

# THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the nature of patriarchal relations and argues that they constitute a social context that 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 boys and men, the concept of masculinity is critically analysed. It is recognised that there are hegemonic or dominant forms of masculinity that have a particular influence on the sexually abused male. The first section, 'Patriarchal Relations', examines the history and construction of patriarchal relations, looking at the intertwining of biological sex with gender, oppressive heterosexism and the widespread historical and present-day domination of women and children by men. The next section, 'Hegemony and Resistance', considers the concept of 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. This is followed by a critical examination of the social construction of masculinities, recognising that they are multiple, dynamic, shifting, and changing. There are, however, forms of masculinity that 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.

Finally, the chapter 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 rediscovery 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 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.

## 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, p. 10), 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, p. 7). 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 occurs through his development of a masculine gender, as defined within patriarchy. There are two important features here. First, patriarchy is an ongoing process that 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 that determines their impact on people's lives. Second, the distinction between sex and gender, which is purposefully conflated by patriarchal construction.

The intertwining of sex and gender has historically been supported by sociobiologism, using concepts relating to hormones and perceived natural attributes (e.g., physical strength, 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). Kaufman 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.

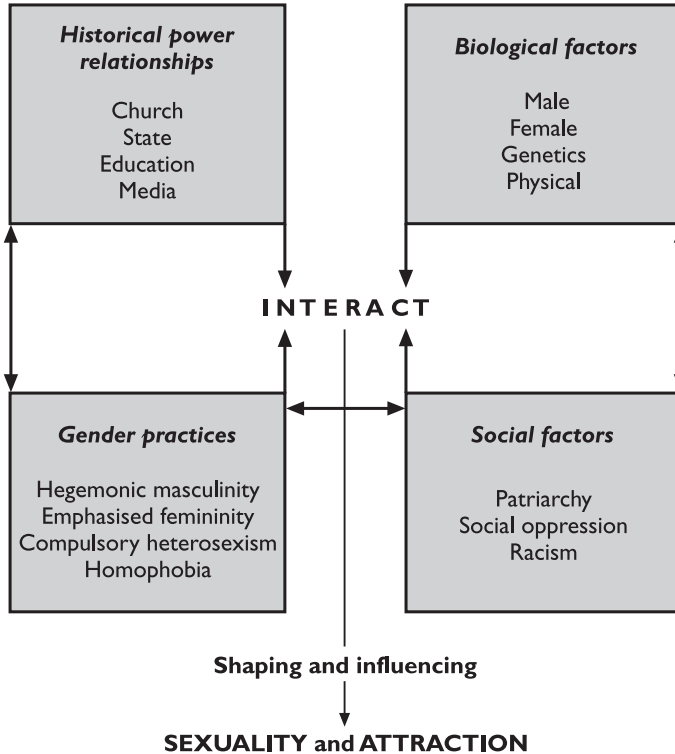
Historically, patriarchal relations have been responsible for circumstances of extreme violence against women across the world: Indian sutteeism (the custom of women throwing themselves onto their husbands' funeral pyres); Chinese foot-binding; African genital mutilation; European witch-burnings; and American gynaecology (Daly, 1978). The dynamic essence of patriarchy is well captured by Daly, who uses the analogy of noxious gases that are lived, breathed, but not always noticed, and carried by the body, surreptitiously permeating interpersonal relationships. Daly (1978, p. 3) refers to the need to seek out 'the sources of the ghostly gases' and destroy the false perceptions that have permeated into the minds of women. She identifies four methods that she refers to as being essential to the games of the fathers: 'Erasure; reversal; false polarisation

and divide and conquer' (p. 8). 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 reconstructed for the benefit of men. She describes her work as an extremist book rewritten 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 worldwide 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, language or phraseology that would carry forward and extend patriarchal discourses, thus influencing, shaping and often determining 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 (e.g., active, strong, and self-reliant for men, and passive, weak, and dependent for women). The intertwining 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 1.1). Additionally, the dichotomous definition of gender implies that two opposites make a heterosexual whole (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994).

In this way, gender is embodied literally as an apparently truthful fixed entity and 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, 1993). 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



**Figure 1.1** The social organisation of sexuality and attraction.

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, 1993, p. xiii)

Paradoxically, both Freud (1973) and Foucault (1976) theorise difference from heterosexuality, often oppressively conceptualised as 'sexual perversion' or 'sexual deviation', in a manner that makes it culturally central (Dollimore,

1991). Freud argued that 'perverse' (1973, p. 245) 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 that enables social control, defining and producing the margins in order to create and maintain the centre (Foucault, 1976). According to Dollimore (1991):

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. (p. 222)

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 that 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, p. 227).

