend myself on these grounds by a number of women who have heard me give conference papers on my research. (For example, Halson, 1989c). Some critics felt I had a duty as a 'responsible adult' to inform a sympathetic teacher about the young woman who thought she was pregnant.

8. The data for this project were collected before the moral panic about AIDS was orchestrated in the UK, certainly before I had much knowledge about the matter. See Holland et al, 1990.

9. Notably, the members of the British Sociological Association, Women's Caucus, Violence Against Women Study Group, of which I have been a member since its formation in 1985.

Chapter 6

1. 'Ideology' is here used, following Ball (1987: 281), in the 'straightforward' sense of referring to perspectives or views and commitments, as evidenced by both utterances and 'presentations of self'.

2. An early draft of this chapter was commented upon by a woman teacher, Ms Brown, who, coincidentally, I met in a pub shortly after I had written it. She expressed an interest in reading the draft and I incorporated her verifying (or otherwise) written comments into the subsequent drafts. Her comments on the Head were especially valuable. Of my original description of the route to the school, Ms Brown wrote: 'a fair description but this does not typify the catchment area.' I hope my reference to 'several nearby villages' also underlines the point that Henry James Comprehensive School pupils are drawn from economically and socially diverse localities.

3. I am reliably informed by a friend (Nicola Horton, a Cambridge University Classics graduate) that a 'felicitous translation' is "virtue can accomplish anything". 'The most interesting word as far as a feminist etymologist might be concerned is virtuti: the original noun is vir, which means 'man' (and that's definitely a male as opposed to a human; from vir comes virtus, which literally means 'manliness' but (and here's the good bit) by extension virtus comes to mean strength, courage, ability, worth, prowess, virtue and excellence - i.e. all these things are male qualities, part of being a man!' (Personal correspondence, July 1992.)

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4.	Spender refers to this linguistic phenomenon as the 'semantic derogation of women'. It is a pervasive phenomenon. It 'is not confined to such blatant examples as that of spinster and bachelor but extend(s) to *all* words that are marked female' (Spender, 1980: 17). (See also Mahony, 1985 and Davies, 1983: 41.)

5.	Inner London Education Authority, now abolished.

6.	Ms Brown's comment on my pen portrait s of what she referred to as 'The Other Big Boys', including the Science Faculty Head to be introduced in the next section., was: 'Fine! These are very accurate impressions.'

7.	For example, 1) during a demonstration of how to make 'lots of' carbon dioxide from marble chips, when the gas jar became full he quipped 'we'll throw that away!' as he waved the jar vaguely around his head to disperse the gas. In the same lesson, 2) he said to one of the lads playing rugby while he was out jogging recently to which the boy immediately joked 'Jogging, Sir? You mean walking!' thereby commenting on Mr Roberts' age which from the point of view of a thirteen year old is somewhat 'past it'. 3) When Mr Roberts asked a boy to go fetch a test tube, various kids reminded him to say, 'please'. *'Please* go and fetch a test tube!' he deferred, smiling.

8.	*Gendered*, not specifically sexual and *not* abusive, interactions are highlighted here.

9.	Excluding Head and Deputy Heads, all of whom do a *little* classroom teaching; including Faculty Heads who do a significant amount of classroom teaching. Also excluding Economics and Social and Religious Education which, I lack reliable data on.

10.	The questionnaire item was: 'Here is a list of subjects studied by 3rd year pupils. Please put a ring around a number from 1 to 5 to show how important you think each subject is for boys and for girls'. Since I have, in chapter 2, critiqued 'measurement', these data can at best be regarded as *indicative*.

11.	An analysis of the gender composition of 1984 3rd form ability sets for Rutherford and Eliot houses (which are timetabled together) for physics (and maths) reveal a preponderance of girls in the top two sets (32 girls; 21 boys) and a preponderance of boys in the bottom three sets (26 girls and 37 boys).

Chapter 7

1.	Such joking is analysed in section three of this chapter as a form of 'applied' humour.

2.	Although Casanova de Seingalt is said to have been 'reduced to rape as a means of keeping his sexual life going' in his old age, he is said to have looked after, been generous to and flattering about the many women with whom he became sexually involved. He did not have 'outright contempt for women'. (See Giddens, 1992b: 82). Namecalling is further discussed in section three of this chapter.

3.	I focus on *perceived* powerlessness resulting from patriarchal ideology which represents such masculine behaviour as natural and inevitable in chapter 9.

