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Young Men Living Through and
With Child Sexual Abuse –
A Practitioner Research Study

By

Andrew William Durham

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Young Men Living Through and With Child Sexual Abuse - A Practitioner-Research Study

Abstract

Using an anti-oppressive life-story methodology, this research analyses the experience and impact of child sexual abuse on the lives of seven young men aged between 15 and 23. In recognising the sensitivity of the study, and that the young men's experiences are recent, particular attention is paid to the impact of the research and the relevance of social work practitioner research. The study advances an analytical framework, which draws on the tensions between structuralism and post-structuralism. Theoretical connections are made between the centrality of sexuality and power in post-structuralism, and the nature of experiences of child sexual abuse. This framework has a wide application for future studies, and has particular implications for future non-pathologising social work practice with sexually abused young men.

Asymmetrical power relationships are shown to be characteristic of child sexual abuse. The thesis argues that it is important to understand the diversity, and socially contextualised nature of the young men's experiences, in surviving the impact and aftermath of child sexual abuse. The thesis recognises the importance of understanding the resistance of the young men, and identifies some of the survival strategies they employed, in the extreme and adverse circumstances in which they became immersed. An oppressive context of patriarchal relations, characterised by compulsory heterosexism and homophobia has shaped and exacerbated the young men's harmful experiences. Internalised oppression and power relationships generate beliefs and subsequent responses which affirm and perpetuate oppressive social constructions, and consequent marginalisation.

Through its anti-oppressive methodology, its analytical framework, and its use of prior substantive knowledge and experience, the study presents a strong and fresh link between research, social work practice and future research. In making this link, the study explicates the role and skills of the practitioner researcher, and thereby strengthens the academic discipline of social work.

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Introduction

This thesis draws on a post-structural perspective to analyse the experiences of seven young men, ranging from the age of 15 to 23, who have as children been sexually abused. The central research question is: "What perceptions do young men have of the experience of child sexual abuse, and how do they perceive and understand its impact on their lives?" A life-story method of data collection is used, in order to generate a sufficient depth of information to allow a post-structural analysis of the young men's experiences. An attempt is made to capture as fully as possible, a representation and analysis of the personal experience of each young man, exploring common and diverse factors; the unique integration of the impact of child sexual abuse into each individual life. There is little available knowledge of male-child sexual abuse of this detailed nature, particularly from a sample close to or during adolescence.

Important links are made between social work practice and research. The study demonstrates the importance and value of practitioner research, making a significant contribution to the academic discipline of social work. From its methodology and its analysis, the study presents exciting and original possibilities for future social work practice with sexually abused young men.

Great emphasis is placed on the sensitivity of child sexual abuse as a research topic, and on a recognition of how researching could unseat or disrupt participants' survival strategies. The potential impact such an enquiry could have on both its participants and the researcher, underlines the importance of an anti-oppressive approach. A process of on-going participant support is therefore woven into the research methodology, which attempts to enable each young man to feel safe in exploring and expressing fearful feelings. It is hoped to give each young man a sense of having contributed to knowledge, whilst at the same time receiving some validation of his experience, and a sensitive and appropriate response to emotional expression. This method of research then becomes not simply about young people, but for and with young people (Butler and Shaw, 1996). The aspiration of the research is that participants will benefit, as well as others who read the study.

As a social work practitioner myself, wanting to take an interest in some of the wider theoretical issues, I became aware that broader social brush strokes were having a particular impact on the manner in which children and young people survived and lived through experiences of child sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse has a long social and political history of discovery - burial - re-discovery - disbelief - burial - re-discovery - denial - re-discovery, in an almost wave-like motion (Herman, 1992; Gilligan, 1997; Oakley, 1997). These public experiences are paralleled by

the experiences of the individual child trying to tell and escape from child sexual abuse, an experience where private personal experiences and social constructions collide, leaving the child in an invidious position. Denial and burial by adults who abuse, by other family members and children, can become functional to the preservation of current circumstances. This may be the preservation of a family, an avoidance of further violence and other feared consequences, or the preservation of an individual child's identity, where the abused child fears the negative perceptions of others, through being instilled with an intense feeling of responsibility, every attempt having been made by the person who abused to ensure that others are held to feel responsible. If there is an open social acceptance of the widespread existence of child sexual abuse in a manner which holds the people who abuse accountable for their actions, then it is more likely that children will feel that their experiences will be believed when they tell. If there is a social denial, individual children will be more likely to keep their experiences to themselves.

Theories of child sexual abuse often focus on "how" child sexual abuse takes place, avoiding the crucial question of "why" we have child sexual abuse in our society (Macleod and Saraga, 1991). Such theories often ignore social and cultural contexts and concentrate on the psychology of individual behaviour (Kelly, 1996). With the best intentions, professional responses to children who have been sexually abused become defined in

terms of “treatment” or “therapy”. Such clinical and potentially pathologising responses may unwittingly compound a child’s instilled sense of responsibility. A more adequate theory of why child sexual abuse takes place has first to account for the fact that over ninety percent of child sexual abuse is committed by males. Second; why does the abuse have to be sexual? Third; why are burial and denial so prominent in its history? Fourth; why for many years, have complacent professional responses been dominated by a medical framework, which potentially colludes with the abuser’s denial of responsibility? More recently, social work achievements, in challenging the dominance of the medical framework, have been confounded by a restrictive legal framework, based on a distrust of children’s testimonies (Spencer and Flin, 1990; Durham, 1997). Such testimonies are only finally believed, within the legal system, after the child has been subjected to a range of difficult and frightening procedures.

Assymetrical power relationships are shown to be characteristic of child sexual abuse. This study identifies the importance of understanding the diverse and changeable experiences involved in the impact and aftermath of child sexual abuse, with elements which are both unique and common. The study identifies some of the survival strategies employed by the young men, in attempting to resist and subsequently survive the abuse.

The thesis identifies and confirms previous findings relating to the particular experiences of males who have been sexually abused. However, the study emphasises the significance of these experiences taking place in a social context of patriarchal relations. This context creates circumstances which allow sexual abuse to happen, and hinders the recovery of its survivors. The study shows how a context of patriarchal relations, characterised by compulsory heterosexism and homophobia has shaped and exacerbated the young men's experiences. This is through internalised oppression and power relationships, which have caused them to respond in a manner which affirms and perpetuates social constructions of hegemonic masculinities. The study recognises that sexuality is a particularly significant constituent of personal identity during adolescence, particularly in a society where heterosexuality is oppressively policed as a vehicle of social control. The thesis shows processes of patriarchal gender construction, particularly in relation to contested masculinities. These have become more threatening, as a result of the young men seeing themselves as being placed on the margin in terms of their masculinities, as a result of their experiences of child sexual abuse.

This study in no way weakens feminist arguments, or detracts from the fact that the majority of sexual abuse is committed by males against females. There have been fewer studies of male-child sexual abuse than female-child sexual abuse. The study will attempt to contribute to

feminist (and pro-feminist) research and practice, by showing how an analysis of gender, power and sexuality can be applied to the experiences of young men. The study makes theoretical connections between the centrality of power and sexuality in post-structuralism and the nature of experiences of child sexual abuse.

The thesis demonstrates the value of qualitative research and a life-story method, particularly the use of unstructured interviews. In analysing the young men's experiences, the relevance of attempting to find a space in between the fragmentation and diversity of post-structuralism, and the over-determination of structuralism was recognised. The study therefore advances an analytical framework, which draws on the tensions between post-structuralism and structuralism, which allows for the continuing potency of widespread social oppression. This framework has application for future studies, and has significant implications for non-pathologising social work practice. Through its methodology and its use of prior substantive knowledge and experience, the study presents a strong and fresh link between research and social work practice, highlighting the importance of using an anti-oppressive methodology for the study of child sexual abuse. In making this link, between research, practice and future research, the study explicates the role and skills of the practitioner researcher, and thereby strengthens the academic discipline of social work.

In conducting this research, I am a white European able-bodied male, aged 42. I have practised as a qualified child care specialist social worker since 1983, with residential child care experience prior to qualifying. My experience has involved providing an intensive direct work service to children, young people and their families. A large part of my work has involved post-abuse counselling. I am currently in charge of a specialist service for children and young people who have sexual behaviour difficulties. From my own practice experience, and prior and current knowledge of the literature, there is an assumption that the experience of child sexual abuse is traumatic and has potentially harmful short and long term consequences. Also that children and young people who have been sexually abused may require help and support, in coming to terms with the experience. Additionally, the extent and success of the recovery is dependent not only on that help and support, but on how a child or young person's other experiences and circumstances, including oppression(s), may interact with the experience of child sexual abuse to produce differing impacts. This means that there may be both common and diverse consequences between different children and young people.

Child sexual abuse is often characterised by secrecy, isolation and the silencing of its victims. This in itself has implications for how such a phenomenon should be researched, particularly when young people, close in years to the experience are involved. A fear of the consequences of telling may still be present, the messages which may

have been implanted by the abuser, in order to maintain the child's silence, may still be influencing the child or young person's ability to tell or discuss the experience in any detail, beyond revealing the fact that it happened. Approaching the study with the practice knowledge, and theoretical assumptions that this may be the case, leads to an awareness that the methodology has to take these factors into account, not only in order to have access to the information, but to be aware of the potential trauma the participant may have in sharing that information. Also to be aware that it may not be possible to share such information in a formal manner, nor to be able to verbalise the extent or nature of the experience.

This study will show that it is an absolute pre-requisite for the researcher to be mindful of these factors, and to be aware that the experience of being a research participant may in itself potentially become an experience of oppression. It will be shown that approaching the research in this sensitive manner has captured and represented the young men's experiences, exploring personal identities and ways of being; their relationships as friends, partners, and fathers. The young men have shared their hopes and fears about their past, current and future lives. The research has closely involved itself with these experiences and has provided important information, which has provided a knowledge base for more appropriate and non-pathologising ways of helping young men who have been sexually abused.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1 analyses patriarchal relations, hegemony and contested masculinities, which underpin the dominance of men and the subordination of women and children through historically constructed power relationships. It is argued that political structures of domination are maintained through the preservation of patriarchal power relationships which are represented in both public and private spheres; individual and institutional relationships of hierarchy, domination and subordination, oppression and control. Power and control in this context are often eroticised through being associated with hegemonic masculinities, which are characterised by compulsory heterosexuality and homophobia. It is argued that these processes create, support, encourage and hide the sexual abuse of women and children, and other forms of violence. Additionally, that they exacerbate and deepen the impact of child sexual abuse on its survivors.

Chapter 2 critically reviews existing literature on male-child sexual abuse, beginning with a discussion of prevalence and definitions, and the methodological problems involved, recognising that there is likely to be a significant degree of under-reporting. Major theories relating to the impact of child sexual abuse are critically discussed. The interacting impact of child sexual abuse and social oppression, most notably racism and disability, is examined. The specific impact of child sexual abuse on

boys and young men is explored. This includes research which examines the link between the experience of sexual abuse and the subsequent sexual abuse of others, and research which examines the impact on sexual identity. Drawing on issues identified in the previous chapter, an interacting mythology, based on homophobic fears and fears of abusing others is identified as significantly contributing to the harmful impact of the sexual abuse. The chapter raises epistemological questions about the dominance of particular forms of knowledge. It concludes that in explaining causation or impact of sexual abuse, much of the literature focuses on psychological factors, in a potentially pathologising manner, and fails to adequately centralise the influence of socio-cultural factors.

Chapter 3 examines developments in social research practice. It argues that feminist research praxis has challenged orthodox (masculinist) research, which has devalued qualitative methodologies. "Scientific" quantitative approaches have been favoured, based on what feminists have exposed as a pretence of objectivity and generalisability. Feminists and pro-feminists have underlined the need for social research to become anti-oppressive, avoiding the replication of oppressive regimes and power relationships, both in the research process and in the anticipated outcome. The work of Cooper (1995) is utilised in conceptualising and advancing an analytical framework which draws on the tensions between post-structural and structural theory, allowing a continued and interacting (but not over-determining) influence of the

social divisions of "race", class, age, ability, sexuality and gender on interpersonal power relationships.

The study recognises the significance and value of practitioner research. Social work knowledge, values and skills are specifically utilised, taking responsibility for the research as an intervention. In setting up the research, there was extensive consultation and preparation of participants, prior to the commencement of the research interviews. A formal research agreement was set up, as a framework for the research interviews, with an option of on-going support beyond data collection. The agreement also explained the rules of confidentiality and the purpose of the research. This afforded participants a high level of control over the research and allowed them to be consulted over the use of the data. It is recognised that there are tensions in such an approach, particularly the potential compromise to objectivity. However, in criticism of claims to complete objectivity, it is acknowledged that the research is the telling of two stories, that of the participants and that of the researcher, the final research outcome being an interaction of the two.

Chapter 4 analyses the research contact and the interviewing of the seven young men who took part in the study and presents vignettes. Their pseudonyms and ages are as follows: Justin (22), Paul (23), Colin (18), Liam (22), Sean (21), David (15) and Ryan (15).

Chapter 5 analyses the life-story research data, commencing with a full discussion and diagrammatic presentation of the analytical framework.

The research is presented under the following headings (underlined):

Living Through and With Abuse analyses the circumstances of the young men before they were abused and identifies how the men who abused them took advantage of their circumstances, in constructing abusive relationships. It explores the power relationships involved during the sexual abuse, and examines the young men's strategies of resistance, and considers their feelings and memories of the experience.

Trying To Tell explores the difficult, fearful and complicated circumstances the young men had to face in deciding to tell about their abuse, and is critical of the socio-legal framework which has been constructed as a professional response to manage the telling, in the sanitised context of a single "disclosure" event.

Impact on Sexuality and Relationships With Peers analyses the young men's statements in the light of the relationship between the impact of child sexual abuse and patriarchal relations, as an "*organising principle*" (Cooper, 1995, p24) influencing peer power relationships and the sexual identities of the young men. Processes of internalised oppression in the context of compulsory heterosexism and homophobia are identified. Some of the young men revealed substantial fears of feeling and being

perceived by their peers as being gay. Additionally there were fears of abusing others, again primarily based on the perceptions of others.

Still Living With The Consequences of Abuse considers the individual private trauma faced by the young men, in terms of memories, nightmares and flashbacks. Some of the young men turned to the use of alcohol, drugs, gas and solvents to try and manage their feelings. The research identifies the depth and turmoil of the sadness some of the young men experienced, which was sometimes represented by their behaviour and at other times was expressed in private. These feelings are finally represented in poetry and artwork by David and Ryan.

Being a Participant considers the young men's feelings about taking part in the research, concluding that they may have benefited, but is cautious in using terms like empowerment, and draws attention to the fact that the young men's lives continue in some ways to be difficult and disadvantaged, and not helped by experiences of child sexual abuse. This section also discusses the emotional impact of conducting the research.

Chapter 6 discusses the implications of the research for social work practice. It criticises the current legalism of the child care system, and argues that young people would benefit from services that are more flexible and less bureaucratic. It also argues that it is important to take

an approach to helping which emphasises the impact of social factors and the potency of on-going social oppression, in a manner which externalises many of the factors contributing to the impact of sexual abuse. By centralising the voice of the young person in the context of everyday experience, paying careful attention to the language used, and the experiences explained, assistance can be provided in a non-pathologising manner.

Conclusions states that an anti-oppressive life-story method is capable of producing unique and epistemologically significant research information. This information has shown that child sexual abuse has had a serious and long lasting harmful impact on the lives of the young men who were interviewed. These experiences were exacerbated by their occurrence in a social context of patriarchal relations. The research has shown that an analytical framework which centralises issues of gender, power, oppression and sexuality creates a new understanding of these experiences, and consequently presents significant possibilities for new and original forms of more helpful social work practice. These implications also arise out of the study's sensitive methodology. It is argued that the study has explicated a strong and fresh link between research and social work practice, clarifying the role of the practitioner researcher, making a valuable contribution to the academic discipline of social work.

Chronology of Research Activity

Jan 1993	Negotiating access to research participants.
Jan 1994	Identification of and initial contact with potential participants.
Sep 1994	Registration of research.
Nov 1994	Initial literature search.
Dec 1994	Identification of 6 young men willing to participate in the study.
	Further preparation and setting up of Research Agreements.
	Commencement of life story interviews.
Dec 1995	Closure of Interview phase.
	Provision of follow-up contact and support for research participants, as outlined in the Research Agreement.
	Initial analysis of transcripts.
	On-going literature search.
Jul 1996	Some follow-up contact with participants to discuss aspects of analysis and share initial findings.
	On-going analysis.
Dec 1996	Phasing out / fading research-support contacts.
	Closure of field data collection.
Jan 1997	Analysis.
Mar 1998	Writing up.

Chapter 1

Patriarchal Relations, Hegemony, Masculinities and Child Sexual Abuse

Introduction

This chapter considers the nature of patriarchal relations and argues that they constitute a social context which allows sexual abuse to happen. It is further argued that this social context has a subsequent influence on the private and personal experiences of those surviving the impact of sexual abuse. In considering the specific experiences of males, the concept of masculinity is critically analysed. It is recognised that there are hegemonic forms of masculinity which have a particular influence on the sexually abused male. Section 1 examines the history and construction of patriarchal relations, looking at the conflation of biological sex with gender, oppressive heterosexism and the widespread historical and present day domination of women and children by men. Section 2 considers hegemony, and examines forms of resistance to patriarchal relations. It is recognised that subordination is never complete, and is always characterised by a level of resistance, struggle and challenge, producing alternative discourses. Section 3 critically examines the social

construction of masculinities, recognising that they are multiple and dynamic, shifting and changing. There are however, forms of masculinity which are dominant or hegemonic, influencing, shaping and subordinating other forms. Subordinated forms of masculinity, therefore have to struggle, resist and adapt, in order to survive in an oppressive social context of heterosexism and homophobia. These factors are considered to be particularly significant in adolescent peer groups.

It is recognised that there are theoretical tensions in allowing diverse and dynamic post-structuralist conceptualisations of masculinities to sit alongside the on-going oppressive potency of patriarchal relations. Living with these tensions allows the research analysis to hold onto the complexity of unique social circumstances, alongside exploring common denominators of experiences of oppression. Section 4 explores the relationship between hegemonic masculinities and child sexual abuse. The feminist movement has raised epistemological questions about the control and production of knowledge, and who this benefits. It has played an important role in facilitating social re-discovery of sexual abuse, and in asking the question why is the majority of sexual abuse committed by males? The chapter concludes by recognising the importance and relevance of post-structuralism, power, gender and oppression, in developing a fuller understanding of male-child sexual abuse, and in establishing fresh approaches to the formulation of appropriate child and young person-centred strategies for helping its

survivors.

1.) Patriarchal Relations

In definitional terms, patriarchy is the widespread institutional domination of women by men, at all levels of society, both in private and public spheres. Patriarchy is *“a specifically gendered organising framework”* (Cooper,1995,p10), the widespread possession of personal and social power by men, which is theirs simply by being men. Patriarchy has *“the power to transcend natural realities with historical, man-made realities”* (Kaufman,1987,p7). By being born a male within patriarchy, a child learns that he is endowed, or rather has been embodied, with privileges not afforded to his sister. This is through his development of a masculine gender, as defined within patriarchy. There are two important features here, firstly, patriarchy is a an on-going process, which can adapt and change according to circumstances (Daly,1978; Kaufman,1987). In this sense, it is more accurate to use the term patriarchal relations, as a more dynamic and less rigidly structural concept. This is not to ignore the influence of oppressive structural divisions on interpersonal relationships, it is what people do and say within the context of these wider structural divisions which determines their impact on people’s lives. Secondly the distinction between sex and gender, which is purposefully conflated by patriarchal construction.

The conflation of sex and gender has historically been supported by sociobiologism, using concepts relating to hormones and perceived

natural attributes (for example physical strength and aggressiveness, weakness and caring), and relating them to current social circumstances. The historical and social construction of these theories is discussed at length by Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994), and Kaufman (1987), who makes the important point, in relation to his discussion on men and violence, that some questions will have to remain unanswered, as the men being studied (both now and in the past) do not exist outside societies. Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994) argue that the male/female dichotomy has no biological or other essential reality. Anthropological analysis has shown how notions of masculinities are often transient and can be situationally and culturally specific, and that definitions of gender can vary with circumstances, to the extent that assumptions about biology and gender can be challenged. Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994) refer to changing gay identities, whereby gay men have rejected the feminisation of homosexuality and have taken on macho-identities formerly associated with heterosexuality. The possibility of being gay and masculine challenges heterosexist patriarchal constructions of gender.

Historically, patriarchal relations have been responsible for circumstances of extreme violence against women across the world; Indian *Suttee* (sic); Chinese footbinding; African genital mutilation; European witchburnings and American gynaecology (Daly, 1978). The dynamic essence of patriarchy is well captured by Daly, who uses the

analogy of noxious gases which are lived and breathed, but not always noticed, carried by the body, surreptitiously permeating interpersonal relationships. Daly (1978,p3) refers to the need to seek out "*the sources of the ghostly gases*" and destroy the false perceptions which have permeated into the minds of women. She identifies four methods, which she refers to as being essential to the games of the fathers: "*Erasure; reversal; false polarisation and divide and conquer*" (p8). Daly describes patriarchy as a complex lie, a hidden web of pervasive deception. Particular importance is paid to the role of language and the notion that women's realities and mythologies have been stolen and re-constructed for the benefit of men. She describes her work as an extremist book written in the extreme circumstances of a culture that is killing itself. This connection between patriarchal relations and the destruction of nature has been identified by other writers (Struve,1990; Cornwall and Lindisfarne,1994). Kaufman(1987) argues that patriarchy is foundational to world-wide political circumstances of human domination, which allows the coexistence of Western abundance and poverty and starvation in the third world.

Patriarchal relations often emphasise commodity and possession. People, by virtue of possessing certain attributes, have power over others. The most immediate example is being male, the possession of a male body; another could be the possession of a white skin (not to suggest that patriarchy subsumes racial hierarchies, Wilson (1993) has

shown how patriarchy operates in black groups). This could be accompanied by use of a particular dialect and language or phraseology, which would carry forward and extend patriarchal discourses, which influence, shape and often determine interpersonal power relationships. The commodity logic is most notably represented in the construction of gender (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994). Gender is defined as a fixed dichotomy, biology and gender are conflated, so that "male", "men" and "masculinity" are treated as a single entity and are defined in opposition to "female", "women" and "femininity". Through patriarchal constructions, the female side of the opposition is defined as the other, and is subordinated by definition. Gendered identities are developed within patriarchal relations by the social acquisition of attributes, for example active, strong and self-reliant for men, and passive, weak and dependent for women. The conflation of anatomy or biology with gender roles and socially learned behaviours reinforces a view that the "normal" sexual orientation and identity is heterosexual (Jubber, 1991) (see Figure 1). Additionally the dichotomous definition of gender implies that two opposites make a heterosexual whole (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994).

In this way, gender is literally embodied as an apparently truthful fixed entity; bodies become gendered. This is particularly evident during adolescence, whereby individuals having experienced puberty and physical changes, begin to negotiate serious identities of their own, and peer group pressure takes on a particular importance (Moore and

Rosenthal,1994). The process is learning through becoming, beginning at birth with blue for a boy and pink for a girl. The result is a view of gender as a fixed natural order. The process of gendering in patriarchal relations amounts to a suppression and denial of similarities and an emphasising of differences between the biological sexes. For each individual this means a repression of behaviours and emotions not considered to be acceptable for a particular gender, a process of personal struggle and fear. Although this means having to constantly negotiate and deny such fears, for the male, the consequence of achieving this successfully is privilege, for the female success or failure means being subordinated (Kaufman,1987; Cornwall and Lindisfarne,1994; Wolfe et al,1997).

These arguments are taken further by queer theory, which argues that most social theory takes a heterosexist perspective, in which heterosexuality is normalised and functional to the social order, never requiring explanation (Sedgwick,1990; Dollimore,1991; D'Augelli and Patterson,1995). Other sexualities are therefore marginalised, problematised and excluded. Queer theory aims to force a revision of these traditions, arguing that a non-oppressive gender order can only come about through a radical change in the theorising and conceptualising of sexuality, with shifting styles of identity politics and the generation and valuing of new cultures. Warner argues that:

“Because the logic of the sexual order is so deeply embedded by now in an indescribably wide range of social institutions, and is embedded in the most standard accounts of the world, queer struggles aim not just at toleration or equal status but at challenging those institutions and accounts. The dawning realisation that themes of homophobia and heterosexism may be read into almost any document of our culture means that we are only beginning to have an idea of how widespread those institutions and accounts are.” (Warner, 1994, pxiii).

Paradoxically, both Freud (1962) and Foucault (1976) theorise difference from heterosexuality, often oppressively conceptualised as “sexual perversion” or “sexual deviation”, in a manner which makes it culturally central (Dollimore, 1991). Freud argued that “perverse” (1973, p245) desire remains repressed and becomes transformed into other energies in a manner functional to society. Foucault argued that perversion is not repressed at all, but that our culture actively produces it as a vehicle and product of power, which enables social control; defining and producing the margins in order to create and maintain the centre (Foucault, 1976).

“In Foucault’s scheme deviants come to occupy a revealing, dangerous double relationship to power, at once culturally marginal yet discursively central. Even as the sexual deviant is banished to the margins of society, he or she remains integral to it, not in spite of but because of that marginality.” (Dollimore, 1991, p222).

In Foucauldian terms, homosexuality speaking for itself would be seen as a reverse discourse, demanding validity and legitimisation. Queer theorists argue more simply and directly that queer is and always has been everywhere, in a manner which seeks to unseat the order of sexual difference, *“succinctly expressed in the liberationist slogan “we are your worst fears and your best dreams”.* (Dollimore, 1991, p227).

Queer theorists argue that power relationships can only be fully understood from the vantage point of “anti-homophobic inquiry” (Warner, 1994, pxiv). Marginalisation and stigmatisation of “the homosexual” are functional to heterosexual (particularly masculine) identity (Sedgwick, 1985; 1990). The extent of the social policing of sexuality implied by these arguments underlines the significance and potency of sexuality and sexual identity in interpersonal power relationships. This is borne out by some of the experiences described by the young men in the current research, and similarly in the research into masculinities and schooling by Nayak and Kehily (1997). This shows how close proximity and emotional contact between 15 and 16 year old male pupils in the school setting is seen and experienced very much as a threat to masculine, heterosexual identity. This identity, therefore, needs to be constantly and repeatedly recharged by public repudiation of any form of homo-erotic bond. This often takes the form of aggressive behaviours; a public transference of inner tensions and anxieties onto

others. Johnson et al (1997,p11) describe these homophobic performances as "*border patrols*" through which the boundaries of heterosexuality are maintained and policed.

Heterosexism is a constituent of patriarchy, an essential characteristic of gender constructions, which is supported through pervasive organisational, institutional, familial and interpersonal relationships. Figure 1 summarises some of these arguments to show the social organisation of sexuality and attraction. An oppressive social context of patriarchal relations defines heterosexuality as the only acceptable form of sexuality. In a society where social control is based on a strict organisation of sexual desire and attraction, sexuality becomes a potent force, central to personal identities. Heterosexuality therefore becomes a significant constituent of personal and social power. To deviate from heterosexuality is to have less power in a wide range of social circumstances and interpersonal relationships.

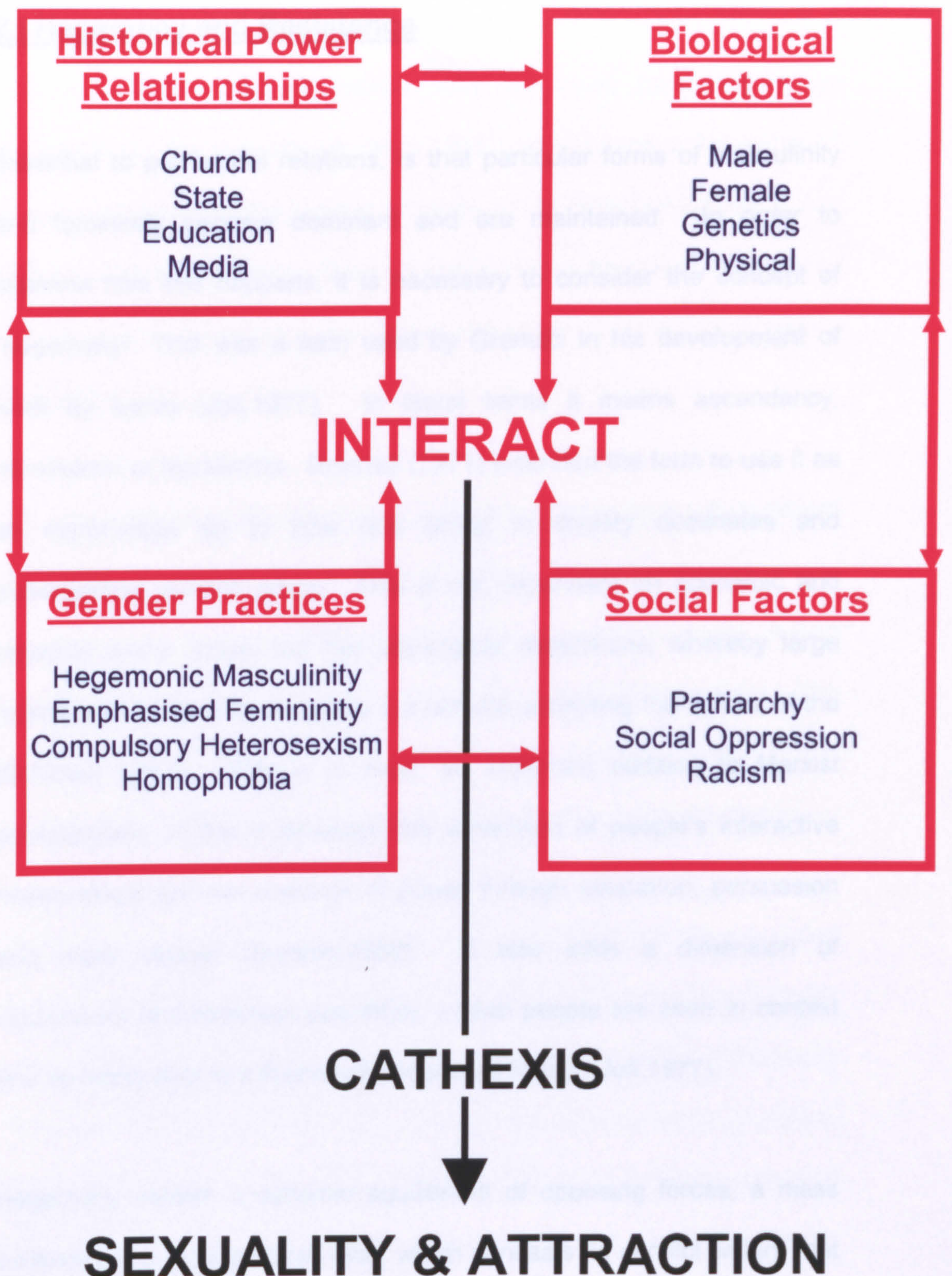


Figure 1
The Social Organisation of Sexuality and Attraction

2.) Hegemony and Resistance

Essential to patriarchal relations, is that particular forms of masculinity and femininity become dominant and are maintained. In order to examine how this happens, it is necessary to consider the concept of "hegemony". This was a term used by Gramsci in his development of work by Lenin (Joll,1977). In literal terms it means ascendancy, domination or leadership. Gramsci (1971) extended the term to use it as an explanation as to how one group in society dominates and subordinates another group. This is not dependent on economic and physical power alone, but has ideological dimensions, whereby large numbers of a subordinate group are led into accepting the values of the dominant group. This is in itself, an important addition to Marxist structuralism, in that it develops the dimension of people's interactive relationships and the exercise of power through education, persuasion and mass appeal (Scraton,1990). It also adds a dimension of voluntarism and historical specificity, in that people are seen in context and as being able to influence the course of history (Joll,1977).

Hegemony implies a dynamic equilibrium of opposing forces, a mass consensus, or a hegemonic bloc, which conceals its conflict within, that is, until the balance of power changes, and internal contradictions become revealed. Thus hegemony implies struggle and resistance, and consensus will always involve contradiction and instability, challenges to

and counter challenges from the dominant ideology. Hegemony is a balance of force and consensus, with the force appearing to be supported by the majority (Sumner, 1990). It involves a hierarchy of power, characterised by diverse interests, on a continuum of complicity with the dominant ideology. Gramsci (1971) draws attention to the role of institutions and the mass media in supporting and reproducing dominant ideologies.

Hegemony involves passion, an emotional bond between the dominant group and the people. For an idea to appear acceptable and have real meaning, it has to have a personal appeal at an emotional level. It also has to have a feeling of common sense and personal application. The needs, passions and beliefs of a mass of individuals become aligned with those of the people, institutions and systems which subordinate them.

Dominant discourses have access to, have infiltrated and are supported by powerful institutions. In relation to sexuality, a social order of power, knowledge and pleasure has been set up, with sexuality (specifically masculine heterosexuality) being seen as the primary locus of power. Thus, power relations are defined through the body, whereby sexuality has become central as its mode of expression and central to identity (Foucault, 1976; Weedon, 1987). Subordination is never complete, the need to dominate implies resistance by definition, such processes produce reverse discourses. Dominant and subordinate discourses are

constructed mutually. Discourses aspire towards social recognition and acceptance and are activated through the agency of individual people. Dominant discourses have access to and support from the dominant institutions of society and the perceived complicity of the majority. Subordinate discourses are resistances to the dominant and as a result are characterised by struggle. Cooper (1995) refers to subordinated groups being able to deploy positive power, and argues that their power should not be solely defined in terms of being resistance to those who subordinate them, and that some subordinated groups may have their own access to positive hegemonies, such as citizenship, rights and so on.

The Women's Liberation Movement and feminism are historically characterised by an on-going struggle with the opposition of men (Daly, 1978; Herman, 1992). Challenges to patriarchal relations are often nullified, but sometimes accommodated, often through tokenism, so as to reduce their effectiveness. Sometimes this accommodation is short lived, as situations are through time re-defined. Patriarchal relations have the ability to adapt and change and mutate in response to new circumstances. The use of the term "masculinity" itself in explaining men's behaviours has been criticised for allowing men to abdicate personal responsibility for their actions (Hearn, 1996). A similar example to this is quoted by Carrigan, Connell and Lee in relation to their analysis of the work of the "men's movement."

"It is not, fundamentally about uprooting sexism or transforming patriarchy, or even understanding masculinity in its various forms. When it comes to the crunch, what it is about is modernising hegemonic masculinity. It is concerned with finding ways in which the dominant group - the white, educated, heterosexual, affluent males we know and love so well - can adapt to new circumstances without breaking down the social - structural arrangements that actually give them their power."
(Carrigan; Connell and Lee, 1987, p164).

Any achievement of resistance or change in patriarchal relations therefore has to be made in the context of anticipating future repression. Discoveries and realisations become buried and therefore have to be re-discovered, the same battles having to be fought over and over again, both on the personal and political level. An important feature of this process, however, is the new information and new strategies of resistance that are produced, a strengthening by struggle, the production of reverse discourses, more able to resist future counter challenge, spurred on by the fact that subordination can never be complete and absolute (Cooper, 1995). This is particularly true in relation to the struggle of the feminist movement in establishing a social acceptance of the existence of sexual abuse (Herman 1992). The current research will show how young men who have been sexually abused had to constantly negotiate their masculine sexualities in a hostile climate of homophobia.

They often experienced set backs and social confrontation in which sometimes the only way out was to adopt language and behaviours which were considered to be socially acceptable. One of the young men described this as *“acting the homophobic”*. Another young man described the situation as showing that *“I’m normal”*. These were strategies of resistance, with which the young men were personally uncomfortable, but felt had to be regularly adopted, in order to detract attention and survive day to day peer group interactions. They were outwardly portraying dominant forms of masculinity, whilst privately wishing to be able to behave differently.

3.) Masculinities

The term "hegemonic" has been accurately used to describe dominant forms of masculinities (Connell,1987). By definition, these dominant forms are characterised by an essential control of the self, the environment and others, namely women, children, and other men. Connell introduced a hierarchy of masculinities amongst men, "*hegemonic, conservative and subordinated*" (1987,p110), located within structures of power. This is an important study, as it underlines the importance of examining power relationships between men in order to understand men's relationships with women and children, and particularly men's violences. In moving beyond the structural limitations of Connell's three categories, it is possible, taking a post-structural perspective, to conceptualise a dynamic multiplicity of contested masculinities interacting with social oppressions. Masculinities are varied, shifting and changing across different historical, situational, cultural, temporal and spatial contexts (Cornwall and Lindisfarne,1994). Individual men or boys will present differing masculinities at different times, places and circumstances (Pringle,1995, Hearn,1996). Hearn suggests that the term "*men's practices*" (1996,p214) more accurately represents an understanding of the diversity of what men do, where, when, how and why.

There are tensions here, on the one hand there is an attempt to

conceptualise a multiplicity of masculinities, which moves towards questioning the term "masculinity" itself. On the other hand, it is recognised that there are dominant forms of masculinity which render other forms subordinate. When previously discussing hegemony, it was established that where there is subordination, there will be resistance; dominant and subordinated discourses are produced mutually. However, as this research will show, there is no simple question of choice about which "masculinity" to present where. There are particular forms of masculinity which are deemed to be socially acceptable, and particular forms which are clearly not acceptable in many circumstances. The negotiation of individual masculinities takes place in an oppressive social context of heterosexism and homophobia (Nayak and Kehily, 1997; Wolfe et al, 1997).

In following through some of the arguments put forward by Warner (1993), it could be argued that in many ways the debate is predominantly about heterosexism. The current research will show, that particularly in adolescent peer cultures, notions of acceptable masculinities would appear to be at least a significant vehicle for, if not a fundamental constituent of homophobia. In this context, heterosexuality would appear to be a defining line in power relationships. In most circumstances, forms of masculinity which are heterosexual are more powerful than others.

Whilst moving towards a post-structural understanding of diverse masculinities, which are shifting and changing discourses, with temporal and spatial specificity, we are in some ways holding onto the structural concept of patriarchy. In doing so, we are recognising that there is an oppressive social context which sets limits and defines acceptability, maintained through varied hegemonies. We are also recognising processes of challenge, struggle and the potential for social change based on local interpersonal relations.

It is also important to recognise that a reliance on a singular concept of "masculinity" potentially replicates a dichotomous construction of gender, and reinforces the oppressive heterosexism which this study seeks to challenge. Studying masculinities in terms of men's practices; (thoughts, feelings, beliefs, actions) is consistent with the life-story approach of the current study (as it was with Connell's later (1995) study), which closely considers the meanings, textures, and dynamics of interpersonal power relationships. The current study follows Hearn's (1996) recommendation for a clearly defined use of the term "masculinities". It will specifically relate to received beliefs and understandings of young men (still close in years to their adolescence), about men's practices in Britain in the 1980's and 1990's. The research will show that sometimes these beliefs and understandings were quite static practical beliefs about how to behave and think in a manner which avoids peer group oppression, criticism and ridicule. In other societies, or at different stages of the life-span, in

different circumstances, these beliefs and understandings may be very different.

4.) Hegemonic Masculinities and Sexual Abuse

Within patriarchal relations, as we have discussed, dominant or hegemonic masculinities are oppressively defined in terms of a restrictive range of acceptable behaviours. The conflation of biological sex and gender potentially creates confusion and doubts for the individual. For the male, masculinities, defined in terms of strength and power and natural domination, are not biological realities, and require constant nurturing, affirmation, and repression of unacceptable “feminine” behaviours (Kaufman,1987; Connell,1989; Frosh,1993). In patriarchal relations, power bestows benefits, one way (the prescribed way) to exercise power is to exercise subordination. The greater the need to emphasise or affirm masculinities, the greater the need to exercise subordination. Furthermore, the greater the extent to which it is done, the greater the power, and hence the benefits, but also the greater the lie, and the greater the harm done. Often the power is real, for example the power of capitalism and politics or the power within an on-going relationship. At other times, the experience of being powerful is only perceived or felt and soon disappears, as in the case of the sexual abuse of children or the rape of women, or other men. The illusion and disappointment at the transitory nature of the experience of feeling powerful through these behaviours is partly the impetus for their repetition. This goes some way to explain the repetition, escalation and multiplicity of some men’s sexually abusive behaviours (Kelly,1988a).

Masculinities have become inseparably linked to masculine sexualities, often as a set of behaviours separate from emotion (Seidler,1989). Frosh (1993) refers to the phallus as a symbol of masculine authority, but as something complicated and unavailable to the individual experience, which cannot be lived up to in the manner which the phallus as a symbol represents. It has been argued that masculinities are particularly fragile during adolescence:

"In adolescence the pain and fear involved in repressing "femininity" and passivity start to become evident. For most of us, the response to this inner pain is to reinforce the bulwarks of masculinity. The emotional pain created by obsessive masculinity is stifled by reinforcing masculinity itself." (Kaufman,1987,p12.)

The repression of men's bi-sexuality is in itself an inadequate means of keeping desires at bay (Kaufman,1987). Some of this is transformed into other derivative pleasures; muscle building, hero worship, sports, situations where the enjoyment of other men can be experienced. The fact that homoerotic desires are never completely extinguished is often managed through homophobia (Sedgwick,1990). Social constructions of gender and their prescriptions of heterosexuality create the inevitability of homophobia as an apparently natural response to repressed "non-masculine" emotions. Men's violences are therefore not only directed

towards women and children, but towards the self and other men. Kaufman (1987) traces this back to the acquisition of gender, which he argues is based on the malleability of human desires, and the prolonged period of human childhood, as a period of prolonged powerlessness and subjection to family gender roles. For the boy, he argues, there is the hope of power in the future, by virtue of manhood, and a process of repressing passivity and accentuating activity, which amounts to surplus aggression. Violence against women, children and other men as an extremity of subordination serves to confirm masculinities.

Post-structural analysis recognises the centrality of sexuality as a locus of power in interpersonal relationships, particularly in a society where sexuality is a significant factor of heterosexist social control (Foucault, 1976; Bell, 1993; Warner, 1993; Steinberg et al, 1997). Weedon argues that Foucault's analysis centralises the body, and that "...*The centrality of sexuality as a locus of power in the modern age has meant that sex has become a focal point in subjective identity*" (1987, p119). Similar themes have been developed by Struve who argues that power and control have become eroticised within our culture, referring to "*the norms of sexual abuse*" (1990, p9) providing a social framework for the sexual abuse of children. A social context of patriarchal relations creates a high risk situation for the sexual abuse of children. This is further exemplified by Connell's description of "normal" hegemonic "masculinity".

“The ability to impose a definition of the situation, to set the terms in which events are understood and issues discussed, to formulate ideals and define morality, in short to assert hegemony is also an essential part of social power.”(Connell,1987,p107).

This is disturbing in its similarity to a description of an act of child sexual abuse, and provides a link to understanding sexual abuse in terms of gender and power. Power is legitimised by the general association of authority with masculinities and subordination with femininities (Connell,1987). Additionally, the denial of emotional expression leaves the use of sexual behaviour as a threatening but available channel for emotional expression. However, this potentially poses a threat to dominant masculinities, as it involves vulnerability, emotion and dependency. This may, as Frosh (1993) argues, lead some men to see children as the least threatening and most controllable objects.