Queer theorists argue that power relationships can only be fully understood from the vantage point of 'anti-homophobic inquiry' (Warner, 1993, p. xiv). 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 Part II 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 homoerotic bond. This often takes the form of aggressive behaviours: a public transference of inner tensions and anxieties on to others. Steinberg et al. (1997, p. 11) 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, that is supported through pervasive organisational, institutional, familial and interpersonal relationships. Figure 1.1 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.

## 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 that conceals its conflict within (i.e., until the balance of power changes and internal contradictions become revealed). Thus hegemony implies struggle and resistance, and consensus will always involve contradiction, 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 that 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 and the need to dominate implies resistance by definition, such processes producing reverse discourses. Dominant and subordinate discourses are constructed mutually. Discourses aspire toward 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, arguing that their

power should not be solely defined in terms of being resistant 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 ongoing 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 redefined. Patriarchal relations have the ability to adapt, 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 (1987) 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 et al., 1987, p. 164, italics theirs)

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 rediscovered, 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 that are 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). Part II 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 setbacks and social confrontation in which sometimes the only way out was to adopt language and behaviours that 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, while privately wishing to be able to behave differently.

## 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 among men, 'hegemonic, conservative and subordinated' (1987, p. 110), 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. Taking this forward, it is possible to conceptualise a more dynamic multiplicity of contested masculinities, interacting with other 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, p. 214) 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 that moves toward questioning the term 'masculinity' itself. On the other hand, it is recognised that there are dominant forms of masculinity that 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, there is no simple question of choice about which 'masculinity' to present where. There are particular forms of masculinity that are deemed to be socially acceptable, and particular forms that 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. Part II 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 that are heterosexual are more powerful than others.

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 1980s and 1990s. Part II shows that sometimes these beliefs and understandings were quite static practical beliefs about how to behave and think in a manner that avoids peer group oppression, criticism, and ridicule. In

other societies, or at different stages of the lifespan, in different circumstances, these beliefs and understandings may be very different.

## 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 intertwining or conflation of biological sex and gender potentially creates confusion and doubts for the individual. For the male, masculinities defined in terms of strength, 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 and 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 (e.g., the power of capitalism and politics or the power within an ongoing 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, 1988b).

Masculinities have become inseparably linked to masculine sexualities, often as a set of behaviours separate from emotion (Seidler, 1989). Frosh (1993) not only refers to the phallus as a symbol of masculine authority but as something complicated and unavailable to the individual experience that cannot be lived up to in the manner that 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, p. 12)

The repression of men's bisexuality 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 toward women and children, but toward the self and other men as well. Kaufman (1987) traces this back to the acquisition of gender, which he argues is based on the malleability of human desires, the lengthy period of human childhood as a period of prolonged dependency and powerlessness, and sustained 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 that 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, p. 119). 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, p. 9) that provide 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. 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, 1988b; Herman, 1990; Macleod and Saraga, 1991).<sup>1</sup> The feminist movement has played a significant role in the social rediscovery of child sexual abuse. There has been an ongoing struggle for social acceptance of the existence of sexual abuse and for a better

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<sup>1</sup> It 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. Saradjian (1998) found that there was a greater sense of anger toward 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 caregiver 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.

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 that obfuscate child sexual abuse have been identified in recent research by Taylor-Browne (1997a, b). 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 reformulation into a theory relating to fantasies of unfulfilled sexual desire directed toward 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 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, p. 14)

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 that recognise the struggle of personal experiences in their social context. The dominance of psychoanalysis has led to a perpetuation of theoretical perspectives that construct child sexual abuse as a diagnostic category, with professional responses being defined in terms of treatment as opposed to assistance and recovery. Women's and children's experiences are defined in terms of medical pathology, ignoring their political and social context, failing to directly confront the causes of sexual abuse, and avoiding direct confrontation of the abuser; for example, the family dysfunction model that 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 reframe the experience of being sexually abused.

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has examined dynamic post-structural understandings of diverse masculinities that shift and change 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 on to 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 study.

An understanding of the social construction of masculinities in a context of patriarchal relations gives perhaps the greatest clue toward an explanation of why men commit acts of sexual violence toward 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, 1988b).

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, p. 1) 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' (1988b, p. 27) and is supported by MacLeod and Saraga, who have argued that a recognition of the importance of gender, power, and 'ideologies of childhood' (1991, p. 8) is helpful to those attempting to help those in need of recovery.

Social constructions of masculinities have a potentially significant, detrimental impact on the manner in which sexual abuse is experienced and on subsequent behaviour that may hinder recovery. Boys and men who have been sexually abused have themselves been influenced by patriarchal relations. The experience

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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 (similar oppressive processes are likely to occur for girls and women, in terms of their received beliefs about 'femininity'). 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 that 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 that will allow them to move forward in their lives as individuals, friends, partners, fathers, and so on.