

**DISCOURSE AND POWER IN THE SELF-PERCEPTIONS OF
INCARCERATED SOUTH AFRICAN FEMALE SEXUAL OFFENDERS**

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This research report is submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg in partial fulfilment of the degree of Masters of Arts in Research Psychology

DECLARATION

I, Sherianne Kramer, know and accept that plagiarism (i.e., to use another's work and present it as one's own) is wrong. Consequently, I declare that this research report is my own unaided work.

Signed: _____

Date: May 2010

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to the following people, without whom this research report would not have been possible:

-My supervisor, Dr Brett Bowman, whose unfaltering commitment to my work has kept me motivated throughout this project. Your intellectual insight has provided me with so many novel understandings of this world. Thank you for helping me realise a potential within me that you envisioned way before I could.

-My father, Peter, for always supporting my thirst for knowledge. Thank you for providing me with an education and allowing me the privilege to get to this point in my academic career. Thank you also for your keen interest in my work and the time you put aside to read this report. Your comments and suggestions are always valuable and constructive.

-My mother, Arlainé, for your ongoing love and friendship. You have always provided me with comfort when I am stuck and you have always believed in me when I could not. Thank you for your constant encouragement as well as your faith in my ability to attain my goals. Your support has been the driving force behind my achievements.

-James, for your generous kindness, patience and understanding. Your enthusiasm for this project has given me so much inspiration. Thank you for walking with me to the finish line and giving me the incentive to get there.

-To the most special friends, Jade, Julie and Olivia, for your ongoing support, encouragement, guidance and understanding. Thank you for never allowing me to experience anything alone- your constant presence and availability throughout this project, and my life more broadly, is so precious to me.

-To Dr Brendon Barnes for making Masters in Research Psychology a possibility. Thank you for your commitment to your students. Your support is so much appreciated.

-To the University of the Witwatersrand for the merit scholarship that made this study possible.

-Finally, to the participants for your bravery. Thank you for sharing your stories and showing yourselves to me. Your words will remain with me always.

“We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it” (Foucault, 1978, p. 101).

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, RATIONALE AND AIMS

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Female sexual offenders have recently become the subject of increased medical, legal and public attention (Giguere & Bumby, 2007) provoking conflicting reactions of both disbelief and fascination amidst the general public (Lawson, 2008). Despite this increased interest, the legal system insists that female sex crimes are rare regardless of the fact that “when various individuals are surveyed about their sexual victimization experiences, the incidence of female perpetrated sex crimes is often higher and much more variable” than expected (Giguere & Bumby, 2007, p. 2). Additionally, lay discourses concerning female sexual perpetration remain charged with expressions of disbelief and doubt (Mathews, 1996) and the vast majority of medical, legal and public attention on sexual crimes therefore remains focused on male offenders (Giguere & Bumby, 2007). As a result, female sexual offenders are understood and treated differently to their male counterparts in the media and medico-legal contexts (Brockman & Bluglass, 1996).

The question therefore arises as to what accounts for the continued denial of female sexual perpetration and, more significantly, how such beliefs around female sexuality, in turn, shape the self-knowledge of female sexual offenders. Wilbraham (2004, p. 488) argues that sexual beliefs arise from historicised and institutionalised discursive practices that provide “parameters of normality and abnormality... [which inform] questions of self, subjectivity and sexuality”. These normative parameters construct subject positions for individuals by providing sets of rules and practices for sexual behaviour. Such discursive practices are invisible as well as taken for granted as knowledge and truth. Foucault’s (1978) concept of disciplinary power refers to the circulation of these institutionalised discursive practices which results in modern power relaying normative discourses onto all sites of existence. As such, disciplinary power, as the nexus of knowledge and power, regulates and constructs individual bodies and, more significantly, shapes individuals’ self-knowledge of their subjectivity and sexuality. It is in this way that “pervasive networks of authorities, techniques and practices...shape the conduct of individuals and populations” (Wilbraham, 2004, p. 490). It is therefore crucial to investigate and define the

various discursive structures at play in understanding female sexuality and its historical and current relationship with systems of power which Foucault (1978) maintains is deeply rooted in the history of modern systems of self-regulation. In turn, this understanding will provide a framework in which female sexual offenders' self-knowledge can be investigated. Specifically, this research seeks to examine the intersections between female sexual subjectivity and sexual offending in terms of the discourses female sexual offenders draw on to construct their identities. This investigation therefore aims to illuminate how disciplinary power acts to produce self-knowledge that in turn leads to the discursive coordinates by which female sexual offenders come to define themselves.