These factors help us understand why the majority of sexual abuse is committed by males, and that the scale and prevalence of child sexual abuse cuts across all boundaries; class, gender, age, “race”, disability (Kelly,1988a; Herman,1990; MacLeod and Saraga,1991).¹ The feminist

¹It is important to acknowledge that there are incidences of children and young people being sexually abused by girls and women. It has been argued that there is widespread social and professional denial of female child sexual abuse, which has contributed to its under reporting (Elliot,1993; Saradjian,1998). This is a denial of the act of abuse taking place, or a denial of the responsibility of the female committing such an act. Sexual abuse committed by males or females is likely to entail an abuse of power and responsibility, and leave a child feeling hurt and guilty for what has happened.

movement has played a significant role in the social re-discovery of child sexual abuse. There has been an on-going struggle for social acceptance of the existence of sexual abuse, and for a better understanding of the pain and suffering of its survivors. In this respect, sexual abuse has parallels with other fields, such as the plight of concentration camp victims and Vietnam war veterans. The social "discoveries" of these psychological traumas have historically flourished in affiliation with political movements (Herman, 1992). The need for these movements suggests political and social resistance to acknowledging psychological trauma. Patriarchal forces which obfuscate child sexual abuse, have been identified in recent research by Taylor-Browne (1997). In 1896, the social unacceptability of Freud's lecture "The Aetiology of Hysteria", which referred to child sexual abuse as a cause of psychological disturbance in some of his adult women patients, led to its re-formulation into a theory relating to fantasies of unfulfilled sexual desire directed towards their fathers (Masson, 1988; Etherington, 1995). This was a denial of the reality of his patients' experiences of child sexual abuse. Referring to this, Herman states:

"Out of the ruins of the traumatic theory of hysteria, Freud created psychoanalysis. The dominant psychological theory of the next century

Saradjian (1998) found that there was a greater sense of anger towards females who abuse, on the part of victims. This may be related to social constructions of gender, but possibly additionally to the loss of a primary care giver and attachment figure, and therefore an enhanced sense of betrayal. However, to enter into such comparison potentially reinforces an oppressive gender construction. It is more helpful to draw a simple conclusion that a child is likely to experience sexual abuse as harmful per se, whether the abuser is male or female.

was founded in the denial of women's reality. Sexuality remained the central focus of inquiry. But the exploitative social context in which sexual relations actually occur became utterly invisible. Psychoanalysis became a study of the internal vicissitudes of fantasy and desire, dissociated from the reality of experience.” (Herman,1992,p14).

The consequence of this course of events over time has been the growth and dominance of theories of psychoanalysis and other therapies, and a constant redefining and silencing of the true nature of women and children's experiences. Masson (1988), after years of working in psychoanalysis himself, has written extensively about the abuse of power in therapy, and its dominance at the cost of more appropriate helping processes which recognise the struggle of personal experiences in their social context. The dominance of psychoanalysis has led to a perpetuation of theoretical perspectives which construct child sexual abuse as a diagnostic category, with professional responses being defined in terms of treatment as opposed to assistance and recovery. Women and children's experiences are defined in terms of medical pathology, ignoring their political and social context and failing to directly confront the causes of sexual abuse, and avoiding a direct confrontation of the abuser, for example, the family dysfunction model, which questions responses of non-abusing parents, mostly mothers (Macleod and Saraga,1988). The male domination of the child sexual abuse industry (Hudson,1992) provides a further example of women's

experiences being taken by men and used for their own theoretical purposes, in male dominated medical and academic institutions.

For present purposes, this analysis brings the concept of gender and power into the experience of the sexually abused male child. It helps us understand the manner in which he may subsequently interpret and analyse his experience, and relate it to his received beliefs about appropriate men's practices. Being a victim may not be compatible with these beliefs, such beliefs are likely to contribute to a boy or a man's decision to remain silent, or to deny or re-frame the experience of being sexually abused.

Conclusions

This chapter has examined dynamic post-structural understandings of diverse masculinities, which are shifting and changing across cultural, spatial and temporal locations. However, it was established that these masculinities are established and contested in a context of patriarchal relations, characterised by oppressive heterosexism and homophobia. Consequently, particular forms of masculinity dominate and gain acceptance and support in a wide range of social circumstances. Other forms of masculinity are subordinated and oppressively policed. Alongside recognising difference and diversity, it is identified that social oppression restricts expressions of difference and shapes social choices. In living with the theoretical tensions of allowing these potentially opposing conceptualisations to sit alongside each other, it becomes possible to hold onto and utilise their complexity. It will be shown that this anti-reductionist approach is central to the methodology and analytical framework advanced by the current research.

An understanding of the social construction of masculinities, in a context of patriarchal relations, gives perhaps the greatest clue towards an explanation of why men commit acts of sexual violence towards women and children. Dominant men's practices are defined in relational terms to the subordination of women, children and other men. Sex, violence, power and gender are combined to construct dominant forms of

masculinities, that are invested in and expressed through the body, and are central to self-esteem and identity. For many men, the everyday experience of patriarchal relations is sufficient to provide the necessary benefits and nurture for being male, although this is not to deny the need for constant masculinising affirmations, and access to "legitimate and acceptable" closeness to other males. For other men, these benefits are not felt, and other circumstances and negative experiences accentuate self-doubts and repressed emotions, and call into play the need for affirmation through the use of a more overt force. Sometimes physical violence may suffice, but for some the doubt is so great that affirmation has to be experienced through the body, as physical and or sexual violence and domination. As we have already said, there is an illusion and disappointment of power in these circumstances, which after a short passage of time thwarts the affirmation. This goes some way to explain the repetition and escalation of men's sexual violences (Kelly, 1988a).

Kaufman's reference to Humphrey Bogart's description of Captain Renault, in the film *Casablanca*, as being "*Just like any other man, only more so*" (1987,p1), has particular salience here. The distinguishing factor between the many men and some men is more a question of degree or attitude, rather than any clinical psychological or psychiatric difference (Pringle,1995). This view is consistent with Kelly's "*continuum of sexual violence*" (1988a,p27), and is supported by MacLeod and Saraga, who have argued that a recognition of the importance of gender,

power and *"ideologies of childhood"* (1991,p8) is helpful to those attempting to help those in need of recovery.

Many of the theories relating to child sexual abuse refer to the individualistic and personal psychological processes. The current research seeks to contribute to theoretical knowledge and create fresh approaches to developing non-pathologising helping strategies, by emphasising the importance and relevance of post-structuralism, power and gender, in developing a fuller understanding of male-child sexual abuse. Social constructions of masculinities have a potentially significant detrimental impact on the manner in which sexual abuse is experienced, and on subsequent behaviour which may hinder recovery. Boys and men, who have been sexually abused, have themselves been influenced by patriarchal relations. The experience of being sexually abused may cause them to feel marginalised, subordinated or inadequate, in terms of their beliefs about men's practices, and awaken repressed fears and feelings about their sexuality. Furthermore, these fears and feelings are likely to be attributed to the abuse, as opposed to any understanding of their patriarchal construction. Sometimes, quite desperate compensatory efforts are made in attempting to regain acceptable perceived masculinities. These young men can be significantly helped if they receive support and intervention which allows them to establish a fuller understanding of how they have developed these fears and anxieties. Consequently they will be provided with more

resolved, effective and peaceful strategies for survival, which will allow them to move forward in their lives as individuals, friends, partners, fathers and so on.

Chapter 2

Facts and Mythology - A Critical Review of the Existing Literature on Male-Child Sexual Abuse

Introduction

This chapter critically reviews the existing literature on child sexual abuse, and raises epistemological questions about the dominance of particular types of knowledge. A connection is made with the feminist critique of the dominant masculine discourse in social and other research practice. The critique extends to the discipline of psychology, which has historically excluded the voices of women, children and other oppressed groups (Burman, 1994; Gilligan, 1997). A great deal of the child sexual abuse literature is dominated by psychological research, which fails to adequately acknowledge the impact and influence of a patriarchal social context. Feminist perspectives on child sexual abuse have centralised issues related to patriarchal relations in asking the question: Why do we have sexual abuse in our society, and why in the main is it committed by men? (Kelly, 1988a; Driver and Droisen, 1989; Macleod and Saraga, 1991; Herman, 1992). These perspectives challenge orthodox theories and threaten to unseat patriarchal power relationships. Consequently there

is an on-going backlash against these understandings, which attempts to obscure open acknowledgement of any problem with masculinities and the widespread social “normality” of child sexual abuse (Gilligan, 1997; Oakley, 1997).

Patriarchal relations influence theoretical commitments which shape the way in which sexual abuse is defined, both in academic and popular arenas, which in turn influences the nature and outcome of prevalence reports. Patriarchal constructions of gender hinder the ability of children and young people to feel safe in reporting sexual abuse, and exacerbate the impact of the experience. These issues are considered in Sections 1 and 2. Section 3 examines the concept of “organised abuse”, acknowledging that all sexual abuse is organised, whether or not it is committed against an individual or in a context which involves large numbers of people, for example in a neighbourhood network, in child-care institutions or on an international scale.

In considering impact, Section 4 presents research which argues that the experience of sexual abuse is harmful and can have long lasting consequences. The interaction of the impact sexual abuse and social oppression, particularly racism and disabilism is examined. It is argued that some of the psychological literature focuses too much on “diagnostic categories and treatment”. This is potentially pathologising and obscures the circumstances of sexual abuse and the normality of the survivor’s

need for “assistance” in recovery. Section 5 looks at the specific impact of male-child sexual abuse and again argues that many research studies inadequately acknowledge issues relating to the social construction of masculinities. It is argued that these are central to an understanding of male responses to sexual abuse. Section 6 looks specifically at the issue of young men who have been sexually abused having concerns about their sexuality and fears about abusing others. It is argued that these two areas have interacted and developed into a social mythology, a systematic misunderstanding of the impact of male-child sexual abuse, leading to a set of false beliefs. These beliefs compound the fears, feelings and sense of responsibility of the child or young person, which are further compounded by the false beliefs and perceptions of others. The conclusions draw together the main themes of the chapter, and identifies the importance of the patriarchal context in understanding and drawing a distinction between facts and mythology in relation to child sexual abuse.

1.) Definitions and Prevalence

Definitions and Methodological Problems

Definitions of child sexual abuse arise out of particular theoretical commitments, research is then centred on that definition, creating a prevalence which in turn consolidates the theoretical commitment. For example, theoretical understandings about family dynamics (Furniss,1991) are likely to focus on families and exclude a range of other experiences which constitute child sexual abuse. They also run the risk of placing responsibility with non-abusing family members, rather than placing it unequivocally with the person who committed the abuse (MacLeod and Saraga,1988). Wider definitions based on Kelly's (1998a) continuum of men's violence are likely to lead to higher prevalence rates. These differences represent the contested knowledge base in child sexual abuse research, and make comparison difficult (Pilkington and Kremer, 1995a,1995b). Additionally, prevalence studies are confounded by factors which contribute to the extent of under-reporting, which is believed by many to be considerable (Finkelhor et al,1986, Urquiza and Keating,1990; Watkins and Bentovim,1992).

A less acknowledged problem is that difficulties may arise due to the sensitive nature of child sexual abuse and the questions researchers may ask of sometimes unsuspecting members of the population.

Finkelhor et al (1986) examined the impact on prevalence rates of methods of data collection, ranging from self-completed questionnaires, telephone interviews to face-to-face contacts. Whilst they quote varying opinions, they conclude that there is a relationship between prevalence rate and method of data collection, and that face to face contacts yielded a higher prevalence rate. Gorey and Leslie (1997) in reviewing 16 North American cross-sectional prevalence studies, identified an inverse relationship between response rate and prevalence outcome. They argue that adults who have been sexually abused, taking an anonymous opportunity to tell their story, are more likely to respond to such studies than their non-abused counterparts. Other problems may also skew outcomes, such as sampling techniques which target a specific social grouping such as college students, or patients of a psychiatric hospital. This may lead to reverse correlations, drawing conclusions about strong relationships between psychiatric illness and child sexual abuse. It is known that many adults who sexually abuse report childhood experiences of being sexually abused (Fisher,1994). The reverse correlation which may result from understandings of child sexual abuse based on samples of adults who have abused are particularly dangerous. They create fearful popular misunderstandings about subsequent abusing being an outcome of being abused, not least, as this study will show, by children and young people.

It is difficult to reach a final concluding definition of child sexual abuse

which is able to encompass and accurately reflect such a vast range of unique individual experiences. Some prevalence studies ask participants about a range of personal experiences, collect the results and then apply differing definitions to obtain different outcomes. Such a study would then lend itself to comparison with a range of other studies. The study by Kelly, Regan and Burton (1991) is an example of such an approach, and demonstrates the variation in outcomes which result. They quote a prevalence rate for contact sexual abuse of 1 in 5(21%) for females and 1 in 14(7%) for males . These rates increase to 1 in 2(59%) for females and 1 in 4(27%) for males, when additional categories of unwanted sexual experiences are included, such as peer experiences and more distant or less direct forms of non-contact abuse and attempts/escapes. Influenced by this approach, and the work of Finkelhor et al (1986) and Morrison (1995), a wide and lengthy definition of child sexual abuse, presenting a range of options and defined behaviours, was used in an exploratory study conducted by myself and colleagues:

*“Forced or coerced sexual behaviour that is imposed on a child (person under 18 years old). **AND/OR** Sexual behaviour between a child and a much older person (5 years or more age discrepancy), or a person in a care taking role, or a sibling. **AND/OR** Sexual behaviour where the recipient is defined as being unable to give informed consent by virtue of age, understanding or ability. Contact Behaviours may involve: Touching;*

rubbing; disrobing; sucking; and/or penetrating. It may include rape. Penetration may be oral, anal or vaginal and digital, penile or objectile. Non-Contact Behaviours may involve: exhibitionism; peeping or voyeurism; frottage (rubbing up against others), fetishism (such as stealing underwear or masturbating into another's clothes), and obscene communication (such as obscene phone calls, and verbal and written sexual harassment or defamation)." (Durham et al, 1995).

Several prevalence studies relating to males have been presented and discussed in the following three reviews to which the reader is referred: Urquiza and Keating (1990), Watkins and Bentovim (1992) and Mendel (1995). Watkins and Bentovim (1992) cite North American studies with a range of prevalence rate from 6% to 62% for girls and 3% to 31% for males. Mendel quotes a similar range for males of 2.5% or 3% to 33%. Both studies cite methodological considerations as the accounting factor. Urquiza and Keating present seven studies, with prevalence rates ranging from 2.5% to 17.3%. These studies span the time period of 1978 to 1989. A factor which may limit the accuracy of a prevalence study is the possibility that a person may consciously choose not to report an experience of child sexual abuse, and indeed making sure the victim does not tell is part of the abuse. This underlines feminist perspectives about the need for research to develop sensitive methodologies which account for the factors which may prevent an oppressed research participant from feeling able to speak out about traumatic experiences.

2.) Under-Reporting of Male-Child Sexual Abuse

The impact of child sexual abuse has the potential to make reporting the experience difficult for anybody. In order for something to be reported it has to be received, if giving information involves stigma or disbelief, then it is less likely to be shared. In considering the extent of secrecy and denial set up and maintained by those who abuse (Finkelhor,1984; Bibby,1996), it is easy to see how a wider social denial would prevent a child from telling. It is for these reasons that Herman has noted and advocated the powerful role of political and social movements in helping to break the silence of individual circumstances (Herman,1992).

Reporting sexual abuse would be particularly difficult if the person concerned had already experienced other forms of social oppression, or lived in circumstances where they had already experienced being silenced, such as an oppressive institution. Thanki (1994) and Gill (1996) refer to abuse in black communities remaining undetected due to racist assumptions of white practitioners, which fail to define circumstances as abusive. Gill refers to "*negative racism*" (1996,p80), the fear of being labelled racist through being seen as pathologising black communities. Thanki refers to white practitioners pursuing a "*rule of optimism*" through a process of "*cultural relativism*" (1994,p239), the net result being the undetected abuse of black children.

Entrance and exit rituals, as used by abusers, are instrumental in denying the external reality of the sexually abusive incident (Furniss,1991). Fears and threats of violence to self or others are also significant. (Porter, 1986; Bolton et al,1989; Grubman-Black,1990). Threats can involve threats of physical violence, threats that a child will be removed from home, threats that telling will result in the loss of a caregiver, or that telling will result in the boy no longer receiving treats and special attention. This happened in the Castle Hill case (Brannen et al,1991) where abuse committed by the headmaster of the school gave access to special privileges and protection from a violent pecking order amongst the other pupils in the school. The social context in which these fears are created gives them credibility and ensures silence.

The possible under-reporting of child sexual abuse by males has been noted by many researchers (Porter,1986; Lew,1988; Vander Mey,1988; Bolton et al,1989; Hunter,1990; Urquiza and Keating,1990; Watkins and Bentovim,1992; Black and DeBlasie,1993; Etherington,1995; Mendel,1995). The literature cites many reasons for the particular under-reporting of male-child sexual abuse. Urquiza and Keating (1990) identify the possibility of researchers and clinicians who have little experience of working with males who have been sexually abused may be unlikely to recognise boys and men as a population in need of investigation. Mendel (1995) refers to a similar process taking place in relation to a lack of recognition of abuse committed by females, and the

difficulties males have in identifying childhood sexual experiences with female adults or older adolescents as abuse. Additionally, a culture of male self-reliance potentially leads to less supervision. It is acknowledged in the literature that males are more likely than females to be abused by someone outside their family (Finkelhor et al,1986; Watkins and Bentovim,1992). Whilst these studies recognise that social constructions of masculinities have significance for the under-reporting of male-child sexual abuse, they remain largely behavioural, diagnostic or at least categorising in their reliance on developing lists of "characteristics". The current study will show that a different and more dynamic picture emerges, when young people are enabled to speak more fully about their own experiences. The study will show how and why being sexually abused in the social context of patriarchal relations may prevent males from feeling comfortable in expressing feelings or fears and being dependent on others, leading to the development of repression as a coping strategy. The study will also show how important it is for these understandings to be central to the knowledge base which informs practitioners in helping young people recover from child sexual abuse.

3.) Organised Abuse

Whilst a level of organisation and planning characterises all sexual abuse (Finkelhor,1984)², the term “organised abuse” has been widely and differentially used in the research literature. The DOH (1998) consultation paper *Working Together To Safeguard Children* proposed the following definition:

“Organised abuse is sexual abuse where there is more than a single abuser and the adults concerned appear to act in concert to abuse children and/or where an adult uses an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for sexual abuse” (DOH,1998,p43).

Institutions by definition are organised establishments, and when abuse takes place within them, adults may have an exclusive power base through which these processes of organisation are utilised for the purpose of creating opportunities to abuse (Doran and Brannen,1996).

²When people commit sexual abuse it is likely that there will be a cycle of behaviour, which indicates the extent to which child sexual abuse is often highly organised and planned (Salter,1988; Kahn,1990; O’Callaghan and Print,1994; Morrison and Print,1995; Cunningham and MacFarlane,1996). In basic terms, the cycle goes through the following stages: Circumstances and Thoughts - Fantasy - Planning - Setting Up - Abuse - Guilt / Fear - Rationalisation (cycle repeats). Often, the child is made to feel that they have either co-operated or given consent, or even initiated the sexual behaviour. The implication of not having resisted enough, or the post abuse rationalisations by the child of what he or she could have done to prevent the abuse would be enough to set such beliefs in motion. Bibby uses the term “hooking” children into a “closed abusing system” (1996,p6), and uses the analogy of an angler playing with a fish. Approximately one third of sexual offences against children are committed by young people under the age of eighteen (Morrison and Print,1995). In some of these circumstances, given the age of the person abusing, there may not be an extensively developed cycle, although some of the behaviour may indicate that there is evidence of a developing cycle. Nevertheless, even though circumstances may be more opportunist, the victim is still likely to be left with a sense of responsibility, or may have been threatened, or both .

Children with disabilities may be particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse, particularly if abilities and opportunities to communicate or resist are limited (Kelly,1992). The extent of “organisation” sometimes has an international dimension (Kelly et al,1995). In circumstances of war, rape and sexual abuse has become a deliberate strategy of male violence between nations (Pringle,1995). Connections have been made between child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation, and the role of adult and child pornography, indicating a high level of organised and sometimes international communication between the adults involved (Itzin,1997). Ritual abuse has been a controversial issue, this has been defined as:

“Ritual abuse is the involvement of children in physical, psychological or sexual abuse associated with repeated activities (“ritual”) which purport to relate the abuse to contexts of a religious, magical or supernatural kind” (McFadyen, et al,1993,p37).

Alternatively, particularly in America, the term “satanic ritual abuse” (De Young,1997) is used. De Young discusses the controversy involved, arguing that the professional community remains confused and divided about the whole issue, which has attracted a great deal of media attention. This illustrates the operation of backlash against feminist perspectives of child sexual abuse (Gilligan,1997; Oakley,1997). The public controversy has affected the reliability of research into the issue. La Fontaine’s DOH (1994) study concluded that there was little evidence to support its existence. Kelly (1994) argues that a more stringent

methodology was used for this study than for other areas of child sexual abuse. This is an indication of the readiness to disbelieve, which has been added to by allegations against practitioners of over-zealousness. De Young refers to "*satanic conspiracy*" or "*cultural connivance*" (1997,p91), and expresses the concern that the cultural and media controversy may result in some more "*ordinary*" type of sexual abuse being overlooked, in the attempt to prove satanic ritual abuse.

Another example of backlash, which leads to the disbelief of children and young people is the notion of the deserving victim. Taylor - Browne refers to moral panics and the "*Issue-Attention Cycle*" (1997,p6) as processes which "obfuscate" child sexual abuse. The need for blame to be attributed to a small group of people was taken up by Kelly in relation to the use of the term paedophile, which takes attention away from the recognition of abusers as "*ordinary men*" (1996,p45). Another related issue is the alleged "false memory syndrome". It has been shown that the prevalence claims of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation are widely inaccurate and in no way substantiated by credible and reliable research evidence (Dallam,1997). Taylor-Browne (1997) points out that this issue has received large-scale coverage in the newspapers, which discusses the ordeals of parents and blame the therapists involved. She makes the point that very little media attention is paid to those who require help because of the abuse that they have never forgotten.

4.) The Impact of Child Sexual Abuse

This section considers theoretical understandings of the impact of child sexual abuse, and argues that many of them fail to adequately acknowledge the influence of social and cultural factors on children and young people's experiences. One model which has been widely used in research is Finkelhor and Browne's (1986) Four Traumagenic Dynamics Model, which conceptualises four categories of impact: Traumatic Sexualisation; Stigmatisation; Betrayal; Powerlessness. These categories are considered in terms of dynamics, psychological impact and behavioural manifestation. They draw together previous research into a useful lens through which to view the experience of the individual. Ranges of conditions and reactions are presented as possibilities for the individual experience. Although the model mentions social problems and the negative perceptions of others, it remains in many ways overly structured, and diagnostic. As a consequence, the impact of sexual abuse is largely explained in psychological or behavioural terms.

For a fuller understanding, social and cultural factors require greater consideration. Stigmatisation and the negative perceptions of others could be largely generated by a young person's internalised oppression and received social misunderstandings about gender and sexuality. Patriarchal gender constructions could lead a young person who has been sexually abused into beliefs about not being "appropriately male" or

not "appropriately female". Having these feelings, could lead to a range of compensatory behaviours and feelings, such as a boy behaving aggressively in order to appear "masculine" amongst his peers, or a girl feeling afraid to resist inappropriate sexual advances in order to appear "feminine". These behaviours can lead young people into considerable difficulties, inviting negative attention and possibly behavioural labels or diagnosis, which create further feelings of powerlessness, betrayal and distrust of adults. The model has been referred to or used by other writers and researchers (Porter,1986; Bolton et al,1989; Watkins and Bentovim,1992; Mendel,1995; Feiring et al,1996) as a tool for analysis of research data or in the development of further theoretical understandings. Hall and Lloyd add an additional category, "*Enforced Silence*" (1989,p45), which refers to the specific processes a person who abuses may use to ensure the silence of sexually abused children.

Another theoretical and diagnostic categorisation which has been used in attempting to understand the impact of child sexual abuse is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Mendel,1995). This involves characteristic "symptoms" following significantly fearful and stressful events, which include flashbacks, where the event is re-experienced, sometimes numbing, other times increased arousal, and avoidance of stimuli associated with the event. A further adaptation of PTSD is PSAT, Post Sexual Abuse Trauma (Briere and Runtz,1988), which specifically refers to childhood adaptations to sexually abusive experiences

manifesting into adult symptoms. This attempts to identify a separate set of diagnostic categories specific to sexual abuse. Closely associated to PTSD and PSAT, is the process of dissociation. This has been associated with the impact of child sexual abuse by many authors (Steele and Colrain, 1990; Watkins and Bentovim, 1992; Friedrich et al, 1997). They refer to dissociation as a physiological and psychological process which involves a separation of mental processes which are usually integrated. Thoughts, memories feelings and emotions are split off from the current stream of consciousness. A dissociative response to child sexual abuse is a functional adaptation, an amnesic barrier repressing the impact of the experience. Again, a greater acknowledgement of social factors may lead to a greater understanding of what some of the dissociative processes actually involve, and how they are triggered by day-to-day social experiences.

The personal circumstances of the opposing experience of blocking memories and feelings and the uncontrolled flooding and re-experiencing of those memories and feelings in PTSD has been paralleled with the social experience by Herman (1992). The oscillation of social belief followed by a reaction of re-framing and disbelief supports and mirrors the private experience. A hostile social context, characterised by hegemonic masculinities, potentially compounds the impact of the individual experience of child sexual abuse, creating a sense of responsibility and failure in the child. Such a process could drive a child

into further secrecy and ultimately result in behaviour which would confirm or invite psychological diagnosis, which would label and fail to assist the child. Whilst diagnostic categories provide a lens and useful summaries which may assist understanding, each individual circumstance is different and must not be compromised by categorisation and diagnosis (Bolton et al, 1989).

A psychological or psychiatric diagnosis, which largely excludes the voice of the young person, and fails to adequately acknowledge the role of the social and cultural experiences and processes that have been lived through is pathologising and will inevitably compound the impact of the social oppression. This section has highlighted this in relation to the patriarchal gender constructions. It has particular salience in relation to the impact of racism, an issue that receives little consideration in the child sexual abuse literature.

The Interacting Impact of Child Sexual Abuse and Racism

When the experience of child sexual abuse is paralleled by social oppression, the impact of the abuse may serve to compound some of the experiences the oppression may already have presented. This can apply to many situations where the individual for whatever reason has been socially oppressed, whether by virtue of age, simply being a child in an environment not sensitive to the needs of children, or having a disability

and being constantly excluded from aspects of social living, creating feelings of isolation and powerlessness.

The issue of racism is neglected in a great deal of the child sexual abuse literature. Some authors have recently considered the issue (Wilson, 1993; Thanki, 1994; Cowburn, 1996; Gill, 1996; Jackson, 1996). In order to consider the particular interaction of the impact of child sexual abuse and racism, it is necessary to clarify a definition of racism, as an oppressive process, as distinct from descriptions of culture and identity. A social and political definition of racism has been adopted (Fryer, 1988). This definition takes into account and assumes a social and political context of a racist white dominated power structure, which supports and encourages individual actions. Thus racism is defined as "white people misusing or abusing power to oppress black people".

Definitions have the problem that over time and with a changing context, their applicability or relevance may also change, or that there may be examples of experiences occurring outside its strict confines. This is an anti-oppressive definition, in that it assumes an active and automatic historically and socially embedded process of racism taking place (James, 1980; Fryer, 1988; Cowburn, 1996; Jackson, 1996). This is both in terms of individual actions and the operation of wider oppressive power structures. Additional problems may involve people defining themselves differently, but still experiencing racism on account of how they are

perceived by others. There is often a confusion between definitions of racism and prejudice. Both involve people holding pre-conceived ideas and assumptions about people or groups, which influence their subsequent opinions, attitudes and actions. However, racism as defined here refers to people actively using the advantages of being white in a white dominated power structure.

The experience of racism can have a range of effects (Angelou,1969; hooks,1984; Ahmad,1990; Jackson,1996) and may cause a child to feel hurt, confused, angry, sad, shocked, upset, isolated, different, resentful and bitter. It may cause them to deny what is happening, or change personal characteristics so as to fit in with expectations. They may begin to hate themselves, and feel responsible for their experiences. They may become aggressive or alternatively become withdrawn. They may question themselves and reject positive aspects of their own culture. They may reject their own family.

The previous section has shown that an experience of child sexual abuse may cause a child to experience a range of feelings, some of which are not dissimilar to the above experiences of racism; guilt, anger, loss, frustration, blame, betrayal, confusion, helplessness, isolation, responsibility, sadness, bitterness. Behaviourally they may become withdrawn, aggressive, moody, untrusting, sexually active and self-harming. The concurrent experience of child sexual abuse and racism

can be particularly difficult as the impact of one may in many ways reinforce and confirm the impact of the other. Additionally, a black child wishing to report sexual abuse may be afraid to approach a white dominated agency and will have to consider the potential personal and family consequences (Wilson,1993).

Interacting processes of abuse and oppression are also applicable to disabled children who have been sexually abused (Kennedy,1992; Briggs,1995a). The increased risk and vulnerability of children with disabilities, highlights the need for personal safety programmes. *“Abuse exaggerates children’s emotional problems which relate to their disabilities”* (Briggs,1995a,p26).

Mediating Factors

Some people are more severely affected by child sexual abuse than others, it is important to establish which factors prompt resilience (Chandy et al,1996; Anderson,1997). The impact of child sexual abuse may depend upon a number of characteristics and the individual’s reaction to them. These include the nature and closeness of the relationship between the survivor and the abuser; the frequency of the abuse and the nature, duration and extent of the abuse; the use of force, aggression and threats; the gender of the person committing the abuse; and the age of the person being abused. Research suggests the

younger the age, the greater the impact (Urquiza and Capra,1990; Watkins and Bentovim,1992; Hunter,1995).

The experience of sexual abuse is harmful, but the degree of harm is unique to the child concerned. Generalisations from research are potentially harmful and may cause professionals to consider certain experiences as being less harmful. Conte and Schuerman's (1987) study of factors associated with an increased impact of child sexual abuse suggests that effects vary between children. They identify the importance of individual experiences and resistance strategies and conclude that a very powerful mediating factor on the impact of child sexual abuse is the presence of an effective support system, provided by supportive, non-abusing adults

These findings are supported by Hunter (1995) and Chandy et al (1996). Also, Feiring et al (1998) note that adolescents rely less on adults and more on their peers for approval and advice, and that this may not always be supportive (as the current research will confirm). Gilgun (1990) conducted a life history study of 34 men, 23 of whom were survivors of child sexual abuse. The study identified the presence of confidants and other supportive persons in the child's life as significant mediating factors. This included both family and non-family members, sometimes persons in authority. The supportive persons were primarily men, but included same-age female friends, partners, and older women.

In the absence of such support, there were reports of negative behaviours being developed, such as sexualised behaviour and its use, mainly masturbation, as a coping mechanism to deal with stress. Lack of social support and a sexualised environment were associated with the subsequent abuse of other children. The additional presence of physical abuse was sometimes associated with subsequent rape by the victim of sexual abuse as an outcome.

These studies highlight the importance and significance of personal and social support in helping young people recover from child sexual abuse. In circumstances where this would not be immediately available from within the young person's family, it would have to somehow be built in to a helping strategy, providing reasonably easy access to on-going assistance and support (Gilgun,1990). On-going personal and social support would help the child talk through and come to terms with the trauma experienced. It would help ensure that responsibility is placed and remains with the person who committed the abuse. It should also help the child to develop insight into some of the social and cultural processes which may become problematic as a result of the abusive experience. These factors will be fully explored by the current research, particularly in relation to adolescent peer group experiences.

5.) The Impact of Child Sexual Abuse On Males

There have now been a number of reviews of the literature in relation to the child sexual abuse of males (Vander Mey,1988; Bolton et al,1989; Watkins and Bentovim,1992; Black and Deblassie,1993; Mendel,1995) and many other studies treating males as a distinct group to study in relation to child sexual abuse (Nasjleti,1980; Porter,1986; Lew,1988; Grubman-Black,1990; Hunter,1990; Mezey and King,1992; Durham,1993; Gonsiorek et al,1994; Etherington,1995; Bagley and Thurston,1996a).

Urquiza and Capra (1990) in their review of the literature, which rests its clinical findings primarily on empirical research, look at initial and long-term effects. The initial effects (many of which are identified as becoming long-term) include emotional, behavioural and sexual disturbances, such as delinquency, shame, depression, non-compliance, relationship difficulties, sexualised behaviours and aggression. They refer to the "strong" finding in the psychological literature which shows that males tend to respond to stressful and difficult situations in a behavioural or externalising manner. Behavioural disturbances are identified as a common finding, supported by a wide range of literature and research. They also identify that such behavioural responses may have the negative effect of deterring potentially helpful and supportive responses from others. They indicate that not all boys respond to abuse

in this externalising manner, recognising the importance of individual experiences interacting with family and environmental factors, and make the point that few studies of child sexual abuse have attempted to address these types of factors.

Two recent studies have attempted to address individual factors by using life-story methods. Mendel (1995) conducted a study using postal questionnaires (using standardised measures), of a sample of 124 men, with a sub-set of 9 men who were interviewed face-to-face. A range of short and long term psychological and behavioural consequences were identified. These categories relate well to Finkelhor and Browne's (1986) Four Traumagenic Dynamics, but have been applied with specificity to the experience of males.

Etherington (1995) conducted in depth interviews of a sample of 25 men. The study identified a range of problems experienced, including difficulties in defining the abuse, either due to repressing memories of the abuse, or confusion in relation to pleasure or arousal experienced during the abuse, or feelings of responsibility. The men had difficulties in reporting their abuse, including disbelief, fear of judgement, shame and guilt. Most of the men reported sexual problems, and difficulties with intimate relationships and severe depressive feelings. Five of the men had been convicted for sexual offences. This study recognises the influence of male socialisation and has gone some way to consider the

impact of social and patriarchal factors. However, this is often in a generally rigid and structural sense, which fails to adequately acknowledge the dynamics of temporally and spatially changing masculinities.

Both Mendel's (1995) study and Etherington's (1995) study have relevance to the current research, because they are recent and use face-to-face interviews, particularly the latter. However, both studies to some extent rely overly on statistical categorisation, which potentially undermines the individual experiences of the men they interviewed. Furthermore, both these studies refer to an older adult population (mainly aged over 35, and often much older), and in attempting to draw generalisations, may be skewed, through reverse correlations, and by the extent of counselling or psychotherapy they had received.

Many authors make reference to problematic aspects, for the sexually abused male, of social and cultural expectations and definitions of "masculinity" (again, in a rather limited and static sense) and the manner in which males are socialised to respond to stress and emotional feelings. (Nasjleti, 1980; Rogers and Terry, 1984; Sebold, 1987; Lew, 1988; Vander-Mey, 1988; Gilgun and Reiser, 1990; Grubman-Black, 1990; Hunter, 1990; Watkins and Bentovim, 1992; Black and DeBlassie, 1993; Etherington, 1995; Mendel, 1995).

The experience of victimisation and a clear expression of emotional distress are not consistent with hegemonic masculinities, which encourage denials of emotional feelings and definitions of the self in terms of activity, achievement, control and personal power, often expressed as dominating others. Two specific problematic areas for some males who have been sexually abused, which stem directly from these considerations are, firstly, the sexual abuse of others and, secondly, fears and confusion relating to sexuality, sexual functioning and sexual identity.

6.)Facts Or Myths - Abusing Others and Sexual Identity

Sexually Abusing Others

The issue of males who have been sexually abused subsequently sexually abusing others has been identified by several authors. One study by Conte and Schuerman (1988) quotes this occurring at a rate of 2%, although the study is not broken down by gender on its symptom checklist. Other studies, relating to boys alone, ranged from a rate of 13% (Friederich et al 1988) to a rate of 50% (Sansonnott, Hayden et al,1987). A pooled prevalence of several studies was 22% (Watkins and Bentovim 1992). The conflicting outcomes of these studies suggest methodological problems and reverse correlations, which inflate and distort statistical relationships. An exploratory study conducted by myself and colleagues (Durham et al, 1995) identified this problem. Some boys only reported being sexually abused during the process of social work intervention in response to their inappropriate sexual behaviours, the implication being that without the sexualised behaviours, their own abuse would not have been reported. This suggests an undetected population of boys who have been sexually abused and do not develop inappropriate sexual behaviours. This is not to deny that many inappropriate sexual behaviours also remain undetected. It may also conceal substantial cultural acceptance of male-on-male aggression, which in many situations, may have a sexually degrading element.

For some boys, there clearly is a problem of inappropriate sexual behaviours, which may result in the abuse of others. As with theories relating to the impact of child sexual abuse, theories which explain sexually abusive behaviour (Ryan,1989; Kahn,1990; Johnson,1995b; Morrison and Print,1995; Cunningham and MacFarlane,1996) often take a narrow psychological perspective, and inadequately acknowledge the interaction of social factors. Theorising from “clinical” experiences, Ryan (1989), describes the path of “victim to victimiser” as a circular and self-reinforcing process, based on internalised negative rationalisations of the person who abused them. Secrecy and isolation prohibit the child from validating feelings or correcting distorted assumptions, for example, about feelings of responsibility and experiencing pleasure and arousal during the abuse. This leads a child into irrational thinking, a declining self-esteem, guilt, confusion, powerlessness and anger. Ryan (1989) refers to such a child developing fantasies of retaliation in order to regain control. This in turn leads to planning negative behaviour and sexually abusing others. A fuller theoretical understanding of sexually abusive behaviours would explain why they are mainly committed by males. Rogers and Terry (1984) in their research using a “clinical” sample of 6 males refer to young men who have been sexually abused being confused about their sexual identity and attempting to regain or reassert their “masculinity” through identifying with their abuser, and recapitulating the victim experience through engaging in sexually abusive

behaviours. Again the term “masculinity” is used in a static and structured sense, and the study therefore fails to recognise that a more subtle and complex range of factors may be influencing the young man’s behaviour. An internalisation of wider social and cultural factors relating to patriarchal constructions of masculinities may play a significant part in some of the psychological processes which lead males towards sexual aggression. Research has shown that many young men who sexually abuse others have not been sexually abused themselves (Durham et al,1995; Durham,1997).

These studies imply a direct link between abuse and abusing, which this review has challenged. It is important for research to establish the factors which account for why the majority of males who have been sexually abused do not sexually abuse others. This returns us to the resiliency perspective, the presence of supportive adults was identified as a significant factor in preventing negative outcomes. A large study by Hunter (1995) supports this viewpoint and explains other factors which contribute to sexually abusive behaviours in male victims of sexual abuse. The findings indicate that personality (depression, low self-esteem, low self-confidence and an inability to be assertive) is an independent predictive factor of sexual aggression, and that sexual victimisation experiences do not predict personality. It would appear that the child who has the opportunity to discuss his fears, distortions and rationalisations involved in experiences of child sexual abuse, alongside

receiving support and insight into the basis of his fears about masculinities, would be more likely to recover from the experience and be less likely to develop the negative sequelae discussed in this chapter, and not have to live with the fear of inevitably abusing others.

Sexual Identity and Sexual Confusion

Males who have been sexually abused may express significant concern about their sexuality and sexual identity, based on a variety of factors relating to the circumstances of the abuse (Gilgun and Reiser,1990; Urquiza and Capra,1990; Gill and Tutty,1997). The person committing the abuse is likely to have been male. Alongside concerns about sexual arousal and possibly the experience of pleasure during the abuse, this may cause additional concerns (Porter,1986). Gill and Tutty (1997) conducted an exploratory qualitative study of 10 adult men who had been sexually abused, recruited from counselling agencies. They argue that it is important to make a distinction between four aspects of sexual identity: biological; gender; social sex role and sexual orientation. The men in the study were clear about their biological identity and their sexual orientation. However, they indicated a degree of confusion about gender and social sex role. This confusion was related to societal perceptions of "masculinity".

Adolescence has been identified as a significant period when the

development of identity is related to sexuality (Moore and Rosenthal, 1994). It is also a time when young people may become unsure of their sexual orientation (Gilgun and Reiser, 1990). Jubber (1991) identifies that there is often a limited education between generations about sexual function and sexual behaviour. As a result, the cognitive dimension develops slowly and socialisation is haphazard. He also argues that adolescence is a critical period for the development of sexuality, and that although their sexual needs are neglected, adolescents receive a clear message that heterosexuality is *"the socially designated and privileged goal of sexual development"* (Jubber, 1991, p38). Jubber goes on to suggest, that:

"In the absence of a formalised process of sexual socialisation and in the face of much social ambivalence and moralising, many groups and individuals are left to their own devices regarding sexual socialisation. It is thus hardly surprising then that there are almost as many routes to adult sexuality as there are adolescents and that the outcome is a great variety of forms of sexuality and sexual pathologies" (Jubber, 1991, p39).

Many myths and falsehoods about gender stereotypes and sexuality can be circulated amongst peers, the main forum for learning about and experimenting with sexuality and sexual behaviour in the light of impoverished and confusing adult information. The acceptance or rejection by a peer group in confirming sexual identity becomes all-

important. This is one of the reasons why peer groupwork is advocated as a means of support for males who have been sexually abused (Leith and Handforth,1988; Kweller and Ray,1992; Scott,1992; Watkins and Bentovim,1992; Durham,1993,1997).

The important factor is that many adolescents experience confusion and anxiety about the development of their sexual identity, and their behaviour will be influenced by social expectations. Moore and Rosenthal (1994) refer to the fact that adolescents overestimate the sexual experiences and competencies of their peers. An adolescent who has been sexually abused may attribute this confusion and anxiety to the experience of abuse, and develop fears about sexuality. If the person who abused was male, the male adolescent may as a result confuse the experience with gay sexuality (Porter,1986; Gilgun and Reiser,1989; Myers,1989). In referring to studies which report correlations between gay sexuality and child sexual abuse within gay male populations, Bartholow et al (1994) identify significant methodological problems and conclude that there are is no evidence for a cause and effect relationship between child sexual abuse and adult gay sexuality:

In a patriarchal context, the identities of gay young men become marginalised and oppressed. This is likely to have an impact on the self-esteem and confidence of gay young men, which could in turn increase their vulnerability to child sexual abuse. Again, the impact of an

experience of sexual abuse is likely to interact with the impact of social oppression and may have an impact on sexual identity development (Bartholow et al,1994). It has been established that the compulsory heterosexism and homophobia creates many problems for all adolescents, and in particular compounds the trauma of the sexually abused male. The conflicting and contradictory messages create a potential for all boys to experience sexual confusion in one form or another. For the sexually abused boy, a belief in the socially perpetuated myth that, for everybody else, the development of sexuality is a straightforward and enjoyable process is perhaps the one that does the most damage.

Conclusions

This chapter has critically reviewed a wide range of factors from the existing literature on child sexual abuse, which are relevant to the current study. Many prevalence studies are confounded by methodological problems alongside a significant problem of under-reporting. The term "organised abuse" is misleading, as all sexual abuse is organised. In analysing the controversy over "satanic ritual abuse" and the alleged "false memory syndrome", it is identified that perhaps the greatest problem is that these debates contribute to a backlash, which ultimately serves to obscure and break down an understanding of the widespread, socially embedded nature of child sexual abuse. Existing research indicates very strongly that child sexual abuse has a harmful impact. Family and/or social support is a significant mediating factor to this harm.