4.	Whitbread (1980) makes the same point about harassment of women teachers by boys.

5. Implicitly, here, I raise questions which are not central to this thesis, namely: in what manner if at all can boys/men who sexually harass be distinguished from those who do not? I leave the quest of 'deconstructing masculinity' to others, noting only that well educated men as well as poorly educated or 'anti-school' boys engage in the behaviour.

Chapter 8

1. Of the nineteen young women in the research sample, eight had had some intimate heterosexual experience. Of these, five had had penetrative heterosex. I knew three to be heterosexually inexperienced. The nature and extent of the remaining eight young women's sexual experience was unknown to me. Heterosex was not on my original research agenda and I did not *introduce* it in any interviews. We discussed it only if information was volunteered by them to begin with.

2. I have *extracted* the specific ideas of investments and contradictions, leaving behind the analytic framework (discourse analysis, based on Foucault's work) within which Hollway employs them.

3. The distinction between 'partner' of 'one night stand' and 'boyfriend' of longer term relationship is by no means unproblematic, given the very short duration of many young teenagers' boy/girlfriend relationships. The matter is complicated also by the fact that Mandy refers to one of her casual sexual partners as her 'boyfriend' which contradicts her previous definition of boyfriend as someone you go *out* with. The boy she discusses here (Downie) was *not* her boyfriend in that sense - she went *with* him on this one occasion. Just to complicate things further, in January she described herself as 'being in love with' Downie.

4. I dislike this phrase because, like the concept of virginity, it defines women's sexuality in terms both of men and of penetration. Lesbianism and masturbation are therefore effectively excluded as active female sexuality.

5. 'Tight cow' - a form of 'applied' humour - receives no detailed comment in this chapter. Neither does 'dirty bitch' and 'lez', which appear later in the chapter. See chapter seven.

6. That this is not unambiguously the case will be demonstrated shortly.

7. I am cautious about the validity of this assertion for several reasons. First, one of the 'pro-school' girls from interview four was already actively exploring her 'emerging sexuality'. She chose not to discuss this sphere of her life with me. Another of this same well motivated group began, towards the end of the fieldwork period, to engage actively in a heterosexual relationship. Further, my own experience, together with that of many of my high school peers and that of many 'committed' and highly motivated educational high achievers (undergraduates) with whom I have discussed the matter, seems to suggest that the proposed inverse relationship is doubtful.

8. Madonna's song 'Like A Virgin', high in the charts during the fieldwork period, was one of Mandy and Jill's favourites. They sang it - the chorus especially - often, and their vocals were not infrequently accompanied by the sexually assertive gestures and postures for which Madonna is famed.

9. Joan Rivers most recently used this expression on 'Clive Anderson Talks Back', Channel 4, 11 December 1992. Annie Lennox is reputed to define Madonna in this way.

10. The lad's full name (a pseudonym) is Barry Downs. His nicknames are Baz and Downie During our interview early in December, cited earlier, Mandy called him Downie. Here, in late January, she calls him Baz.

11. See discussion of validity in chapter five.

12. Mandy *did* care - very much - as is evidenced by the expressions of both hurt and anger in the longer account. This expression is here defined as a 'technique of neutralization' and will be discussed in detail in chapter 9.

13. See above note.

14. As in the case of responsibility for sexual safety.

15. This is not to construe women as *responsible* for the oppressive realities described. The assertion is based, rather , on feminist politics which sees women as *active agents* of change.

Chapter 9

1. Note that the word 'pure' was used by Mandy, cited in the previous chapter. That is, a colloquial term for virginity or heterosexual inexperience is 'pure'.

2. During one interview, early in July, I came across just one young woman who, a little self consciously, explained that her boyfriend (of several weeks) had performed cunnilingus. Whereupon Lindsey said, 'How specific!, "He licked me out and I liked that"!'. I said, 'Well! There's no reason why you shouldn't!'. Lindsey's response was 'Oh! Jacqui! Me 'n' Tracy are the only ones here that's *normal*!'.

3. That is, my failure to intervene more actively, my 'failure' in designing and conducting *exploratory* ethnographic research rather than *action* research.