1.2. RATIONALE

Although the scientific literature base concerning female sexual perpetration is gradually growing in volume, most authors focus on the actual offence rather than on the subjective experiences and perceptions of female offenders. One exception is Lawson's (2008) research which provides a description of female sexual offenders' experiences in their everyday lives. However, this study is based on a thematic content analysis that focuses on interpersonal relationships rather than critically taking into account the macro-level discourses that feed into female sexual offenders' micro-level experiences and identities. The current study addresses these scientific oversights as well as provides a platform from which to account for the discursive silence on female sexual offenders. This is significant as society is generally guided by powerful normalising discourses regarding social concerns such as sexuality and criminality (van Dijk, 2001). Such discourses render female sexual perpetration improbable through gendered and sexualised social constructions. As such, even when a female sexual offender attempts to explain her actions without reliance on gendered constructions, she is often silenced by 'expert' discourses that rely on dominant understandings of men and women. Consequently, the female sexual offender is often only allowed to express herself when she does so through a conceptual framework that relies heavily on social constructions of 'normality'.

As Denov (2003, p. 312) argues,

each time a female sex offender raises her "voice," she is reopening the space within which new knowledge and discourse can be produced about women who sexually offend. However, research...has shown that each time a female sex offender "speaks," there are explicit attempts by criminal justice and mental health professionals to mute her voice, actions, and

responsibility and once again rely upon the "known truths" about women. The criminal justice responses to female offending which result in a lack of formal sanctions may, at times, be advantageous to women. However, there is a cost and it is a price that arguably all women pay. Women are relegated to limiting, narrow frames of reference. They lack agency and responsibility for their actions. If women's voices are to be heard, it would be beneficial if they could be heard in all possible forms, whether in compassion, in protest, or in violence.

As such, this research attempts to open up new possibilities for the production of counter- knowledge and discourse for the expression of female sexuality.

This research also avoids the common scientific objective of demonstrating differences between male and female sexual offenders (Brockman & Bluglass, 1996) and rather investigates *why* these apparent differences are structured in particular ways and come into existence in the first place. In light of this, female sexual offenders' self-knowledge serves as a vehicle to demonstrate broader social discourses on female sexual subjectivity and their relationship to patriarchal systems of power. Consequently, this research exposes power relations operant in society and, in turn, calls for a more complex, variable and dynamic understanding of both gender and sexuality as instruments and effects of modern power.

According to Levenson, Brannon, Fortney and Baker (2007, p. 21), myths and misperceptions concerning sexual offenders in general are widespread in society and "exposure to more accurate information can facilitate attitudinal changes about important social issues" which in turn "could enhance public education and prevention". By exposing how and why these misperceptions are socially constructed, academics, policy makers and the general public will have access to a different and novel understanding of female sexuality in light of sexual offending. This has practical implications for the acknowledgement and awareness of female sexual perpetration as well as for future preventative efforts.

As of December 2008, the South African correctional services held 3482 female offenders of which only 24 were sexual offenders (Department of Correctional Services, 2008). According to Brockman and Bluglass (1996), as a consequence of prevailing disbeliefs about female sexual perpetration, the legal system treats female sexual offenders with greater leniency than it does

their male counterparts. That is, female sexual offenders are rarely incarcerated for their sexual crimes and those that are tend to receive lighter sentences than male sexual offenders (Giguere & Bumby, 2007; Denov, 2001). If the legal system, and in fact society in general, is genuinely sceptical about the existence of female sexual offenders and is consequently more lenient on them, then this small number of incarcerated female sexual offenders is possibly both a false representation of the true number of female sexual offenders as well as a cause for serious concern.