Influential models and theories relating to impact of child sexual abuse are pre-dominantly psychological, and fail to adequately acknowledge social and cultural factors, which reinforce, and in many cases explain, some of the psychological processes. This raises epistemological questions, which are consistent with the methodology of the current research, about how and why particular types of knowledge are created in particular ways and why they readily gain acceptance. Psychology and science are underpinned by a masculine discourses, which often excludes the voices of women, children and other oppressed groups

(Burman, 1994; Gilligan, 1997). The voice of the child is often absent, or abstracted from the child sexual abuse research and literature. Including and accounting for these voices, and seeing child sexual abuse in its social and cultural context, would more accurately demonstrate how its impact is further compounded by its interaction with experiences of oppression, such as racism or disabilism.

Finally, in considering the specific impact of male-child sexual abuse, an interacting dual social mythology has been identified. There is a systematic misunderstanding of the impact of male-child sexual abuse, leading to a set of false beliefs. These beliefs compound the fears, feelings and sense of responsibility of the child or young person, which are further reinforced by the false beliefs and perceptions of others: firstly, that boys who have been sexually abused will sexually abuse others and, secondly, that boys who have been sexually abused are or will become gay. This may be compounded by the child's experience of sexual arousal and physical pleasure during the abuse, if the person abusing was male, or lack of arousal and pleasure if the person abusing was female. To be abused is to be gay, and to be gay is to be an abuser. These factors are not supported by the research, and more often arise through methodological error, reverse correlations and misunderstandings. Furthermore, it is important to note that research does not remain purely in the realms of academia. Dominant discourses leads to research which in turn reinforces popular views. This material

feeds into social constructions, which create caricatures and stereotypes, further creating and maintaining popular views. These perspectives may influence the thinking of the sexually abused child and can cause considerable harm and anxiety. It is therefore important for research to more fully represent the voice of the child or young person, accounting for diversities of experience, and the impact of social oppression. It is also important for research to recognise and explore the positive potential for strengthening through survival. This would avoid inadvertently reinforcing an expectation of failure (Sanford,1990). Research and other professional practices have the responsibility to treat this subject in a manner which is anti-homophobic and rejects the patriarchal deviant model of sexuality. Not to do so is to replicate social oppression.

Chapter 3

“If I talk about it, it’s in the tape machine, on the paper, and not stuck in here, in me anymore”

(Liam, research participant)

Developing an Anti-Oppressive Research

Methodology for the Study of Child Sexual Abuse

Introduction

The central question of this research is: “What perceptions do young men have of the experience of child sexual abuse, and how do they perceive and understand its impact on their lives?” This chapter presents the research methodology, which highlights the ethical considerations of researching a sensitive topic, particularly one which involves children or young people. A theoretical relationship is established between ethnography (particularly a life-story approach), feminist praxis, anti-oppressive research, post-structuralism and practitioner research. This emphasises the social and political context of research activity and seeks to create greater equality in research relationships. The principles of anti-oppressive research practice are discussed, critically evaluating how far a research process can empower

participants. It is recognised that research should avoid replicating oppressive asymmetrical regimes and power relationships. The chapter explores the relevance of phenomenology and grounded theory, and gives detailed consideration to the importance of post-structuralism, in both formal and substantive terms.

Researching experiences of child sexual abuse is stressful for all concerned, and requires a methodology which establishes a safe environment, which facilitates an expression and discussion of painful and fearful feelings and experiences, and provides appropriate on-going support. In setting up this environment and providing support, before, during and after the data collection phase, the value and importance of practitioner research is established. The potential influence of this on the nature of data collected is acknowledged, both as a potential cost, in terms of objectivity, but also as a benefit, in creating a climate for the production of sensitive knowledge. The chapter concludes with a discussion of sampling and the setting up of a research agreement with seven young men. The study recognises that these young men have had traumatic experiences and may well be in the midst of struggling with a range of on-going problems and difficulties. It is concluded that a life-story practitioner research approach, incorporating the principles of anti-oppressive research practice, is an appropriate methodology for the study of the experience and impact of child sexual abuse, producing knowledge of substantial depth.

1.) Anti- Oppressive Social Research Practice

The Life-story Method

“For most of us it is very difficult to be constantly aware of the limitations and of the relativity of conceptual knowledge. Because our representation of reality is so much easier to grasp than reality itself, we tend to confuse the two and take our concepts and symbols for reality.”

(Capra,1975)

One of the issues identified in ethnography is that positivism and scientific rationalities have been unable to capture the quality of people's lives (Garfinkel,1967). Ethnography has therefore favoured qualitative approaches, and questions the sharp distinction between social science and its object (Hammersley and Atkinson,1983). An important principle in ethnography is reflexivity, which emphasises the interactive process between the researcher and the researched. Such interaction influences the nature and direction of the research, which is in itself identified as being social action. Implementing research may transform the direction of research, social events may stimulate further research. Formal theory may generate substantive theory and vice versa. The emphasis is more on the discovery of theory, rather than testing an already formulated theory (Glaser and Strauss,1967). The interactive process may involve self-disclosure and lead nearer to an equality in the relationship between

the researcher and the researched.

One approach which seeks greater equality and closeness, and gives primacy to human action and lived experiences, is the life-story method. Plummer (1983) traces the origins of its recognition to Thomas and Znaniecki's 1958 study of *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*. He describes life stories as being like "snowflakes" (Plummer, 1983, p7), unique and never of the same design. The individual's actions as a human agent participating in social life are revealed. Researchers taking life stories get close to people and pick up their understandings, taking in the ambiguities and confusions of everyday experiences. Plummer sees the life-story method as being firmly rooted in humanistic sociology and identifies four central criteria.

"It must pay tribute to human subjectivity and creativity - showing how individuals respond to social constraints and actively assemble social worlds; it must deal with concrete human experiences - talk, feelings, actions - through their social, and especially economic, organisation (and not just their inner, psychic or biological structuring); it must show a naturalistic "intimate familiarity" with such experiences - abstractions untempered by close involvement are ruled out; and there must be a self-awareness by the sociologist of the ultimate moral and political role in moving towards a social structure in which there is less exploitation, oppression and injustice and more creativity, diversity and equality."

(Plummer, 1983, p5).

Plummer's understanding of the diversity of individual experiences has a theoretical consistency with post-structuralism. Issues of power and difference are significant on both sides of the research situation. Such an approach is consistent with arguments made by Butler and Shaw (1996) in relation to the position of children and young people in social research, in terms asymmetrical power relationships with adults, and the need to account for this by developing child-centred research methodologies.

A life-story method is appropriate for the study of sensitive topics, where the research has the potential to become a difficult and possibly traumatic experience for participants. It brings the researcher closer to the lives and needs of its participants, and is therefore compatible with an anti-oppressive methodology (Clifford, 1994). However, it has to be acknowledged that some people may find it easier, for a variety of reasons, to respond to the anonymity of a questionnaire or a telephone line (Finkelhor et al, 1996). Qualitative and quantitative methods have their place alongside each other and produce different but complementary data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983).

Life-story research will inevitably deal with small samples and may to some extent be idiosyncratic, and characterised by particularities and

circumstances which may make the experience less representative or less generalisable to wider populations. The research may also be biased and skewed by the particularity of the relationship between the researcher and participant, and may therefore not be replicable. In the current study, the use of unstructured interviews, allowing a high level of freedom, flexibility and participant control, was a conscious attempt to limit this potential bias. Approaching this research with existing knowledge about child sexual abuse, highlights the importance of telling the two stories in the research report. That is, the experience of the participant, and the experience of the researcher in collecting the information, giving a full account of the research relationship, the background of the researcher and its potential influence on the data collected. Such a report may also comment that the study is not intended for generalisation, but a specific account of the processes of particular experiences, which may or may not have elements in common with the experiences of others, but which nevertheless contributes to an overall understanding of a particular area of study. Feminists have taken these arguments further and argued that research should be sensitive to its social and political context, often taking action to influence that context, as part of its process.

Feminist Research Practice

Feminists (Oakley,1981; Harding,1987) have argued that orthodox

research has been male dominated, and has taken a formal (positivist) approach in both its method and its reporting, and has excluded women's experiences. Feminist research has sought to include all aspects of life as being relevant to research, valuing individual experiences as an important theoretical resource.

The principle of reflexivity is a central concept within a feminist research paradigm (Roberts, 1981; Cain, 1990). Feminist researchers attempt to locate themselves in their research on an equal basis to its participants. The process is as shared and democratic as possible. Any threat to this process would result in a re-formulation of the research design, so as to protect and maintain the goal of working towards a democratic equality between the researcher and the researched. Feminist research is usually characterised by respect and empathy, and attempts to directly address the power differentials between the researcher and the researched. It often has a focus on oppression and the plight of disadvantaged groups, and influencing change. Issues of methodology are not just about obtaining data, but much more about how data is generated by a contextual interactive research process and the impact of that process on its participants and the relevance of the standpoint of the researcher. Gender and power have been central concepts in feminist research. Feminist research directly implicates women as the knowers and seeks to make women's voices heard (Reinharz, 1992). Notions of relationship and friendship between the researcher and the researched

are common in feminist research; the researched are respected and never viewed as subjects, data collection is often described as sensitive, and unstructured conversation interviews are valued. The research participant often has a significant level of control or consultation over the direction of the research.

It has been argued that feminist research has ignored the cross-cultural perspective, by homogenising the gender category of women (hooks, 1984; Harding, 1987; Rice, 1990). This position is well stated by bell hooks, who acknowledges the primary importance of sex discrimination as being the basis of all oppression, through being the practice of domination that most people experience. In challenging all hierarchy in our society, hooks argues that the overall social status of black women is particularly low:

“White women and black men have it both ways. Black men may be victimised by racism but sexism allows them to act as exploiters and oppressors. White women may be victimised by sexism but racism enables them to act as exploiters and oppressors of black people. Both groups have led liberation movements that favour their interests and support the continued oppression of other groups. Black male sexism has undermined struggles to eradicate racism just as white female racism undermines feminist struggle. As long as these two groups or any group defines liberation as gaining social equality with ruling class white men,

they have a vested interest in the continued exploitation and oppression of others."

(hooks,1984,p14-15).

The current research identifies hierarchy within the masculine gender category, and argues that sexually abused males could be described as being subordinate to dominant cultures of hegemonic masculinities (see Chapter 1). The research will show that some of the young men felt different from the dominant group of males, and lived in fear of that difference being discovered. In this respect, they participated in the complexities of their own hidden private life world, but driven by their fears, made efforts to significantly participate in the life-world of the dominant male group.

I have approached the current research as a pro-feminist, on the basis that men can and have made contributions to feminist research and scholarship (Harding,1987). This position is also taken by bell hooks, who argues that men can make significant contributions to feminism to the point that when they do they should be acknowledged as "*comrades in struggle*" (1984,p81). Understanding is given to the need to scrutinise contributions made by members of the oppressor group. Harding (1987) continues with a discussion of the potential benefits of men conducting feminist research into areas where they have greater and easier access than women. Also, that on the one hand men have been criticised for not

engaging in gendered research sympathetic to the ideals of feminism and that on the other hand they are then judged as being incapable of doing it. Harding describes such criticism as being inappropriate. She concludes that:

“My own preference is to argue that the designation “feminist” can apply to men who satisfy whatever standards women must satisfy to earn the label” (Harding,1987,p12).

Feminist research is consistent with an inductive approach with an emphasis on theory generation, which maximises discovery and description. This would involve understanding the interviewee as a co-researcher, with less emphasis on getting questions answered in order to test a particular viewpoint, or pre-determined theory. In understanding the interviewee, self-disclosure allows the standpoint and motivation of the interviewer to be understood and discussed as integral to interactive research (Cain,1990). Feminist research establishes a connectedness with people and involves them in developing an understanding of their experiences.

The principles of feminist life-story research would allow a recognition of the personal nature of the finished document, essentially being the property of the participant. The participant would therefore have some right of veto, permission would be required for its use, even insofar as

for the purposes of producing the research report, such documents being so intensively personal. The process of producing a life-story document may have a therapeutic benefit for those who take part, particularly when sensitive issues are being discussed, and emotions and feelings can be shared or let go of (Bowen, 1993; Clifford, 1995). Feminist research also seeks to identify issues of power; a demystification for and with the powerless can create potential for change, because a paucity of information and knowledge about certain groups can accentuate and perpetuate their powerlessness (Reinharz, 1992). In the current research, the generation of knowledge and information about male-child sexual abuse could help break down some of the fears and feelings of isolation and powerlessness of others.

Anti-Oppressive Research Practice

Feminist research practice has clearly identified the need to research issues of power and social disadvantage, which includes gender, sexuality, "race", disability and age. Further development of this has led to the identification of a specifically anti-oppressive research practice. As more and more research is done, improvements are made and a greater understanding is achieved. Truman and Humphries refer to doing "better" research and state that:

"It implies a new framework of political will to confront inequalities in the

research process and in wider society, and to be politically committed to contributing to social change” (Truman and Humphries, 1994, p1).

In order to contribute to social change it is necessary to challenge social divisions and assumptions which perpetuate the status quo. Respect for diversity and difference is central to an anti-oppressive research practice, as is a concern with the assumptions which underlie and inform its process. The critique of mainstream research is not only based on its male perspective, but other social divisions are specifically acknowledged, but not simply by virtue of their difference.

“However, it is neither the blackness or whiteness, nor the disability or non-disability that forms the focus of the investigation, but the differential experiences of being black or white, or being disabled or non-disabled that fundamentally reveal how inequalities are maintained” (Truman and Humphries, 1994, p3).

The use of the term anti-oppressive research practice is an open acknowledgement of the active presence of oppression of the disadvantaged by the advantaged. For example, the use of the term “racism”, instead of “race” or “culture” implies that an active process of oppression is taking place: the abuse or misuse of power by white people over black people. In a situation of a white researcher and a black participant, the presence of racism as an active process is acknowledged

and accounted for, both in how the research takes place, the nature of the data collected, and how its analysis may be influenced, by a black person responding to a white person, and a white person analysing what a black person has said.

A similar recognition is needed in the formulation of research questions, which again, instead of focusing on the characteristics and idiosyncrasies of an oppressed group, formulate questions around the social processes and experiences of oppression. This involves a deliberate focus on strengths and coping, as opposed to looking at deficits and weaknesses. An understanding of the context of social disadvantage enables a perspective of people surviving in the midst of adversity, as opposed to a pathologising focus on the characteristics of failure. Sanford (1990) refers to this as being "*Strong at the Broken Places*", the title of her book which argues there should be a greater emphasis on hope and recovery and a celebration of being strengthened through survival and being able to move forward.

A progression of anti-oppressive research practice would be for research to begin to focus on the social processes of being powerful. For example how men benefit from patriarchal relations, or how the social processes of heterosexuality work to create advantage. This is particularly relevant to the current research, with its focus being on the working of patriarchal forces in influencing the lives of sexually abused males. It identifies how

easy it is for males to consciously co-operate with the social pressures created by hegemonic masculinities and homophobia to work towards their own advantage (of perceived recovery), and evade uncomfortable or painful feelings. The research shows how a sensitive methodology can create a safe environment for an acknowledgement and exploration of those feelings and processes. This would be a safe haven away from the normal workings or replication of these social processes; an environment based on sensitivity, trust and caring, with an open motivation to work towards improvement and healing.

The ethics of anti-oppressive research practice go beyond the simple framing of a research proposal in a manner which satisfies an ethics committee, or an opportunity for the researcher to justify his or her actions. Anti-oppressive research practice seeks to challenge oppression at all stages. There is a deliberate and active concern for the research participants and the processes of oppression which conducting the research might create, or identify. The overriding aspiration of this research study has been that its participants will benefit, and that the generation of new information about the experience of child sexual abuse will help others with their recovery.

In conducting the research interviews I have been conscious of the dynamics of an older person, with a professional status, interviewing young people and children. The role of trust has been a crucial feature

of the research, crucial to my satisfaction that the participants were willing and were likely to benefit, and crucial to the participant's ability and desire to impart sensitive information, and be reasonably confident about the response such information would create. A supportive and caring response created an environment of safety and facilitated safe discussion. The features and context of the research environment had to be clearly explained and tested out by myself and the participants, before the research proceeded.

Child sexual abuse as an area of research enquiry has specific difficulties in that silencing, not telling and secrecy are features of the experience, and may have an impact on the participants' ability to recount their experience. It is therefore important for the researcher not to privilege verbal accounts, and to remain open to accepting and valuing alternative methods of participant communication, which may otherwise become marginalised or remain unheard. An anti-oppressive life-story method should make it possible to bring disabled children into research. For example the use of communication boards which encompass the language of child sexual abuse for children with learning difficulties (Kennedy, 1992). Although such accounts may present difficulties in analysis, they should nevertheless be included; in not doing so, research will replicate social divisions and oppressive assumptions. An example of this is given in the current research, which has utilised art work and poetry as a complement to verbal means of expression.

Empowerment is a central concept for anti-oppressive research practice, but it can mean different things to different people and is open to misuse. It can be used by researchers to make themselves “feel good” about their actions, or it can truly be a conscious relinquishment and handing over of power, on a permanent basis from the advantaged to the disadvantaged. Unfortunately the former is often the easier to achieve. About empowerment, Humphries states:

“the notion is so ill defined as to accommodate any and all theoretical positions, and consequently to serve as a justification for oppressive practices” (Humphries, 1994, p185).

Humphries refers to Foucault in investigating how mechanisms of power at a local level have been appropriated to become part of wider political and social networks of power relations. She states:

“In terms of empowerment we have presented to us dimensions of power which (1) allow that potentially, dominated groups may have access to power (2) emphasise its productive rather than negative potential and (3) demand that resistance is carried out in local struggles against the many forms of power exercised at the everyday level of social relations” (Humphries, 1994, p187).

This underlines the complexity of power relations, and emphasises the importance of approaching empowerment with an adequate theory of power. It identifies potential clues as to the practical workings of the process of empowerment, and that powerlessness may relate to a specific social context and not to the essential characteristics of a specific group. However, caution is required in the use of the term empowerment. It must take account of the on-going lives and living standards of research participants, and the structural and social disadvantage which they may continue to endure.

2.) Phenomenology and Grounded Theory

For a research study which seeks to explore individual experiences in an anti-oppressive manner, which affords considerable participant control, and seeks to produce a representation of individual experiences, phenomenology and grounded theory have important contributions to make, particularly in analysis.

It has been argued that phenomenology provides an appropriate theoretical base for the study of child sexual abuse (Darlington, 1993). Phenomenological research has a commitment to the use of natural language, allowing the researched to speak for themselves, and not approaching research with a predetermined hypothesis. The focus is on descriptions of participants' experiences, rather than attempts to explain them. An attempt is made to understand fully the nature of an experience from the perspective of the participant.

Darlington identifies four particularly relevant phenomenological concepts, *"intentionality, the phenomenological attitude or reduction, the lifeworld, and the phenomenological concept of time"* (1993, p75). Intentionality deals with discrepancy between internal awareness and external reality. Phenomenological reduction is particularly relevant in the interview situation where the researcher attempts to forgo predetermined concepts or knowledge, in order to capture the

participants perception of their experience. Darlington refers to the terms “*surrender and catch*” (1993,p73), the catch being the result of such an approach. The impossibility of complete reduction is acknowledged. “Lifeworld” refers to the relevance and importance of everyday experience and the contextual relationship a person has with the world . This is extended into a consideration of the notion of the human body as the site of experience. The phenomenological concept of time refers to past and future time as a structural unity experienced in the present. Again it is argued that this is relevant to a situation where participants are being asked to reflect upon the impact of past events, both in the present, and their perceived likely impact in the future.

The development and movement from phenomenology in the current study, is the emphasis on the interactive nature of this process, and on the influence of the standpoint of the interviewer, as a social work practitioner researcher. The interactive nature of the research is fully explicated and acknowledged throughout. Every attempt is made to make the process transparent. The relevance of phenomenology is the attempt to capture the participants’ experiences. It is important to acknowledge that the final research outcome is still only a representation of the young men’s experiences. Collecting, analysing and reporting the information itself creates new meanings and understandings (Denzin,1997).

In order to stay close to participants' own descriptions of their experiences, the analysis will involve the use of detailed participant quotes from the interviews. In order to make sense of lengthy unstructured transcriptions, thematic categorisation was employed. The theoretical influence on this has been the Grounded Theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), in that the generation of categories has taken place, followed by the development of linkages, and the use of constant comparisons between cases, to further explore complexities and common themes. Unlike the recommendations of Glaser and Strauss, the nature and scope of the current research project does not allow further theoretically driven sampling, although this is potentially a possible direction for future research.

3.) Post-structuralism

It has been argued that ethnography, particularly life-story research, and feminist praxis recognise the importance of the individual experiences, and that an anti-oppressive approach seeks to account for the power differentials in research. These approaches are consistent with post-structural perspectives, which emphasise diversity and individual experiences, and recognise the importance of power. Post-structuralism recognises the social contingencies of science and natural orders, and the threat of indeterminacy and chance (Parton,1996). Jackson (1992) identifies three main themes of post-structuralism. Firstly, language is seen as constructing and not transmitting meaning, and subjectivity is constituted through language. Secondly, there is a denial of the existence of an essential self outside culture and language. Thirdly, there is no possibility of an objective scientific truth, knowledges are seen as "*discursive constructs*" (p26) produced from particular positions.

The extent to which language mediates reality is related to and often dependent upon the social context in which the language is used. In an oppressive social context of patriarchal relations, the use of particular types of language can invoke and carry forward social oppression and thereby significantly influence interpersonal power relationships. In this sense language potentially becomes a tool of oppression. The current research will show how simple statements or even words can embody

significant meanings, which directly relate to widespread and socially embedded and supported oppression. It will be seen that for example the use of the word "queer" in the context of adolescent peer group relations has a particularly powerful impact (Nayak and Kehily, 1997). It makes some people significantly more powerful and others significantly less powerful. The use of this word will be shown to be capable of invoking multiple oppressive discourses about personal identity, and social misconceptions about the nature and impact of child sexual abuse. The research will show that particular words and phrases significantly contributed to each of the young men engaging in complex personal processes of internalised oppression. Although occurring privately, and indeed in fearful secrecy, there were similarities in the beliefs the young men held, and the words they were afraid of. When viewed in this manner, the role of language, as a mediator of social reality becomes more transparent, and becomes less of a purely philosophical pursuit (Ferguson and Lavalette, 1999). It is also more difficult to conceptualise the role of language independently from the existence of structural oppression, especially as certain words seem to have the same meanings and impact on different people, in a wide range of social and personal circumstances. Listening to language as representation may reveal important details about the process and impact of child sexual abuse in a context of patriarchal relations. The study has therefore sought to set up an analytical framework, which allows diverse interpersonal language to be considered in a context of social

oppression. In other words in a manner which draws upon the tensions between post-structuralism and structural theory.

Post-structural analysis takes the form of deconstruction, so as to reveal the social and cultural nature of meaning, and the influence of gender and power, and an exploration of the relationship between knowledge and power (Barrett and Phillips,1992). These debates have led to a questioning of both the assumptions and conclusions of orthodox theory (Barrett and Phillips,1992, Reinhartz,1992). They have led to an increasing awareness of the importance of difference and diversity and concepts of multiple oppressions. This awareness has informed the development of anti-oppressive practices in social research and social work (Pringle,1995).

Post-structuralism challenges the essentialist nature of structuralist theory, arguing that it homogenises groups of people and launders out diversity. Differences are often reduced or denied, or seen in terms of dichotomy, such as masculine and feminine, black and white. The notion of internal differentiation within a defined category is not entirely new, in fact Gramsci (1971) in the *Prison Notebooks*, referred to internal contradictions within what he described as a hegemonic bloc, a dynamic equilibrium of opposing forces. Post-structuralism emphasises the importance of the complexity and diversity of individuals and their experiences. Anti-oppressive practice involves paying attention to the

impact of multiple oppressions and requires an awareness of interpersonal power differentials. Phillips refers to a “*plurality of many differences*” (1992,p20) and argues that equality is compatible with difference and does not have to mean sameness.

A problem with post-structuralism is that it may become overly existential and unseat some of the classic analytical concepts, woman, class, “race” etc. (Ferguson and Lavalette,1999). This potentially leads to a denial of the continuing potency of patriarchy, racism and capitalism, as a result of power being seen as highly dispersed, rather than being located within the domain of specific groups. Achievements made through sharing and identifying common experiences and plights may be lost by the fragmentation of post-structural diversity. This would create a space for traditional or classic oppressive relationships to establish increased potency, through being hidden within the tapestry of difference. Walby argues that:

“There is a significant possibility in between which enables us to theorise rather than merely describe gender and ethnicity independently from capitalism. We do not need to abandon the notion of causality in the face of the complexity of the social world. We do not have to move from analysis of structure to that of discourse to catch that complexity; neither do we have to resort to capitalism as the sole determinant in order to have a macro social theory” (Walby,1992,p48-49).

These considerations are directly relevant to the current research. They contribute to a theoretical framework which seeks to analyse the relationship between the personal and unique experiences of young men who have been sexually abused, and socially constructed concepts of hegemonic masculinities. As we have said, in order to identify in theoretical terms, a significant possibility in between it is necessary to find an approach which attempts to acknowledge and move towards a reconciliation of the tensions between the totalizing framework of structuralist theories, such as the role of class in Marxism, and the fragmentation of post-structuralism. The work of Cooper (1995) is helpful in that it conceptualises the theoretical possibility of mutual determination, and attempts to utilise the tensions between the opposing perspectives of neo-Marxism, radical feminism and post-structuralism.

Power provides the linchpin in Cooper's approach and offers a way of understanding the nature of people's struggle. It is argued that the technologies of power have reached us through "*historical condensations of past actions*". The "*sites (geographical, institutional, systemic)*" (1995,p24) include the courts, armed forces, welfare state, and the body. These shape the nature and form of power. The effects of power are the consequences of activity or non-activity. The consequences can be intended or unintended. Although power often involves agency or will, this is not necessary for it to have an effect. An ability or potential to

exercise power is sufficient to have an impact. Power is conceptualised as having the possibility to be positive as opposed to being simply the operation of oppression. Resistance can be seen as a positive deployment of power (by the oppressed), as opposed to being defined as the antithesis of power. Freire (1985) similarly conceptualises a dialectic of power as both a positive and negative force, arguing that domination is never complete and that resistance involves the deployment of power. Productive and relational power is therefore not necessarily asymmetrical. The power of the oppressed is defined in their own terms, as opposed to being defined in relation to the oppressor, or dominant agency or structure. Power can say yes or no, it can be prescriptive or proscriptive. One can by definition entail the other, for example if heterosexuality is prescribed, homosexuality is simultaneously proscribed.

This is helpful to the current research, as power is central to patriarchal relations which create circumstances which lead to sexual abuse. It therefore provides a basis for analysis of circumstances where sexual abuse has taken place. The act of sexual abuse itself will be shown by this study to be an abuse of power. It is also helpful in that it develops an approach which accounts for the diversity and uniqueness of individual experiences, but which also accommodates the influence of wider and commonly oppressive social forces such as heterosexism or racism, which may result in a commonality of experience within and

alongside that uniqueness. In discussing the various ways in which feminists have conceptualised the multiple dimensions of inequality, Cooper refers to organising frameworks or principles:

“Rather than basing analysis on axes of oppression, gender class and race can be conceived as “organizing frameworks” or, less systematically, as “principles” that over-determine each other in their operation and effects. Thus in exploring the impact of race, we not only need to consider how it is articulated to, and shaped by, other structuring systems such as gender and class, but also to take into account that race itself provides a complex, often contradictory framework which produces more than two subject positions. This is apparent if we consider the different, situated experiences of British Asians, European Jews and Afro-Americans” (Cooper, 1995, p11).

Seen as organising principles, class, “race”, and gender are mutually determining, none of which are seen as primary or foundational. Additional organising principles of age, ability and sexual orientation may also apply. Whilst the principles are over-determining, they are not totalizing, and each has its own internal differentiation. They intersect and sometimes merge and may involve contradictions. Seen in this manner it is possible to account for the complexities of relationships between people, for example between a white woman and a black man, or between a white child and a black woman. In being able to

accommodate such complexities and diversity this conceptualisation begins to have a substantive resonance with social realities. So how do these principles actually determine social relationships? What is the process which takes place between two people which is informed and affected by these principles? In order to answer this question it is necessary to explore the concept of power.

Cooper discusses power in terms of its modes, technologies, sites and effects to form a "*paradigm of power*" (1995,p21). In extending the work of Foucauldian feminists who have concentrated on the production of knowledge and discipline, four modes of power are identified: Ideology, force, discipline and resources. Ideology refers to a "*...range of interpretive frameworks and meanings through which social relations, practices and society generally are constituted and understood...*" (Cooper,1995,p21). I have included Cooper's precise wording of her conception of ideology in order to avoid its confusion with the over-determining role of ideology in Marxist structuralism. Force is the subjugation of the will or body of another, physically or psychologically. Discipline is more complex, it incorporates the Foucault's (1979) concept of the metaphorical panopticon, a process of self-discipline through internalising the judgement and expectation of others, and the confessional, the social urge to explain and justify intimate feelings and actions, seeking the forgiveness of others. This is similar to Freire's concept of "*sedimentation*" (1985,pXIX). It is also related to

organisational considerations and the production of concepts of normality and abnormality. The point is made that the mechanisms of discipline need not necessarily be asymmetrical, a more symmetrical form of discipline is identified as a possibility.

Sexuality is a significant form and expression of disciplinary power, which shapes and impacts upon a range of social and cultural and economic practices and relations. However, it is difficult to consider sexuality and the social construction of sexual desires and practices without reference to the work of the queer theorists (Sedgwick,1990; Dollimore,1991; Warner,1994; D'Augelli and Patterson,1995), which underlines the importance of anti-homophobic enquiry. Sexuality has particular significance in a social context in which sexual desire and sexual identity is heavily policed, to the extent that to deviate from a heterosexual identity is to engage in a significant loss of social power in many (but not all) social circumstances (Steinberg, Epstein and Johnson,1997). Again (as with the discussion of language), whilst sexuality and power are central concepts in post-structural theory, they are given a sharper edge by a social context which heavily invests itself in the perpetuation and dominance of a particular type of sexual desire, sexual practice and sexual identity. As the queer theorists have argued, in a manner which threatens to unseat all social theory(Sedgwick,1990; Dollimore,1991; Warner,1994; D'Augelli and Patterson,1995), the spinning concepts of homophobia and compulsory heterosexism are written into the very fabric

of our culture, both socially, and particularly psychologically. They are further embedded through being written into our historical and current spiritual culture and beliefs. In this manner sexuality, that is heterosexuality, becomes apparently central to our essence of being. To deviate potentially involves significant personal, psychological, social and spiritual costs and consequences.

These issues will be drawn together in Chapter 5, which sets up an analytical framework, which allows a study of power relationships at different, inter-related levels of social interaction, in the context of widespread oppressive social and political influences. It is shown that the individual is not only influenced by these social forces and organising principles, but also internalises, carries, and shapes them himself (herself). The individual becoming a perpetuation of the very forces by which she (he) is influenced. These factors are specifically applied to circumstances of male-child sexual abuse, but it is argued that the analytical framework has application for the research of other social phenomenon.

4.) Practitioner Research

There is a clear connection between social work practitioner research and feminist praxis, which emphasises the importance, when researching sensitive topics involving marginalised groups, of having an appropriate methodology. The greater the extent of a person's social marginalisation, the greater the likely risk of further exploitation through research. Social work practitioner research is therefore poised in a position of wanting to represent the stories of some of these marginalised groups, with awareness of the extent of the power differentials (Parton, 1999). Social work practice involves itself with some of the most vulnerable and possibly the most under-researched groups in society. The ethics and values of social work are compatible with those of anti-oppressive research practice (Mullender and Ward, 1991; Everitt et al, 1992; Thompson, N., 1993; Pringle, 1995; Brown, 1998). Feminist anti-oppressive approaches to life-story research are taken further when combined with social work practitioner research (Lyon, 1999). The current study explicates a strong and fresh link between theory, research and social work practice and extends and clarifies the role of the social work practitioner researcher. It shows how practitioner research can strengthen the academic discipline of social work, creating knowledge and theory which makes important contributions to future social work practice. This creates further opportunities and direction for future research, a dynamic, interactive and perpetuating process of praxis

(Parton, 1999).

In approaching the research as a child care specialist social work practitioner, I had a prior experience and understanding of working with and alongside children and young people, and an understanding of the nature and impact of child sexual abuse. This significantly influenced my approach to the research and was pivotal to its methodology and method. Firstly, by giving me an understanding of how taking part in research about the experience of sexual abuse could have a detrimental impact on participants. Secondly, by giving me the skills and experience to feel able to conduct the research appropriately, in a manner which actively seeks to counteract and limit the potential for such impact. This was both in terms of how the data collection interviews were conducted, and the ability to provide on-going support before, during and afterwards. The responsibility towards participant welfare was a priority over and above data collection.

It may be possible to argue that such an approach is inconsistent with the traditional or conventional roles and boundaries of the researcher, and that it should be for outsiders to provide such help and support. However, it is argued that it is the process of providing the help and support as an integral part of the research practice that is not only ethically appropriate, but is a research method in itself, entirely appropriate for the collection of sensitive data. Such data may only

become accessible in the event of such help and support being provided, otherwise it may remain hidden and unexpressed (Cain,1990). The knowledge produced by the current study is the outcome of transitory research relationships. These relationships were purposely supportive, being informed by social work experience which was knowledgeable about the impact of sexual abuse. The ethics, values and knowledge of the researcher, around issues of child sexual abuse, were made known to participants at the outset. Participants knew that they had a choice about what they would say, and they were aware that the aspiration of the researcher, about them taking part, was that they would benefit. They were aware that the researcher had the experience and skill to respond appropriately to their experiences, in a manner which was likely to help them. The research will show that hidden fears were expressed by participants, who were safe in the knowledge that they would receive sensitive, informed, anti-hegemonic³ responses.

My previous social work involvement with the young men who participated in this study had established a level of trust (details of this will be fully discussed Chapter 4). This was central to their decision to take part, and enabled them to feel safe in discussing personal and

³ Some consideration was given to the use of the term "counter-hegemonic", which involves challenging existing hegemonies through their substitution with alternative hegemonies. Positive counter hegemony could include concepts such as citizenship, children's rights and so on. An "anti-hegemonic" approach more directly focuses on the production of power through challenging the apparatus and technologies of hegemony itself. These issues are discussed at length by Cooper (1995), who conceptualises mutually pluralist and diversified strategies of resistance, which can be both counter and anti-hegemonic.

sensitive issues. Meeting participants through research as a first time contact would have taken longer, as time would need to be taken in developing that trust. Whilst some of the trust with the participants in the current research has been built up over a number of years, it was still necessary to spend time with them in discussing and explaining how my role had changed. Taking part in the research would mean a change in the relationship, and the nature of the work which was planned to take place.

One possible problem with practitioner research is the potential for exploitation, through privileged access to vulnerable populations and insider information, which could be accessed without appropriate consent. Being a social work practitioner potentially influences the nature and quality of the field data (Fletcher, 1993). It could be argued that a new and more anonymous relationship may facilitate a greater ease of expression of intensely private personal issues, especially if the relationship ends after the exchange of information. A lack of former knowledge or established relationships could create greater objectivity. Gaining access to research participants as a practitioner researcher could entail political problems, if the purpose or potential findings were not satisfactory or not considered relevant by the employer. There may be additional pressures on the researcher to produce particular outcomes, in unrealistic time scales, particularly if the employer has been involved in funding the research (Cornwell, 1993).

It could also be argued that previously established professional social work relationships could create senses of obligation. This could place additional pressures on participants to share personal information, especially if it was previously known that such information existed. It may be difficult for participants to share information, experiences or perspectives which contradict or challenge previous knowledge, or is critical towards any prior involvement of the researcher. It will be shown, when discussing the study's sampling, that there was an awareness of these issues, and they were carefully discussed with potential participants. The young men who chose to take part did so, with a full understanding of what to expect, knowing that they would be offered open choices and support throughout and for some time after their participation.

In conducting this research as a practitioner researcher, it has been explained that I have had substantial prior experience of working with and supporting children and young people who have been sexually abused. However, it would be erroneous to assume that this would necessarily limit the potential emotional impact of conducting this research. Listening to further and new accounts of child sexual abuse is in itself a further unique new and stressful experience. Anybody undertaking such a task will need to have on-going support and supervision. Additionally, in being a researcher, I felt additional

responsibilities, having made an approach to the young people, rather than responding to requests for a service. As a practitioner researcher, it was possible to incorporate some additional support and supervision into my social work practice supervision. Importantly, this did not involve any breach of confidentiality agreements set up within the research, but allowed an on-going awareness that I was closely handling very stressful research material over a sustained period of time. The support of my practice supervisor(s) was an invaluable and necessary part of the research. In a similar, but more direct manner, the emotional support of my academic supervisor(s) was equally necessary and invaluable. The provision of on-going informed and effective emotional support through supervision is a necessary and important component of a sensitive and anti-oppressive research methodology.

In completing the data collection phase, and either through winding down and closing the contact with the young men, or in providing follow up support, there were less intensive forms of contact. These contacts occurred through either telephone conversations or further face to face meetings, which were more informal, lighter and not necessarily focussed on issues of child sexual abuse. They served to place the research interviews back into a wider perspective of day to day living, in a manner which was, in a longer term sense, a de-briefing process. This was both for the young men and for myself. This was a deliberately intended outcome. It was again informed by my prior social work knowledge and

experience, of how to appropriately close down professional therapeutic or counselling relationships.

I have approached this research then, from the open and clearly acknowledged standpoint of a social work practitioner, with an awareness of the potential impact this may have on the data collected. This has made an essential contribution to the research design and methodology, which has attempted to minimise the potential for negative consequences. It has made me aware of the importance of providing support before during and after the research process. The nature of this research and its methodology are such that it is reasonable to argue that it is best carried out by a researcher with social work experience and skills. This becomes more pertinent in the light of the research involving me in the writing of criminal injuries compensation reports; advocacy and attendance at Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeal Hearings; attending child protection planning meetings; assisting the making of further statements to the police and extensive follow up support, both face to face, and by telephone.

The provision of participant support during all stages of the research was set as a priority above and beyond data collection. If necessary, the research data collection would have been abandoned. Throughout the research every effort was made not to compromise the well-being of participants for the purposes of the research. The research will show

that the interviews of the young men were first and foremost, opportunities for them to talk about their experiences and receive informed and supportive responses. Through talking, and through the manner of the responses received, there was a level of resolve to some of the misconceptions and harmful beliefs the young men had held on to for substantial periods of time. In this respect, the interviews were in some ways dual occasions of social work practice and research.

Taking this further, the conversion to a research relationship, of what was previously a singularly social work relationship has changed the nature of those relationships. From the outset, the participants were aware that my involvement with them was additional to any previous social work involvement, and that they had consciously opted in to this involvement, with an expectation that they would in some way benefit and make a contribution to the plight of others. This created for the young men, a special situation in which they had increased control, and had expertise about the information they were giving. Additionally their experience of me had changed, in that our conversations were being recorded and extra attention was being paid to detail, in a rigorous manner, as a necessity of the research process. The information became valued and in the public domain, rather than remaining problematised and in the private domain.

In disseminating the research it is hoped to further develop an interest in

research amongst social work practitioners and to illustrate the relationship between practice, research and theory (Broad and Fletcher, 1993; Fuller and Petch, 1995; Everitt, 1998). Through the nature of its data collection and its subsequent data analysis, it will be shown that the study presents exciting possibilities for future non-pathological and anti-oppressive social work practice with young men who have been sexually abused. It is hoped that this may lead to an increased awareness of the potential for other social work practitioners to become interested in research. This is both in terms of using the knowledge and theory generated for practice, and in terms of recognising the value of their own experiences and of becoming involved in future research. This study will show how a strong link between research and social work practice potentially strengthens the academic discipline of social work, thereby strengthening the knowledge base for future anti-oppressive practice.

5.) Moving From Theory and Methodology Into Method

The method of this research takes the researcher close to the lives of its participants, in order to gain a socially contextualised representation of their experiences and understanding. The research method has been informed and shaped by the related methodological fields of ethnography; feminist praxis; anti-oppressive practice and practitioner research. It is a qualitative study, which by using a life-story approach, engages seven young men in lengthy unstructured discussions about their experiences of child sexual abuse. Feminist approaches have provided an understanding of the patriarchal construction of knowledge and the importance of gender and its relationship to power. They emphasise the political dimension of research, which is about social change, before, during and after the research. Feminist approaches emphasise the importance and value of centralising marginalised voices, allowing people's stories to be told and heard.

Through being conducted by a social work practitioner, the research has been approached with an awareness of the sensitive nature of child sexual abuse as a research topic and of the potential harm to the participants. Through knowledge developed from the field of practitioner research, the methodology allows the existing (social work) skills of the researcher to provide support and appropriate responses to emotional distress. Anti-oppressive practice, provides an awareness and

understanding of the power differentials in research. Attempts have been made to minimise these differentials, whilst at the same time acknowledging that they cannot be eradicated. From the outset, the young men were informed about the purpose of the research, and how the knowledge gained would be used. They were made aware, as fully as possible, of what would be required of them, and how long it was likely to take. They were given clear unequivocal opportunities not to take part. They were allowed a maximum level of control over the length, nature and duration of the interviews. They were offered support and counselling before, during and after the research.

Through taking a pro-feminist, anti-oppressive life-story approach, the research will answer its central question: "What perceptions do young men have of the experience of child sexual abuse and how do they perceive and understand its impact on their lives? In answering this question, utilising the skills of the practitioner researcher, the research enters the world of the young person, which takes the form of dialogue; poetry; metaphorical language; drawing and painting, through which they convey their understandings of their experiences. The research emphasises understanding and meaning and tries to represent the complexity of the young men's experiences. The research will therefore concentrate on a small sample, and maintain the integrity of the accounts the young men gave. This makes the research complex, but brings it closer to being a more accurate representation of reality, making full use

of the young men's own words, and expression of meaning.

Sample Selection (all names are fictitious)

The sample for this research study was selected from my professional social work contacts with young people (the majority of whom were male). Many of the young people I have worked with have been sexually abused, although this may not have been the initial reason for their referral for a service, in many circumstances it was. This provided an initial population, from which to identify potential participants

From this population, a pool of twenty four potential participants was identified, this included eleven boys who had been abused through a community network. I had worked with these young men in two groups separated by age, for a period of eighteen months (Durham, 1993 and 1997). Ten had not requested any individual work, and therefore I decided it was not appropriate to approach any of them to become an individual participant. From the remaining sample of fourteen, three had moved to other towns and cities, and were therefore less available in practical terms, although one had been approached prior to moving on, but for other personal reasons had decided that the time was not right for him to take part. He has continued to remain in periodic contact and has expressed interest in the outcome of the research. The other two simply lived too far away, and were therefore not approached at the initial stage. Of the remainder, three were currently receiving a service from myself, in relation to sexual abuse they themselves had committed, and I made the

decision that at that particular time, it was not appropriate to change the focus of my involvement with them.

One young man was seventeen years old, of mixed parentage, African-Caribbean/European, living in a white adoptive family. He had received a service from myself over several months, this was initially requested in relation to family conflict issues. His two sisters had recently reported early childhood sexual abuse. During the process of expressing opinion and feelings about his family situation, this young man gave an indication that he had similar experiences, but was not wishing to be any more specific. In responding to this situation, I had allowed this young man to receive re-assurance, without having to speak about anything he did not wish to. Most of my work with this young man had focused on issues of racism and peer group struggles, he also had anxieties about his sexuality. My decision not to approach him about taking part in the research was based on my knowledge of his reluctance to specifically discuss experiences of sexual abuse, and the potential risks to his fragile family circumstances.