APPENDIX ONE: RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITIES OF BRADFORD, WARWICK AND YORK, APRIL 1983

Research Proposal

My proposed research arises from a combination of interests: firstly, an interest in Foucault's theory of power/control developed as an undergraduate and forming the subject matter of my dissertation in which I surveyed the works of Freud, Elias and Foucault; secondly, an interest in the sociology of gender relations; thirdly an interest in sexual harassment as a feature of the educational and working lives of the majority of women.

It may be argued that the sources of women's oppression rest within or arise from prevailing material conditions, cultural values and social practices - for example, differential socialisation of males and females, speech and language, media stereotypes and numerous other seemingly innocuous social processes. Thus, sexual harassment must be analysed as an aspect of patriarchal power relations as a form of power; it may not be regarded as a 'natural' expression of sexuality in the workplace but as a mechanism which mirrors and reinforces existing gender divisions. Following Foucault's insight that it is its attempt to control the body which distinguishes the expression of power in the modern world - that nothing is more physical, material or corporal than the exercise of power - it may then be argued that sexual harassment in schools and in the workplace is so used as a vehicle for maintaining existing relations of domination and subordination, made all the more effective by women's seeming complicity.

With the eclipse of more manifest forms of sexual discrimination the more difficult forms of social control to address are those that arise implicitly through socialisation. It is this aspect of the phenomenon of sexual harassment which is particularly interesting: the manner in which sexual harassment becomes a 'normal' feature of women's lives, beginning in and institutionalized in (mixed) schools and continuing throughout their adult lives where sexual harassment is regarded as normal sexual practice, reinforced by the concept of the 'normal woman' recently analysed by Hutter and Williams as one of the most powerful forms of control over women.

Empirically, my research will have two distinctive features. Firstly, it will make use of ethnographic methods - particularly with regard to studying sexual harassment in primary and secondary schools where detailed information collected on the basis of observational techniques will be of greater value than brief, structured interviews. Secondly, it will be comparative, focussing on the extent and form of sexual harassment in various occupations and including an examination of the factors which affect the degree of sexual harassment at work (e.g. social class of employees, relative numbers of/power of men and women in the workplace, attitudes of management and trade unions). However, I envisage that existing material on sexual harassment in the workplace (collected by survey research) will be utilized also, given the constraints of time and resources on any graduate research.

In conclusion then, my objective is to pursue research into a phenomenon of major social significance. I envisage that my results will contribute at two levels: firstly, as a background to policy; the need for such a study at the present time must be stressed, given recent developments in the USA and following tentative steps taken by a few trade unions in Britain, since policy decisions cannot be made without some deeper theoretical understanding of the issues; secondly, to fill a gap in sociological knowledge; although research into sexual harassment has been conducted in recent years (both in American and, latterly, in Britain) sociological interest in this area has been limited and the phenomenon remains thus far 'untheorized'. My research will make a significant contribution both to the study of gender relations and to the ongoing debate about the nature of power and the manner in which it is exercised, particularly insofar as it will address the issue of the institutionalization of sexual harassment, via schooling, as a feature in the control of women.

APPENDIX TWO: PILOT STUDIES AND NEGOTIATING ACCESS: DETAIL

In November 1983, towards the end of my first term as a graduate student, the practical advantages of doing some exploratory pilot studies were discussed with my supervisors.(FN) The advantages were basically twofold. First, pilot work would help me formulate a more specific research design. Second, I simply needed some experience of doing research before I entered the main period of data collection. I decided to approach three institutions. First, I telephoned my old Head of Department in the College of Further Education in which I had been employed for twelve months as a part-time teacher. I spent just one day there in January 1984. I spent half the day with one group of sixteen year olds, attending their classes and, for one hour, leading a discussion on sexual harassment. The rest of the day was spent sitting in the college bar and refectory area observing and making notes.

I used the telephone directory to compile a list of secondary schools located in a county neighbouring the one in which I lived and arbitrarily selected one (Henry James School) on the grounds that the journey there would require only one bus from my home. With the help of a friend who had been researching secondary schools on behalf of her daughter who was about to leave middle school, I compiled a list of schools in another part of the country and again arbitrarily selected one which my friend described as 'rough but friendly'. In February 1984 I wrote to each of the two schools as follows:

> Dear (named headteacher)
>
> I am a graduate student at the University of Warwick and am about to begin research on the way in which sex roles are learned and acquired. In preparation for the research, I should like to spend a little time in a number of schools and colleges.
>
> I have already spent a few days at .... College of Further Education in .... (where I was, until recently, employed as a teacher) and would be very grateful if you would allow me to visit your school.
>
> The purpose of my visit is to conduct observational work in some classrooms with a view to helping me formulate questions for the research. I would be pleased to discuss details with you, at your convenience.
>
> May I take this opportunity to thank you in advance for any assistance you can off. I look forward to hearing from you shortly.
>
> Yours faithfully

I encountered no difficulties in securing the permission of two headteachers to spend two or three days in their schools. This pilot work was conducted in March and May 1984. By June 1984 I was ready to negotiate access to a school for the longer term fieldwork. Again, I compiled a list of schools in the area. In consultation with my supervisors, the list was honed down from nearly sixty (including some middle schools since these had 12/13 year old students in their final year) to four. Decisions about not approaching schools were made for a variety of reasons, none of which amount to an attempt to 'sample' a 'representative' or 'typical' school although, like Hammersley (1984) I wanted to avoid an obviously 'untypical' school. Single sex private schools were rejected on these grounds. Schools with headteachers who were thought to be or known to be unsympathetic were rejected for obvious reasons. In one case, it was known that the headteacher had been reported to the Equal Opportunities Commission on the grounds of sex discrimination and was currently involved in a court case. Two schools were rejected, not for 'untypicality'

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but on the grounds that I could not, with confidence, at the time, handle what I then described as 'additional' issues of ethnicity and racism. I cannot *now* begin to justify the decision to exclude as potential sites of research schools with a large proportion of Asian and Afro Caribbean pupils.

I wrote to the headteachers of the four prospective schools in June 1984, this time using the phrase 'the significance of gender in pupils' behaviour and attitudes':

> Dear (named headteacher)
>
> I am a graduate student at the University of Warwick and, since October 1983, I have been preparing to research the significance of gender on pupil's behaviour and attitudes.
>
> Before coming to Warwick I was employed as a teacher in a college of further education where I have recently done some exploratory fieldwork. I have also conducted pilot studies in two schools. I wonder if I could come and discuss with you the possibility of carrying out fieldwork in your school, beginning in September and continuing throughout the academic year.
>
> May I take this opportunity to thank you in advance for any assistance you can offer. I will telephone your secretary next week to arrange a mutually convenient time for us to meet.
>
> Yours faithfully

The headteachers of schools A and B replied immediately, saying that I had first to obtain the permission of the Director of Education and should write to him in the first instance and provide detailed information about the research project. The headteacher of school C wrote to say that he had forwarded my letter to the Director of Education. I drafted a letter to the Director of Education but was advised by my supervisor to let him contact me and, in the meantime, to continue negotiating access to school D, the deputy head of which had telephoned to request that I meet him. This interview was brief and difficult: I was nervous; he, I felt, was hostile. He described the proposal as 'contentious' and asked me to submit further details in writing which I did (see Appendix M). The following week, now the beginning of July, I rang to arrange a further meeting. I was told they had not received my letter nor the detailed outline of my proposed research. I felt incompetent. I sent another copy and waited.

By the end of August I still had not received a reply from the Director of Education regarding access to school C. Nor had I heard from school D. In view of my apparent failure to gain access to a 'new' school, I wrote again to Henry James School, enclosing a copy of the detailed research proposal. I then got a letter from a senior person in the Director of Education's office suggesting I call him to arrange a meeting. I rang both him (Mr James) and the deputy head of the 'pilot study school' (Mr Tate) and arranged meetings with them for September 10th and 11th respectively.

Mr James appeared interested, informed and friendly. He was Advisor to school C. After twenty minutes or so of talking about 'gender issues' in education, the length of the fieldwork period and likely degree of participation of/disruption for staff, he rang the school and arranged for us both to meet with the acting deputy headteacher. He drove us there and the three of us spent an hour in animated conversation about their school and my research project. The deputy headteacher (a woman) seemed as interested in the project as Mr James. She said she would make an initial approach to the House Heads and the Heads of Department and see the Head about it on my behalf. Both she and Mr James elected to act as sponsors and were optimistic that the Head would agree. I was introduced to the Headteacher on the way out. I wrote in my notebook that Mr James 'gave the Head the

distinct impression that although it was his (the Head's) decision as to whether or not I was admitted, he (Mr James) was very interested in the project. There's nothing like having friends in high places!'.