Another young man, who was nineteen, had been sexually abused over a number of years at his residential school. I had provided some support for him in the past, but he had left the area. When he returned to the area, he heard of my work from one of the other participants, and contacted me, expressing an interest. However, his circumstances were

turbulent and he eventually received a prison sentence. At his request, I visited him in prison. Following this, there was some written communication, but unfortunately, there were further complications in his circumstances, he had to move several times, and having other priorities, he stopped writing.

In approaching potential participants, particularly anybody that I had been engaged with in an in-depth working relationship, I was aware of some potential difficulties. Firstly, creating a sense of obligation, and secondly, creating a sense that future services were dependent on taking part in the research. To avoid these problems these issues were openly discussed, and it was made clear that I had to be satisfied firstly, that they would benefit, and secondly, that their decision to become involved was as much a voluntary one as it possibly could be. Chapter 2 considered the potential for some people to respond better to more anonymous opportunities to discuss issues of child sexual abuse. This may have been the case for some of the potential participants in this study. Those who were selected were those who made a conscious decision to discuss their experiences with myself. The young men made their decisions in the light of clear and extensive information about what the nature of their participation would be. This would sometimes involve allowing a young person to make his decision after several discussions, with some passage of time. It was also made clear that if a young man did not wish to take part, he could still receive the on-going support that

was being offered to other participants. This applied to the young man discussed above, who had left the area, but subsequently remained in touch, and expressed interest in my progress.

These accounts of initial approaches and sample selection also demonstrate the sensitivity required, and the need to directly address the potentially oppressive consequences of asking a young person to take part in research which explores personal experiences and sensitive issues. Six young men were selected from the initial pool population and one was selected additionally. This method of sampling has been described as "*focused or judgmental*" (Arber, 1993, page 71). The final sample was selected by the following criteria:

1. Being male, under the age of twenty five, and having experienced childhood sexual abuse (contact sexual abuse).
2. Expression of a positive wish to take part in the research, in the light of full knowledge and information.
3. A judgement by myself that the potential participant has understood the potential impact of the research and was likely to benefit.
4. Availability for a series of lengthy interviews.

The table below summarises the pseudonyms, ethnicity and ages of the sample group.

NAME	ETHNICITY	AGE
Justin	White/Euro	22
Paul	White/Euro	24
Colin	White/Euro	18
Liam	White/Euro	22
Sean	White/Euro	21
David	White/Euro	15
Ryan	White/Euro	15

When each of the seven young men had decided that they would like to participate in the research, they were presented with a “research agreement”. This agreement endorses the principles of anti-oppressive research practice. Each point in the agreement was explained and clarified, in terms of the young man’s understanding and acceptance.

Research Agreement

1.) This agreement has been written for young people who have agreed to take part in my research project which involves detailed interview-conversations about their life experiences, with a focus on matters relating to childhood sexual abuse.

2.) The project is being conducted by myself over a four year period, as part of an MPhil/PhD thesis.

(Details of names, addresses and phone numbers of university and employment supervisors follow).

3.) In collecting this research material I am aware that matters relating to the experience of sexual abuse are sensitive and stressful. I have over ten years experience of providing a direct social work service to young people experiencing difficulty in their lives, many having experienced sexual abuse. I have also undertaken post-qualifying study and training in this area of work.

4.) I hope to be able to utilise this experience to ensure that by being interviewed as part of this project you will benefit from having an opportunity to discuss these sensitive areas of your life. The interviews will be informal and will take the form of conversations. You will not have to talk about anything you do not wish to, and have choice about how long the interview should last.

5.) Alongside these interview-conversations, I am offering a process of additional support and counselling. This is offered before, during and after the research interviews up to a period of twelve months after the first interview. This is offered as a right to all participants and will be free of charge. (Details follow of how to set this up).

6.) It is my hope that previous knowledge and contact with myself and the

unfolding of the research process itself, will create the necessary trust for participants to feel able to make such contact.

7.) Additional and/or longer term help to this can be obtained by contacting your local Social Services Department, and or Childline (Details and phone numbers follow).

8.) All interview-conversations will be tape recorded and transcribed (written out) by myself. No other person will hear the tapes, which will be erased after being transcribed. Where a tape recorder is not used, the interview will be written up in detail.

9.) The written transcriptions will be available for you to see (at the following interview where possible), where a right to veto (request not to use) any material is offered. Where participants have any concerns about the way material is explained or written up, their own comments may be included in the final research report.

10.) Throughout the research process, strict confidentiality will normally be maintained. No material through which a participant can be identified will be passed on to anybody. However, the law of the land in relation to criminal offences and child protection matters will apply. For example any information regarding potential harm to any person, or information relating to illegal activity which could cause other harm. Such

information could not be treated with confidentiality and would have to be passed on to the relevant authority.

11.) The research will be written up into a Report, anonymity will be maintained. No participant will be identified at any stage. False names, changed geography and minor alterations to family detail will be employed. A final copy of the Report will be kept in the Warwick University Library. Additional copies may be circulated within the Social Services Department.

12.) In the event of this material resulting in publication, any profits resulting will be shared between yourself and the other young people who have agreed to take part in the interview conversations (maximum of seven). This is not expected to amount to any great quantity of money and may not result in any profit at all.

13.) It is hoped that the information developed by this research will serve to inform the help and support offered to children and young people in the future.

14.) The final research Report will be available for you to read. Where possible a follow up meeting will be arranged for you to have the opportunity to ask questions or make comment.

15.) Please feel free to ask questions about anything which your not sure of in this agreement.

16.) Thank you for your help in agreeing to take part in this research .

This agreement provided a framework for the discussions which took place during the initial approaches to the young men. When using this agreement, Justin, Liam and Sean were initially reluctant to acknowledge the need for its use, on the basis that they felt they already knew me and trusted me, to the extent that they felt I didn't need to have it all down in a written format. The use of the agreement was better understood by these young men, when the reasons for doing so were explained further. This was firstly in terms of my perception of their own needs, and my eagerness only to allow participation in the research for those who I felt would benefit, and who fully understood what the research was about in terms of potential impact. Secondly in terms of the need to set standards by example, of the importance to provide support for the participants of research which focuses on sensitive personal issues. Thirdly in terms of my wish to engage them in the generation of information which would be helpful to others.

The issue of confidentiality for David and Ryan was more complex, in that they were only 15 years old. The other participants made their decisions to take part independently. For David and Ryan, initial

discussions took place in the presence of their parent(s), where the issue of confidentiality was explored. These discussions were followed by separate discussions with Ryan and David, to individually explore and clarify their wish to take part, and also to explore their feelings about potential limitations on confidentiality. It was agreed that the normal rules of confidentiality would apply, as with the other young men in the study. However, as both young men were living with their parent(s), it was agreed that there may be circumstances where it may be helpful to share some information. It was agreed that such additional information (above and beyond the normal confidentiality agreement) would only be shared at the request and agreement of the young person.

In conducting the interviews, a set of ground rules was drawn up between myself and my academic supervisor, to set clearly defined boundaries about where the interviews should take place, and how they should be recorded:

Ground Rules for Conducting “Life-story” Research Interviews

1. All interviews will be transcribed or written up in detail and dated.
2. An ongoing research diary will be kept to record other interview details and between interview contact.
3. All young people under the age of 22 will be interviewed in one of the following circumstances:

- In a formal setting, such as a social services building, or the university building, with at least one other adult present in the vicinity of the interview.
- At their home, with at least one other adult present, preferably a parent or carer, in the vicinity.
- At a public place, such as a cafe, where there are many adults present.

4. All young people under the age of 18 will be interviewed with the permission of their parents or carers, who will be informed of the date time and place of the interviews.

5. All young people being interviewed will be supplied with a copy of the research agreement, which details the usage of the interview material and gives contact details of both my supervisors (University and Social Services.).

6. Where possible, courteous and appropriate these rules will apply to all interview participants. However, young people over the age of 22 will be considered to be responsible adults acting as their own agency.

Conclusions

Previous chapters of this study have identified the epistemological inadequacies of orthodox approaches to child sexual abuse research. Dominant psychological perspectives and theories have failed to adequately acknowledge the role of social factors, particularly the influence of patriarchal relations. In responding to this knowledge gap, the current research is located in a post-structuralist theoretical framework. It makes theoretical connections between life-story methods; feminist praxis; practitioner research and anti-oppressive research methodology. These areas of knowledge have shaped and informed the research and its methodology. Further theoretical connections are made between the centrality of power and sexuality in post-structural theory, and the nature of experiences of child sexual abuse.

A sample of seven young men, aged between 15 and 23 who have experienced child sexual abuse was selected. It is hoped that by analysing these young men's experiences, they will be further validated and centralised, and contribute to the growing body of knowledge and theory in relation to child sexual abuse. This is a small sample and as a result will inevitably not be representative of the wider population, in terms of differential experiences of oppression. Whilst there are no black or disabled participants, or representations of other oppressed groups, the potential impact and dynamics of the research process for these

groups is acknowledged, both in the anti-oppressive methodology, and also in the literature review. The approach has been to acknowledge the potential of social processes of difference and oppression, rather than attempting to achieve a representational cross-section of different social groups. Furthermore, such an approach could potentially homogenise diverse groups, the claims of representation which it may have been tempting to make, would not be consistent with the study's methodology. This research study does not seek to make claims of representation or generalisation to any wider population. It does claim a contribution to knowledge, theory and understanding of the impact of child sexual abuse.

The ethical considerations of the research are heightened by the sensitive nature of child sexual abuse as a subject of study. This underlines the importance of an anti-oppressive practitioner-research methodology, in being able to set up an anti-hegemonic and anti-homophobic research environment, which allowed the expression of privately held anxieties and fears. In responding to these expressed anxieties and fears, it was important to provide supportive and informed responses. My previous social work experience told me this was likely to be necessary, and provided me with the skills to respond appropriately. The research will show that these responses allowed the young men to substantially express private emotions and feelings, which they had held onto for many years. The research has involved me in the provision of

extensive follow up support, applications for criminal injuries compensation and attending appeal hearings, and assisting participants in the making of statements to the police. Again, approaching the research with previous social work skills and experience allowed this to happen. By bringing these skills into a research methodology, the study demonstrates a strong and fresh link between research and social work practice, and thereby strengthens the academic discipline of social work.

Chapter 4

Field Research - Seven Lives

Introduction

This chapter shows how the anti-oppressive research methodology was applied in the field. It describes how research contacts were set up with the seven young men who participated in the study. It considers the process of the interviews which subsequently took place, and discusses the post-interview phase, where some of the participants took up the option in the research agreement of twelve months follow up support and counselling. There is also a discussion of how the initial interview transcripts were managed and the theoretical developments of the research analysis. The chapter concludes with vignettes for each of the seven participants.

1.) Research Contact

The young men in this study were all previously known to me, through my professional contact with them as a social worker employed by their local authority. I had known Liam, Justin, Paul, Colin and Sean for several years. With the exception of Ryan and David, my formal involvement with the young men had ceased, and they had themselves chosen to maintain sporadic contact with me. Sometimes this would take the form of utilising the “drop in” services of my work base, other times it would be in the form of telephone contact or leaving messages. Having little or no family contact, they would occasionally contact me for advice or support, job references, or to report positive progress in their lives. It had been possible to incorporate these contacts into my formal day to day social work practice. Through these contacts, the prospect of taking part in a research project was discussed at length with each young man, over a period of four months. This created opportunities and time for the young men to fully consider the implications of taking part, and to ask questions and listen to my explanations of what the nature of their participation would be. It was made clear that discussing the details of their experiences of child sexual abuse would be potentially stressful, and that through the research agreement, every effort would be made to provide support and understanding.

2.) The Interviews

The interviews took place in a variety of settings in accordance as far as possible with the wishes of each young person. This included in their own homes, at a social services day centre, or at a public venue such as a cafe or on one occasion a pub. Where possible, each young man was given a choice of venue. When a public venue was selected, the session was made lighter and less formal. Given the nature of the research topic, it was important to consider safety issues both for the participants and myself. This is not to under-value the trust which had developed and which had enabled the young men to feel safe about their participation, but to ensure that each participant understood that these issues had been considered, and that openness and accountability were maintained without compromising confidentiality. The research agreement gave each participant details of how to contact both the university supervisor and my social services employment supervisor. I felt a level of personal responsibility in asking these young men to talk about painful and sensitive issues. I received supervision in relation to these interviews on a monthly basis at the university, and also had an opportunity to raise issues during my employment supervision.

The interview phase of the work was intensive, time consuming and stressful, for a period I became personally involved in the lives of the participants. I was reassured by the fact that the participants stated that

they had benefited from the process and had enjoyed the additional contact. The young men were recounting very distressing experiences. Listening to several of these experiences in tandem inevitably had an impact. My social work experience helped, as did the support I received during both supervision sessions, alongside day-to-day support from colleagues who were aware in general terms of the nature of my research.

The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by myself, by hand, using pseudonyms. Apart from (with permission) the occasional sharing of taped interviews at the university, for supervision / audit purposes, nobody else heard the tapes. In most circumstances the same cassette was used for each subsequent interview, so as to erase the previous session in the presence of the young man. All tapes were erased after the final interview. Having a limited number of tapes was a good discipline, which was necessary, as it became important to maintain a pace for each young man. Once they had begun to talk, they were generally keen for subsequent sessions not to be delayed. I considered it important to maintain a regular contact during the more difficult and intensive phase of the work. This included a regular follow-up contact in the weeks immediately following the final interview, with the contact becoming less frequent as appropriate.

In conducting the interviews, apart from a mutual awareness of the topic

of research, there was no specifically imposed structure, each participant was afforded the maximum possible control over the interview process. The interviews took the form of conversations, often with myself taking a listening role, occasionally asking a relevant question, or a gentle comment to maintain the focus. In most cases, once a participant began to feel comfortable, he would engage in lengthy descriptions of his experiences. Whilst I would listen and not interrupt, I took care not to create any uncomfortable silences. This was a question of judgement, the nature and process of each interview varied between individual participants. My previous social work experience was crucial, and allowed me to feel confident that I was making appropriate responses across these differing circumstances. Maintaining an awareness and acknowledgement of each young man's vulnerability and stress, whilst at the same time providing positive encouragement and support, sensitive and appropriate to their age and understanding.

As the stories unfolded, each young man's struggle for meaning became evident. Sometimes the process would generate additional information, as past understandings were re-visited and re-interpreted. This was particularly true of Colin's story, where a personal relationship with an older female was re-defined by Colin as having aspects which were abusive. A sense of struggle is evident in all the stories. Justin, Paul, Colin and Liam were more verbal and able to speak at length without interruption. Sean preferred to discuss the more difficult and distressing

aspects of his experiences in brief sentences. Both Ryan and David were fifteen and still very close in time to their experiences of sexual abuse (In comparison to many other studies, all the young men in this study were close in time to their experience of child sexual abuse). Ryan expressed his feelings in poetry and David used painting and drawing, he required more therapeutic help and re-assurance during the interview. At his suggestion, following my use of the expression “on the road to recovery” a large roll of wall paper was used to draw out the road and map out his memories and feelings, showing the past and his aspirations for the future, vividly representing his advances and progressions, alongside contradictions and set-backs.

To summarise, the young men who took part were engaged in a sensitive interview process, the pace and format of which was in the main of their own choosing. As a result, a safe and anti-hegemonic environment was created, which enabled them to feel safe to discuss distressing experiences of child sexual abuse. The young men were able to go to the heart of their experiences and say how they felt and how their lives had been affected. The research methodology allowed a freedom to explore perceptions in ways which opened up new meanings and understandings. The research will show that this allowed feelings of self-blame and feelings of responsibility to be shifted onto the abuser. The young men were able to discuss experiences and personal fears which they had held on to for a long time and felt they could not openly share

with their peers or close friends, for fear of ridicule and embarrassment. Some of the comments made had never been said before. They were secure in their belief that the research environment was a safe situation in which to explore some of the more difficult aspects of having been sexually abused. The offer of support and understanding allowed each young man to test out and explore his feelings and beliefs. The environment was created with the knowledge and understanding that it was likely that the young men would wish to express such feelings, given the appropriate and sensitive opportunity. The transcripts show that this was in fact the case.

3.) Post - Interview Phase

After the interview phase, each participant was given the option of receiving on-going support. This was taken up substantially by Justin, Colin and Liam, and to a lesser extent by Sean and David. The post-interview contact involved face-to-face work and telephone contact. As time progressed, the face-to-face contact faded into telephone contact. Often the contact would relate directly to the research, other times it widened out to more general support work. Some of the participants still maintain an occasional telephone contact. None of them has pursued other forms of more formal support or therapeutic help. Whenever this had been discussed, the response was in the main a reluctance to speak to a stranger.

The post-interview contact sometimes involved a more formal response and drew upon my social work expertise. A reporting of additional past abuse by one participant involved my attendance at a child protection planning meeting. Following his interviews, Liam, who had never reported his abuse, chose to report his experiences to the police. At his request, this involved my attendance with him at one of the police interviews. The research generated information from David which led to the writing of a further report to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, and resulted in an additional award. The research information was also used to secure compensation for Justin and Ryan. In Justin's

case I attended a criminal compensation appeal hearing, and later at his request took him to re-visit his boarding school

4.) Analysing the Transcripts

The interviews were transcribed in handwriting, by myself, as soon as possible after the interview had taken place. The use of a limited number of tapes (one for each participant), and the intention to have a transcript of an interview available for the next helped to maintain the pace of the work and prevent back-logs of transcriptions. Notes of interviews or comments were kept in a research diary, along with other information, thoughts and theoretical notes. Each transcript was unique, there was no standard format or sequence of themes.

The initial analysis involved devising a series of thematic categories, based on what appeared to emerge from the transcripts, and also in the light of some of the findings in the literature review. This created a means to organise a large amount of unstructured conversation transcripts. Miles and Huberman refer to this process as coding and state:

“Coding is analysis. To review a set of field notes, transcribed or synthesized, and to dissect them meaningfully, while keeping the relations between the parts intact, is the stuff of analysis. This part of analysis how you differentiate and combine the data you have retrieved and the reflections you make about this information.” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p56).

They go on to state that:

“....a more inductive researcher may not want to precode any datum until he or she has collected it, seen how it functions or nests in its context, and determined how many varieties of it there are. This is essentially the “grounded” approach originally advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), and it has a lot going for it.....The analyst is more open-minded and more context-sensitive, although, here, too, the ultimate objective is to match the observations to a theory or set of constructs. It is not at all the “completely unstructured” process that is so daunting to new researchers.” (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The following initial categories were identified, as the analysis progressed they were broken down into further themes, and the particular experiences of individuals were traced: History of Abuse; Reporting and Legal Processes; Impact of the Abuse; Relationships constructed by the Abuser; Relationships with Parents and Family; Relationships with Peers; Intimate or Sexual Relationships; Impact on Sexuality and Sexual Functioning; Fears about Abusing Others; Feelings and Memories.

The transcripts were manually coded, by allocating each category to a colour, and then marking the corresponding blocks of text. This allowed

the possibility of multiple coding, simply by marking the same texts with the relevant combination of colours. This enabled an easy visual method of reference to the transcripts by category. Consideration at this stage was given to the use of ethnographic computer software. At this stage I had the view that the manual system created a sense of closeness to the transcripts which I considered to be consistent with the nature and sensitivity of the research methodology and method. However, having once identified the categories, the transcripts were entered into a word processing computer programme (Microsoft Word 6) under the thematic categories. This allowed substantial editing and flexibility in working through the material.

The inter-relatedness of these categories led to the development of patterns of events, beliefs, feelings and behaviours that the young men had in common. This occurred alongside theoretical developments in relation to post-structuralism and Cooper's (1995) "organising principles", and theoretical developments in relation to patriarchal relations and child sexual abuse. In making sense of the data, an analytical framework was constructed (see next chapter), allowing a representation and analysis of the inter-connectedness and multiple influence of many relevant factors. The research concludes with a representation of the framework as applied specifically to the experience of male-child sexual abuse, based on the analysis of the data. This amounts to a "data display" (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

5.) Seven Lives (Vignettes) (All Names Are Pseudonyms)

Justin

Justin was 22 years old and for the past six months living with his partner Ruth and their two children David and Leo. At the age of 14 Justin had Special Educational Needs (1981 Education Act) in relation to emotional and behavioural disturbance, following the divorce of his parents. He was placed at a residential school when he was 14. He was physically and sexually abused on numerous occasions, between the age of 14 and 16 by the Headmaster of the school, John Austin. He attended two court trials as a witness to this abuse. The Headmaster was convicted and sentenced to fourteen years imprisonment. Many other pupils from the school testified against the physical and sexual abuse they had suffered.

After leaving school, Justin describes himself as losing control. His story describes a great deal of emotional pain, anxiety and private fears, especially around this period. Justin also talks about the court appearances and the stress he suffered during a lengthy waiting period. During this period, Justin committed some criminal offences. At the age of 17 he was privately fostered by a neighbourhood friend. He began drinking alcohol and also inhaling excessive amounts of butane gas in an attempt to block out his memories. This has had a serious impact on his

health, leaving him with sustained liver damage.

After this period, Justin met his current partner and has fathered two children. Justin has continued difficulties in maintaining this relationship, finding it very difficult to extend trust. He continues to have flashbacks and private anxieties about his sexuality. He has re-established his contact with his father, and is beginning to address some of the difficulties he has with his mother, mainly as a result of her disbelief and sending him back to school, when he first reported his abuse.

In applying for criminal injuries compensation, Justin feels he had unfair treatment at the appeal hearing, and felt that he was the person on trial. He was relieved to have the award, but felt that the money was tainted, and spent it quickly. The award presented him with difficulties in relation to his state benefits, which he considers to be unfair.

Justin was very positive about taking part in this research project and feels that he has benefited from the support and the opportunity to explore his feelings in detail.

Paul

Paul was 23 years old and living with his oldest sister, after having broken up with his partner Claire after a period of intensive conflict. He continues to have some contact with Claire and his two year old daughter. Paul had welcomed the opportunity to talk about his life as he felt that things had come to a head and that he would benefit from talking through past events which had troubled him for many years.

Paul's earliest memories reach back to around the age of 5, when he, his two older sisters Gail and Sally and younger brother Peter lived with their mother and step-father. At this time his two half brothers; Kevin and Martin also lived with him, prior to their adoption when Paul was around seven years old. For many years Paul carried a deep sense of responsibility for the fact that he was unable to protect Kevin and Martin from his violent step-father Raith, who also lived in the family home. Paul describes his sense of guilt as having an overwhelming negative influence on his life.

Paul's story relates a great deal of emotional and physical abuse being inflicted on all the children in the family by Raith. Paul was particularly singled out and has described a whole catalogue of extreme physical abuse and emotional torment. At the same time Paul was sexually abused by a man whose name he does not know. He lived in the next

street, where he used to play outside with his friends. Again Paul has given a vivid account of these memories.

When Paul was 9, he, his brother and two sisters became subjects of care orders and moved into foster care. Within two years of this move, Paul's mother died and his step-father disappeared. Paul remained in the same foster home until he was 19, when he moved into housing association accommodation.

Paul has explained how his experiences of physical and sexual abuse have damaged and disabled his life. Throughout his adolescence he had deep fears about his sexuality and was worried that his abuse meant that he was gay. Paul describes how he has had to manage his life, to maintain an image of heterosexuality. He felt isolated and had to keep his feelings to himself. He lived in fear of discovery, as he felt a deep sense of responsibility for his own abuse. He was ashamed, and believed that any discovery of his abuse would invite ridicule. His story relates the many contradictions and struggles he has experienced as a result of being physically, emotionally and sexually abused, and has been very specific about how his private fears have seriously affected his relationships, with adults, with peers and with intimate partners. Paul feels he has benefited from taking part in this research project.

Colin

Colin was 18 years old, he was living alone in rented accommodation, after having broken up with his partner and mother of his two children. Colin had welcomed the opportunity to talk about his life, in terms of his sexual abuse and the difficulties he was now able to recognise he'd been having with his relationships and in general.

He had spent fourteen years in local authority care and was now living independently. He became the subject of a care order at the age of four, following a period of physical abuse and neglect. For nine years he had lived in one stable foster care placement, with his younger sister Alice. Colin's placement broke down when he was 13. Alice remained in the placement

Colin was moved to a short term emergency placement and had to change school. This was the beginning of a very uncertain period for Colin, for four years he was unable to settle down. Within a month of moving to the emergency placement Colin explains how he had absconded following an argument and was picked up by a stranger, who lured him with the prospect of alcohol and drugs. Colin was driven several miles away to a house, where he was sexually abused several times over a four day period. He refers to the abuse as "the four days". Colin reported the abuse within days of his return to the emergency

placement. Although the police were able to track down the abuser, it was considered that there was insufficient evidence to take the case to court.

Within a month of reporting his abuse, Colin's story explains how at the age of 13 he became involved in a turbulent relationship with an 18 year old woman named Penny. This relationship lasted for nearly four years and produced two children, both of whom are now adopted. There were many failed attempts by Colin to separate from Penny. He also resisted professionals' attempts to separate them. Upon reflection, partly as a result of these research interviews he has now redefined this relationship as involving aspects of sexual abuse. During this period, Colin drank heavily and smoked cannabis. He also went through a period of sniffing butane gas. There was evidence that he had been drinking large amounts of alcohol from around the age of twelve.

Colin's story describes his feelings about his initial sexual abuse by a male, and explains the impact of this abuse, both privately and in the manner in which he relates to other people. He explains his attempts to accommodate the experience, and describes his intense fears of being gay, and deep suspicions about how he is viewed by his peers as a result of his abuse. He has also described his fears of abusing others. Colin feels that being sexually abused by a male has left him with sexual problems and sexual confusion, to the extent that he often finds it difficult

to enjoy sexual relationships.

Liam

Liam was 22 years old, homeless and living with friends, following the breakdown of a two year relationship with a female of a similar age, named Tanya. This breakdown had precipitated many issues and feelings for Liam in relation to past events, including the death of his father and sexual activity which had taken place between Liam and a teacher, Carl, at a boarding school, when Liam was 15 and 16. During the initial stages of the research, Liam did not fully define the experience as sexual abuse, and referred to it as a relationship. As the research contact progressed, Liam re-defined the experience as involving aspects of sexual abuse and asked for my assistance in reporting it to the police. As the incidents had occurred six years ago, the investigation did not result in prosecution, but it contributed to previous concerns and another similar investigation in relation to other boys.

When Liam was 8, his father died suddenly at work. He was an ambulance driver, and had been suffering from stress. Liam was the youngest of three, he had a sister four years older, and a brother two years older. His mother found the situation increasingly difficult to cope with and had enlisted the help and support of the Social Services Department. By the time Liam was 13, he was beginning to get into difficulties. His school attendance was sporadic, and he was drinking and smoking cannabis. He was often late home, and sometimes away

overnight. On one occasion he was picked up when hitch hiking and narrowly escaped being sexually abused, as his story will describe. This resulted in a police investigation, in which Liam feels he was blamed and made to feel responsible for what had happened. He carries strong feelings and bad memories about this course of events to this day.

When Liam was 14, with the help of a charity, Liam's mother paid for him to go to a mixed boarding school, as she felt it was imperative that he moved away from the area. Liam regards this as a life saving decision, even though at the time and since, his relationship with his mother has been very strained. Liam was very happy with the time he spent at boarding school. However, whilst at the school he developed a closeness to a member of the teaching staff, Carl, which at the age of 16 became what he described initially as a fully consenting sexual relationship.

Liam's story describes these events and highlights the struggle he has had in coming to terms with his sexual feelings, the impact of being picked up at the age of 14, and coming very close to being sexually abused, and the ambivalence he feels about a sexual "relationship" with his teacher which he strongly feels he consented to, but is also aware that it was sexually abusive. Liam describes the impact of these events on his sexuality and his subsequent relationships with women.

Sean

Sean was 21 years old and was homeless, having recently moved out from living in temporary accommodation with a friend. Since leaving care at the age of 18, Sean had not lived in his own accommodation, but had constantly survived on the hospitality of friends. Since the age of 17 he had been unemployed. He was in the process of setting himself up with a joint tenancy, with a friend of his mother.

Sean had been the subject of a care order since the age of 9. He was the second youngest of four children. During his time in care, he lived in eight different foster homes, four of which had disrupted. In between these placement moves, Sean had on three occasions attempted rehabilitation with his mother. Each attempt had been unsuccessful, largely due to financial circumstances and health problems experienced by Sean's mother. These pressures made it very difficult for Sean's mother to exercise care and control over him, his brother and two sisters, (Karl, Mary and Louise) who were also the subjects of care orders. Sean has never known his father.

At the age of 12 Sean's life was very disrupted, he was unhappy and was getting involved delinquency and drug taking, which had resulted in court appearances. He was excluded from school and became the subject of a Statement of Special Educational Needs (1981 Education Act). It was

recommended that he attend a residential school on a termly basis. Sean was placed at an all male boarding school forty miles away from his home.

At the age of 15, Sean was showing sexualised behaviour towards male adults, this concern alongside reports from another boy led to an investigation. Sean reported that he had been repeatedly subjected to sexual abuse by Mr Lister, the Head of Care at the school. As Head of Care, Mr Lister was in a central and powerful position in the school. This included making decisions about behaviour grades which would result in the provision or restriction of privileges. He also made decisions about permission to return home at weekends. He lived on the school premises in a cottage to which he invited pupils and sexually abused them. In Sean's case, the sexual abuse had taken place over a period of six to nine months. Sean was not aware that there were other boys being sexually victimised at the school by the same person. Mr Lister disappeared during the course of the investigation, and was believed to have left the country.

Sean's story explains the details of these events and describes the impact sexual abuse has had on his life, both at the school and since leaving school. Sean explains how he now feels that he has recovered from the experience. He now has a stable relationship, fixed accommodation and a full time job. He has always maintained that he

wanted to be left to “*get on with it*”, and that he never welcomed the involvement of the police and wouldn’t have wished to go to court.

David

David was 15 years old and still attending school. He was living at home with his mother, father, four brothers and two sisters. Eighteen months previously, David had attended a court trial, along with twelve other boys, to give evidence against by a man named Harry, who was a computer studies lecturer. He had sexually abused several boys who had been temporarily in his care. David was abused from the age of 9 to 12. A previous study (Durham, 1993 and 1997) has examined the professional response to this situation, which had involved the setting up of support groups.

Following an initial approach to David's school for names of boys who would benefit from attending his computer club. Harry approached David's mother and father and offered to provide weekend respite for David. Subsequently, in the confines of his own home, Harry sexually abused David on a regular basis. The abuse took place in the context of the provision of care and positive attention. The material standard of comfort which Harry could provide was far greater than that which he had experienced at home, and was therefore welcomed and enjoyed.

David was confused and unsure about whether or not he could or should tell his mother about the abuse. David felt that often she was too busy either working or looking after a large family, for there to be opportunities

in which he felt he could talk to his mother about what was happening. Additional to this, was the fact that in material terms, David found the weekends away comfortable. He had considerable ambivalence about his relationship with Harry, who was the provider of considerable material comfort and favour, but also sexually abused him, which he found difficult to understand and was embarrassed about.

At school David was isolated and found it difficult to make friends, he was often victimised by some of the other pupils at school. On such occasions he used to run out of lessons, or run home. His problems increased when some pupils discovered that he had been sexually abused. He was accused of being gay. This fed into David's personal anxieties, and added to his feelings of being responsible for what happened. Additionally, he had been accused of lying by the defence barrister during the court case.

Eighteen months after the closure of the support groups, David asked his mother to contact me, as he was having nightmares and problems with his peers at school, and wished to receive further help. On hearing about the research project, David expressed a wish to take part. During the course of discussing his feelings, David reported that the sexual abuse had taken place to a much greater extent than had been indicated by either his first statement, or the court trial. David was clear about the fact that, beyond my informing the police, he did not wish to pursue the

legal aspects of the matter any further. This wish was respected.

Ryan

Ryan was 15 years old, he was living with his mother. His 19 year old sister lived away, but often returned home to stay for two or three weeks at a time. His father left when he was 3 years old, after a series of violent incidents towards Ryan and his mother. Ryan does not wish to find his father or have contact with him and feels anger towards him.

At around the age of 10 or 11, Ryan had attended computer club activities set up by a man named Harry (the same man who abused David). Just after the period when he had attended the club, Ryan was playing in a local park, and by chance met Harry. As Ryan's story explains, he cannot recall exactly how, but he ended up in Harry's car and travelled to a house, the location of which he has never been able to recall. When he was at this house, he was sexually abused by Harry, and eventually driven back to near his home. Ryan recalls two incidents of this nature.

During this period, Ryan was very unhappy and spent large periods of time away from home, often absconding. There was a period of intense conflict between Ryan and his mother, often relating to problems Ryan was experiencing in relation to his sexual abuse. Ryan did not express anger towards Harry, but his mother did. Ryan was sometimes ambivalent and passive about the abuse he was reluctant to go to court,

but his mother felt strongly that he should go. As a result, Ryan was often reluctant to discuss anything relating to the abuse with his mother.

Further tensions were caused by Ryan absconding from school and returning home late, being very moody and difficult to manage. Ryan also became involved in petty law breaking incidents, which resulted in police involvements. There were occasions when Ryan very clearly put himself at risk. Staying out very late, all night in dark cold places with insufficient clothing. It was after one such incident that Ryan initially reported his abuse to his uncle. During this period, as a result of baiting and name calling from his peers, Ryan changed school. There are large periods of time he cannot remember, particularly situations of stress. At times he still feels that he is not believed about what he refers to as his "memory blocks", and felt that he was pressurised by the police at the time of the investigation, when he was driven to several locations in an attempt to find the houses he was taken to by Harry. There is much that Ryan feels he has now forgotten, but he is clear that he knows it was a very bad time for him.

Recently Ryan has been offered a sum of money from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, for the sexual abuse he has suffered. A report based on information gained by the research process was submitted by myself in support of his claim.

Chapter 5

“Society dictates that that’s the way you should be at my age.” (Liam, Research Participant),

Analysing The Seven Life Stories.

Introduction

1.) Post-structural Analytical Framework

This section presents a post-structural analytical framework, which utilises the concept of “organising principles” (Cooper, 1995), and draws on the tensions between the over-determinism of structuralism and the fragmentation of post-structuralism. The analysis focuses on the power relationships before, during and after experiences of child sexual abuse, occurring in a context of patriarchal relations. The framework allows examination of these factors at various levels of interaction, individual; family; peer and wider social networks.

In particular, the analysis reveals how these experiences are influenced by their occurrence in an oppressive social context of dominant masculinities, characterised by compulsory heterosexism and

homophobia. The framework is ideally suited to the qualitative methodology of this research, which seeks to value individual experiences, whilst at the same time analysing commonalities across these divergent experiences, allowing for the narrative without fragmenting it. At the end of the section the analytical framework is represented in a diagram (Figure 2).

2.) Living Through and With Abuse

This section identifies the experience and impact of child sexual abuse as being an integrated process, rather than an isolated or singular event. There are similarities and differences in the experiences of the young men. Unlike some of the studies discussed in Chapter 2, there is no attempt to draw up a fixed inventory of outcomes, but instead, a recognition that the experiences are varied and changing over time, and need to be considered in terms of being lived out in their context. There is an emphasis on survival and recovery, and the employment of strategies of resistance, before, during and after the abuse. The young men are “*checkerboards of strengths and weaknesses*” (Sanford,1990,p16), their recovery is not a linear process, but is subject to many unique twists and turns, interacting with other aspects of their individual lives.

Before Abuse considers the circumstances of the young men before

they were abused, and looks at the power relationships between the young men and the adults who sexually abused them. The analysis shows how the adults set up circumstances which would make it possible for them to sexually abuse the young men (boys). The particular experiences of Justin and Paul are contrasted, Justin was abused alongside other boys at a residential school, Paul was abused on his own by a man who lived in his neighbourhood.

Being Abused considers what was happening when the young men were being abused, again considering the situational power relationships involved, and how combinations of threats and persuasion were used, and how the young men tried to resist. A common feature was that the young men were unaware of the prior intentions of the adults involved, and how they were instilled with a sense of responsibility for what had happened to them.

Relationships Constructed By The Abusers continues the analysis by considering the relationships which were constructed by the abusers. Some of the young men were offered treats of money, others were threatened severely and offered treats. Sometimes, extreme threats would be combined with kindness or positive attention. This meant that for some of the young men, there were positive aspects to this relationship, which created a sense of voluntarism or co-operation and responsibility.

3.) Trying To Tell

This section analyses some of the comments the young men made about trying to tell about their sexual abuse. Telling about their sexual abuse meant that they had to face considerable anxieties. Some of this was about what the young men believed about themselves, and some of it was about people's reactions and being believed. The young men also had to weigh up the potential course of events which would follow their telling, what they would lose and what they would gain. The use of the term "disclosure" in socio-legal circumstances, is criticised, in that it constructs the complicated process of telling into a single event.

The research examines the complications of the circumstances the young men were in, and considers the difficulties they had in attempting to tell. There were many factors which prevented the young men from feeling able to tell, not least feeling responsible for the abuse. Some of the young men feared the consequences of telling, both in terms of being blamed, and being threatened not to tell. They also feared that telling may potentially lead to a disruption of social and family circumstances. In telling, some of the young men became involved in legal processes. The research identifies that in many circumstances these processes were experienced as being stressful. This was particularly true of Colin's medical examination and Justin's first compensation hearing. The

section considers these issues under the following headings: Circumstances of Telling; Feelings About Telling; Fear Of The Consequences Of Telling; Telling Family; Telling Friends; Experiences Of Police Involvement; Going To Court; Compensation Appeal Hearings.

4.) Impact on Sexuality and Relationships with Peers

This section initially considers the particular importance of sexuality in post-structuralism, referring to its disciplinary power, and also in terms of Cooper's (1995) "organising principles", making connections with patriarchal relations and social constructions of hegemonic masculinities. The importance of sexuality, in terms of body changes and identity development, during adolescence is discussed, alongside a consideration of the critique of developmentalism in psychology. It is recognised that there is potential for any person to experience confusion and difficulty at this time of life, particularly in a social context of compulsory heterosexism and homophobia.

Sexuality and Peer Relationships. The experiences described by the young men indicated that there were considerable anxieties and difficulties in relation to their sexuality, and that much of this was as a result of being sexually abused by a male. In many of the comments, the young men made reference to how they presented to and were perceived by their peers. The experience of child sexual abuse on many occasions

caused anxiety, confusion and false beliefs about male gay sexuality. These beliefs interacted with the young men's feelings of responsibility, and through internalised oppression caused them to have considerable anxieties about being gay or being seen as being gay. There was a belief that this would be easily picked upon by peers, which caused some of the young men to repress feelings and engage in behaviours they considered to be consistent with a (hegemonic) masculine heterosexual identity.

Sexual Functioning; Fears of Abusing considers the specific comments the young men made about the impact of being abused on their intimate sexual experiences. Some of the young men stated that they had found difficulty in deriving pleasure out of these experiences, as a result of constant intrusive memories and fears. Some of the young men expressed fears about becoming abusers themselves. Again, many of these comments were made with reference to peer perceptions, there was again further evidence of internalised oppression.

5.) Still Living With the Consequences of Abuse

This section considers other areas of impact child sexual abuse has had on the lives of these young men. This includes having to cope with memories and flashbacks on a daily basis, and having to live with the emotional stress of these memories, how these memories influence

behaviour and create pre-occupations. Some of the accounts show a direct relationship between the abuse and the use of stimulants to block out memories and feelings, and show how these escalated out of control, causing considerable harm to health and rapidly deteriorating circumstances. Other accounts show how the memories resulted in expressions of anger and temper, which began to have a toll on family and carer relationships. These experiences show how difficult and stressful the day to day experiences of these young men are, and how their memories and feelings continue to haunt them. The section concludes with non-verbal research contributions from David and Ryan, in the form of poetry and artwork.

6.) Being a Participant

This section considers how the young men felt about taking part in the research study. It looks at what they have said about this directly, and considers the longitudinal process of their participation, how their stories individually unfolded and how in some circumstances this led to either further telling, or a re-framing or reinterpreting of experiences as a result of discussion. The section also considers how some of the young people viewed the analysis and presentation of the research itself, and includes some of their after-thoughts. A final comment is made by myself about being a researcher.

Conclusions

This section draws the chapter together, and considers the impact of patriarchal relations and social mythology on the young men's experiences of child sexual abuse. The frankness and detail of the transcriptions are testament to the appropriateness of the research methodology. The experiences of the young men are finally represented in an application of the diagram presented in section 1. This represents a discourse of male-child sexual abuse, showing how many of the young men's experiences and beliefs have been socially constructed throughout the courses of their lives, with they themselves playing their own part in carrying forward mistaken beliefs, myths and expectations.

1.) Post-structural Analytical Framework

In Chapter 3, post-structuralism was considered with a particular emphasis on the work of Cooper (1995) which conceptualised “organising principles” which influence and can sometimes determine the power relationships between people. Alongside each other, different organising principles are mutually over-determining. For example one principle may relate to gender, one to class and one to “race”. Each principle has bearing on the other, their interaction influences the balance of power in interpersonal relationships. The “organising principles” influence and shape access to the modes of power; ideology, force, discipline and resources. Alongside the modes of power, the technologies, sites and resources of power were also considered.

This research study is essentially post-structuralist in its method and analysis, in that an emphasis has been placed on diversity and the uniqueness of individual experiences. However, as the research unfolded, a commonality of experience was identified across this uniqueness. This did not deny or compromise the uniqueness of each young man’s experience, but rather served to highlight common struggles, concerns and fears. Many of these related to concerns about masculinities and sexual identity. There were other common experiences, for example in relation to the human reactions and responses to childhood trauma, in terms of emotional reactions, recurring

memories and flashbacks.

The analytical framework is represented in Figure 2 below. The individual is an agent of choice and action, with wishes, desires and beliefs. Individual experience however is subject to and created by interactions with others. Each level of interaction constitutes a site of learning and influence. Each individual is a member of each level and so not only receives its influence, but contributes to its influence on others. For example at a peer group level or at the level of the wider political and social context, processes of hegemony and consensus involve each individual in receiving beliefs, carrying them forward within themselves, passing them on to others and so forth. The extent of the influence will vary according to many factors, some of which may relate to class, "race", gender, sexuality, age or ability. The influence of each level is interdependent, and will vary according to circumstances, age, and development. The most immediate level of this interaction is family and kinship. In most circumstances, for a young child this is the site of initial interactions, relationships and learning, and continues to have a varying influence over time. The next level of interaction, is the social network of extra-familial relationships and interactions. Within this network is located the peer group and access to other close and intimate relationships, experienced through schools and possibly pre-school networks, social and leisure contacts and work or college. These three levels of interaction are located in the wider social and political context,

which again influences and interacts with each level, and also contributes to the determination of interactions between the different levels.

The common experiences relating to perceived masculinities and sexual identity are particularly examined through the lens of this framework. Sexuality has been identified as a significant form of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1976), particularly in a social context where sexual desire and attraction is strongly regulated to create a social climate of compulsory heterosexism and homophobia.

Particular attention is paid to hegemonic masculinities and the possibility that the experience of child sexual abuse has led some of the young men to believe themselves to be in a subordinate position in relation to other males, particularly their peers, who they see and believe to be living a life more consistent with received beliefs about hegemonic masculinities. Some of this subordination is evidenced by not only actual life experiences, but the choice of language (one of the technologies of power) used to describe their experiences. In trying to limit, deny or change the extent of this perceived subordination, some of the young men adopted behaviours perceived to be consistent with the masculinities (hegemonic) they believed they should aspire to. In effect they themselves began to carry and perpetuate the discourse which was hurting them. In the case of Justin and Liam this involved acting tough

and *“acting the homophobic”*. In Colin’s case this involved being led into another sexually abusive situation, but this time, by a woman.

The sensitive nature of the research method employed facilitated an expression and exploration of some of these deeply held fears and beliefs. There was evidence that some of these fears were still present and being coped with. The young men felt a degree of safety which allowed them to say some of the things which had been on their minds *and had been carried since the experience of sexual abuse*. In some cases the research led to a reframing of some experiences, and hopefully in all cases, an improved understanding of the nature of the fears. It was a fine balance of response, to allow the fears and emotions to be expressed before making supportive responses which may effectively change the nature of the impact of the experience. Some of the young men had been too afraid to voice some of their fears, they had never allowed themselves to be open to taking in new understandings and supportive advice in any meaningful manner. It was necessary to hear the experience first, in its raw state, before such responses would be possible. This will be illustrated in later sections for example by Justin’s description of his fear of becoming an abuser, and by Paul’s response to being told that it was not possible for him to be responsible for the bad things which happened to his younger siblings, when he was only six himself.

The framework is represented below (Figure 2) and will particularly be applied to the impact of child sexual abuse on sexuality and peer relationships in relation patriarchy and its constructions of gender and sexuality. The framework has been described in terms of its specific usefulness in understanding male-child sexual abuse, and how feelings and beliefs during and after such an event are constructed in a relationship with wider social forces and interaction. The framework potentially has a formal theoretical application to other social phenomena.

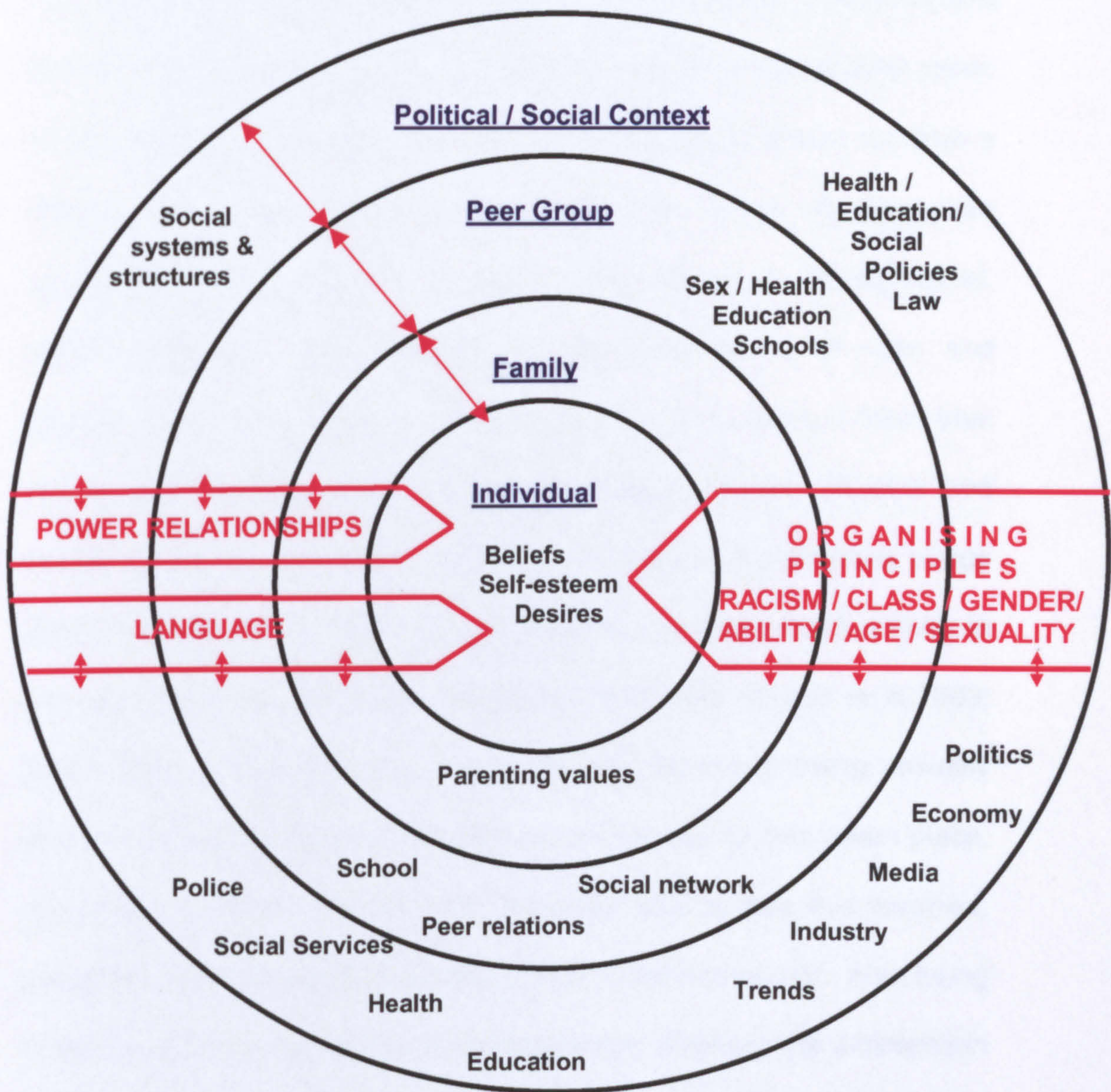


Figure 2
Post-structural Analytical Framework

2.) Living Through and With Abuse

One of the main themes of this research study is that the experience and impact of child sexual abuse is not a singular fact or an isolated event, but an integrated process. The experience of sexual abuse involves a child or a young person being coerced into abuse by processes constructed by the abuser, to allow sexual abuse to be committed, without detection, and instilling an oscillating sense of fear and responsibility in the child or young person, so as to prevent them from feeling able to tell. This coercion may involve sexual, physical and emotional acts which may or may not be understood, but by virtue of age and or circumstances cannot be consented to. Such an event is likely to be experienced as a trauma. (Finkelhor et al,1986; Bolton et al,1989; Briere,1992; Friedrich,1995). The short term impact of being sexually abused involves living with the fact that sexual abuse has taken place, and trying to come to terms with the likely trauma that this involved, alongside considerations of whether or not to tell somebody. Also trying to weigh up the many perceived consequences of telling, the intersection of circumstances and likely events which telling would involve, such as family consequences, legal consequences, being blamed, being disbelieved and so on. The longer term impact may change over time as the child or young person gets older and becomes more aware of sex and sexuality. For some people, the trauma may continue to produce flashbacks and intrusive memories for many years, which may lead to attempts to block out such memories.

The experience and impact of sexual abuse varies from child to child and is lived out uniquely. This is not to deny the commonalities across different experiences, but to emphasise the uniqueness of the experience for each child. Some of the literature discussed in Chapter 2 referred to indicators of child sexual abuse, or inventories of experiential outcomes. Here, the experience of child sexual abuse can become decontextualised and viewed in clinical or medical terms in a pathologising manner which implicates the necessity of "treatment". This potentially colludes with a child's feared sense of responsibility, and the view that they have personal deficits, or faults, instead of emphasising that much of the way they are feeling about themselves is an understandable and natural response to what they have gone through. Sanford referring to stereotypes of survivors; those who have been traumatised during childhood states that:

"The list of those deserving "equal opportunity" needs to include those who have been traumatised in childhood. Too often, knowing that a friend or co-worker is a survivor changes our perception of them, diminishes their humanness in our eyes. We may view them as a "human time bomb waiting to go off". We may become impatient with their suffering, cajoling them with "It could have been worse", or trying to reassure them that the worst is over." Why, we wonder, do they hang on to obsolete coping skills? We fail to recognise how our denial, minimisation and pseudoscientific projections of blame for trauma parallel the abusers' defences and thinking errors, how our insensitivity keeps alive just those

defence mechanisms that need to be discarded." (Sanford, 1990, p179).

Sanford refers to the "*once damaged goods*" (1990, p9) myth as being fuelled by the three psychological theories of the intergenerational transmission of violence, learned helplessness, and identification with the aggressor. She makes the point that we should not be so categorical in defining the experiences and consequences of childhood trauma, emphasising that people who have such experiences are "*checkerboards of strengths and weaknesses*" (p16). This introduces the possibility that as a result of such trauma, strengths could become stronger, and through recovery, weaknesses could become weaker. There is therefore the possibility of a wide range of experiences and feelings over time, and less of a need to describe experiences in terms of fixed polarised categories like victim or aggressor, there are no single conclusions. A clinical categorisation of consequences of a human experience has the potential to instil a sense of inevitability, and an expectation of not surviving well. A later section in this chapter exemplifies this, some of the young men in the study talked about their fears of becoming abusers, based on what they had heard and believed from statistics about sexual offenders.

This research shows that there are differences and similarities between the young men in how they experienced being sexually abused during childhood, and that the impact of experience interacts closely with other aspects of their lives, to produce varying impacts at different stages. In

this respect, Sanford's description of a "*checkerboard*" (1990,p16) of experiences is accurate. Later sections will show that recovery is not a linear process, but is in fact very turbulent, oscillating between progress and set backs, in a very unpredictable manner, as the experience is accommodated, re-accommodated, adapted and re-adapted to at different stages of life. The research also shows how whenever possible, the young men employed or attempted to employ strategies of resistance, exercising small amounts of personal power in attempting to survive the ordeal they were going through, and afterwards in coping with the impact of what had happened to them, and how they believed they would be perceived as a result. The next sub-section discusses some of the circumstances of the young men, and how the men who abused them manipulated these circumstances to set up contact with them and create a situation where sexual abuse could take place, with the child in various ways being silenced. The following sub-section explores how the young men were abused, and very clearly reveals that the adults involved clearly meant to abuse them, and shows how powerless the young men were, as boys, in being able to protect themselves from such strengths of purpose.

Before Abuse

When a child or a young person is being sexually abused, this may be experienced as a starting point or a change in a relationship, but for the

person who commits the abuse this is likely to be the culmination of a whole series of thoughts, events and planning, all of which the child is unaware. This section will show how the child being unaware was used to advantage by the abuser. At the outset it was used to instil a sense of responsibility and voluntarism (a sense of having co-operated, or being made to feel a volunteer in the abusive situation) in the child. Up to and including the point where abuse takes place, the abuser's motivations are likely to have been purposefully masked, disguised and perhaps represented as something else, such as a process of caring, special regard or love. This would make it easy for a child to be made to believe that it is he or she who has disrupted this process and begun to initiate the sexual behaviours. The circumstances and combinations of these processes are as many as there are children who have been abused. The beliefs and circumstances are tailor made by the abuser for the individual child, maintaining their silence and compliance.

Justin, Sean and Liam were sexually abused by members of staff at their boarding school. The men who abused them were in positions of authority and trust, and had used their positions within the school to gain access to selected pupils and sexually abuse them. In this section, particular attention will be paid to Justin's experiences, which illustrate the differential use of power by the adult who sexually abused him, and how at the outset, Justin was aware of the incongruity of his situation, even before he was sexually abused, and had to employ his own survival

strategies to avoid physical violence from other pupils.

Justin was abused by the headmaster, who was in the position of highest authority at the school. From additional information obtained from an official social services report, and evidence adduced at trial, it was clear that the headmaster, Mr Austin had secured his position by developing positive relationships with significant adults outside the school. This including local authority education officers, local community figures, but perhaps most importantly, the parents of the boys placed in the school. For these parents he presented as a reasonable and caring man who was taking a very difficult task out of the hands of parents who in many cases had great concerns about their sons' education and behaviour. He was providing them with a solution to a difficult problem, by taking on their sons and providing control and education. The alliance he made with parents was a crucial aspect to his being able to maintain the secrecy of his abusing and contain it within the school. This began with the initial school admission interview; a very different face was presented to Justin in a brief moment when he was away from his mother:

JUSTIN: *“Mr. Austin, he interviewed everyone....Well he took me outside, we'd gone for the interview on the Wednesday and he said I was going to the school on the Saturday and I said well I don't want to go to it to my mum and the woman who took us, that Mrs. Jones. He said well we'll go outside and have a word. He took us outside and then pinned us up*

against the car and says, he starts pointing and says: "I can be two things to you, I can be your father or a bastard." So I just turned round to him and said well you can start being a bastard 'cos you won't be my father and then went back inside and my mum says well you're coming to the school and everything and he says Saturday, I goes home, tells all my friends."

It is clear that even at this initial stage, Justin was aware that Mr Austin was abusing his personal and situational power. To his mother, he presented as a powerful person in a professional position. His power was derived from his masculinity, and its representation of control, and his authority of being the Headmaster of a formally recognised educational establishment. He presented as someone who could be trusted to take on the problems of a young man, who up to now had experienced considerable difficulties in previous schools. However, in the context of Justin being on his own, his power was differentially used. His immediate power was expressed in the form of physical force, conveying the message to Justin at the outset, that his power could be abused, and that with Justin there was no need for the pretence of respectability. Mr Austin perceived the necessity of presenting his formal authority to Justin's mother, who he was able to differentiate as having more personal and social power, especially in terms of her having the responsibility of giving consent for Justin to attend the school, and the power to tell Justin that he had to attend the school. Justin was

disempowered in this situation. Mr Austin knew this and was able at the outset to demonstrate the extent of his power, and the fact that he could abuse it. Justin's immediate response to Mr Austin indicates his resistance. In the face of Justin's response, Mr Austin returned with him to the "formal" interview situation with his mother, and resumed his air of respectable authority. Justin was aware of the incongruity of the situation, but was resigned to the fact that he would have to go to the school. These circumstances are not altogether extraordinary, when considering the "developmental" construction of childhood, which reduces children and young people to the status of "*becomings*" instead of "*beings*" (Morss,1996,p158), which legitimises a denial of rights, particularly in circumstances such as when considering educational matters. Mr Austin used circumstances of "normal" power relationships as a springboard for committing sexual abuse. Justin was aware that his mother had a very different opinion of the Headmaster to his own:

JUSTIN: *"...she thought the sun shined out of Austin's arse, as far as she was concerned, Austin couldn't put a foot out of place."*

Mr. Austin had set up an abuse regime which employed a pecking order, whereby older boys who had been physically and sexually abused by him in the past were given a parallel and sometimes elevated status to members of staff, and were used in the process of abusing other children, they themselves were encouraged to abuse other boys. Boys

who had been abused in the school aspired to reaching the status of the top boys, and thereby receive rights, privileges and protection. Justin was introduced to this regime upon arrival, and he quickly became aware that the headmaster was fully aware of much that was going on, although it would be some time before he realised why.

JUSTIN: *“They came and picked me up on the Saturday afternoon and on my way over there I bought some fags and this kid grasses us up and when I get there this kid Henry, the hardest kid in the school puts these rubber gloves on to search me so I just give him the fags before he searched me, I ain’t getting searchedhe’s the hardest kid in the school and like he was like a member of staff.*”

Justin became aware that the authority they had was in reality power that was being exercised through them by Mr Austin and at any point could be taken away from them. Although Henry appeared to have near adult status and power, his own personal power and authority had to be exercised and maintained through the medium of actual and threatened physical force, which he was given permission to exercise. Without this permission he too was relatively powerless. Justin was later to learn that Henry himself, and many other boys had been sexually abused by Mr Austin. In these circumstances, Justin was able to overcome some of his own powerlessness through the same medium, by making it clear that in terms of physical violence, there were circumstances where he too could

exercise power. The threat of this as a strategy of resistance and survival allowed him to maintain a level of status in the eyes of the most violent pupils, and ensured his avoidance of additional severe physical pain.

JUSTIN: *“Austin used to let him have the run of the school.....He was Austin’s right hand man.....Whatever Austin told him he did....he used to go round beating kids up and that, but he never used to give me any shit, ‘cos like the first day I was there I basically turned round to everyone and said If I ever get beat up by any of you lot, when you’re asleep, see these pool balls in a sock, you know what I mean, they’d get when they’re asleep, so you know, he used to go and beat up kids that run away from the school really badly like, you know, they were given bleeding noses, make them lose their teeth..... Austin used to go and tell him to go and beat them up..”*

Many of the boys were engaging in violent and aggressive behaviours (which may sit alongside compulsory heterosexism and homophobia), whilst during the same period of time being sexually abused by the headmaster, and in many cases being forced to engage in sexual activities with each other. The fact that sexual abuse was taking place between pupils would have likely compounded feelings of responsibility and prevented boys from being able to tell. This was alongside the fear of the hierarchy, and the need to assert aggressive forms of masculinity

in order to survive and maintain a level of status. The exercise of personal power through physical force served to confirm a pupil's status in terms of "hardness and toughness", which in association to being a strategy for resistance and survival, may have in a very personal sense, served to counteract some of the impact of the sexual abuse, particularly in terms of allowing the boys to re-assert their masculinities.

Paul was sexually abused by an adult male neighbour, who lived near to his home, where he used to play football in the street. He was abused on his own, in isolation from other children, but sometimes in the presence of another adult, a female. The abuser may have had the knowledge from Paul's disposition, that he was an unhappy child, who was likely to have restricted opportunity or ability to report being abused.

Before Paul was sexually abused, he had experienced considerable physical and emotional abuse at home, at the hands of his step - father Raith. Paul experienced the circumstances of his abuse as being less painful, and in some ways a relief and escape from the extreme physical violence which was being inflicted on him at home. He provides a vivid recall of what happened at home, where for him being on the receiving end of violence, aggression and cruelty was the norm. He makes the point that he still carries the scars in his memory and on his body, and that he has never talked about it before now.

PAUL:"I can only remember violence, shouting, aggression and hatred. They're the only things I can remember from being a kid.....Sometimes it was just the fact that we were there and he didn't want us there. Basically letting us know that everything was our fault and that we shouldn't be there anyway. He would try and tell us that our mum didn't want us, our mum didn't love us and we were making a mess of her life. He used to tell us that she'd told him that she wished she'd killed us at birth.....He used to fill the bath with cold water and chuck me in it and held me under the water. He did that a few times.....One night I went to the bathroom, Raith jumped out of his doorway and there was a coat hanger hanging on the banister and he picked it up and he hit me with it, the hooked end of it and it went into my side and I've got a scar there now. He just pulled it out and tore the skin away....He made me sleep on the stairs because I'd wet the bed....he would never change the mattress or change the bedding, so it always used to stink....He tied me in sheet once. Rolled me up in a sheet and tied the two ends and said he was never going to let me out. Once he banged my head against the wall that much that I passed outI've never talked to anybody in this detail."

Being anywhere else, other than at home, was for Paul a release. Being sexually abused didn't hurt in the same way and involved receiving treats and some positive attention. From what Paul says it would appear that he was selected from a group of boys. It is likely that the man would

have identified his withdrawn disposition, his suffering and depression and made a judgement that he would be able to abuse him and prevent him from telling.

PAUL: *"We used to play up the other side of the street against some garages. We used to play with an old beat up can of coke and this guy came out once and he was asking what the noise was and we said: "Oh we're playing football" and he says: "Oh haven't you got a ball?" and we said: "No." and he said "Do you want to come and find one?" and we said: "Yeah, all right." He said: "Who wants to come and help me find one and a couple of them went: "Yeah I'll go," and I just stayed in the background 'cos I was pretty quiet and he said: "What about you?" Pointing to me and I said: "Yeah, all right."*

The contrasting circumstances of Justin and Paul, before they were sexually abused, draw attention to how their powerlessness was used to the abuser's advantage. For Justin, Mr Austin had established control over almost every aspect of his day to day living environment including most of the people who were part of it. He made no attempt to hide from Justin the fact that he could present himself differently in different circumstances, using his personal power in contrasting manners, ranging from a presentation of respectable authority, to the blatant use of physical violence. For Paul, his step-father completely controlled his home environment. Within this environment, Raith's abuse of power was

exercised in the form of physical force and verbal threats behind the closed doors of a family home, beyond the detection of those outside, with the possible exception of the man who sexually abused Paul. Paul's anxieties and defeated powerlessness seemed to stand out amongst his peer group, from which he was selected to enter a man's house to look for a ball. He returned to the house many times, and was repeatedly sexually abused.

Being Abused

This sub-section considers the young men's recollections of being sexually abused and how they remember thinking and feeling at the time. Continuing initially with Justin's experiences at his boarding school, explaining that eventually Mr Austin took him to the "sleeping in room" and sexually abused him. Justin explains that he was not only confronted with the immediate physical threat from Mr Austin, should he refuse to co-operate, but also by alluding to the total power and control he had over all other aspects of Justin's living environment:

JUSTIN: *"You know he had that influence of being an ex-boxer and everything, 'cos I mean he did look a mean character, especially to a twelve year old boy. The thing that I was scared of was not just him, but getting a beating from the other kids, you know, Henry and the others.....It was just like the way he used to go on about them and that, you know, mess with him and that and he'll do you and you don't do this and he'll do you."*

Sometimes one or two of the powerful older pupils would be present and take part in setting up the abuse. Justin was in a situation where he knew because he was going to be sexually abused again and again, that by co-operating, the experience was over; the uncertainty of waiting was over, for a short period of time at least. This was a coping strategy for

Justin, which at the time marginally reduced the anxieties of his situation. Upon reflection this could and has been rationalised by him, and by others, as giving consent and wanting the abuse to happen. For Justin, these fears are compounded by his being eventually manipulated into a situation where he had to report to his headmaster to be abused.

JUSTIN: *"Yeah, it was like my fault, I was actually there, no I've thought of that loads of times, you know, why did I walk down to the room, because I knew what was going to happen when I got in the room, from being told by all the other people, but it's just fear that takes over. It's like you're not actually in control of your body. It's like the fear's there in control. It's weird, directing you, and people just say yeah, oh course, that's a load of shit, you was in control, you was your own person, but I don't know that's not the case..... You know it was always on your mind like, when's he going to come and get you again. It was just like constantly waiting for it to happen to you. You just do it to just get it out the way, 'cos you was always there waiting, are you gonna be the next one. You were always there waiting for it. If he's gonna come and drag you out the room. Or you'll be sitting on the toilet and all of a sudden you come out and that's it, down in the sleeping in room.....He'd have Henry and that lot with him.....Henry had the run of the school.....like Austin's servant.....Scary thoughts.....It's the fear of having somebody like three times your age, it's a bit terrifying. You just freeze and it just happens."*

Justin was aware that many other boys were being sexually abused, he witnessed or heard about sexual and physical violence on an almost daily basis. He had an awareness of the status and categorisation of the other boys in the school, and the relationship they had with Mr Austin, in terms of how they were being abused, and the privileges they may or may not have received, and concludes he “*just*” came into every category.

JUSTIN: *“Some kids were only getting beat up, not sexually abused, ‘cos Austin would have some for beating on, some for shagging, some for screaming and shouting, calling them all the names under the sun and things like that. He’d have ones for particular ones. Me I just came in the category for just screaming and shouting at and beating up and being sexually abused. I just came in every category starting from the day I said well you can just start being a bastard, so he was a bastard to me.”*

At Sean’s school, the man who abused him was the Head of Care, and so similarly, but not to the same extent as Mr Austin, commanded authority and was therefore in a powerful position of control over many aspects of Sean’s daily life. For certain pupils he set up a different relationship, where rules were broken and treats were given. Several pupils were abused in parallel, but each pupil was not aware, and believed themselves to be alone in their experience, until rumours and

suspicious began to establish themselves. In a similar manner to Mr Austin, Mr Lester, the Head of Care used his position to command the respect of parents, but his methods of controlling the pupils he abused were tied up with their isolation and the secrecy of what was taking place. Sean only received elevated status when he was in Lester's house. When he was back in the school, there were no special favours or privileges, and the reality of the abuse was denied by Mr Lester in his dealings with him.

SEAN: *"Kids used to live there with him, but they were never there. I think he used to invite people over there to get away from the school and stuff, to sit down and watch telly and have a fag and stuff. Basically to relax and get away from everything....you know it's all right here and all the rest of it..... He would tell me to do things, he had a few pornographic videos, there would be the two of us watching this video, that would turn me on. He used to talk about it and take it from there. I knew why he would tell me to go to his bed. He was like the head of the household sort of thing, he would just tell the other members of staff whatever and that was it."*

There are parallels with Justin's experience, in that Sean knew that Mr Lester had substantial control over his day to day life, and he lived with the thought that he could be sexually abused again at any time. Mr Lester had the authority to interrupt lessons, change sleeping

arrangements, cancel weekends home and so on. Whenever possible, Sean would resist being abused by hiding, after being told to go to the house.

SEAN: *"He used to just ask if I wanted to go over, or tell me that I was going over. I used to get nervous and try to get out of it somehow, but that didn't always used to work. I think most of the time I used to go and hide somewhere and hopefully he would forget about it and that was it.....I just wanted to keep it to myself. A really bad memory that I wanted to keep to myself, I was just pleased when it was all over.....I didn't know when it was going to happen next. I was nervous all the time."*

Liam was abused by a man who was not the Headmaster, or the Head of Care, but a young teacher, who was very popular and was able to relate to some of the older pupils *"on their level"*. This shows contrasting circumstances of abuse. One based on fear, which created a strong sense that the man abusing was beyond any form of reproach from anybody. The other being a situation of abuse where friendship and co-operation was betrayed through a process of creating a strong sense of mutuality, the experience of sexual pleasure and a high level of reward and special attention. Both circumstances illustrate the extent to which child sexual abuse is highly organised by those who abuse. Liam explained that every year there was a pupil who became his favourite, a *"golden boy"*. One year Liam became the *"golden boy"* :

LIAM: *“ He used to help me with my maths and anything else really. He'd just be there for me if I needed him.....and then the old fifth form left and then I was in the fifth form. There was a lot of us used to go up to his flat at night. Have a beer and have a laugh sort of thing. One night everybody else had gone and he was going on about a massage or something and I thought yeah, cool, go for it, massage, you know, sounds good to me and of course one thing led to another you know, and I was a bit confused about it all really. Er it felt good sort of thing.....I would have been sixteen. There is no negative feelings about it really. You know, I knew what I was doing and er it was all cool really.....It was comfortable I think the word is, it was comfortable to be up there.”*

Liam went to the teacher's flat virtually every other night over a 12 month period. He remembers that he didn't want to tell anybody about what was happening, and that in the main he felt for a long time that he was at the time “*comfortable*” with what he now sees as involving aspects of abuse and exploitation. By being the “*Golden Boy*”, a phrase which he remembers vividly, he was afforded an unofficial “*Head Boy*” status, which appeared to have some recognition amongst other pupils. They were certainly aware that Liam was receiving favours and had a special relationship with one of the most popular young teachers in the school.

LIAM: *“Everybody was saying oh he's his golden boy and all this, you*

know, about me, and I was saying hey favouritism gets you everywhere. I was sort of his favourite, you know, it's a bit strange.....It's the sort of something that you don't want to get out, 'cos then you get labelled as being a queer.....you didn't want to get out 'cos of the stick you'd get would have been really really rare. But I had a reputation of, well I wasn't really a hard man, but I didn't take any shit. To lose that would have been not good at all.....I would have been ripped apart, but it was all kept secret.....If it had got out, then I would have freaked. I wouldn't have been happy at all about it all. The stick I'd get. You wouldn't be able to look people in the eyes would you. You know what I mean. Friends that had known you for years. They'd just blow you out. So that probably would have an impact on me."

Being nearly sixteen and having an understanding sexual behaviour added further to Liam's confusion. He describes himself as being aware of what was happening, and considers this to be tantamount to mutuality. He retrospectively identifies his perceived understanding as having been subjected to manipulation and exploitation, particularly when he comes to consider the understanding and motivations of the teacher.

Liam's perception of what sexual abuse was may have also have been influenced by the fact that he had previously had a sexually abusive experience under very different circumstances, at the age of thirteen, when he was picked up by a stranger when hitch-hiking in his home

town. He has no difficulty in seeing this situation as abuse, he also had fears about his life. Once he was inside the man's house, his self control and immediate agency was weakened by being given alcohol. He was subjected by implication to a threat of extreme violence.

LIAM: *"I was picked up once when I was a kid.....I was hitch hiking, trying to get a lift home and he offered me some fags, took me back, showed me the films of him and his wife, sexual films, I think we may have had a drink and some fags, then he suggested a massage. One thing that freaked me out was, he showed me round the house and his bedroom, he had like knives on his bedroom wall and that freaked me out completely.....I thought, there's knives up there. You know, this guy's a bit weird like. I can remember seeing a police woman out the window when I was there, as he was drawing the curtains and I thought to myself, that's the last time I'm going to see a police person.....I just didn't like it, it was a bad experience all the way through, I didn't enjoy any part of it whatsoever, because I did feel exploited then, completely. I don't usually talk about that one, I still get shivers when I go past the house."*

Paul also refers to being subjected to threats of violence, he describes the continuation of the sexual abuse in terms of the attention he received, he soon became ensnared into an abusive situation, which continued for over two years. He estimated that he was sexually abused well over a hundred times and subjected to a wide range of abusive acts.

The sexual abuse stopped when his family left the area, shortly before he was taken into care by the local authority.

PAUL: *"Then we go into his house, go upstairs and he would like lift me up to have a look on the top of wardrobes and on the tops of shelves, things like that and then he would put me back on the floor and obviously my clothes would have come un-tucked. Most of my clothes didn't fit me anyway, but they had come un-tucked and he would say: "Oh, tuck you back in" and he would pull the rest of my clothes out and undo my trousers.....we used to go up there and play football maybe 2 or 3 times a week and every time we went up there it would happen.....The next step was the same thing would happen again, but then he would lay me down and he took photographs. That scares me now, you know, the photographs, because I don't know where they are and you know, you hear of things, child porn rings and they print magazines. When I was older, I'm talking about probably 16, I used to think is my picture ever going to appear in one of those."*

Colin's circumstances were similar in that his home circumstances were extremely difficult, he had just left a long term foster home, and had moved to a short term placement, which he hated, and had run away from. He was thirteen, lost, isolated, lonely and depressed, and suddenly found himself in the company of a man who was being very friendly and buying him drinks, and who had quickly learned that Colin

could be tempted with an offer of cannabis. Like Paul, he was sexually abused on his first contact with the man, who had likely perceived his isolation and depression as an opportunity for exploitation and abuse.

The man's power and attractiveness was exercised through his presentation as a street-wise adult. He was prepared to defy the law, both by buying him alcoholic drinks and by the pretence of being able to supply illegal drugs. Colin believed that he had found a man he could trust and tell his story to.

COLIN: *"He was saying he had some draw and he could get some drugs and stuff. I think it was the whole situation really. He just stripped you of all the power over what was going on. It was a very fine tuned form of manipulation. Just like getting into somebody else's head and saying that's what you want to do, you want to come back to my place and have a smoke, and then you know, you just don't see anything wrong with him.....Looking back at it, I was that manipulated that I don't think I could have walked out. For a start I didn't know where I was. I didn't know where he was or how far he'd gone. I didn't know what would happen if he saw me leaving the house. I didn't want to risk getting done over or anything. It just seemed that the only option was to stay put."*

Once Colin was at the man's home, and beginning to be aware that he was in danger, his immediate situational resistance was weakened (like

with Liam) by his being given alcohol. From that point onwards he had to cope with being in a state of shock over what had happened to him. His resistance was finally broken down by a show of physical force.

COLIN: *"I was sitting on the sofa, I'd had Bacardi and Coke, I was pretty gone by that time and then I don't know, my instincts said there's something wrong here, and then I got pounced on. Literally like, he just came over and started trying to take my jeans off. The fact that he could out power me so easily, that was pretty terrifying in itself really.....he could just move me round like a rag doll.....my life was at risk....I would grab him, he would just move my hand, push me off, crush my hand or whatever.....Before I knew what was going on, my jeans were half off."*

Colin makes the point that he was in fear of his life. In both Colin and Liam's, circumstances the person who was abusing them was previously completely unknown, it is understandable that Colin and Liam would entertain the possibility that they were going to be killed.

COLIN: *".....it was like being trapped, I didn't have any way of getting out. I think the biggest part was like just being used really and any belief you have in yourself gets stripped away. I didn't have much self-confidence to start with then.....I didn't know whether I was going to get out of it alive or not, didn't know what was going to happen."*

These accounts highlight the level of fear, shame and confusion the young men experienced, as they were manipulated and forced into being sexually abused. They illustrate the extent to which the young men took on a level of responsibility for what had happened, despite the impossibility of escape, or avoidance and the level of threats and violence, entwined with treats, rewards and special attention.

Relationships Constructed By the Abuser

The nature of the relationship which had been constructed by the abuser with the young men (as children) was central to the abuse, and had a significant bearing on telling. Several of the young men explained that they were made to feel as if there was some form of trade-off or transaction associated with the abuse. This in itself would create a sense of equality and fairness in the exchange. In reality it was a further manipulation and abuse of adult power, and a further means of silencing the young men. Something would either be given or happen which would make their immediate circumstances better. This usually involved distorting and abusing the dependency of the young men, most of whom as we have discussed, had very difficult life circumstances. Justin, Sean and Liam were away from home at boarding school. Justin's parents had divorced. Liam's father had died. Paul had been severely physically abused at home. Colin's long term foster placement had broken down and he had run away from his new placement, in a very distressed and depressed state.

Justin had the hope of improved privileges and status within the school, and protection from some very violent older pupils. Liam received emotional support and counselling, he was coming to terms with the death of his father. He also had the privilege of staying up late in a teacher's flat, evading the normal school curfew rules. The same was

true for Sean, who also received free cigarettes. Paul had the privilege of short periods of time away from a very violent step-father, and the opportunity of spending time with an adult who wasn't going to physically beat him.

Notions of having taken part in a trade-off, fed into some of the young men's concerns that they had responsibility for what had happened, and that they had co-operated with the sexual abuse, and enjoyed the benefits of the exchange. Colin was handed twenty pounds, which caused him to believe that he "prostituted" himself. Justin constantly questions himself about why he walked down the corridors to the sleeping in room seemingly of his own volition. It was only several years later that Liam was able to see his experience as involving aspects of sexual abuse and report what had happened to the police. His discussion shows evidence of the struggle he had in seeing that he was exploited. Ryan and David remain confused about their relationship with Harry, although they are both clear that they believe they have been sexually abused, and that they do not wish to meet him again. The relationship with the abuser for Paul, Colin and Justin alternated between friendliness and severe threats of physical violence. This would set the limits, as if to say whatever happens, at the end of the day, there is no way out for you. The accounts reveal how skilfully the adults used their intimate knowledge of the young men, and how skilfully they deployed power in ways to make the young men feel they had co-operated, even

alongside extreme threats of harm.

DAVID: *"I enjoyed the hugs and every thing they were all right and the trips. I didn't want those to stop, but I didn't want anyone to know. I've still got memories of the abuse in my head."*

JUSTIN: *"Sometimes he was the nicest guy you could ever know. Seriously like, it's a horrible thing for me to actually say like, but sometimes he was really nice, but that's just a cover to get his own way.....that really hurts to say that, but you can't help but say that, 'cos sometimes he was really nice. I mean you used to go out to the mad swimming pools. You know, you used to get the best of everything.....Sometimes his discipline would be out the kindness of his own heart."*

In spite of all the harm and suffering Mr. Austin inflicted on Justin, throughout his years at the boarding school, Justin, although very clear about how he feels about being abused, has managed to maintain a level of compassion towards him. He also remains generally positive about his other experiences at the school.

JUSTIN: *"I don't know what to think of the geezer. I hate him now, but you just don't know what to think. What was going through his mind, why was he doing it. I mean I always thought he was a sick perverted*

bastard, which he was, but there's times when I think well he might have just had something wrong with him or he might have been doing it for just to show us that's the only way he can show how he feels.....I'd like to go back and see the school, I mean most people wouldn't want to go back to a place where those shit things happened to them, but I've had a lot of really good things happen to me there as well. It gave me my education and everything. The only thing I didn't like was being abused there. I hate him, but in another way I've got some respect for him.....It's hard to say he was a right right bastard really, because he wasn't always a right right bastard."

Liam had difficulty in disentangling strands of neediness, help, exploitation, and abuse. As he mused over the course of events, he began to doubt the complete voluntarism of his involvement in what he often referred to as a relationship. There are many contradictions in the way in which Liam rationalises his experiences. These statements were made before he made his decision to report the experiences to the police as incidents of child sexual abuse. His comments embrace a wide range of considerations, including comments about the teacher's young age and similarities of interest. He describes a strong sense of having enjoyed the experience and of having gained considerably. Gradually Liam reached the viewpoint that he had been sexually abused, and that this had happened to other boys previously.

LIAM: *I'd talk to him about this and have a few tears, you know and like he'd just cuddle me and not try anything on. If he was truly exploiting me he'd be only after the one thing. But he'd give me a cuddle and that was it. We were very very close and that was really comfortable.....I've tried to put myself in his shoes and from his shoes it would be exploitation really, you know, there's not another word for it, but the way he went about it, it just didn't feel like I was exploited at all.....I needed someone to talk to, I needed someone to be there for me, you know and I needed someone to be close to.....I mean maybe he exploited me for his own reasons, but on the same level he was so understanding and cool about everything that it didn't enter into my mind about being exploited."*

For Paul, the relationship set up by the man who abused him, although characterised by threats and fear, was experienced as positive, by comparison with the relationship he had with his violent step-father Raith. There was almost a sense of loyalty towards the man who sexually abused him, simply because of the fact that unlike Raith, he never actually hit him. This highlights the extremities of Paul's childhood, and how abusers use and exploit children's perceived vulnerability and neediness.

PAUL: *".....sometimes he wasn't gentle, sometimes he was, you know, it almost sounds as if I like him, but sometimes he was quite aggressive and sometimes he hurt.....I liked him for his friendliness because other*

than the times when he turned nasty which he did when he threatened me with a knife, which he did a few times.....After he'd finished his sessions of abuse he used to be kind. I would probably say, it makes me feel sick to say it. I would probably say yeah, at times I would say that I did like him, because he would, besides what he was doing, he was being nice. You knew what he was doing was wrong. I knew that in the back of my mind, and in the back of my mind I always wanted to tell somebody.

Again Paul makes a comparison between the man who sexually abused him and his violent step-father Raith, and in so doing minimises the fact that he was physically threatened. Violence was the norm in Paul's life, any kindness he experienced therefore became great kindness, when set against no kindness at all.

PAUL: *"....At times he was nice even to the extent when he gave me like a bar of chocolate. I mean Raith never gave us a bar of chocolate. Mum used to give us ten pence a week pocket money and Raith used to take it off us.....You know when he, he didn't always buy me a bar of chocolate, but when he did I felt like he was my friend.....He wouldn't have hit me. Okay, he threatened me, but he wouldn't have hit me."*

Ryan, in describing his feelings about Harry, the man who sexually abused him, seems to have a view that there is a certain way in which he should feel about him, very angry. He had a view that he hadn't taken

“an active part” in the abuse. Had the circumstances of his abuse been constructed in a manner which would have instilled a greater sense of responsibility, then he feels he may not have considered it to be sexual abuse. He was twelve at the time he was sexually abused. There is an incongruity between the experiences being described and the feelings associated with them. There were large parts of Ryan’s experiences which he couldn’t remember. This may indicate a level of dissociation (see Chapter 2), which may have become functional to Ryan’s survival. Ryan described that there were times in his present life where he exercised what he described as *“memory blocks”*, when he felt distressed or under some form of threat. A later section of the analysis shows that Ryan was able to get in touch with some of his powerful feelings through poetry. The contradictions in the following statement indicate a level of confusion, alongside an understanding that what happened was in retrospect, clearly manipulation and an abuse of power.

RYAN: *“I don’t really feel anything, I don’t know why. I don’t feel like angry or anything like that. I don’t feel all right that it happened. If Harry sat down by me on the bus, I’d probably ram his head through the window. I’m not angry, I’d just think if he sat next to me he’s just being cheeky.....I can play down what happened with Harry because it weren’t really my fault, he was taking advantage of the situation and his power. I wasn’t really an active part in it. If I had been an active part in it I probably wouldn’t have said anything about it to anybody. It would have*

been partly my choice and if it had been partly my choice I wouldn't have felt I needed to say anything about it to anybody."

Sean identifies contradictions and confusion about the relationship which had been constructed by Mr Lester, a man who he initially experienced as supportive and helpful. His silence was maintained by being instilled with a sense of normality about what was happening. His belief in normality was linked to his sense of survival.

SEAN: *"I got on with him at first, until I found what he was like.....I think it was all us used to think of him as Big Dad. If anybody had a problem, they'd go to him and he would sort it out sort of thing.....Basically it was the very first time anything sexual happened to me and I thought this was it. This is what was to happen.....It felt the right sort of thing to do, it was all right. It was supposed to happen sort of thing. At the time I thought it was all right, I was only young and I thought it was the right sort of thing to do. Now I think oh, it was horrible."*

With hindsight, Colin is clear about the process he went through, he is now clear that most of what happened was being trapped and manipulated. Even with this hindsight, he continues to have concerns as he still feels he could have walked out of the situation.

COLIN: *".....looking back at it now, it was just another way of trapping*

me really, manipulating me. "Cos like he'd already shown me the physical strength. He'd already got inside my head, so he already had the power and control over me physically and mentally, so discussion was probably to put me at ease a bit more, a bit like saying stay, yeah, I can talk to you a bit, don't try anything because I've already shown you what I can do."

After Colin had told about his abuse, some of his peers became aware of what had happened to him, and began to use the information against him. This was particularly true of a young adult female who Colin met within a month of his being abused. In trying to come to terms with his experience of being sexually abused by a male, and being afraid of rumours which had circulated about his sexuality, Colin thought that the best solution was to have a sexual experience with a female and let everybody know this was happening.

COLIN: *".....I had something to prove, I just wanted to prove to myself that I was normal, and I just wanted to prove that I was straight.....She did quite a bit of flirting....She just showed a general interest in me, I suppose, she made hints.....Well, at the time it felt pretty good, you know, it was like I'm okay, I'm normal, fine, that's really good. Initially my fears disappeared for a couple of days, and then they started coming back again and I wasn't sure why. I think it was to do with the fact that she would go with anyone, it wasn't really an accomplishment.....It was*

just like I didn't understand sex at all. I didn't understand anything about it. I knew what to do, but I didn't understand any of the emotional side of it, and why people do it basically. So to me it was just a meaningless act.....it was another situation where I was being completely controlled, I didn't have any say in whatever. I suppose initially I had some control, 'cos like I was in it for my own gains. So at the time I thought it was a good idea. I'm in it for what I can get out of it. That's where it ends. But she took it further than that, she just turned the tables and pinned me. Then she got pregnant and then I felt obligated then. It wasn't my kid but....I was trapped.....I just felt heavily obligated, she played guilt trips.....you're not gonna leave me, what did I do to deserve this. So I'd go back to her all the time, at her beck and call basically."

Looking back Colin sees the relationship as "another form" of sexual abuse. At the time it was more difficult to see, this may be similar to Liam in that he had experienced being sexually abused by a stranger, and subjected to extreme threats and actual violence. At the initial stages, he was happy to have and be seen to have a relationship with a female. It is the route through considering the incidents of violence, that leads Colin to see this relationship as being abusive.

COLIN: *".....I mean like being pinned down and doing exactly the same things I told her I didn't like. That was just blatant abuse. Sleeping with somebody the age of thirteen, that was pretty sick, when you're eighteen*

anyway, that's another form of sexual abuse. Emotional abuse, big time, 'cos like she was always after reactions, always going out to hurt people. It was just a completely abusive relationship."