My interview with Mr Tate, described in chapter four, was successful also. By lunchtime on 11th September I was excitedly telling friends and supervisors that it seemed I had negotiated access to two schools, having spent two months being fearful that no-one would have me. However, I received a telephone call the following day from the deputy head of school C. She was very apologetic and embarrassed. It transpired that the school was to have a new 'deaf unit' which meant that there would be 'observers' (signers) in classrooms and in these circumstances, the Head did not feel that it would be appropriate for me to carry out the fieldwork there. I rang Mr Tate and confirmed that I would start the fieldwork at Henry James, beginning early in October.

APPENDIX THREE: RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO THE HEAD TEACHERS OF SCHOOLS C, D AND HENRY JAMES

Gender Socialization: A Study of Pupil Interaction

The object of the research is to investigate the significance of gender on the behaviour and attitudes of teenagers. It has been argued that adolescence is a critical period for the development or confirmation of gender roles, in particular that adolescents themselves exert considerable pressure upon each other to conform to norms concerning adult gender roles. A good deal of work has been produced in recent years which focuses on the part played by schools in helping to socialize children. However, much of this work has been concerned with issues such as teaching materials and methods, the organization of the school, the curriculum and the relationships between teachers and pupils. Very little work has focused on pupil interaction. This, then, is the main concern of my own work: gender relations as they are lived and experienced by adolescent boys and girls in a secondary school. The main sample of pupils will be about 14 years of age.

The main issues I shall want to examine include the following:

1)   The day-to-day interaction between male and female pupils in a variety of social settings (classrooms, playground, extra-curricular activities). In particular I shall be concerned to examine pupil interaction between and within gender groups, that is, to compare and contrast boys' and girls' behaviour in mixed and single-sex groups, taking note of friendship groups, degree of (self) segregation of boys and girls, types of classroom and non-classroom activity, interests and activities of pupils outside of school and so on.

2)   I shall also endeavour to gather information about pupils' perceptions of stereotypes of men and women and of themselves as male or female. I shall be concerned to establish the extent to which stereotyped images of adult gender roles actually impinge on pupils' lives (for example, in subject and career choice, in relation to marriage and parenthood).

3)   A third area of concern will be representations of men and women in teenage magazines, school text books and other reading materials in specific subject areas (to be determined at a later date).

Given the variety of data required it is clear that a range of technical procedures will be employed in order to achieve the aims of the research. These include:

1)   Participant observation of classrooms, playgrounds and other recreational areas, corridors and extra-curricular activities. Although I shall want to observe pupils in a range of classes/ subject areas, (games, home economics, English, science and technology) of especial interest to my project will be those classes where issues of gender are likely to be raised, for example in that area of the curriculum variously called 'communication skills', 'social studies' or 'personal development'. In my role as an observer, particularly of classrooms, I shall endeavour to be as unobtrusive as possible.

2)   Interviews. I do not intend to set up formalized interview situations with either staff or pupils. 'Interviews' will range in form from conversations which one might ordinarily expect to occur informally during the days of fieldwork to perhaps more in-depth conversations with a sample of pupils later in the research period. Both staff and pupils will be able to choose whether or not they participate. During both observational work and interviews it would be useful, on occasion - and with the permission of those present - to use a tape recorder.

3) Questionnaire. Again later in the period of fieldwork, it would be useful to administer a short questionnaire to pupils. No element of compulsion will be introduced at this stage of the research. I am concerned that pupils decide for themselves (with parental permission if necessary) whether or not they take part in various aspects of the research.

4) Content Analysis. In addition to examining the contents of teenage magazines, textbooks and other teaching materials, I shall also need to examine certain school documents (on rules, teaching organization , etc.) to provide background information on the research setting.

I anticipate that the fieldwork will take place over several months - perhaps over the course of a school year - as research of this kind needs to do justice to 'the researched' and requires the depth of information that can only be collected over this period of time. In the first instance I should like to spend perhaps two full weeks in the school, familiarizing myself with the research setting. Thereafter, I hope to spend two days (or equivalent hours) per week in the school. Much of this time will be spent with one or two class groups attending lessons and other activities with the main sample of pupils. It would also be useful if I could attend and observe the 'personal development' classes of other groups of pupils and some of the extra-curricular activities of pupils who are not part of my main sample.

Finally, I should stress that the confidentiality and anonymity of all individuals connected with the project will be honoured, both during the fieldwork and in subsequent written work.

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