Summary

This section has examined the power relationships between the young men and the adults, how the adults' power was derived and how it was used to force or manipulate the young men (as boys) to co-operate with being sexually abused and subsequently cause them to feel blame and responsibility. The analytical framework in Section 1 identified the operation of "organising principles" as having potential to influence power relationships between people. The most immediate principle operating in these circumstances has been that of age, the discourse of the adult-child relationship. Additionally, the discourse of gender in the relationships between the male abusers and the anxious mothers of the boys, and also the discourse of class and status, where adults used their professional status and situational and institutional arrangements to command respect from other adults, whilst at the same time using physical force and control to secure the availability, silence and co-operation of children in a process of sexual abuse.

The analysis has shown that the subordination and powerlessness of the young men was not always complete or total, in that wherever possible

the young men would attempt to employ strategies of resistance, finding circumstances where they could employ a level of personal power. Sometimes this would be physical resistance; for Justin this was the use of the threat of an inevitable violent retaliation for anybody that attempted to physically hurt him. He was also aware that by co-operating with the sexual abuse, he would get it over with, and for a short time be released from the painful uncertainty of not knowing when it was going to happen. He was also aware that it made other aspects of living at the school easier for him, in that he wouldn't be bullied by the older boys. In going into a neighbour's house, Paul was avoiding his step-father. After Sean had been told to go over to Mr Lester's house, he would hide in the hope that the instructions would be forgotten. Other times the resistance was internal, through the manner in which the young men considered, interpreted or tried to forget what was happening to them. Ryan was able to put the details and emotions of his experience out of his conscious mind, although he was always aware that he had been sexually abused. He was unsure about the extent to which he could control this blocking, if at all.

A common feature in all these circumstances is that the boys did not know the prior intentions of the adult who abused them, and that this was worked to an advantage by the abuser. The adults knew them and used their intimate knowledge of them to their own advantage. Each adult was making a contact with them, with the express purpose of sexually

abusing them, having either set up a situation which would make this possible, without getting caught, or having made a calculated assessment of the likelihood of the child being unable to tell, alongside instilling a sense of voluntarism and issuing or implying a threat, which would ensure that they would be afraid to tell. The inequality was not just through what the young men didn't know, but also what the adults did know, about their lives, and how to ensnare them into compliance and silence.

3.) Trying To Tell

In professional and legal circumstances, when a child makes a statement about being sexually abused, it is referred to as "a disclosure" (Working Together Under The Children Act 1989, DOH,1991; Memorandum of Good Practice, DOH,1992). This term is widely used in the literature and needs to be examined. Throughout this research, the particular use of language has been carefully considered. Post-structuralism identifies how language is not a passive conveyer of information, but actively constructs meaning. For example, the term "abuse victim" essentially has a different meaning to "person who has been abused". In the former, the absence of person defines the individual primarily in terms of having been abused, and makes this the most significant part of them. The latter clearly states that the individual is a person who has had a particular experience. The use of person leaves the individual open to being considered in a wide range factors and circumstances other than that he has been abused. They are essentially freed from their abuse, as opposed to being inextricably tangled with it. The latter creates a sense of freedom and conveys a belief and understanding of the person's ability to move onwards and away from the abuse, developing diverse strategies of coping with and resisting perceived consequences of having been abused.

The use of the term "disclosure" as a description of the event when a

child reveals that they have been sexually abused is a simplification and distillation of a very complicated series of events. Disclosure conveys an assumption that telling about child sexual abuse can be a singular event, which can be contained and captured in an hour, usually on video tape. This belief has become enshrined in policy, primarily through the Memorandum of Good Practice (DOH, 1992). It is a professional and sanitised imposition onto a diverse, complex and painful process of events which have components of guilt, relief, anger, pain, all with related consequences. When a child tells that he or she has been sexually abused, the private is changed to the public, and professional attention is drawn to intense personal conflict and turmoil. It is not a singular event, but an intersection of many factors: fear of consequences; fear of other's beliefs about the child as a result of him or her being abused; a sense of responsibility and voluntarism; leading onto fears about sexuality; the ending of a period of isolation; embarrassment; shame; guilt; stigma; relief; release. It is potentially an iconoclastic experience with fundamentally far reaching consequences, because it is bringing everything that is happening into the public gaze and laying it open for scrutiny.

The comments from the young men demonstrate that "disclosure" has cataclysmic power, often based upon a long history of self-doubt and anxiety, which begins at the first instance of sexual abuse, and will often involve a series of attempts or considerations to tell and decisions not to

tell. Socio-legal processes which by constructing "disclosure" as an event, a single interview, potentially intensify the impact of the abusive experience. All seven of the young men found telling about being sexually abused difficult, having absolutely no control over the true course of events.

The reasons for not feeling able to tell, wondering who to tell, or making the decision not to tell were varied, but interrelated. Some involved the young men having private feelings and fears about themselves, and what people would think of them, linked to feelings of voluntarism and beliefs about being responsible for the abuse. Other reasons related to fears of reprisal from the person who had abused them, and the potentially disruptive consequences, including involvement of the police, going to court, telling family members, the possibility of friends finding out.

For some of the young men being sexually abused involved receiving treats and special attention which would be lost as a result of telling. For Sean, Justin and Liam, being abused by members of staff at their boarding schools meant that telling would entail a disruption of their education, and possibly their removal from the school. Some of the young men had mixed feelings about the person who had abused them. The positive feelings they had towards him fuelled their fears of voluntarism and feelings of sexual confusion and homophobia.

Circumstances of Telling

Justin reveals very clearly that the process of telling is complicated and involves many of the considerations which have been discussed. For Justin, telling would mean literally escaping from the school and preventing further abuse, which was on-going with an increasing intensity. He had learnt that in order to tell, he had to literally escape from the school. This brings to mind Herman's (1992) parallels of sexual abuse with the trauma experiences of people in concentration camps. Particularly when listening to Justin's stories of how he attempted to organise group escapes and his experiences of being caught and being returned to the school. He explained what happened when a group of them stole a car and managed to get away, and how Mr. Austin's good reputation and positive relationships with the parents and his situational power eventually defeated them:

JUSTIN: *"Oh as soon as we got caught or got home we was actually going to tell the parents and go to the police.....all the way back all we did was tell them we'd been abused at the school, we don't want to go back, that's all we said on the way back. So they just put us in the police cells, luxuries all day basically. They were buying us fags, everything we wanted like. We had to make statements. Louis went back to the school, Alan went home with his parents. I had to get bailed out by my uncle and that. On the way back my mum and Joe managed to get, persuade me*

to change my statement and I got sent back to the school.....Louis didn't get caught until he got home. He was the one that got away and then he didn't want to make a statement.....Alan ended up coming back to the school. He was forced into retracting his statement by the parents, basically the same reason as me. They don't want all the hassle of the court case and that. Louis was weird anyway, he seemed to want it to happen to him. He tried it with me once. He was terrified of Henry."

Justin often tried to organise escapes, but he finally realised that he had to go on his own, before he set out, a member of staff had told him to make sure he wore an extra jumper. The incongruity and distortion of the power relationships within the school continued from beginning to end. When he had first arrived at the school, he had been formally searched and threatened by another pupil, when he left, an adult member of staff had advised him about his health and safety before running away. Justin found it difficult to assess the relative power of some members of staff when set against the power of some of the older pupils which was in reality power by proxy operated through them by Mr Austin.

JUSTIN: *".....I was trying to arrange a few of the kids to run off with me, but when it came to the crunch only two of us run off. It started with twenty of us. Then my mate backed out and went back to the school I was in the Town and I thought no way am I going back to the school.....Just walked straight out, it was twelve o'clock at night, I got a*

lift at about half seven in the morning. I walked seventy miles, well that's what I thought. I got a lift, just stuck my thumb out I pleaded with him to take me home, I said look I've just run away from my boarding school, I've been sexually abused, you can take me to the police station if you want.....I phoned up the school and spoke to K, he knew what was happening. I told him I was going, he gave me jumpers and clothes to run off with he's a good man."

Sean has significantly less recall of the circumstances of his telling, but indicates that this may have been blocked out, rather than simply forgotten, as previously discussed in relation to Ryan, this may indicate a level of dissociation.

SEAN: *"I only forget certain things. I can't remember anything about what happened after the abuse had happened, about the police coming and questioning me and all the rest of it. All I can remember is them coming in and asking a few of us what happened and apart from that I can't remember anything about it. I think that's through choice. That I chose not to remember anything about it. At the time it happened, I thought I was the only one it was happening to. It was only afterwards when the police had been that I was told that it had happened to several of the other boys, but at the time I thought I was the only one.....Teachers Pet."*

Ryan remembers the day he told about his abuse as a traumatic process, and indicates a build up of events and circumstances before he finally made the decision to tell an adult that he had been sexually abused. He was emotionally and physically ill and had intended to run away. Colin also had similar feelings:

RYAN: *“I don’t know why I didn’t tell anyone I suppose I thought I was going to get into trouble, but I can’t really remember that far back. It’s all really really blurred, but it was definitely a bad time. I remember the day I told my uncle, and I remember everything that happened that day and ‘cos I’d been out all night the night before and I was in bed burning up with like kind of hypothermia type thing. My uncle came up and he was speaking to me and I was crying and I told him and he came down and told my mum and I came down and stuff and I had run away the night before and I was like suffering from exposure.”*

Feelings About Telling

Paul has already explained how he had experienced the adult world as hostile, this was further compounded by his first real attempt to ask for help. From then on he was very cautious about what he told anybody:

PAUL: *“You knew that what he was doing was wrong. I knew that in the back of my mind, and in the back of my mind, I always wanted to tell*

somebody. I told somebody once. I told a friend of Gail's mum, 'cos she saw me walking and asked me where I'd been and I said to her something like: "That man in there he does things that are wrong. He does rude things." And she looked at me and said: "Don't be so silly, stop making up stories and go home." And that was that, the first and last time I tried to tell anybody."

Feeling responsible and being confused also had a significant bearing on Paul's decision not to tell anybody about being sexually abused.

PAUL: *"I've never talked to anybody, not in this detail..... I didn't want to tell anybody because the way I felt about what happened, I thought that's what everybody must think, it's my fault. It wasn't until I was about 15 or 16, when a few more of the pieces had been put together that I started to tell people about my past. I think that the thing that most people knew, all they ever really knew was the fact that I'd been beaten up as a kid and my life was rough. They didn't know any details, that's all I wanted them to know."*

Colin had a strong sense of having co-operated with being abused, as he believes he had an opportunity to get away and didn't take it. This was further compounded by the fact that he was confused about some aspects of physical pleasure he had experienced during the sexual abuse. Colin has explained how frightened he was, and how he feared

for his life, how he was throttled, and constantly physically over powered by a strong man. This is incongruent with any sense of voluntarism, but does not prevent him from blaming himself.

COLIN: *"I can remember thinking I should have done that and I should have done this and I should have done that. Guilt and regret really. I should have tried harder to fight him off and I should have left him. Because it was my first sexual experience for some unknown reason I automatically assumed that it would make me homosexual. That built up a lot of anxiety and self-questioning.....I thought that if anybody found out that it happened, that they'd automatically think that I was queer. So just letting people know was a big risk, but then like saying oh, by the way, there was certain aspects of it that were quite enjoyable, people would be, they'd build up a wall straight away."*

Colin's feelings of responsibility and shame were reinforced by a carefully timed payment, even though he received one final threat alongside.

COLIN: *"Well he came in with twenty quid and I can't remember whether he gave me twenty quid before or after, but anyway, he just went out and came back and said there's a taxi booked and you're going home and he stuck twenty quid in my hand. I think that was before he phoned the taxi, but you know, that's just like the ultimate stab really. I just felt like a male*

prostitute then. I felt completely used and paid for services rendered, you know, it just made me feel really cheap. I can remember him saying don't open your mouth, don't say anything.....I think it was linked to the money, just another form of making sure I keep my mouth shut. It was just breaking down my confidence even more."

Colin had intended not to tell anybody about what had happened, but had eventually found the whole situation too much to cope with, he was in a situation of torment, powerfully summed up as *"mental dirt"*.

COLIN: *"I didn't have any intention of telling anybody really. I didn't want the twenty quid, I just wanted to get it over. I wanted to tell somebody, but I thought it was my fault. So that brought up a lot of anxieties about what people would think. Just basically what people would think of me. I was just paranoid about what I said to people, what they'd think. Just generally being annoyed or victimised.....I was just really overwhelmed and confused. I didn't know what was going on and I needed to tell somebody before I exploded because it was driving me mad and I couldn't think straight and like I was just feeling like shit all the time. I'd get in the bath and I'd scrub myself senseless, but it's more like mental dirt."*

Paul was also subjected to a confusing combination of severe threats against himself and his family, paralleled by what he experienced as

expressions of concern and kindness.

PAUL: *“He went straight into his kitchen and slammed the door and he came out with a knife with probably about a four inch blade on it. He walked up to me, pushed me against the wall hard and put the knife on my throat and he said: “I don’t care what you think, if you tell anybody about anything that happens in this house I’ll come after you and I will kill you.” He said: “I know who your family are and I will kill them as well.....And it frightened me so much I remember, I remember I was crying and he sat me down in the chair and he liked hugging me, calmed me down, but all the time you know, you know he turned back to being nice again, but all the time he was trying to calm me down.”*

Fear of the Consequences of Telling

The abuse regime to which Justin was subjected, was extremely pervasive, incorporating almost every aspect of his daily life at the school. Telling meant entertaining many possible consequences, ranging from being beaten up by Mr. Austin, or by other boys, not being believed or losing an education and school which was in some ways enjoyed. The senior position of Mr Austin within the totality of the institution was an extreme manifestation of a particular type of power which closed off all avenues of telling. These circumstances show very clearly that telling is a complicated and frightening process, which even

some members of staff were unable break through.

JUSTIN: *"..... see that he had over you 'cos of him being an ex-boxer like, he did have a few good moves with him like, he was hard to get to with a punch."*

On one occasion he was asked directly by a member of staff whether anything was happening to him. He was in the tantalising situation of having an opportunity to tell, but having to weigh up the relative power of this teacher, compared to Mr Austin and some of the older pupils who were "working" for him. He was aware that many other boys were in the same situation, but also of many other older boys who had over time become part of the abuse system. Justin was made aware that he would have to face the violence of these boys, should he consider making any attempt to tell, or resist being sexually abused. In understanding how difficult it was for him to tell, it is important to remember that his abuse was on-going, and was having a severe impact on him.

JUSTIN: *"I don't think it was so much frightened as didn't want to go into the hassle of going to court at the time.....I always did want to tell, but who could you tell that would believe you."*

Additional to the threat to his family, which we have already discussed, Paul had a deep belief that telling and also having to talk about his

experiences at home would mean having to face the responsibility for letting his brothers be adopted. The earlier experience of trying to tell somebody in the street also seemed to have a lasting impact, in that he really wasn't sure if there was anybody he could tell:

PAUL: *"Nobody has ever heard my feelings about Martin and Kevin, not even Gail, Sally and Peter.....Even when I was older and I knew adults would understand, at the back of my mind I thought well what happens if I tell the wrong adult..... I never knew who the right or wrong adult was so I never let it go.....and I got the impression that anybody I told was going to say, you know, that I was making it up, that I was lying and that I was looking for attention.....It's been something that I've been carrying around for so long and that has caused me so much grief."*

At the time, Liam's sense of voluntarism was so great that he did not wish his abuse to be discovered, and describes an occasion where he actively covered up what had happened when Carl's brother discovered them in bed.

LIAM: *" I was asleep, Robert, that's his brother, came in, saw there was somebody else in his bed. Lifted up the covers. I was pretending to be asleep. We had to blag that one through. "Cos other people found out, I just said look I just fell asleep up there, sort of thing. We were having a chat and I fell asleep. I don't know how I blagged it. I just said to him, tell*

him that nothing happened. I just fell asleep in the room and you put me into the bed and nothing happened.”

Sean had made the decision to himself that he didn't want to tell about being abused, and that he envisaged that he would find talking about it very difficult.

SEAN: *“I just didn't want to talk to anyone, I just wanted to be left alone.....I didn't really want to get involved if anything did happen, like he got caught or somebody told, grassed on him or anything. I didn't want to get involved with it..... all the pressure and hassle and being asked questions. I just wanted to be basically left alone and kept all to myself.”*

Telling Family

Justin reached the point where he was too overwhelmed to think about telling anymore, especially as his previous attempts to tell had been thwarted. In the meantime, the abuse he was suffering continued to escalate beyond his endurance.

JUSTIN: *“I wanted to tell my mum. I just wanted to run off straight away. I felt dirty and everything like. I felt like that for ages afterwards, but then it just got worse and worse there.”*

Paul's comments about not telling his foster carers highlight the need for professional carers to be clear with children and young people placed with them about confidentiality and limit the extent to which they share any information with friends. This may potentially be in conflict with a particular family's life style, but underlines the professionalism of good foster care. Paul's comments also highlight the importance of appropriate male role modelling in foster care, and the need for the recruitment process to explore the potential impact of traditional stereotypes and what young people may believe is implied by particular aspect of adults behaviour.

PAUL: *"I never told my foster parents because I was afraid what Bill would think and I didn't think that Rita would understand. Also I didn't know who else they would tell, their friends and their family, they're not professional people.....I think if I had have told my foster mum I think she would have talked to me nice about it and stuff, but she wouldn't have understood, if I spoke to my foster dad, he would have talked about something else and just say I was stupid or leave the room. He comes from the men don't cry era. I was worried about him finding out I'd been abused because I thought he would have judged me. I was worried that he might maybe think that there was something not quite right about me, that I was unusual or queer. At first I was worried about anybody knowing, but especially someone like my foster dad. I knew he wouldn't understand. I often used to wonder what he would think about it.*

Sometimes I really wanted to ask him when I saw a story in the news paper, but to be honest I don't really think he used to take much notice of them."

David found it hard to find an opportunity to talk to his mother about what was happening to him, he was also struggling with the fact that his mother had sent him to spend time with Harry.

DAVID: *"I tried to tell my mum, but it was hard.....I wanted to tell anyway, because I was getting bored of going. My mum usually had people round and knocks at the door and everything, so I found it difficult to tell her."*

Ryan felt a sense of relief when he told his family, or as he says, when he "came out about it".

RYAN: *".....I cried when I came out about it to my auntie's boyfriend. I cried to him when he was asking me about it.....I had no choice once I told my uncle. I'm glad because I was up and down a lot then. Before I told anyone I was like always locked away in my room and stuff..... Once it was all out in the open and stuff I started getting my head sorted out."*

Telling Friends

Justin kept his feelings to himself for quite sometime, and didn't have any

intention of discussing them with his friends. Eventually he reached a point where his feelings overwhelmed him, and he had to start talking about his experiences.

JUSTIN: *"I couldn't stop thinking about it I was having a nervous breakdown. ...I was just sitting outside a friend's house with my best mate...all of a sudden I burst into tears, shaking and trembling and everything just came out and that's when Sally took me under her wing. Paul went and got her. I think I'd only just moved into Sally's, living there a couple of days and that's when sally knew everything that had happened to me...I was just in bits for days and days and days."*

In the context of an established and personal friendship, Paul eventually felt able to talk about being sexually abused in general terms, the experience for Sean was similar.

PAUL: *".....As I got older I got new friends, I had one friend, Graham, that I would talk to a lot and that used to help. We didn't just use to talk about my life and me, we talked about things in general.....he was a very good mate, besides Claire, he was probably the best friend I ever hadhe was really the first person I told that I was sexually abused. He didn't know the details of my abuse. It just came out in conversation."*

It was several years before Sean began to talk to anybody about his

abuse.

SEAN: *"I think the only person I talk to was the girlfriend I've just broke up with. I didn't exactly tell her, I just said there was a male member of staff at the school that was messing around with a few of the boys and I was one of them. I didn't exactly say what he did and how he did it.....If I have to talk about it, I just say that there was a few of us there that was being abused and that would be it then and leave it alone."*

Experiences of Police Involvement

From the outset, although Justin clearly wished the abuse to stop and for Mr Austin to face the consequences of his actions, he wanted to limit the extent of his involvement, and did not wish to talk about everything that had happened. In this way he preserved some of his limited power and prevented further harm which he fears he may have experienced as re-abuse.

JUSTIN: *".....I told them I was only going to tell them about two incidents and they said well two incidents will be enough for what they want, so that's all I told them about. I'd have been there for ages if I'd have gone through the lot, I just weren't having that, 'cos that would have really messed up my brain. 'Cos I don't like to think it happened to me as often as what it did as far as I am concerned it happened to me them twice that*

I gave evidence for. Just one of them things.”

Colin anticipated that he would have problems in dealing with the police by virtue of their authority.

COLIN: *“I can’t remember that much detail about the police interview, but I can remember feeling pretty terrified talking to the police, authoritarian figure and that. It was okay, it was a lot better than I thought it would be.”*

Prior to being abused at his boarding school, Liam has already described that he had experienced what he considers to be a near miss when he was picked up when hitch hiking, taken back to a man’s house where he attempted to abuse him. Liam was interviewed by the police, and feels that he was disbelieved and made to feel responsible for the man’s potential loss of employment.

LIAM: *“The police didn’t believe me, they thought I was a right twat. They said oh yeah, this happened, that happened, all right, we believe you. They didn’t believe me. I can remember thinking I’m not the one who’s done wrong, what have I done. You know, here’s the guy that does this shit, and I’m getting the bollocking off the police for something that was beyond my control. I didn’t appreciate it at all actually. I felt like the criminal. They basically told me that I was a liar.”*

Colin and David both had medical examinations to find evidence of their abuse, the outcomes of which in both cases was inconclusive in terms of finding reliable forensic evidence. Colin has a vivid recall of his medical, which he considered to be another form of sexual abuse and highlights the importance of legal and professional processes becoming more child centred and less driven by evidence and legal considerations. Colin wanted his abuser to be caught, and so consented to a police medical, in order to produce forensic evidence. He was however, again in a position where he was subjected to a situation dominated by adult power, having little power and control himself over a high level of intrusion, breaching his bodily integrity. By having to undergo a medical examination, Colin had the subtle message that his words (his telling) were not sufficient. The evidence on his body counted for more than his words. His body became objectified, the clinical setting (unsuccessfully) attempted to separate the mind and body, the psychological and the physical. Colin's experience is better understood through post-structural theory, which brings the body into consciousness (Foucault, 1976; Cooper, 1995). Colin was certainly conscious of his body when he was being examined by the police surgeon.

COLIN: *"The check up by the police surgeon. I think that in some ways that's just as bad as the abuse. It's demeaning. Like you have to strip off in front of this stranger, being a bloke as well, and then like you have some examination done and it's not very pleasant having somebody look*

up your arse and it's very close to the experience and it just brings quite a few things back. Like while you're lying there it's just another totally helpless situation. I did it because if there was anything that could have nailed him I'd have done it. It wasn't very pleasant. I was pretty angry at the time, overwhelmed by memories about what had happened to me. Almost being back there again. I felt as if I was being abused again. It's just being in a position where I felt I didn't have any power over what was going on. I just had to do as I was told."

Going to Court and Other Legal Proceedings

Justin and David had the experience of giving their evidence in court. Children's testimonies are extensively policed and distrusted within the legal system, which is often unfriendly towards children and young people (Spencer and Flin, 1990). A previous study by myself (Durham 1993, 1997), highlighted the amount of preparation children and young people require, before having to face the ordeal of giving evidence in a criminal trial. These problems continue, as the 1991 Criminal Justice Act, which introduced the use of pre-recorded video-tape evidence in court, failed to implement the full proposals of Judge Pigot's recommendations. Pigot had proposed the making of a second tape of a child's attendance of a hearing in chambers, instead of attending a live cross-examination in court. The Home Office was only able to accept the proposals for an initial video-tape (Davies, 1992; Aldridge and

Freshwater, 1993). Some of the young men in this study would have certainly benefited from such a reform. In going to court they suddenly found themselves in a venue which was formal, male and authoritative, characterised by a long history and powerful legal discourses. Upon arrival, they were having to give a very clear and unambiguous public recount of their experiences of sexual abuse. They were having to move from having to deal with the experiences through repression and dissociation to having to present a consistent and rational account. It is self-evident to say that this is likely to be frightening for a child or young person.

JUSTIN: *"The first time I went up there like, it shit the life out of me, I was terrified, I didn't want to face him. It was horrible the first time in the first court, but when we went to Court the second time, to the same hotel again it just seemed a lot calmer....They made you feel welcome in the hotel. We were playing card games with the coppers.....They gave us these yellow balls to rip under the thing in the court.....you could take it out on the ball, they did it on purpose. There was a pile of torn pieces from the other boys. Yellow sponge all around my feet. I tore up about six balls while I was giving evidence."*

When David went to court, he was subjected to a harsh cross examination and accused of lying, which had a devastating impact on him for several years, he required considerable help in understanding the

circumstances which could lead to such a statement being made in official circumstances.

DAVID: *“Court was difficult, the solicitor said that I might have been lying. I was scared, and I was worried that they wouldn’t believe me.....It was a weight off my shoulders.”*

In going to court, there are high costs at stake; for Justin, the stress involved was a price he was prepared to pay to have his experiences validated. For David, once the ordeal was over, he experienced a level of relief. Sean made the judgement that going to court was a price too high to pay.

SEAN: *“Well thinking about it, I don’t think I could have done that (gone to court), all those people watching me, talking about it, I couldn’t talk about it in a room full of people.”*

Justin applied for compensation, and had to attend two appeal hearings, before receiving his compensation. I attended both of these hearings, the second hearing occurred during the period of the research study. Some of the material from the research interviews was presented by myself at the second hearing in support of Justin’s claim (Material from the research interviews of Ryan and David was also used to inform their written applications, both were happy to report to me that they had been

awarded sums of money). The first hearing had been very difficult, the panel members were unable to appreciate the extent to which sexual abuse had disrupted Justin's life, and would not accept that there was any connection between some criminal offences he had committed and being abused. Justin felt that he was on trial, and that the experience was worse than going to court and that he was "*punished in questions*". The second panel were entirely understanding and Justin had a very different experience. He has a vivid recall of these events:

JUSTIN: *"The first one (Compensation Appeal Hearing) was terrible....Well I just steamed out of that 'cos they turned round and said I weren't gonna get it because of my record. I just burst into tears and walked out and said well you can fuck your claim then. I was really upset and I was sick on the way home.....all I remember is they said they weren't gonna pay me 'cos of my record.....it's just all blocked out 'cos that was a really bad day. That day really hurt me I think. It did really hurt me because I was sick and everything.....I'm used to being in and out of court, it wasn't that. I was punished in questions, punishing questions. It felt like I'd just been put through the mill. My nerves and everything, I was just gone, pins and needles from head to toe.....It's just the way they were, their attitude, the way they treated me in the place like I was a piece of dirt, like it was my fault, and I know for a fact that it weren't my fault. They just didn't have no respect. They just treated me like a piece of shit. They were different on the second time, they had two different*

men and the same woman there..... I thought I handled the second one very well."

When Justin finally received his payment of compensation, he had very mixed feelings about having the money, and the fact that it had not come directly from the man who had abused him. Recently, another young man who had been sexually abused told me that he wasn't sure whether or not he wished to apply for compensation, as he thought it would be like payment for services rendered. Justin's comments echo a similar sentiment. Since his abuse, Justin has been virtually unable to hold down any employment, and is therefore receiving state benefit. His receipt of compensation led to his benefit being stopped.

JUSTIN: *" I was happy I got that much moneyI mean the money didn't help really, well it helped. I got my things for the flat and that but it only made me happy for a little while, not too long. The money started doing my head in after a while of having it.....It was good getting that much, but it would have been better if it had come out of his own pocket. You know it should have been out of his own money.....he made millions from that school.I got the pleasure of getting some money like, but I knew it weren't his money. If it had been his money, I'd have probably had more pleasure out of spending it. Out of his own pocket like.....the only thing that made me feel good was when they put him down, the day they put him in jail. That's the only time I've ever felt any pleasure out of*

it.....The dole want to stop my money, but it's mine. I deserve it they can't stop paying me for this."

Summary

This section has considered the professional and legal use of the term disclosure, which constructs the child's telling as an event. This has been contrasted with the complex reality of the circumstances of the young men. Telling, trying to tell or deciding not to tell, is not an event, but a process, beginning alongside the abuse. It is inextricably bound up with the messages the child receives from the adult during the abuse itself. For the child or young person, the decision whether or not to tell involves the weighing up of many considerations and possible consequences. Telling inevitably involves an initial loss of control, which may replicate the abuse. There is no certainty of a desired outcome, and often a belief that telling will result in being blamed.

Justin has explained how many of his attempts to tell were thwarted, and that there were severe consequences of being caught in the process of trying to tell. For Liam, telling was only a consideration several years later, when he was able to reflect upon his feelings and experiences with a degree of perspective, as he was so convinced and persuaded, through a process of manipulation by the abuser, that he was "comfortable" with what was happening to him. Sean simply did not wish

to have to deal with the likely consequences of telling, and was simply prepared to wait and persevere with being abused, as he knew he was soon to leave the school. Paul didn't speak about being sexually abused until many years later, he had no idea who or access to anybody he felt he could tell. As the years rolled by he became more and more ashamed about himself, and deeply believed that telling would have to involve confronting and accepting the shame he felt. Colin felt that he was responsible, partly because he had been given money, and partly because he feels he could have escaped, but at the same time has described how he was threatened and physically throttled. Colin's feelings and anxieties sometimes override his memories of how frightened he was at the time. The young men were not able to see that their fears and anxieties about telling were central to the manipulative relationship which had been set up by the abuser, with the express purpose of silencing them.

The young men's involvement in socio-legal processes, has by disempowering them, in some ways replicated or resonated with the abuse they had initially reported. Colin has discussed vivid memories of his medical examination, which he considers to be in some ways as bad as the abuse. Justin explained that he found the first compensation hearing to have been more stressful than when he gave evidence in court, which he had already described as stressful, although he recognised that measures were taken to help him through the

experience. David had bad memories of being accused of lying. Liam felt that he had been disbelieved by the police, and made to feel responsible for the potential consequences as a result of his telling, for the man who had picked him up as a hitch hiker and attempted to abuse him. These comments show that the young men experienced their involvement in socio-legal processes as being unhelpful, and adding to the problems they were already having to cope with, carrying little recognition or acknowledgement of the struggle they were experiencing.

4.) Impact on Sexuality and Relationships with Peers

Before considering the young men's experiences, it is necessary initially, to have an understanding of the particular importance of sexuality during adolescence. Figure 1 in Chapter 1 identified sexuality and desire being constructed through the interaction of a variety of factors: Social; biological; historical power relations; and gender practices. The discussion of post-structuralism in Chapter 3 identified sexuality and gender as a significant organising principle (Cooper 1995), which potentially influenced the process of power relationships between people. It was also recognised that sexuality was a significant form of disciplinary power, constructing and impacting upon a range of cultural, social and economic practices and relations. Shaping and being shaped by the culture and social context in which it is situated. This study shows that sexuality becomes a particularly potent force in a society where particular types of sexuality are oppressively and extensively policed. This makes sexuality an important site of social interrogation. Foucault in discussing sexuality states that:

"It appears rather as an especially dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, an administration and a population. Sexuality is not the most intractable element in power relations, but rather one of those endowed with the greatest

instrumentality; useful for the greatest number of manoeuvres and capable of serving as a point of support, as a linchpin, for the most varied strategies.” (Foucault, 1976, p103).

Sexuality and sexual identity is particularly important during adolescence, where following puberty, for most people there is an increase in sexual drives and sexual awareness (Moore and Rosenthal, 1993). This study shows that it is also a time when young people become acutely aware of the power of social policing of sexual desires and the drive towards compulsory heterosexism and homophobia (Nayak and Kehily, 1997). Adolescence is a time when patriarchy takes residence in the body.

The policing of sexuality is supported by developmental psychology and social biologism, both of which are complicit to patriarchal constructions of gender. This point is argued strongly by Burman (1994), who identifies that in responding to meet the needs of prevailing social anxieties, the masculine science of psychology (as defined by its methodology of abstraction and measurement, and its drive towards rationality and normalisation, for example, infancy research which focuses on instrumental behaviours and technological capacities, suppressing more ambiguous indeterminate or non-instrumental behaviours) incorporates the mental into the medical. Additionally, that a change in gender relations would alter our conceptualisation of

childhood, taking it away from the patriarchal hierarchy of regulation and normalisation, suppressing the particular, and emphasising the general.

Stage theories of development are positivist, naturalist and functional. Morss (1996) has argued that developmentalism is antithetical to human freedom, and that developmental theories carry a mistaken assumption of human agency. The repressed data of scientific abstraction disciplines difference for the project of the general, claiming to be universal by denying its own specificity, and laundering out diversity. Morss argues that developmental change should always be seen as (having been) socially produced. Stage theory of development being one story abstracted from a range of other possible stories which are suppressed by the one that is chosen. The assumption of natural and regulated change, which underpins the stage theory, is itself a socially and historically located discourse. Our daily lives are shaped by our position in the capitalist system, its markets, its media and so on. This includes scientific procedures which play their part in the production of their object of study, the processes of which are suppressed by the guise of objectivity and scientific rationale. Development is instead a tapestry of social experiences and expectations and personal locations. Morss argues that through developmentalism, adults command the present, having the status of "*beings*", denying full rights and status to non-adults who are reduced to the status of "*becomings*" (1996,p158).

The sexual experiences of teenagers are shaped by their social context. For many, peer group experiences are particularly significant and overtake family influences. In reviewing a range of studies, Moore and Rosenthal (1993) argue that teenage boys tend to describe their sexual experiences in terms of their own agency, whereas girls enter into more relationship-based explanations. They also argue that teenagers sometimes learn inappropriate values and engage in unwanted sexual behaviours before they are ready. They may acquire many myths about sexual behaviour, for example over-estimating the sexual experiences of their peers.

Chapter 1 recognised the importance of queer theory in establishing the heterosexist nature of nearly all social theory (Warner, 1994). The notion of a widespread prevalence of bisexuality has been considered by Kitzinger (1989), who in discussing lesbian identities argues that although discourses of liberal humanism have been considered to have de-pathologised lesbian identities, they amount to social control and regulation of identities. Social acceptability of gay and lesbian identities has involved a suppression of difference. Kitzinger argues that this has resulted from Kinsey's⁴ 1953 "*famous invention of the "heterosexual - homosexual" continuum*" (1989,p85). By recognising the potential of bisexuality in the wider population, the attempt is to de-politicise lesbianism and thereby restricting its challenge to the dominant moral

⁴ There is controversy over Kinsey's failure to inform the authorities about current and on-going child sexual abuse reported in paedophile testimonies (Adams, 1985).

and social order. People who are not able to accept the “well-adjusted” faces of gay and lesbian sexuality are themselves considered not to be “well-adjusted”, as defined within the parameters of liberal humanist psychology.

Sexuality and Peer Relationships

All the young men in this study expressed concerns about their sexuality, with reference to having been sexually abused by a male. Many of these concerns were expressed in terms being discovered by their peers, and being considered to be gay as a result of the experience. These concerns appeared to interact and compound private feelings, fears and beliefs resulting from the conflation of same sex child sexual abuse and gay sexual preference, and were exacerbated by feelings of responsibility and concerns about the experience of physical pleasure, or of having a relationship with the abuser that was experienced as being to some degree positive.

These concerns appeared to be intensified by “traditional” heterosexist beliefs about behaviours and experiences deemed not to be masculine, and a peer culture of homophobia. It has been established above, that there are potentially difficulties and myths to contend with on a large scale for any boy growing up in Western society. The conflicting and contradictory messages create a potential for all boys to experience

sexual confusion in one form or another. Chapter 2 concluded that for the sexually abused boy, the belief in the socially perpetuated myth that for everybody else, the development of sexuality is a straightforward process is perhaps the one that does the most damage.

Believing and reacting to myths, wrong information and misunderstandings can be particularly stressful for any adolescents who are trying to come to terms with and develop understandings of their sexuality. Bremner and Hillin refer extensively to the process of "*internalised oppression*" (1993,p27). They define oppression as systematic mistreatment and misinformation, and discuss how such information is reinforced by a variety of social interactions. Eventually it becomes internalised and believed and acted upon against the self and others, in a manner which reinforces and perpetuates the misinformation.

Internalised oppression subordinates the individual to wider dominant beliefs and understandings, which eventually become deemed to be the right understandings. This can result in a process of self-discipline and repression. Previous discussion above has referred to the disciplinary power of sexuality, operating through Foucault's use of the "metaphorical panoptican" and "confessional". The belief in the permanent gaze and scrutiny of others and the need to explain oneself in terms of justification, based on the scrutiny of others, in most cases the scrutiny of peers. Beliefs and scrutiny become internalised, and often believed and

incorporated into behaviours and attitudes. The particular context of internalised oppression referred to in this study is compulsory heterosexism (the oppressive view that the only or at least the most valid sexuality is heterosexual) and homophobia. Heterosexual behaviour is prescribed and gay or lesbian behaviour (including bisexuality) is proscribed.

Many of the comments below demonstrate the particularly compulsory nature of heterosexism, during adolescence and the need to actively demonstrate a perceived heterosexual identity. For the young men in this research study, this is spurred on by beliefs which conflate child sexual abuse with gay sexuality. Porter's (1986) work, showed that such beliefs can be confirmed by the heterosexual identity of the abuser, and cause a boy to believe that it was his gay sexuality which led to him being sexually abused. For such a boy (and indeed as will be seen, most of the young men in this study), the internalised oppression of compulsory heterosexism and homophobia takes a particularly strong and deep root. This can lead to a range of anxieties, which result in such fears not being talked about, rendering the young person unavailable for therapeutic assistance and accurate information. From this research it would appear that compulsory heterosexism and homophobia are central to the discourse of male-child sexual abuse.

Some of these processes can be seen from comments made by Liam,

who approaches his concerns with a clear distinction between what he privately believes and feels, and how he wishes to be seen by his peers. He also states very clearly how his peer culture dictates how he should be and how he should behave, and that there are social costs for non-conformity. Whilst he does not accept the norms privately, publicly he feels he has to openly conform, particularly in view of his experiences of sexual abuse, the discovery of which he believes would constitute as proof that he does not conform to the norm. As a survival strategy Liam explains how he would often resort to “*acting the homophobic*”, and is very clear by his description, in his understanding of what this means and why it is necessary to behave in such a manner.

LIAM: *“I’m surprised I’m not homophobic after this lot, I should be..... Well you know, you’d think like after the experience you’d think oh I don’t want that to happen again, it’s never going to happen again and like you know he was queer and he tried it on and all that, so I wonder whether or not I should be homophobic. You know, given the norm, most blokes are homophobic. Like you know, say oh you’re queer, better sit down, or stand against a wall..... “I mean being a young bloke and all that, shagging the women and everything, that’s what I’m supposed to be doing. I mean I’ve just had a slander situation, being called gay, and I’ve just laughed it off, I said yeah, I’m queer, great you know, I’m shagging a bird, course I’m queer. You know, it’s acting the homophobic sort of thing. Society dictates that that’s the way you should be at my age. If*

you're a bloke, if you're a lad, going out for a beer.....Inside I would like people to know the way that I really feel, but it's just not acceptable, so I just keep my mouth shut. There's very few people that I've told, you, Tanya and Cindy.....I don't feel at all that what I want is a bloke. I don't want a sexual relationship with a bloke, I don't want that, I don't see the point in it. I mean I enjoy sex with women. The closeness of a bloke would be an important thing to me, being really close to somebody. Really really really close, but without the sexual part. Like there's a fine line I know. I know there's a fine line between it, but er if I was really really close to a bloke, it would be on the verge of like you know, me being queer if you know what I mean, getting called queer sort of thing because like I'd like to get so close to a male because I don't know whether it's something to do with my dad subconsciously, I don't know, but on the other hand I only want to go and shag women, I'm afraid that's my only interest you know, with the women.....If somebody tried to label me as a queer I'd defend myself right to the hilt, even though I've had a relationship with a bloke. I'd still say who do you think you're talking to sort of thing. I mean I've thought about it, am I gay, am I gay? I've sat down and thought to myself am I queer am I gay, and I thought no I'm not queer, I'm not gay, but you know, am I bisexual, I don't feel bisexual, I don't have feelings for blokes. I've experimented with that situation, I mean I denied it for a long time, but I just thought you know what's the point of telling people about it, where does that get me. It doesn't get me anywhere talking about it, I've done it, I know I've done it and everything

and like you know.”

This lengthy comment from Liam illustrates how he has to engage in processes of repression. He is aware that some of his feelings inside would not be socially acceptable and would damage his perceived heterosexual reputation. Liam believes that even though he has such feelings, expressing emotional feelings towards males would not be consistent with being seen as masculine, and to some extent does not fit in with his own beliefs and definition about what being masculine entails. To express such feelings and beliefs would result in subordination through a damaged reputation amongst his male peers; indicative of a male hierarchy. Liam is acutely aware that expressing emotional of sexual feelings towards a male would be completely out of the question, he remembers an earlier time of his life, where his feelings led to sexual experimentation with another boy, who he still knows, any open or private acknowledgement of this experience is now repressed.

LIAM: *“I had another relationship with a bloke. Right, when I was really young, about nine, I’ve never never told anyone about this. My friend Michael, it was growing up stuff, exploring bodies, we sucked each other’s knobs, it’s just sort of something that happened, there’s a taboo between us, we never talk about it now, it’s like done, because we’ve both got relationships with women. It happened quite a few times, it was quite weird, but I don’t regret that either.....I don’t know what’s wrong with*

me, I should be feeling dirty and humiliated, but I don't. I just don't worry about it, I don't give a toss."

Ryan was aware of some of these issues, and indicates that he feels he is able to take an open minded perspective, but when it comes to relationships amongst peers, indicates a similar awareness to Liam, of the internal and external conflicts involved. His comments demonstrate a considerable level of insight, in being able to rise above the pressures of his peer culture.

RYAN: *"Well no one's sure are they?..... I'm definitely not, because I've tried it, I don't regret trying it, I just know that at this particular moment in time I'm not homosexual..... Like the most macho acting male. A lot of the time people who are really acting macho and hard and sleeping with all these girls and that are trying to deny something. Deny being attracted to lads. So I mean no one's sure about anybody and no one's sure about themselves until they try it. It's just like drugs and alcohol no one's sure about what effects it's going to have on them. No one's sure if they're gonna like them and that until they do it."*

In discussing the importance of relationships with females, Paul also expressed concerns relating to being seen as gay, and his image amongst his male peers. His experiences are almost totally referenced towards his peers and his status amongst them:

PAUL: *"I think females were more important because I thought if I hung around with lads I always thought people would be able to tell what happened and would think, well you know, he's a bit queer, whereas if I was with females people would think, hey, Paul gets on with the girls, can't be anything wrong with him."*

Paul had his private doubts and fears about his sexuality and lived in fear of this being discovered by his peers. From his comments, and in the same respect, from the comments we have already heard from Liam, some of the normal trials and tribulations of teenage peer group interaction in the context of learning to express and develop sexuality, are considerably sharpened by the experience of child sexual abuse.

PAUL: *"It was an image I felt I had to have, 'cos otherwise people would be able to tell. It's like the fact that after you did games you had to go and have a shower. I would wear my trunks in the shower, because I thought if anybody saw my genitals, they would be able to tell that another man had touched me....You know, all they had to do was just look at me and the way I acted and they would be able to say, you know, he's queer, there's something wrong with him."*

Paul had developed a sensitive antenna to how he was perceived by his peers, and would often consider situations from conflicting perspectives,

in order to be sure that he was seen as “doing something right”, his motivation was a consistent belief that having been sexually abused by a male meant that he was gay.

PAUL: *“.....I knew, especially at secondary school that homosexuals were looked down on, they were mocked, ridiculed and because I thought I might be homosexual, which was weird because on the other hand I wouldn't let anybody near me, but because I thought I was made homosexual by this guy I thought I had to do something to show everybody else that I'm not and that's why I tended to stick in with the girls. 'Cos I mean at secondary school its when you first really start getting into girl friends and you know I was lucky that I was in a year that people did, 'cos otherwise they could've looked at it a different way as in the fact that you know; Paul's always hanging around with girls, he must be a bit of a girl himself, you know, probably fancies men. Sort of stigma , but I was lucky in the fact that I didn't get that, you know Paul gets on with all the girls, he must be doing something right. There must be something right about him because he's attracting all the girls.....I would have been so scared of being labelled as being gay and you know, because other kids and sometimes other adults they don't see the fact that it was forced on you. You know they have such a narrow view they can't see that it's forced on kids. Kids don't go along with it willingly.”*

Paul's concerns only related to the masculine culture amongst his male

peers and men. He did not experience the same level of threat from females, and felt he could be more true to himself. He was able to find a male peer who he could talk to, and also found the research relationship with myself to be a safe situation in which to express his feelings.

PAUL: *".....I always found that the girls would be more genuine than the guys, the lads and that's why, girls weren't worried about posing like the lads were,.....all they used to go on about was getting in the school team, it used to annoy me. The girls weren't like that, they used to talk about every day stuff and you could have a laugh and a joke with them and they were really genuinely good friends."*

Justin also had considerable fears about how he was perceived by his peers.

JUSTIN: *"All of my friends are really wary when they know I've been abused. I don't care, I don't mind. I'll talk about it anywhere. They think you're gay or you're gonna do something to them.....I don't mind people knowing but I'm worried about what they're going to say, what they're going to think afterwards like, when I've left the room. While I'm there, to my face they'll be nice, but it's what they say afterwards to other people and things like that. Oh he's a queer, he's bent, he's this, he's that, he's the other like, just because I've been abused."*

Ryan also had anxieties about peers discovering his abuse, and described telling of his abuse as when he “*came out about it*”, he sees this as a positive process.

RYAN: *“Stuff used to remind me of it, but that was like straight after I told people and came out about it, just a lot of the time before I came out about it I used to get problems like that but erm, what triggered it off was silly things, I don’t know, stupid things like kids would just be kidding and insulting each other and saying bender and stuff like that. That would make it come back....I used to get anxiety all the time, anxiety attacks. I’d get paranoid about people finding out and stuff like that.”*

David also expressed a concern that being called names at school was influencing the way he interpreted what had happened to him and why:

DAVID: *“Being called gay, it used to upset me and make me think that I was, because of the abuse. I worried about it for quite a long time. Sometimes I was frightened to go to school.”*

Colin was afraid of people’s perceptions of his sexuality, which were compounded by significant private fears and beliefs. The repressive processes of internalised oppression disrupted one of his closest and most reliable friendships, causing him to become further isolated and estranged from a potential source of support:

COLIN: *“Like with Nigel, we were really close at school. Whenever there was any hassle for each other, we’d always be there. We were more like brothers than anything else. During school time it wasn’t a problem, we were just very close friends, but after the abuse I got really paranoid emotions and fears that it might just go a bit further than that so I avoided him. We seem to have drifted away since we left school. It’s really weird, ‘cos he still gives me a hug when I go to his place, there’s still quite a strong bond there. That sometimes gets me a bit paranoid, even now, but not half as much as it did. It still does now and again.....I don’t see anything wrong with it, I don’t see it as homosexual, it’s just a paranoia.”*

Colin found his peer group particularly threatening and only maintained a small circle of close friends. There were occasions when his anxieties would lead him into difficult situations, because of the assumptions he was making about the people he came across, he often found the world to be a hostile place. He would often find himself behaving in a homophobic manner, in situations which raised fears about his own sexuality, which he constantly relates back to his experience of being sexually abused:

COLIN: *“I was getting persecuted, word got around, but I also had really weird thoughts like if I went into a pub and somebody stared me out and I’d have this paranoid delusion that they knew something or they were*

queer and they were eyeing me up and I would just have a major panic attack on those grounds. You know, either I'd hit him or I'd leave.....I thought it was my body language, that people just instinctively knew, or they were queers and they were trying to chat me up.....All gays are abusers, that's what I initially thought, so like anybody that was homosexual would go out and abuse people, take advantage of them and manipulate people to do what they want. That's what I thought, I didn't see them as human beings, but thinking about it now, that was wrong.....I think I'm starting to overcome that....I still feel threatened by anybody that's homosexual. I mean I'll talk to them, I won't, I don't feel as threatened as I used to, but I'm still aware of memories.....I'm not as prejudiced as I used to be."

The way Colin believed that others perceived child sexual abuse interacted with his private fears and anxieties. He would often privately scrutinise himself in a desperate search for meaning and understanding.

COLIN: *"There's still some thoughts going through my mind about sexuality, especially related to anything sexual. Like do I really like females in a sexual way. That comes into my head, that's a major one. I still think it boils down to the fact that the "four days" was the first sexual experience I had and I still carry some anxieties about that money, and even though they are not as strong as they were, you know, when something goes wrong, they come back again and then sort of well, I*

don't know, I convince myself that what I was thinking was right and it's back to square one again. Like I'm thinking about what happened and I go through all the old stuff like I could have done this and I could have done that and I could have left and then I'll have a few beers to get it away and the next day I think about it and I'll be able to sort it out in my own mind, you know, go through all the well it wasn't my fault because of this that and the other."

Colin was very concerned about his perceived image, and has already explained above (in Section 2) how at the age of thirteen he became embroiled in a sexual relationship with an eighteen year old female. Although the relationship was very destructive in many ways, Colin felt it was necessary to continue with the relationship for the sake of his image amongst his peers. This was also an attempt to help himself come to terms with his own private concerns of having experienced physical pleasure when he was abused by a male.

COLIN: *"One kid found out and was calling me queer so yes, I don't know whether word about the abuse had got around or not, so a female by your side, you can't be queer can you, you can be bi-, but you can't be queer, and the next step was to have a kid with her....I did want to, because you know even after Robert, it wasn't the baby, it was just what a baby stands for.....producing a baby is what males are for, so you know. I didn't really see myself as a full male until I had a kid.....it was a*

mirage...wishful thinking, like it didn't change anything. Trying to prove to myself, proving to everybody outside and inside. Saying to the world I'm not queer because I've got a kid and the same to myself, but no, it doesn't work."

Paul's experiences were similar, in that he would often question his feelings and memories about being abused, and consider his own sexuality. He strictly maintained what he considered to be an appropriate "normal" social image, in order to detract any attention away from his private fears. Paul also believed he could sort himself out by engaging in a heterosexual experience. Both Paul and Colin found it necessary to use relationships with women to bolster their masculine identity, and both were disappointed and ended up with further and more complex difficulties.

PAUL: *"There were times when I thought about it and I thought I don't feel sick, I don't feel ill about this, am I gay, you know, did I enjoy it. I mean you know, I didn't enjoy it and you know, 'cos I enjoyed the kindness of it and I did worry about that I would become homosexual. I didn't know about homosexuality then. I didn't know that it was something that you either are or you're not. I thought it was something that people made you.....I had to stay on top of the situation and if I got so much as the wrong sort of look from somebody I'd have to rush out and do something about it, like go and run up to a girl and give her a hug*

or something like that to say I'm normal.....I didn't want to have sex, but these fears were still with me about being homosexual. I didn't want to have sex, but I felt I had to. Almost driven to it to prove that I am not, you know, to prove that I am heterosexual. I am in my own terms normal and I got worried when it was over, when I lost my virginity and it hurt a lot and I was actually like bleeding a bit and I was worried that well maybe I am homosexual and that's why it hurt with a woman and that's why I stopped again for a while. Just stopped completely."

Justin went through a similar struggle, the experience of child sexual abuse had an impact on his self confidence and his interest in sexual relationships, but this often brings him back to being confused about whether or not he is gay, or whether other people see him as being gay. When he considers the possibility of having a gay sexual relationship himself, he immediately remembers being abused, particularly when considering the safety of his own children, he associates risk with gay sexuality.

JUSTIN: *"It's always there in the back of my head. Am I gonna turn out you know, one day I'm, 'cos there are days when I don't feel like I'm interested in women or nothing like, you know I'm not interested in nothing basically. Then I sometimes prefer the company of other blokes, but not in that way. Just to be around to talk to and things like and there's times I prefer the company of women.....it's just a nagging fear in*

your little mind, what are other people going to think. If I wanted to be gay, I'd be gay and I wouldn't be ashamed of being gay neither, if I was gay.....if all of a sudden I totally lost interest in women then maybe I would try and see what being gay was like, just try it.....Some of my best friends are gay, I've got no problems with gays...if they want to do that let them do that. If they try it on with me it would be a different case. I know that for a fact, it would be a different case if it's my own friends that tried it on with me. Cos of me having my kids and everything, I wouldn't freeze now, I'd end up doing time."

Many internal fears and concerns have been expressed in relation to perceptions of peers, and in relation to behaviours deemed to be acceptable within the parameters of an outwardly perceived masculinity. Some of the young men discussed difficulties they were having with their sexual functioning, and the strain it was having on their intimate relationships. These difficulties interacted with some of the other concerns about sexuality and masculine image already discussed. Colin spoke about his reaction to being touched, and the fact that he often found it difficult to enjoy sex.

COLIN: *"Initially I'd freeze and my stomach would start doing somersaults and I'd twinge. Like whatever part of my body had been touched would twinge and like I'd get a really weird, it's like a stitch sensation in my lower back and kidneys, my whole body just tensed up. Afterwards I*

would then have memories of the abuse going through my head.....I've always had questions about my sexuality and my performance and mostly it comes from me pressurising myself.....I'm thinking well I didn't do very well there, what's she going to think and is my performance up to scratch and that sort of stuff, which then leads to anxieties which leads to pre-mature ejaculation and then it leads to not being able to do anything at all.....and then like I go into, why do I ever bother and then it's a vicious circle, I can't get out of at the moment. Then I think there must be something wrong with me."

Justin and Paul's experiences were similar, their enjoyment of sex was disrupted by flashbacks, and recurring memories.

JUSTIN: "To begin with there would be all the excitement, but then when I get down to doing anything, it would just pop like in the back of my head..... It's there in the head..... Sometimes I really want to do it, but when it actually comes down to doing it I just sort of lose interest.....If I lose interest in it I just go in a mood and storm out the house and just not think about nothing....I just feel angry and disappointed I suppose..... When I was abused I just felt numb, you know, feeling nothing down below, sometimes I feel like that with Ruth, though seriously numb. The brain wants to do it, but the body is numb. You know, you could stand there and slam it in the door and you wouldn't feel it, you know, it's numb. That's how it was, how it felt when it happened."

PAUL: *“The sex I had with Claire was brilliant, but sometimes if I’d been on a downer or maybe I’d read something in the newspaper about abuse. I used to go to bed and I wouldn’t want her to touch me because I would feel not so much that she’s going to hurt me, but I felt dirty and cheap I suppose and sometimes that feeling.....all I’d have to do is read one newspaper report and I could feel like that for a whole week.....I felt so sick with myself and felt so sick about my body that that I just didn’t want to be touched. And also there was always a niggling that, it wasn’t a big feeling, just a little one, that I was gonna get hurt. That was what my body was there for it was to be hurt, because Raith had hurt it, this bloke had hurt it in a different way.”*

Sean, although having difficulties, never really felt that he wanted to receive any help in coming to terms with his experience, and wanted to be left to *“just get on with it”*. He believes he sorted the situation out for himself mainly by getting older and having experiences which he thought were more appropriate, and which he had a choice about. At the time, however, he did share some of the concerns of the other young men in the study.

SEAN: *“Well to be perfectly honest, when it all started, I thought I wasn’t going to be straight when I left the place. I thought Oh no, when I left the place I thought now what. I thought it was going to happen to me that I*

was going to become gay, blokes and men and stuff. When I left the school, the next sexual thing I had was with Helen, but it was with a woman this time and I thought yes, I like this much better.....even though I'm twenty one, I still get a bit dubious with females, you know, I think I don't know whether I want to do this sort of thing. It makes me feel like when I do go out with somebody or have an affair with somebody, it makes me feel as if you know, I shouldn't be doing this. It makes me want to hold back sort of thing. Not because I think I'm becoming gay, but full stop basically. Having any sort of sexual relationship with anyone.....I like to be seen as somebody who knows what he's doing, knows how to handle it and really be the person to be with sort of thing."

Fears of Abusing

The relationship between having been sexually abused and subsequently sexually abusing others was discussed in Chapter 2. It was established that this was more of a problem for males than females. Also that there was a significant majority of males and females who have been sexually abused who do not sexually abuse others. It was identified that there was a social mythology, or popular misunderstanding about this correlation, and that this could be harmful and damaging for people who had been sexually abused. This was both in terms of their private feelings, and in terms of the assumptions other people. Justin, Colin and Paul had fears that they themselves would become abusers,

this was partly based on what they felt, and partly based on what they had read or heard from others, and what they understood to be the beliefs of some of their peers. Some of their comments exemplify the power and influence of popular mythology on privately held feelings and beliefs, and how this internal consequence of having been sexually abused manifests itself in day to day relationships and peer group circumstances.

COLIN: *"Well I thought that like, you know I've been sexually abused, so you know, so I didn't know whether it was possible that I'd do that...I've heard that abused become abusers....after reading that I was pretty paranoid for a couple of months or so...it just raised doubts for myself.....I mean if I was changing say John's nappy (second child), then I wouldn't touch his genitalia at all...I thought it would be interpreted as abuse or you know.....Staff at Sycamores Clinic helped...they just said that basically it's got to be done, otherwise you'll get it infected.....I haven't got any problems with it now."*

Fears of abusing also came to a head for Justin, when he became involved in the care of his own children, partly his own fears, the fact that they were male, he was male and he was abused by a male, but also because of how he felt he would be seen by his peers. This situation led to a strain in his relationship, as he was unable to explain why he was afraid to become involved in the close personal caring of his children. To

some extent he was able to make up for this by giving them attention through play, but he felt deprived of the closeness he could have with them. These comments were the first time Justin had ever spoken about these fears.

JUSTIN: *"I've heard so many cases where people who been abused go on to abuse, that scares me all the time....and that would kill me if I ever ever abuse my own kids I'd kill myself, I know I would, I couldn't do it.....I won't even bath them.....My main fear is that I don't want to become an abuser.....I'll think twice about what I'll do with my children where another parent probably wouldn't think once. I try to convince myself that it's not going to happen, because I'm always scared that I am going to become an abuser. You do actually get to convincing yourself that you're not going to be then you just stop thinking about it, but then you start thinking about it again.*

The next comment from Justin further reveals his concerns about abusing, and illustrates through his mode of description (phrase underlined) how readily he conflates gay sexuality with child sexual abuse, placing himself in a position of agency and responsibility for being sexually abused.

JUSTIN: *"...I shouldn't be worried about what other people are going to say, but I just don't want to be accused of touching up my own*

kids.....Before Leo was born I said I'll do everything....I changed him in front of one of my friends that knew that I was sort of queer and it was the look he gave me when you know I put the baby wipe over his willy and across his bum. It was the look I got off my friends and that sort of made me think now I'm gonna get accused of touching these up and everything 'cos of what's happened to me, and don't you think that upset me."

In considering the impact of being sexually abused, Justin confirms for himself that he was not responsible, despite what he believes others may think, and in doing so, in a very deep and searching reflection attempts to salvage something positive from what he has been through.

JUSTIN: *"I don't think it was my fault, what happened. What's happened has happened, I can't turn nothing back. If I could I would, but I can't. But then if I turned it back my life wouldn't be what it is. I wouldn't have met Ruth, I wouldn't have had the kids. Who knows, maybe I needed that to happen to me just to get where I am now."*

When Paul was interviewed, he made it clear that he had never previously discussed being sexually abused with anybody in any detail. During the interviews, his feelings were raw and disturbing to himself. They also make disturbing reading, and demonstrate the destructive power of compulsory heterosexism. His experiences have left him with fearful thoughts, anxieties and impulses, which have made him

ambivalent about his actions. These feelings have to be constantly managed and have created difficulties in his personal relationships. Paul's deep sense of shame, guilt and responsibility has prevented him from being able to share these feelings and anxieties. Paul has lived his life through the lens of having been sexually abused, many of his personal relationships and sexual experiences have been distorted by the anxieties which have subsequently remained.

PAUL: *"When I did feel dirty and ashamed, it was easier to have sex with somebody that didn't mean that much.....When I felt bad about myself because of what happened, it seemed okay to have sex with somebody else because you can pass those feelings on to them and get rid of them from yourself a bit.....I didn't see myself as an abuser. I think it did concern me that I was passing over negative feelings I was having to them.....When I first started to build up my sex drive and I really felt I wanted to have sex, but there weren't any people round to have sex with. I almost felt at times like I could go out and rape somebody. You know I never did, but I felt like I could, and that scared me, which is what stopped me, because it scared me I knew that it was wrong and that that was unfair. I mean I never thought of things like I could go out and have a go at a kid, it was always like adults, women older than myself and I thought I could go out and rape somebody and I'd never get caught."*

Paul was also concerned about what he had read and heard about the

relationship between the experience of abuse and subsequent abusing.

PAUL: *“But I do worry what they say in the media. He abused this child, but he was abused himself, because it spooked me when I was younger, you know it really got me worried that I was going to be a sexual abuser, or a violent abuser, because that is just the way that I perceived it and also the fact that it happened so much with Raith and with the sexual abuse. It happened so much and so frequently that it did seem normal. Although I knew it was wrong it still seemed like that was the way things were done. You know, as if that’s what people do. I’m glad that I don’t think like that now, because otherwise I’d be a write off, I’d probably be inside now.”*

Summary

This section has considered the young men’s perceptions of the impact of child sexual abuse on their sexuality. The young men’s concerns centre around their perception of having co-operated in a sexual relationship with an adult male, without having full awareness of how the adult male had constructed the relationship to invoke such feelings, in an attempt to ensure silence. Remaining silent was supported by an oppressive social context of compulsory heterosexism and homophobia, which had been internalised by the young men. Many of the young men in this study were separated or estranged from their families, so the peer

group became particularly significant as their main point of reference. Post-structural theory about the disciplinary power of sexuality, and its critique of psychology and developmentalism as knowledge, allows a better understanding of the unique impact of sexual abuse. The comments from the young men underline the importance of understanding their lived out experiences in social context.

The experiences described by the young men confirmed that their increasing awareness of their sexuality was fraught with difficulty. It is difficult to assess the extent to which some of these difficulties may have already existed, if we accept that adolescence is a turbulent period for many people. However, many of the comments were directly related to the aftermath of child sexual abuse, and there was evidence that many of the young men did in fact have significant concerns about their sexuality, and were very concerned about this being discovered by their peers. This often had an impact on the manner in which they behaved, portraying images which were consistent with their received beliefs about hegemonic masculinities, in Liam's phrase, "*acting the homophobic*". The young men felt marginalised in terms of their beliefs and perceptions about their masculinities. This meant that these behaviours became very transparent, some of the young men's perceptions were quite extreme. For example the idea that others could tell that they had been sexually abused, and that therefore they were gay, by simply looking at them in a public bar, or seeing their genitals in the shower at school. Paul's

description of the attitudes of his peers at school, and Liam's description of some of the attitudes of his friends which have motivated him not to share information about his experiences are examples of this. Colin and Liam felt that they had to be careful about how their close supportive friendships with males were perceived, and were concerned about the "fine line" that existed in such relationships. The accounts show that although certain aspects of behaviour were embarked upon, for the sake of image, for the sake of not being seen as gay, the young men themselves continued to have private fears and self-doubt, some of which continue to present day. The solution was to behave in a certain way, a way in which they could be seen as being a "full male". As a result, it appears that to some extent these friendships suffered.

The impact on their sexuality for most of the young men seemed to have lasting significance, and was the area that they most wished to talk about, and which prior to these interviews, they had least talked about, if at all. It was necessary for them to perceive a degree of safety before discussing such privately held fears. The power and hold these fears have over the young men is illustrated by the fact that in most cases they continue to be hidden from their peers.

In discussing their sexuality, some of the young men described how their sexual functioning had been disrupted by being sexually abused. This sometimes resulted in difficulties with their partners, and spoilt their

enjoyment of intimate sexual relationships, through having to constantly struggle in private with disturbing thoughts and memories. Some of the young men spoke about having concerns about sexually abusing others, making reference to comments from peers, and information they had collected from public sources, newspaper, television etc.; the mythology of abusers becoming abusers instigating further processes of internalised oppression. For some of the young men, a whole range of private fears and social myths interacted to cause considerable private suffering.

The experience of child sexual abuse has had a significant negative impact on the young men's perception, experience and awareness of their sexuality. The detailed comments from the young men vividly reveal some of the processes of patriarchal gender construction. In particular they have shown that they have sometimes conflated the experience of being sexually abused with being gay, and have found themselves taking a homophobic stance in situations where they feel threatened. Some of this is fear based on peer group identities, but it is also fear based upon privately held beliefs and feelings from the sexual nature of the experience of being sexually abused, alongside other more generalised difficulties relating to adolescent sexuality. The experiences are shaped by their social context, but through some of the consequential behaviours, become the context, and carry forward the discourse of compulsory heterosexuality and homophobia.

5.) Still Living With The Consequences of Abuse

The analytical framework presented in Section 1 portrayed the inter-relatedness of individual experiences, feelings, memories and desires with family and peer experiences and relationships, embedded in the context of wider social and political influences. Chapter 2 considered a wide range of research and theory about the short and long term impact of child sexual abuse. This included a discussion of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and the psycho-physiological process of dissociation. This section compliments this existing research by capturing in detail some of the processes of the young men's individual experiences, whilst importantly not losing sight of some of the reservations already expressed in relation to developmentalism and de-contextualised psychological theorising.

Strategies of resistance and coping employed by survivors of sexual abuse may in the long term cause problems, both personal and for others. Some of the comments from the young men show that they were having to cope with memories and flashbacks on a daily basis. Sometimes this had a significant influence on their behaviour and created pre-occupations and moodiness, which they were unable to understand themselves, or explain to others. This section shows how some of these experiences interacted with other difficult aspects of the young men's lives, for example being "in care" and living with foster

carers, or being away from home in a boarding school.

Some of the young men came to rely on the use of drugs and alcohol. Some of the accounts show a direct relationship between the abuse and the use of stimulants to block out memories and feelings, and show how these escalated out of control, causing considerable harm to health and rapidly deteriorating circumstances. Other accounts show how the memories resulted in expressions of anger and temper, which began to have a toll on family and carer relationships, particularly where the abuse hadn't been talked about, with carers or parents having no idea why the mood swings were taking place. These experiences show how difficult and stressful some of the day to day experiences of these young men are, and how their memories and feelings continue to haunt them. The experience of on-going flashbacks, where there was an uncontrollable flooding of vivid memories of sexual abuse, was referred to by all the young men to varying degrees, for some they were more pervasive and on-going than for others.

Flashbacks

Colin had many problems in trying to manage the uncontrollable intrusive memories of his abuse, and describes some of the circumstances which trigger them. He has already discussed some of these in the previous section, in terms of being triggered by specifically sexual experiences.

He is aware of having these memories, but struggles to understand some of the processes of constriction and flooding, and how he is able to store and hide away these memories, to the extent that when they return he is often caught off guard and has panic attacks.

COLIN: *"Mainly just thoughts, but occasionally it would be like flashing, flashbacks very quick.....quite a lot of it is buried now and if I try to have an in-depth conversation about it, I can't, because a lot of it has gone back in my subconscious somewhere, but I know I do get some memories back, some thoughts, occasionally when I've had too much to drink, you know, I've been thinking about the four days, anyway I would just get the occasional flashback. Or if I've had a really stressful day, I'll sometimes get a flashback then.....Crowded rooms sometimes, I don't know where it's from, it still happens regularly. I mean walking to the town centre on Saturday, I can't stand it, I can't handle it at all. I have real panic attacks. I started feeling claustrophobic, I just wanted to get out of there, my heart rate went straight up and I couldn't breathe too good, I just panicked. People all around and you can't move anywhere, trapped almost."*

Justin describes similar processes, and refers to disturbing nightmares, in which he experiences an on-going pervasive presence of his abuser.

JUSTIN: *"I had one (nightmare) the other week. That was just like the*

school and things like that.....Austin would be there in my dreams. You know he'd just be there, he'd just be him.....You'd be dreaming and you'd lose control of your dreams. You'd get all these little bad things happening and when I get like that I wake up in a cold sweat."

David was sometimes so afraid of his abuser returning in his dreams, that he would force himself to stay awake. He has little recall of the details of his nightmares, but associates the feelings they created with his abuse. He also refers to having flashbacks when handling his genitals when washing himself.

DAVID: *"There used to be sometimes that I wanted to stay up all night.....They were horrible, too horrible to describe.....I can't really remember the horrible ones, but I know I had them. I had some dreams about telling my parents. The first one they didn't believe me, then there was another one and I kept telling and telling them. That was one of the last ones..... I never used to wash down there (pointing) because it used to make me think about the abuse, so I just use to miss it out. I never used to touch it."*

Paul describes himself as having lived in a constant sea of memories, triggers and day-to-day reminders of his abuse

PAUL: *"There's not a day goes past when I don't think about my past in*

general, but specific aspects and details of it I can usually put away, but it can take, there's so many things that can trigger it off that it can take, like I can read an article on abuse in a magazine or a newspaper. For Raith, I can see somebody with a beard like his and it comes back. I can see somebody I knew as a kid or go near the places I knew as a kid and they'll bring it back. They weren't so much flashes, than they were images, pictures all the time. I used to have nightmares about it. I used to think of it probably a lot more constantly than I do now, because they weren't just flashes of images, they would be there for longer periods. I would probably see whole days events, rather than just a flash of one image. I was always alright if my mind was occupied, if I was busy doing something, but as soon as I started to slow down, like night time. I would think about the day that I've had and then something would trigger it off and then I will start getting the repeat of what happened."

Feelings and Emotions

These comments speak of the intense pain and emotional turmoil the young men went through day and night, and show how isolated they felt with their feelings. This comment from Justin shows that at the heart of everything that has been discussed so far is an individual who feels lost and broken in every way possible.

JUSTIN: *"Sometimes I sit at home and I have a little cry to myself,*

because I do feel better after having a cry, ...if someone's there, like if we're watching telly and all of a sudden I feel so depressed, so I just go off to the bathroom and have a cry.....all of a sudden you'd be really enjoying yourself, you know, having a wail of a time and all of a sudden bang! It just happens, it's just there.....I can remember the very first day it happened, November 23rd, that's a real shit day for me. I feel dirty all day, all that day. That's why I was in bits when you turned up yesterday. I was getting myself totally mashed up."

The same was true for Paul, his comment demonstrated the immensity of his isolation, and the depth of his sadness, and how his memories would return him to the physical pain of his experiences, and how his pain sometimes turned into anger.

PAUL: *"When I was on my own I used to cry endlessly.....I'd either wait until everybody had gone out or I just go up to my room or I'd go for a long walk. There's one thing about being in a village, it's in the country, you can just walk. I'd just walk to the middle of a field and I would cry and cry and cry and I would get up and I would scream and I would shout. I'd scream just things like you know I hate you at the top of my voice and I would scream things like I'm gonna get you for this, all at this bloke and Raith. Privately I was a mess because it used to screw me up so much, but looking back on it now I can't believe just how much time I did spend crying, 'cos I never sit down and rationalise it with myself. If I was on my*

own and I thought about it, it would upset me and all the feelings, the shame, the guilt, being dirty, it would all come back and I would feel like I wanted to get my revenge.....I think anger, pain, probably the biggest feelings I had when I was on my own, physical and emotional pain.....I used to think about it and it was as if I could feel it all physically as well as mentally you know, my body used to ache, even as I was a lot older, even now. I remember it all so vividly as it was like yesterday and that hurts because I can feel. Not only can I see what was happening in my mind, but I can feel it as well. And there's been times when it's been that bad that I've wanted to kill myself because I feel so ashamed of myself. There's times when I've felt very suicidal. There's times when I've been very close to doing it."

Behaviour

For some of the young men, containing, trying to forget or coping with the consequences of abuse had a significant impact on their behaviour. Unfortunately this would then become the focus of the attention the young men would receive. Colin experienced placement disruptions in care, to the point that he would abscond for long periods of time, often being caught up in the destructive relationship with Penny, which resulted in him being further sexually abused, as he has already described above. Justin ended up in court following petty offences, leading to a period of homelessness, until he was taken in by Sally a

neighbourhood friend. Paul used to have massive rows with his foster parents, as a result of his anger building up over time. Colin describes how he resisted being controlled by adults, and had a pressing need for controlling situations himself, but would often end up losing control and become angry.

COLIN: *"I had a massive appetite for gaining control of situations.....I just got totally obsessed with power over my own life and any situation I felt lost in, I'd just give them hell. Sometimes I had quite powerful surges of anger which I had no control over. I was scared, I felt stunned, it took me back. I can remember hitting a door in an argument with my mum and that just like really stunned me, because I'm not an aggressive person. That sort of way for me to act was like I didn't know myself and I didn't like it."*

Paul would hold onto feelings of anger, particularly in school (we have already heard how scared he was of his abuse being discovered by his peers), but periodically he would let these feelings out.

PAUL: *"I used to have an amazing temper, it never used to let go, it took a lot to build me up to it, but once I was going that was it.....Like when I'd been teased at school, and because I never used to release how I feel about everything, I used to keep it inside. It's like a bottle of champagne, if you shake it up, the cork's going to explode eventually and that's what it*

was like. It all just exploded in one go and then things would go quiet for a while and then it would all explode all over again.it was a test for my foster parents and a way I could release things without going completely off the rails. If I hadn't have done that I would have probably ended up completely in a mess."

Sean described how he used manage his feelings and anger through recklessly driving fast, which culminated in an accident.

SEAN: *"I don't really like hurting anybody or anything. I used to, I used to take it out on my car, before I had my smash. I used to drive fast to scare myself, to calm myself down.....I've just forgotten about it all. I'd like to know what happened to him. As far as I'm concerned now, I'm just a twenty one year old bloke.....I didn't want any help, I just wanted to get on with it."*

Drugs and Alcohol

Colin and Justin, spoke about how and why they would use alcohol, gas, solvents and cannabis to help block out their memories and feelings about their abuse. They felt that the consequences of not using these substances were at the time too painful to bear.

COLIN: *"It's mainly a form of escape, if I'm thinking about it and it's doing*

my head in, I'd reach for the nearest thing that I'd get a buzz out of; petrol, gas, draw or drink. It's not as bad as it was, but anyhow, I still do that.....Looking back they didn't do anything for me at all, just confused me more, but at the time they just like settle your thoughts. Like you've just got this buzz in your head and this ringing, that's all you can hear and all you can concentrate on, so I did that to escape thinking about the "four days, just to get it from my mind, 'cos it was on my mind quite a lot at the time. It still haunts me now."

For Justin the use of gas and cannabis was more long term, and he suffered severe health consequences, he had serious lung and liver damage. He sees a direct connection between sniffing large amounts of butane gas and being sexually abused.

JUSTIN: *"Last time I had a sniff of gas was 1992.....I ended up doing 18 tins a day just to get a buzz..... That just helped me forget about it. That just helped me forget about everything, just about life. I was just in my own world, the one that I wanted to be in. You know, which was just following footprints, sea monsters, a permanent trip. It helped me to forget. If I'd stopped sniffing, I'd start thinking about it. I knew one day I'd have to cope with it, but you know, I weren't ready to cope with it then....I know I smoked cannabis before I went to the school, but it was the gas that messed up my insides and my mind. It was the gas that did that, but that was due to the school, because it helped me forget about the*

school.....it would just help me forget how I was feeling. I'd just feel so numb and totally out of it. I was just in a world of my own, and that went on for a long time."

Justin is aware now that to sniff any more butane gas would be life-threatening. Only the threat of death is worse than his memories.

JUSTIN: *".....I used to get up at 3 or 4 in the morning to have a sniff of gas just to get back to sleep. I used to wake up in that much pain.....The addictions still there, I just don't do it anymore 'cos as far as I'm concerned when you look at yourself and your ten stones and then when you go past this mirror...and then all of a sudden all you see is skin and bones it shocks you...and that was it I said to myself if I pick up another tin of that and put it in my mouth again I'll die and ever since that day I've never touched it.....Once I packed that in, the amount of cannabis I started smoking just to get a buzz like, it was mad, it was, it was ridiculously mad."*

Family Relationships

Colin, Paul and Sean were the subjects of care orders, and had lived most of their life in foster care, or in Sean's case in foster care and residential school. Justin and Liam lived in residential schools. A significant feature of the life-story interviews for all these young men was

that they spoke little about either their birth families or their foster families. They all related to and judged themselves by their peer group. Neither their families nor their peer group were allowed true access to the private world of fear and doubt that these young men were living in. Continuous attempts were made, to prove to their peers that they were healthy "normal" young men, capable of all the behaviours and attitudes they perceived to be expected of them. The significance of the peer group could also be attributed to the age of the young men, but also to the absence or distance of family support. Justin had particularly strong feelings about his mother and step-father, as he feels they were instrumental in his initial withdrawal of his statement. He believes that they have never really fully appreciated the extent to which he has suffered as a result of being abused. His comments show how destructive child sexual abuse can be to family relationships, especially when the abuser has known the parents and successfully masked his intentions of sexually abusing their children:

JUSTIN: *"I didn't even want my mum at the fucking trial, I don't get on with my mum. I live less than five minutes away from her, I don't go...I do take Leo sometimes, I just find it hard to communicate to my mum. All this abuse and everything's only really just sunk in to my mum's head in the last couple of weeks as it goes.....You know what I mean, it's took her this long just to.....I see her trying to make up for things she didn't do years ago, you know, believe me when I told her the fucking first time*

and that upsets me a great deal, but she knows that hurt me a lot, her and Joe making me change that statement and going back to the school and getting abused again afterwards. That hurt me a great deal and I've never forgiven her for that.....I feel guilty for making her feel guilty, but it makes me feel better for making her feel guilty."

David had some ambivalence towards his mother, particularly when he was being abused, on the basis that his mother made the decision for him to have contact with Harry, even when he said that he didn't wish to go. In looking back, David is able to rationalise that his mother was not to blame for what happened:

DAVID: *"My mum feels a bit guilty, but I know that she wouldn't have sent me if she knew what was happening, I'm not blaming her. My tempers used to be really bad at home, and they're not anymore.....I had some after the abuse was stopped, but they weren't as bad as the ones when the abuse was going on. They used to really get mum upset, I used to have a go at her sometimes, I didn't want to know her, for making me go, I suppose.....She's talked to me about it and asked me why I had all the tempers and I said because I didn't want to go and you did, so I used to have to go. I don't think that no more and I don't blame my mum at all.*

Paul had similar feelings towards his own mother, who died whilst he was in foster care.

PAUL:.... *"I mean I know I shouldn't feel disrespect for my mum, and I still love her, but I don't think you can hide, there's no point in hiding and masking the truth and making excuses for people.....Just living with it, yeah it upsets me and stuff, it's just one of those things that happened and I can't change it now. There's no point in hating my mum for it....I suppose that deep down I know that my mum loved me or loved us."*

Sexual abuse caused significant strains between Ryan and his mother, who was very angry with Harry, the man who abused her son, but struggled to understand Ryan's apparent lack of anger. There were also tensions in that Ryan did not wish to attend a court trial, which in the event never took place, although Harry was convicted for sexually abusing David and several other boys.

RYAN: *"It dragged us apart when it all started happening, now it's brought us back together again, kind of perhaps in a way. Me and my mum are always arguing, we don't agree on anything."*

For many months and sometimes years, the young men were coping with these problems in secrecy and isolation, with immense feelings of guilt and shame. There were flashbacks which caused strong surges of feeling and emotion, which they often felt they had to contain and mask. This would sometimes lead to mood swings and difficult behavioural

consequences, which would then disrupt current relationships. Sometimes, as in the case of Colin and Justin, this would lead to drug and alcohol dependency, and for the latter, the contemplation of death as the only feared and containing consequence.

Writing and Drawing - Non-Verbal Accounts

David and Ryan were 15 years old when they were interviewed, they were within three years of their experience of being sexually abused. They were very keen to take part in the research and saw it as part of their recovery process, telling their stories to further validate their experiences, whilst at the same time receiving further help and support. They were young and their experiences were recent, they sometimes found it difficult to express their feelings in words. They were however, able to express their feelings in a non-verbal manner, using poetry, art, writing and drawing. Most of this was produced during the interviews, as a means of assistance to verbal communication, but the poetry was written in solitude, outside the interviews. These non-verbal accounts from Ryan and David complimented and added weight to their verbal accounts, and helped them to make a distinctive and valuable contribution to the research. This complimented the more extensive verbal accounts of the older participants, and underlines the importance and value of recognising and not prioritising verbal accounts to the exclusion of non-verbal communication in research methodology.

David's Road To Recovery

During the course of my conversations with David, I had used the phrase "on the road to recovery", to which in response David had suggested could be drawn out, this was done jointly. Using a large roll of wall

paper, a pavement was drawn, at the beginning was the date David remembered the abuse starting, the end was the present day. Major events were denoted by pelican crossings or traffic lights. The events which had taken place were listed in chronological order with David's memories or thoughts and feelings associated with the events alongside. This enabled David to construct a visual picture of the process he had been through, how he had survived difficult experiences, and was able to reflect upon his achievements, comparing past and present feelings.

The picture shows the turbulence in David's life, getting through one stage, such as the court appearance, feeling better, only to be later besieged by the onset of further nightmares or name calling at school. Gradually David was able to shun his feelings of responsibility and develop an improved insight into what had happened to him. David's experiences, thoughts and feelings reflect Sanford's "*checkerboards of strengths and weaknesses*" (1990,p16), and demonstrate the complexity of recovering from child sexual abuse. There have been many low points for David over the past few years, but these have been interspersed with positive achievements, events and experiences. David's account shows the amount of work he has had to do, in order to get over his abuse and concludes with a positive sense of his recovery and moving on. What follows is an exact transcript of what was written on the wallpaper, alongside the road drawing.

1990

Going to his house, being abused.

Being frightened to tell anyone.

1991 - 1992

Joining the group. Meeting the other boys, making friends.

Going to the group each week.

Bad feelings while waiting to go to court.

Feeling that I have done something wrong.

Getting angry about it.

Worrying a lot.

Learning that it was not my fault.

Talking about court.

Talking about how I feel in the group with the others.

Feeling better in the group.

Going to court, getting it over with.

1993 - 1994

Leaving the group, being back on my own again.

I was alright at first, but then I started to worry again.

Thinking he might come and get me.

Or that I might meet him.

Talking to mum about it.

Applying for the money (compensation).

Having trouble with school.

Bad times coming back again. Being called names.

Worrying about being gay and getting the names I was called.

Thinking about the abuse again and Harry.

Getting annoyed and angry about everything.

Having arguments at home.

Bad moods and losing my temper.

Getting compensation money.

Worrying that if I talk about it I will have to go to court again.

Getting more help and planning it

Talking about bits of the abuse I hadn't been able to remember or tell anyone about before.

Knowing that I definitely won't be going back to court.

Having plenty of time to talk about what happened.

Starting to work on my memory blocks.

Talking about my bad dreams.

Talking about the abuse in more detail.

Asking questions about sex and sex education at school.

Feeling better about me.

Feeling better about my body.

Understanding my body and how it makes me feel.

Beginning to do better at school.

More sex education and reading the book *Out in The Open* about other young people who were abused.

Looking at why I couldn't tell at the time it happened.

Becoming more able to talk about it, and how I feel about it now.

Being more able to talk about my worries about being gay.

More help with my memory blocks.

More talking about what happened and my memory blocks.

Talking about friendships and relationships.

Asking more questions about sex education, and borrowing some more books on it.

Understanding about being able to choose my friendships and my relationships if I want any.

Knowing that the abuse hasn't made me gay.

Understanding privacy and closeness between people.

Being able to help protect my younger brothers.

Not having to block everything out because of being afraid.

Not losing my temper too much.

Feel able to make new friends.

Not worrying about name calling anymore.

Feeling happier and more relaxed.

Feeling good about myself and my future.

Continuing with my life.

Feeling okay about all of this.

My future will be **Great** **DAVID: 1994**

David's account compliments many of the verbal comments from the other participants. When he was sexually abused, he was taken away and isolated. He was frightened to tell and felt responsible for what had happened. Going to court was a difficult experience for David and caused him considerable anxiety. He feels he benefited from meeting others with similar experiences in a group, which helped him through the court experience. After a while he began to feel better, but this was short-lived, and he began to ruminate over some of his memories, and began to have fears that when Harry was released from prison, he would come and look for him. At school, his anxieties and experiences were similar to some of those experienced by the other participants, a hostile peer group which was quick in accusations and sexual name calling. Like the others, David had a sensitive antenna to these comments and developed private fears about being gay. He had nightmares and was prone to mood swings and temper outbursts, which he was unable to

explain or understand.

Through talking, writing and drawing, David was able to look back and understand some of these feelings and began to be able to accept that he was not responsible for the abuse. This allowed David to confront some of his fears and talk about some of his dreams and flashbacks, which in turn enabled him to talk more about what had happened to him.

The Mixed Feelings Painting

David found it difficult to express some of his feelings, but it was clear that he did have feelings about what had happened to him, and was showing a great amount of confusion and ambivalence. As a medium of expression, I introduced David to the idea of associating different colours with different feelings, and that different feelings could be experienced at the same time in a similar way to different colours being seen simultaneously. David had very mixed feelings about the man who abused him, brought on by memories of treats and positive experiences alongside the abuse. He is aware that the experiences and treats took place so as to make the abuse possible, but nonetheless struggles with a mixture of good and bad feelings.

As I starting point, I painted a red margin and a blue margin and asked David to identify the difference in associated feelings between the two

colours. Blue was identified as cold, and red as hot. Using a feelings chart (showing drawn facial expressions) David was asked to select the ones which applied to the way he felt and identify a colour he could associate with the feeling. David moved from selecting solid colours and jointly painting them on to the paper in separate blocks, to mixing his own colours and painting them to overlap and cover existing colours. Between us, an abstract picture of swirling and changing colours emerged; a unique drawing, as David selected more and more feelings, and obtained a wide a range of colours.

The drawing was specifically produced in relation to David's feelings about Harry, the man who had abused him. Once painted, no additional attempt at interpretation is made, beyond this understanding and explanation of how and why the painting was produced. David has asked for it to be included as part of his contribution to the research. A photographed copy of the painting appears on the next page. The initial colour key was :

Red : Warm	Blue : Cold	Brown : Unhappy / sad
Yellow : Sick	Green : Good	Black : Scared / bad
Red : Excited	Purple : Worried	Orange : Happy / warm
Blue : Hurt	White : Hopeful.	



Figure 3
Feelings and Colours

Ryan's Poetry

Ryan's feelings were most vividly expressed through his poetry, which he wrote unprompted during the period in which he was taking part in the research interviews. The poems demonstrate the extremity of some of his feelings, which he often finds difficult to get in touch with in normal day-to-day interactions. During the research, Ryan explained that there often large parts of the day which he would forget, and that he seemed to have an ability to block out difficult or challenging experiences. He is unsure as to whether he wishes these experiences to be blocked out, or whether he has no choice about it. Some of these experiences appear to have features of dissociation. If this is the case then they are likely to be a coping mechanism. There are large parts of the abuse Ryan suffered which he can't remember, and the details he can remember sometimes vary from day to day. The poetry indicates the presence of deeply held feelings which are not easily accessed by Ryan, exemplified by sharp metaphors; *edge; ledge; pain; private hell; bottomless well; sorrow trap; wreckage at the bottom of the bay; baron land; unspoken words hidden from light; punch and bash; always awake*. The poems stand as a vivid testament to the experiences of all seven of the young men who took part in this research.

Who Me!

People say I can write

verse!

To me it sounds bad!

Don't try, if you read,

To understand me.

The verses I write

think how they feel,

Deep inside!

Far Too Late

Is it too late?

This feeling I hate.

My fate contemplate

on the edge

on this ledge.

My only way barred by a hedge.

Now I pledge

on this ledge.

Far to late

to contemplate.

My Hell

*Locked in these four walls
chained in this cell, I've got
my own private Hell.*

*Like a bottomless well,
Never ending the drop of my
moral. Will you help me break this
spell?*

*As you walk down the hall
be careful not to fall into
the sorrow trap.*

Fear

*That immortal scream
in dreams it came
it made me afraid.*

*Each raid my cave saved,
and aided me sometimes it
seemed to fade but I'm
Still afraid!*

Help

How can I stop this pain?

Please tell me!

Can I stop the pain?

It hurts so bad!

Help me stop the pain!

My soul is sore!

Help me stop the pain!

I Wish You Could See

As you sit and stare through the

mirror you don't hear my thoughts.

If you could only see what you mean

to me, it would fill me with glee.

To take your hand and take you on a

tour through this barren land of my

mind, from front to behind, inside you

would find the unspoken truth of

this matter, the unspoken words which

have lay so long, hidden from the light

of day which I long to say! To this day

I have found no way (?) In the wreckage

at the bottom of the bay, these words I long

to say.

Always Awake.

As I sit here in the sun,

I start to wonder through

my mind.

I laugh and joke with my

pride.

Punch and bash my dignity.

I then find an emotion I can't

understand, so I observe

and try to understand!

What are these feelings?

Sometimes harsh (?)

Sometimes soft (?)

Cold, warm too (?)

This emotion I can't control

for many years it takes

It forms, but in all its

Varying states hard to see but

always awake.

Ryan:1994

Summary

The young men have described some of the problems they were having: Flashbacks; recurring and intrusive (constriction and flooding) memories of the abuse; vivid dreams and nightmares; the use of alcohol and drugs to cope with the pain; large parts of memory being blanked out, possibly through processes of dissociation; mood swings; fears of losing control, self-control and control of situations; expressions of anger and temper; absconding and petty offending; homelessness; strained and estranged family relationships; isolation and unimaginable depths of deep private sadness. These experiences show a depth of meaning and intensity through being presented in the context of the day-to-day lives of the young men, where they interacted with other difficult life experiences, such as being in care, homelessness and so on. David's art work and Ryan's poetry, represented dramatic condensations of these experiences and feelings. A non-verbal access to the feelings and experiences of the younger men in the study, amounting to a vivid contribution to the research.

6.) Being a Participant

The research methodology has already discussed the extent to which a secure and safe (anti-hegemonic) context was set up for the interviews. In being able to tell their stories in such detail, it is possible that the telling of the story has validated the experience, and that perhaps the young men are able to reflect upon their experiences in a changed manner, hopefully with an improved insight. During the interviews, comments were made by some of the young men about how they felt about taking part in the study, and whether or not they feel they have either benefited or enjoyed the process. Benefiting largely refers to the impact of talking through difficult experiences and whether or not a level of improvement of well-being has been achieved, perhaps by expressing emotions that have been held on to, or by developing a better understanding of private fears and doubts that have hitherto not been shared to any significant degree. Enjoying the process refers to a level of enjoyment received by virtue of receiving positive attention and taking part in something which could be of benefit to others. The young men also expressed a view that knowing me from before, was helpful, in that a level of trust was established, and they knew what to expect.

In my discussion of the methodology I expressed caution about the use of the term empowerment in research reports, arguing that the term could sometimes be used to facilitate a "feel good" factor for the researcher,

and that in the current study it was important to remember that taking part in the research will not have significantly changed the material lives of the participants. It could however be argued that by breaking down some of the hegemonic myths, through the manner in which their stories were shared, and the responses that the young men received, that a level of personal empowerment through insight may have taken place. Consider the comments from Paul about his changed feelings of responsibility.

PAUL: *“Nobody else knows how I felt and how I feel about Martin and Kevin..... I know it's irrational. I know it now, you know like talking about it and stuff, because like I say nobody's ever known how I felt and how I feel about them times, so nobody's ever been there to say it's alright, it's not your fault, there was nothing you could have done. I mean that's my fault for not telling anybody.....The time has come that it's got to be let go because somebody else finally knows what I went through during that time and that person can turn round to me and say there was nothing you could have done, you were too young and you did what you thought was right at the time and that is OK....The fact that I've never told anybody, nobody could ever help me out. I just needed somebody to lift it off....It's just like lifting a huge great big weight off me....To know that I haven't been judged and that it is irrational to think the way I have thought is a good feeling. It really is, it's kind of emotionally exhausting in a way but it makes me feel good. It makes feel as if there is some other purpose to my life.....You don't need to feel guilty. You don't need to feel*

ashamed....But the feeling of you know, feeling dirty and cheap, them sort of feelings, there not so easy to get rid of, because they're not the sort of things that somebody can say it's not you're fault."

Justin commented on the extent to which he trusted me, even though he is often wary towards males. His comments highlighted the importance and significance of the on-going support offered through the research agreement. Since the end of the research and support period, my contact with Justin has significantly faded, in that he rarely contacts me now, although he has a long term interest in the outcome of the research. Prior to the research period he maintained a level of informal contact, this was partly due to the fact that there was a long waiting period for his compensation hearings, and that his life was in turmoil. When Justin talked about his fear of abusing his children he stated why he felt able to tell me about it, and related it to the day he first told me about his abuse over five years ago.

JUSTIN: *".....You know I get nervous of things like that, but I've never told that to anyone before.....You can see I should really tell Ruth, but I can't because I know she wouldn't take it serious....but I seem to be able to tell you virtually everything.....You're really understanding. You see like that day when I rode over in the rain. I had to tell somebody and I thought well who can I tell, I'll go and see Andrew, he's a man I can talk to and it's been like that ever since. From the first day I met you, when I*

was in foster care, I thought you were somebody I can talk to.....It helps quite a lot, I've enjoyed doing the talking, getting it off my plate ...that's helped relieve a bit of pressure as it goes.

David and Ryan expressed similar views about the benefit of being able to talk through their difficult experiences.

DAVID: *"I don't mind talking about the abuse as long as it gets it out of me, the stuff that's embarrassing what was done to me, the abuse. The whole thing. I was trapped*

RYAN: *"I don't really speak to people, you're the only person that like since I've known you that I've really spoken to about this kind of thing."*

Liam and Sean commented on the fact that the research process had enabled them to remember and discuss matters which they had either forgotten or blocked out.

LIAM: *"It's hard for me to remember this because basically I've blocked it out for many years. I don't talk about it or anything. You know, it's only just now that it's coming back. I trust you, this is basically the reason why I came today, trust somebody and talk about it, openly, like I think I've told somebody, you're not the only person that's going to read this, if it gets published or anything, you know, so I mean what the hell, you know*

If I talk about it it's in the tape machine, on the paper, and not stuck in here, in me anymore."

SEAN: *"It's bringing up stuff that I thought I'd forgotten about...it was alright, I felt comfortable talking about it, it's not as if I didn't want to talk about it.....It's OK, I'm not bothered about talking to you about it."*

Colin saw the research as an opportunity to sort himself out, and come to terms with needing to talk through his experiences, he was concerned about remembering things he had blocked out.

COLIN: *"I still had and still have some anxieties, so I thought it would be good to discuss those so I could get them out in the open. It's the first step, anxieties about going to the bog and getting close to other males, so I thought well, the first step to recovery is to discuss it, go in the open and admitting it as a problem. I thought it would be a good opportunity to get it sorted really and.....that helped, the fact that I know you from before and trust you.....I had some doubts about whether or not it would bring up some things I didn't want to remember.....Well if it will help somebody, even if it only helps one person, that's fine."*

A draft of this chapter and the previous chapter has been shared and discussed on separate occasions with Colin and Liam. They have maintained an on-going interest in the progress of the research, and

have often contacted me. Most of the discussions have been general, they have both viewed drafts of this and Chapter 4. They were pleased with the manner and extent to which their identities had been concealed, and enjoyed seeing their own contributions being used, and expressed agreement with the overall approach to the research and its conclusions.

Being a Researcher

Conducting a research study of this nature will inevitably have an impact on the researcher (Kelly, 1998a). From my previous social work experience I was aware that working with young people who have been sexually abused would be challenging and stressful, but, also that assisting their recovery was not unrewarding. In conducting the interviews I felt a level of personal responsibility to ensure that the participants did not suffer, and that in some way they would benefit from the experience. My sense of responsibility and emotional investment deepened as the research progressed, and the extent to which some of the young men had suffered became clear. Listening to these seven stories, first hand, and in parallel was very stressful. For a period it placed me alongside the young men and these experiences, and deepened my understanding of what had and was happening to them. Throughout the research, I have felt very close to the transcripts, to the extent that even now, as I read them, I can remember the individual voices, diction, intonation and so on. My formal supervision, at the

university and from my employment in social services has therefore been very important to me. Not necessarily in terms of talking to any great extent about this personal impact, but more in maintaining an on-going supportive awareness of the potential stresses involved. I will always remember the young men who took part in this study, and wonder how their lives have progressed.

Summary

The young men who took part in this study have stated that they felt supported in being able to share sensitive information about their experiences of child sexual abuse. Some of the young men clearly stated that they felt they had benefited from taking part and had been able to let go of fearfully held feelings. Finally it was noted that conducting a research study of this nature will have an impact on the researcher, and that supportive supervision was essential.

Conclusions

A post-structural analytical framework has been employed to theorise the impact of child sexual abuse on the lives of seven young men. The framework draws on the tensions between structural theory and post-structuralism, utilising Cooper's (1995) concept of "organising principles" which influence inter-personal power relationships. It allows a socially contextualised exploration of inter-related common and diverse experiences. Whilst recognising common experiences, analysis of the individual accounts from the young men highlight the uniqueness of each experience; how they have been lived through, continue to be lived with, and coped with.

The young men's experiences of child sexual abuse, were characterised by asymmetrical power relationships. The research has shown how and why the adults used their personal and situational power in a planned pre-meditated manner, to gain access to the children, to sexually abuse them and subsequently silence them. The young men have explained how difficult and frightening it was to tell about the abuse, and how difficult it was to live with the consequences of telling. They continued to live with long established private fears, whilst having to cope with moving into public scrutiny.

The young men had to negotiate their experiences and fears on a daily

basis, in a hostile social context. Peer group experiences were particularly difficult, where individual fears and beliefs were compounded by the behaviour of other young people, who were themselves having to negotiate the same patriarchal context. In this respect, some of the statements from the young men have as much to say about sexuality and adolescence, as they do about child sexual abuse, in particular, the influence of compulsory heterosexism and homophobia, which for some of these young men set up processes of internalised oppression, which had a significant impact on the beliefs they had about themselves and how they behaved. As a consequence of being sexually abused, the research shows that some of the young men placed themselves on the margin in terms of their masculinities. In particular, they expressed concerns and anxieties about their sexuality and sexual identity, and how they are perceived by their peers. As a strategy of resistance and survival, some of the young men engaged in compensatory external behaviours based on these fears, aimed to demonstrate a conformity to dominant masculinities. Ironically, in some circumstances their behaviour served to compound and carry forward the processes from which the internalised oppression had emerged.

Alongside these behaviours, the young men lived through a parallel private world of anxieties doubts and sexual confusion, based on the nature of the child sexual abuse experience, and the nature of the relationship constructed by the abuser, which was sometimes

experienced by the young men as having aspects which were positive. This fed into feelings of responsibility and voluntarism, further exacerbated by the experience of physical pleasure or sexual arousal during the abuse. On a day-to-day basis many of these memories and fears were, and in some cases continued to be compounded by flashbacks and nightmares, some of which are triggered by peer experiences, particularly sexual experiences, whether it be during sex education lessons, or during an intimate relationship, or during day-to-day sexualised conversation.

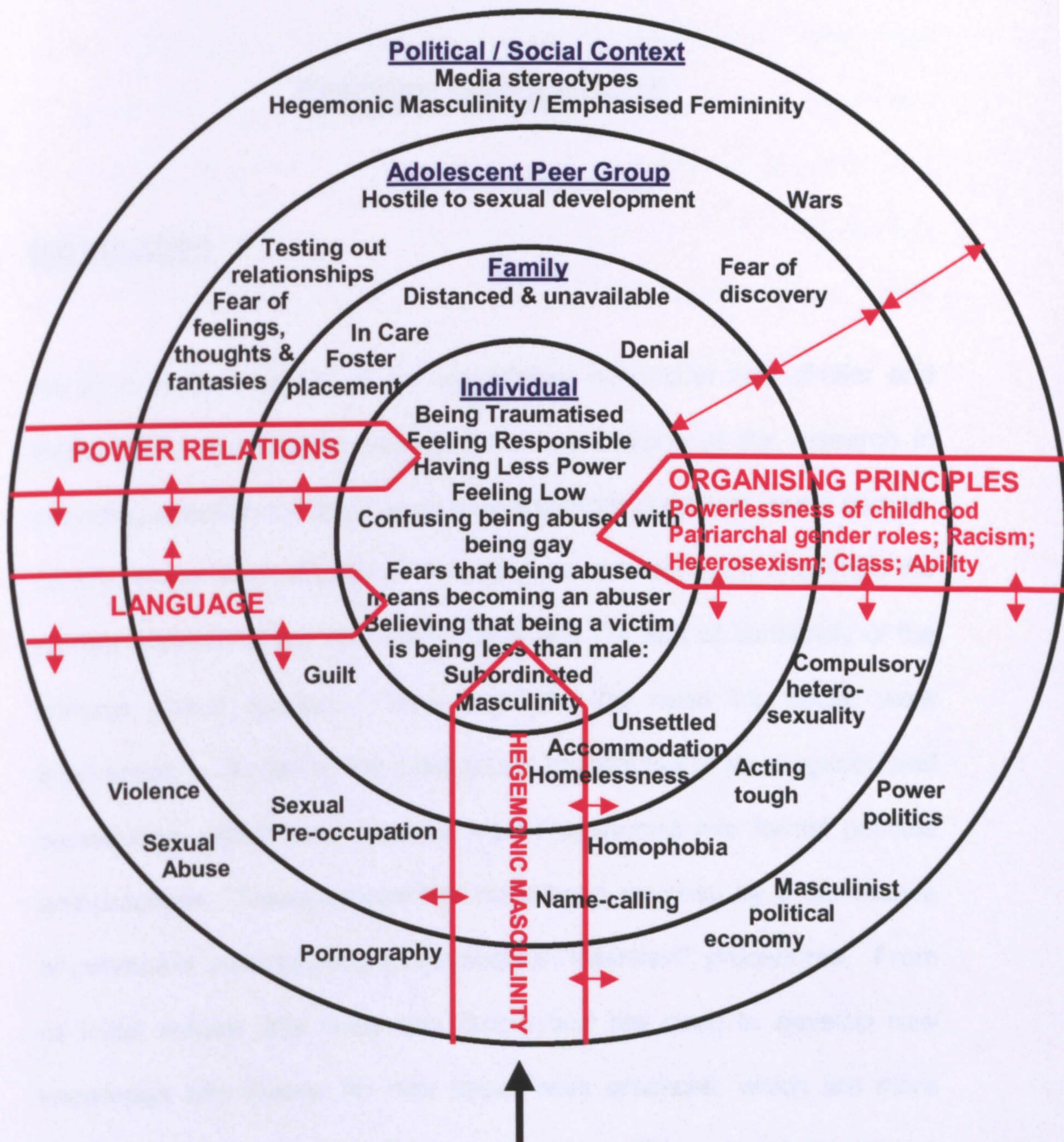
For some of the young men, the pain of living with their memories on a daily basis led to, and again in some cases continued to lead to, the use of alcohol and drugs or solvents to block out the memories. For others, there were uncontrollable mood swings and strained relationships with family or partners. With the exception of the two youngest participants, the young men experienced a significant distance or estrangement from their families, this served to increase the importance of peer relationships, although this may have happened as a normal feature of adolescence. Three of the young men expressed concerns about abusing others or people believing that they would become abusers as a result of being abused.

The young men felt safe enough to express these private fears and concerns in a detailed manner. This in itself is a testament to the

appropriateness of the research methodology. It underlines and demonstrates the value of practitioner research. The young men were unanimously positive about taking part in the research, saying that they could trust me as a researcher, and that much of this trust was based on their previous knowledge of me as their social worker, and that they knew what to expect from me in terms of how the interviews would proceed. This underlines the importance of a careful selection process, and the provision of appropriate support before, during and after the interviews. The young men felt that they were able to get feelings off their chests, and that they weren't (or didn't fear) being judged. Some of the comments made by the young men were made for the first time, and had been held on to at considerable personal cost for a long time.

In taking part in this research, the young men's experiences may have been changed, through new understanding and the letting go of painful memories and feelings. The extent to which this may have amounted to a level of personal empowerment, can only be considered in the light of acknowledging that whatever the outcome, the young men have lives which continue to be difficult and disadvantaged. Without being overly deterministic and pathologising, it has to be acknowledged that child sexual abuse has potential long term consequences. The young men in this study have shown many strengths in struggling to survive adverse and extreme circumstances.

Some of the experiences of the young men are represented in Figure 4 below, which is a substantive theoretical application of the formal theoretical representation presented in Figure 2. This represents a discourse of male-child sexual abuse, showing how many of the young men's experiences and beliefs have been socially constructed throughout the course of their lives, with they themselves playing their own part in carrying forward beliefs and expectations.



Generating a context and climate within which child sexual abuse can occur. Prolonging, intensifying and exacerbating its impact.

Figure 4
The Socially Contextualised Experience of Male-Child Sexual Abuse

Chapter 6

Practice Implications

Introduction

As an important aspect of the practitioner-researcher role (Fuller and Petch, 1995), this chapter analyses the implications of the research in providing direction for developing new and more child and young person-centred social work practices. The young men's accounts challenge the current legalism of the child care arena and the lack of sensitivity of the criminal justice system. They highlight the need for social work intervention to challenge the mechanistic procedures of investigation and prosecution, which have become legally enshrined into formal policies and practices. These approaches have been matched by a dominance of potentially pathologising psychological "treatment" procedures. From its initial stages, this study has recognised the need to develop new knowledge and theory, for new social work practices, which are more helpful for those recovering from sexual abuse. This research has shown a rare and different view of child sexual abuse, which is likely to be helpful in overcoming some of these problems.

1.) A New and Clearer Framework for Social Work Practice

Unlike much of the existing literature, the experiences of the young men do not (and should not be made to) fit easily into analytical or diagnostic categorisation. Such approaches not only locate both the problem and its solution within the individual, but also divert attention away from seeking social solutions to what this study has shown to be a widespread social problem. However, sociological approaches, which take a purely structural perspective, potentially homogenise the individual experience, laundering out difference and diversity. Alternatively, a purely post-structural approach to the problem of child sexual abuse will allow an analysis of the individual experience, and will centralise issues of language, power, gender and sexuality. However, there is a danger that focusing on the individual experience could again be pathologising. Common experiences of the impact of widespread social oppression could be misinterpreted as being individual factors.

The analytical framework used in this research study has sought to overcome many of these problems, and consequently has important and significant implications for better and more helpful social work practice with sexually abused young men (and others). The framework allows a socially contextual analysis of the individual experience, which recognises the role of language in creating and carrying forward oppression, alongside recognising the importance of power and sexuality. It does not exclude consideration of individual psychological

factors, such as trauma responses and dissociation, but does not allow these factors to be considered in isolation from the individual's socially lived in world.

The theoretical framework developed through this research has made an original contribution to a wider field of social work practice. It has vividly explicated the apparatus of oppression and social disadvantage, as a context in which to understand diverse individual experiences. The framework has distilled the essence of post-structuralism, without losing sight of the continuing potency of structural divisions, based on "race", class, gender, age, ability, and sexuality. The framework allows an analysis of interpersonal power relationships and highlights the significance of language in mediating, carrying forward, supporting, and being supported by oppressive discourses. The framework has usefulness for a wide range of social work practice, and is a valuable tool for the analysis of oppression in a wide range of changing circumstances. It has a fluidity which makes it immediately applicable to the turbulent arena of social work practice. It provides a circular link between theory, research, practice, future research and so on.

2.) Child and Young Person-Centred Practice

The link between research and practice is further sustained through the study's sensitive methodology itself, which has implications for the way in

which future practice should proceed. There are strong connections between how this research was conducted and how social work practice should proceed. In both arenas, there is a need for a knowledgeable and perceptive approach which takes full account of the needs and wishes of the child or young person, and the impact of social oppression.

There is a need to go beyond a simple adoption of the term “child-centred”, which has been used in a neutral and moralistic sense, to justify varied adult-centred practices, which fail to establish any significant detail of children’s perspectives (MacLeod and Saraga, 1991). Approaches to practice need to incorporate a critique of dominant social constructions of childhood which emphasise innocence and powerlessness, moving towards alternative discourses of empowerment and childrens competences, recognising their strategies of resistance, struggle and survival, helping them to name their own oppression (Kitzinger, 1997). This research study has shown that it is important to approach practice from a perspective which empowers the child or young person, by allowing him (her) to theorise his (her) own experience. This involves paying careful attention to the words used by the young person, to explain and describe experiences which have taken place. This allows the young person’s “story” to unfold, in a manner which has personal and private meaning and texture, elucidating the day-to-day realities of their lives. As this research has shown, in order facilitate the unfolding of the story, it is necessary to create the right environment in which to engage

the young person in a positive and supportive manner. Such an environment would need to be anti-oppressive (anti-hegemonic, anti-homophobic, anti-heterosexist, anti-racist etc.), and would need to involve supportive, caring and appropriately defined relationships, to allow the young person to feel safe in letting go of fears and anxieties which may have been long and deeply held on to. As the research has shown, many of these fears are likely to be based upon the nature of the abusive experience itself. They may additionally be based upon subsequent personal and social experiences, including inappropriate and unhelpful social work responses, which may have in themselves, further constructed and compounded the initial impact of the abuse.

This research has shown the importance of taking care to listen for clues in the language and the manner in which the young person describes his experiences. Single words or phrases can reveal complex social pressures, peer group fears and internalised oppression. An example of this was given by Justin's use of the phrase "*one of my friends who knew that I was sort of queer*". Through this phrase, Justin invoked the intersecting discourses of homophobia, of children and young people being responsible for being abused, and of the misconceived link between being abused and abusing others. He had carried and internalised the implications of these discourses for many years, which influenced how he saw himself, how he managed his relationships and interactions with others, causing considerable pain, struggle and

suffering. The analytical framework drawn together in this research allows these words and experiences to be placed in their context, in a manner which captures the interpersonal power relationships, and the daily dynamics and textures of a young person's individual life, in an overarching context of social oppression. The framework can be used to help us understand these experiences, and to help us convey a helpful insight to the young person.

This approach allows an exploration which appreciates the young person's positive use of personal power, no matter how great or small that may be, in struggling to survive day-to-day experiences. The young person is not and was not powerless, although he did have significantly less power than the person who abused him. He may have significantly less personal and social power than those who continue to oppress him, but he is not utterly powerless. The study has shown how the young men used the small amounts of power they had, in varied ways, to resist and survive the experiences they suffered. The study has shown how the abusers manipulated the young men's existing social exclusion, to create sustained opportunities to sexually abuse. The framework allows an insight into the social circumstances, and "normal" power relationships, that allowed an adult or other person to feel able to make the decision to sexually abuse. It reveals the discourses which supported that person's authority, abuse of power and "rightness" about what was to take place, often in a manner which engendered the young person's "wrongness" for

“allowing” it to happen. These distortions are supported by the use of social oppression and popular mythology to reinforce these feelings and beliefs, and to further silence the young person into shame and feeling responsible. Through this framework, a young person can be helped to understand how and where the adult was situationally located, in terms of being able to use his social and personal power, in planning the abuse. Also, how the abuser was able to support his activities by calling upon multiple aspects of oppression, based on age, class, ability, gender, “race”, sexual orientation, heterosexism, homophobia and so on.

The sensitive approach implicated by this research has the potential of narrowing the power differential in the adult-young person relationship, towards a greater equality, which allows personal feelings, fears and anxieties to be expressed. Through the process of telling the story, with the power and expertise in the hands of the teller, the young person may have a better and more helpful conversation, and consequently gain a different perspective. This may lead to greater insight, with the young person being helped to see where he is located, and the multiple range of influences and discourses which have shaped his fears and stifled and smothered his hopes. He can be helped to recognise how the words he has “chosen” to use have wide ranging social meanings, and have become vehicles of prolonged internalised oppression. These suggestions have consistencies with some of the narrative approaches to practice suggested by White and Epston (1992), and the broader based

The analytical framework of this research gives both young people and practitioners insight into the personal and social circumstances of the young person's experiences of sexual abuse. It provides the practitioner with a starting point and a framework for supportive and sensitive intervention, in helping young people recover from sexual abuse. It allows an approach that uses an analysis of narrative in a contextualised manner, accounting for the uniqueness of the individual experience, without losing sight of how those experiences are shaped by social circumstances. This approach allows many of the young person's problems to become externalised. It provides a deep understanding which centralises, gender, sexuality and power within helping strategies for work with boys and young men, in a similar manner to work Kelly (1988a) has undertaken in relation to women and sexual violence. There is currently little available in-depth knowledge of this nature, which specifically relates to the experiences of boys and young men.

The study's methodology strongly suggests a practice approach towards young people who have been sexually abused, significantly moving away from the pathologising framework of adult-centred psychological and legal practice frameworks. Such an approach is consistent with that suggested by Butler and Williamson (1994), being child and young

person-centred. This involves recognising the impact of adult power, making every attempt to establish and respond to the child or young person's view of the experiences being discussed, addressing and validating the trauma, without imposing adult interpretations and distortions of meaning. Also recognising the importance of trust and confidentiality, and of involving the young person, offering choice and autonomy, in a context of having an understanding of why they are telling. This is a skilled and knowledgeable approach, equally relevant to research and practice, which is able to clearly convey to the child or young person, a sense of being in control and being safe.

3.) Providing Helpful Services

The young men's experiences presented in this research, have significant implications for the nature and type of services which need to be set up, in order to help and support young people who have been sexually abused. The research has shown that the current legalism of the child care system is harmful, and that significant improvements could be made. The stories also suggest that there needs to be a wider and more flexible range of services, which are able to meet young people's longer term needs.

The research has shown the lengths to which abusers are prepared to go in order to gain access to children and young people, and make sure that

their abusing remains undetected. The majority of the abusers were adults who were known to the children, often holding positions of trust and formal responsibility. This is not to forget the risks presented by strangers, as Colin's case has shown, they can be substantial. The research highlights the diversity of circumstances through which children and young people can face risks of being sexually abused. This underlines the importance of preventive programmes to provide full information about the wide range of circumstances through which abusers may operate, and the wide variation of their social background. Broader media campaigns, making links with sexual abuse and domestic violence, would challenge myths and stereotypes about abusers. These would further contribute to environments which break down silences, and ensure greater protection (Mullender and Morley,1994; Bagley and Thurston,1996a; Wolfe et al,1997).

The research underlines the need for more to be done to ensure that people with intentions to sexually abuse do not get into positions which provide them with formal or professional access to children and young people. It highlights the importance of appropriate training for members of staff in residential and other child care institutions, so as to enable them to become aware of the nature and impact of child sexual abuse. It would also lead to improvements in the detection of on-going abuse, from adults or peers, from either within or outside the institution (Green and Parkin,1999). The study also shows how important it is for child care

institutions to have policies which sensitively and appropriately define the boundaries of the professional relationships between children and staff. Such institutions need to have frequent and thorough inspections, which should ideally include substantial independent contact with the children and young people living in them. Inspections should ensure that they have support and safety networks, including unfettered regular access to confidential telephone help lines, such as Childline or the NSPCC child protection phone line (Butler and Williamson, 1994). Greater child protection would more generally be achieved by an approach which promotes an increased consultation and participation of children and young people in the running of the institution, and other matters concerning their lives, based on a children's rights perspective, which challenges the adult-child power relationship, and extends the voice of the child (Myers et al, 1999).

The research has shown how difficult it is for children and young people to tell about being sexually abused, and how unhelpful some professional responses have been, particularly within the legal and criminal justice system. This suggests a need for a radical re-think about the procedures to which children and young people are subjected, when all they may really want to do is tell, and or possibly simply gain access to some form of help. This study suggests the need for children and young people to be provided these opportunities, without necessarily having to fully go through the processes of a formal investigation. This suggests a need

for a more diverse range of services, which may or may not necessarily involve legal processes, or perhaps delay the involvement of legal processes, to a point where the child or young person feels stronger and more able to cope. When it is necessary to involve legal processes, the study suggests that they need to be significantly amended, to become more "child-centred", taking account of what young people have said about being on the receiving end, making sure that every effort is made to prevent them from experiencing further harm. This study challenges the fairness of the requirement for a child or young person who has been sexually abused to appear in court. It has shown that when this does happen, the potential for further harm is great.

In attempting to work effectively within the current legal system, the research has provided ideas for helpful and supportive social work intervention, regardless of the stage at which an investigation has reached (Durham,1997). It has been shown that there are significant aspects of harm, which are either generated or exacerbated by the wider social context in which the sexual abuse has occurred. The wider and more generalised beliefs, which are likely to have been oppressively internalised, have been shown to have a notable and detrimental impact on the young person's self-esteem and feelings of social, sexual and personal competence. The research has shown how these factors may also contribute to a child or young person's sense of being responsible for having been abused. By helping a young man gain an insight, which

breaks down some of these beliefs and socially generated myths, he can be helped, in an indirect way, to develop a better, more balanced and less harmful understanding of his experiences. In other words, the young person can be helped to develop strategies to dismantle the more generalised apparatus of his internalised oppression. This would potentially lead the young person into having an improved insight and ability to survive and sustain himself through a difficult stage of his life; a stage where he is having to anticipate the likely oppressive outcome of having to appear as a witness in a court case. This work could be undertaken without discussing the factual details of the young person's abuse, until it had been presented in court as evidence. Taking this indirect approach is a compromise, in response to what the research has shown to be an unhelpful legal context, which often places evidential requirements before needs and wishes of the child or young person. This is not to deny the importance of prosecution, but to question the means by which it is currently achieved. In this study, Justin and David received a level of validation through being believed at a court trial. Prosecution was important for Colin, he stated that *"....if there was anything that could have nailed him I'd have done it"*.

The research has challenged a linear model of recovery. It has shown how prolonged the impact of sexual abuse can be, and how after periods of recovery and survival, young people may experience set backs and the return of abuse related problems. This may occur, for example, when

significant life events are faced, such as becoming involved in consenting sexual relationships, or becoming a father, or perhaps a family bereavement. This research challenges the wisdom of time-limited post-abuse services, which are often a response to organisational demands and priorities, and often a far cry from the needs of the child or young person. The expectation of recovery after a short time-limited intervention, if not fulfilled, may in itself convey a sense of failure. A young person, who having gone through such a programme, may still feel the impact of being abused, and may well be in need of further help and support. The research suggests a need for the provision of a diverse range of flexible specialist services, which are user friendly and non-pathologising, with less strictly defined cut-off points. These services would allow a young person to have access to on-going support, additionally providing security in the knowledge that they are available, even if not used. It would be helpful for these services to include aspects of peer support, and the involvement of other survivors of child sexual abuse (Scott, 1992; Durham, 1997). This means thinking beyond current organisational structures within statutory agencies (particularly the divisions between adult, mental health and children's services), so as to be able to provide appropriate support across the life-span (NCH Action For Children 1994).

Conclusions

This research has significant implications for the development of future forms of social work practice which are potentially less pathologising than many existing services and forms of practice, which are dominated by either a medical (and) or legal framework. The research has provided a framework for future social work practice which recognises the significance of narrative and discourse, in a context of social oppression. It has provided a starting point; listening to what is communicated by the child or young person, verbal and non-verbal, and holding onto and responding to their needs and wishes as far as possible. The research has shown how relevant and important it is for social work intervention to allow the young person to have the maximum possible control over the consequences of reporting sexual abuse. Without this, telling may amount to secondary abuse. The research has shown the complexities of surviving and recovering from sexual abuse, and has highlighted the need for a more flexible approach to the provision of services across the life-span.

Conclusions

This study has shown that an anti-oppressive life-story methodology, combined with a practitioner research approach, is capable of producing unique and epistemologically significant research information; the nature of which is less obtainable by other methods of enquiry. The study has centralised and validated seven young men's accounts of experiences of child sexual abuse, and has contextually analysed its impact in close detail. The study has explored common and diverse experiences, attempting to capture the texture and meaning of the unique integration of the impact of child sexual abuse into each of the young men's lives. The study has advanced an analytical framework which has drawn on the tensions between post-structuralism and structuralism. Importantly, the study has made a fresh link between research and social work practice, presenting exciting and original possibilities for non-pathologising social work practice with young men who have been sexually abused.

The research methodology has strongly emphasised the issue of participant support, recognising the extreme sensitivity of child sexual abuse as a research topic. An attempt was made to create a safe research environment, which has been described as being "anti-hegemonic", allowing the young men to feel safe in expressing sensitive and raw feelings, in the knowledge that they would receive appropriate and supportive responses, before, during and after the life-story

interviews. The subject was approached in an anti-oppressive, anti-homophobic and anti-heterosexist manner, seeking to recognise and account for the actual and potential power imbalances involved in conducting the research. The majority of data generated was verbal, but this was not prioritised to the exclusion of non-verbal accounts, the data therefore included poetry and art work. It is recognised that conducting the research as an experienced social work practitioner has contributed significantly to the research method, methodology and epistemology.

The life-story approach has generated data suitable for detailed post-structural analysis of the young men's individual experiences. However, the data and literature led to further theoretical perspectives, which signified the necessity to develop an approach which also accounted for the young men's common experiences, especially in relation to social oppression. In meeting this need, the analytical framework advanced by the research attempts to chart a middle way between the over-determination of structuralist theory, and the potential fragmentation of post-structuralism. This has allowed an analysis of diverse individual experiences, without losing sight of widespread social oppression and social divisions, operating through asymmetrical power relationships based on gender, age, "race", class, ability, and sexuality. The framework allows an analysis of the unique interwoven and interactive influence of these factors, but also recognises their individual potency in potentially determining the outcome of social interaction. The

framework's emphasis on power relationships was shown to have particular relevance for the study of child sexual abuse.

What The Stories Have Told Us

In substantive terms, the research has shown how and why experiences of child sexual abuse have had a serious and long lasting harmful impact on the lives of the young men who were interviewed. The young men, having already lived through difficult and disadvantaged childhood circumstances, were subsequently sexually abused through asymmetrical power relationships, constructed by adults in positions of formal, official or social authority. Often, the adults commanded social circumstances which allowed them to have significant degrees of control over the young men's lives, and allowed them to abuse them and subsequently silence them. The young men were made to feel guilty and ashamed of being sexually abused, and that telling would be met by criticism, blame or disbelief. The young men's accounts revealed their many and varied strategies of resistance in surviving these adverse circumstances. Those who formally reported being sexually abused found their involvement with the legal system distressing. Those who did not formally report their abuse found the prospect of being involved with the legal system potentially stressful.

Further theoretical connections have been made between the centrality

of sexuality and power in post-structuralism, and the nature of experiences of child sexual abuse. It was recognised through the work of Foucault (1976) and others (Weedon, 1987; Cooper, 1995) that sexuality is a central locus of power in post-structural theory. Compulsory heterosexuality, homophobia and eroticised power are also recognised as being central to patriarchal constructions of masculinities (Kaufman, 1987; Connell, 1989; Seidler, 1989), or more accurately, men's practices (Hearn, 1997). The experiences of the young men were analysed in relation to these social constructions, which were identified as being a social context which allows the sexual abuse of women and children to happen. The young men's experiences showed that the manner in which they perceived their masculinities had a significant exacerbating influence on the impact of being sexually abused. There was evidence of internalised oppression based on beliefs about experiences of sexual abuse not being consistent with social constructions of hegemonic masculinities (dominant forms of men's practices). The young men carried homophobic fears which were daily reinforced by their peer group experiences. The research and literature (Bremner and Hillin, 1993; Nayak and Kehily, 1997) established that homophobia and internalised oppression were not uncommon amongst male adolescent peer groups. It was shown that these beliefs had become more threatening and pronounced, as a result of the young men's experiences of being sexually abused. There was evidence that through privately held fears and misinformation, the young men conflated

their experiences of sexual abuse with gay sexuality. Consequently, all of the young men developed fears of being gay or being “accused” of being gay. Additionally, some of the young men took this further and lived in fear of abusing others, or being accused of abusing others. In particular, some of the young men commented specifically on how they felt being abused had caused them to worry about how they would be perceived as fathers, caring for their own children. All the young men’s accounts showed that they were oppressively affected by their peer group interactions, living in fear of “discovery”. In order to evade this discovery, some of the young men embarked on patterns of behaviour which they perceived to be a conformity to dominant social constructions of men’s practices, as Liam said, “*acting the homophobic*”. In a circular manner, this served to reinforce patterns of hegemonic masculinity, and heightened their fears of “discovery”. The research recognised that in a context of patriarchal relations, these fears were reinforced by the media, in its responses to gay sexuality, child sexual abuse and sexual offending, and more generally in its portrayal of masculinities through imagery and popular culture.

In the months and years which followed the sexual abuse, the young men continued to have difficulties with their lives. Social pressures and flashbacks kept the wounds open, and once again drove some of the young men into silence and secrecy, concealing their memories and feelings. In surviving and resisting social pressures, some of the young

men used drugs and alcohol to block out memories and get through the days. The stories have also shown perspectives of hope and resistance. The research reminds us that it is important to recognise that those who live their lives out on the margins often have prodigious strengths, and that what is amazing, is not that they fail, but how often they triumph (Sanford, 1990).

Two of the young men had not previously discussed or reported their abuse, taking their research participation as an opportunity to finally relieve themselves of the burden they had been carrying for many years. All the young men welcomed the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about being sexually abused, and stated that they felt they had benefited from taking part in the research. A cautious approach is taken to drawing conclusions about how much the young men benefited, and the extent to which they experienced any form of empowerment. This is in recognition of their continuing disadvantaged lives, not helped by the impact of child sexual abuse and its interaction with other life experiences. This challenges a linear model of recovery, it was recognised that the young men had different and changing experiences, having good days and bad days, ups and downs, sometimes being able to move on into new experiences and phases of their lives, other times falling back into the pains of the past.

A New Framework For Non-Pathologising Social Work Practice With Young Men

This research has recognised that existing services are overly legalistic and mechanistic, and that psychological “treatment” procedures are pathologising in their reference to “diagnosis”, “symptoms” and “characteristics”. These approaches have the potential to compound inadvertently the child or young person’s oppressively internalised understanding of how and why they have been sexually abused. This underlines the need to develop forms of social work practice which consciously seek to externalise the problem from the young person, in a manner which unequivocally places the responsibility for the abuse where it belongs; with the abuser.

Whilst there has previously been significant gender-centred research and practice in relation to work with women and girls who have been sexually abused (Kelly, 1988a; Hall and Lloyd, 1989), this has not been the case in relation to males. This research has attempted to provide new ideas for social work practice with boys and young men, which centralise issues of gender and power. It has drawn attention to the importance of these issues to be considered for all young men, through a wide range of practices, for example, in their schooling, and their general health and social education (Wolfe et al, 1997). In particular, the anti-oppressive methodology and the analysis has provided a practical and

theoretical framework for non-pathologising social work practice with sexually abused young men. This is an approach which has an emphasis on supporting, empowering and assisting a child or young person's recovery, recognising their strengthening through survival. It provides the space for a young man to gain insight into how his hopes, fears and beliefs have been socially constructed. It provides a starting point for the practitioner, in terms of approaching the provision of assistance from the perspective of the young man. This involves paying careful attention to the words used by the young man, to explain and describe his experiences, taking time to pick up on the important clues they may give about internalised oppression and distorted beliefs about responsibility, and about what a young man may think being abused means.

This research has highlighted the need for services to be more flexible and child and young person-centred. It has shown how harmful and traumatic the mechanistic procedures and the current legalism of the child care arena can be for those on the receiving end of investigation procedures. Whilst recognising the urgent need for radical changes in the legal system, the research has provided helpful ideas for supporting children and young people caught up in the unacceptable delays and traumas of the current system.

The research has shown the important need for appropriate training for

staff members of child care institutions. It has demonstrated the urgency of ensuring that those with intentions to abuse do not get into positions where they have power and authority over children and young people, underlining the need for regular and unfettered inspection. It has shown the importance of providing a range of supportive opportunities for telling, and the need for on-going flexible services to be provided across the life-span.

Implications for the Academic Discipline of Social Work and Practitioner Research

This study has shown that the academic discipline of social work has made an important, unique and original contribution to a fuller understanding of the nature of child sexual abuse. This understanding has utilised, validated and centralised the narrative of the individual experience of the young person, in an analytical context of discourses of social oppression operating through patriarchal constructions of power relationships, based on gender, "race", class, age, ability and sexual orientation, the rapprochement being the development of theoretical understandings, and helping strategies which are more sensitive to the needs of the young person. The study has found this approach to be inadequately conceptualised in other disciplines, and has identified considerable scope for improvements in current social work practice. It has provided a knowledge base from which to challenge the current

medical and legal dominance within the professional child care arena.

The study has itself contributed to the academic discipline of social work, by explicating a fresh and strong link between theory, research and practice. It has extended, clarified and validated the role of the social work practitioner researcher. Through a common value base, practitioner research provides a link between the framework of professional social work practice and academic social theory. Social work as an academic discipline will always need to go beyond being simply an academic discipline, to have reference to a value and skill base (Parton, 1999). Through research, further knowledge is generated; a dynamic and interactive process of praxis. Social work knowledge and theory, validated by research, contributes to the development of appropriate and helpful anti-oppressive services.

In this study, social work skills were central to the research method. The research has subsequently informed new recommendations for social work practice and future research; the skills of the researcher were close to the skills of the practitioner. Social work practice provides access, for the practitioner researcher, to the experiences of some of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in society (Parton, 1999). Prior involvement in social work practice with young people who have been sexually abused provided an experiential knowledge base for the researcher. This informed the sensitive anti-oppressive research

methodology, and provided the skill base from which to conduct the research, and subsequently support the participants, taking particular care not to exploit them. In analysing the outcome, the knowledge and skills of research provided a framework for a theoretical understanding which has in turn provided new and fresh ideas for future social work practice. This practice will provide opportunities for future research. This circular and central relationship between research and practice strengthens the academic discipline of social work, and will ensure that it will continue to make a meaningful contribution to the knowledge, values and skills of social work practice.

Finally, it is hoped that the young people who have contributed to the knowledge generated by this study, and others who in some way become aware of it will benefit. It is also hoped that future research and other professional practices will become more anti-oppressive, and allow the voices of children and young people to be heard, fully understood and responded to in a more helpful manner.

"I don't think it was my fault, what happened. What's happened has happened, I can't turn nothing back. If I could I would, but I can't. But then if I turned it back my life wouldn't be what it is....." (Justin, research participant).

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