Finally, because “in our society sex is seen not just as a means of biological reproduction nor a source of harmless pleasure, but, on the contrary, has come to be seen as the central part of our being, the privileged site in which the truth of ourselves is to be found” (Weeks, 1981, p. 6), the study of female sexual offending represents a strategic point of entry into understanding the way sex, gender and identity intersect to produce a node of modern social transgression that is itself an instrument and effect of power.

1.3. RESEARCH AIMS

The primary aim of this study was to identify and examine knowledge and power in the production of the self-perceptions of incarcerated female sexual offenders. This was achieved by interviewing female sexual perpetrators and thereafter drawing on critical discourse analysis (CDA) in order to interpret the transcriptions of these interviews. CDA addresses social concerns by recognising how discourse, as an historical, social and cultural constituent, has been used as a means to construct and conceal power relations (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). That is, power is enacted through discourse in language, speech, actions and images (van Dijk, 2001). The key objective of CDA is to distinguish “the links between discursive practices and broader social and cultural developments and structures” by analysing discourse at the micro level of language in interpersonal conversation as well as at the macro level of ideology that filters into this discursive practice (Phillips & Jørgenson, 2002, p. 78). It must be noted here that discourse, as understood by CDA, is different from Foucault’s concept of discourse which regards discourse as both an effect and an instrument of power that operates through selection, exclusion and inclusion (Foucault, 1981). However, Foucault (1981) only offers two forms of analyses: critical analysis which examines the role of exclusion and restriction in discourse and

genealogical analysis which investigates the historical production of discourse. Neither form of analysis applies to this research. As such, this study attempted to use a Foucauldian framework as a theoretical paradigm and CDA as an epistemological paradigm. However, this procedure was complicated by the fact that theory and epistemology cannot easily be separated from one another. Accordingly, it must be acknowledged that, because a neat division between epistemology and theory is not viable, the consequent merging of distinct methodological frameworks is complex and often problematic. The results should therefore not be understood as solely the outcome of a simple and straightforward CDA process but should rather be viewed as influenced by both the theoretical paradigm and the epistemology that frames them.

Wilbraham (2004) argues that discourse, as an historicised and institutionalised set of norms, rules and practices, locates subject positions for individuals by providing categories that produce and define self-knowledge. Following Foucault's (1978) theory of disciplinary power, this study therefore aimed to analyse the various systems of power at play in society especially in terms of how these systems produce self-knowledge and enforce self-discipline as a means to maintain supremacy and control. More specifically, this study investigated how power and knowledge operate together to subjectify female sexual offenders. While dominant patriarchal structures utilise discourse as a means to transmit, produce and reinforce power, this study draws on discourse as a means to undermine and expose this power. That is, "critical discourse analysis is 'critical' in the sense that it aims to reveal the role of discursive practice in the maintenance of the social world, including those social relations that involve unequal relations of power" (Phillips & Jørgenson, 2002, p. 63).

Specifically, in line with Butler (1999), this research interrogates the types and structures of language in which gender and sexuality are produced in order to shift understandings of these constructs by articulating "discursive elements...in new ways" (Phillips & Jørgenson, 2002, p. 76). The aim of this research is therefore to explore "a self that takes place in a language that is already going on, that is already saturated with norms, that predisposes us as we seek to speak of ourselves" (Butler, 2004, p. 69). Such an exploration allows for the understanding of how self-knowledge, as a target of regulatory power, is constructed and produced. In essence, this will

entail an investigation of how a patriarchal society transfers its lenses from the social system onto the individual in order to ensure the production of gendered subjects (Bem, 1993).

At this point it is necessary to delineate the ontological position of this study. Primarily, Foucault's concept of discourse and power remains paramount throughout the investigation. Here, "power is inscribed *within* discourses" and, as such, discourse has its "own intrinsic technology" that transmits, produces, reinforces and sustains power and in this way constitutes social subjects (Purvis & Hunt, 1993, p. 488). However, while this understanding of power is useful, it does not account for the relationship between gender and patriarchal forms that is necessary for the understanding of female sexual offending. That is, because Foucault regards power and patriarchy as not necessarily a product of patriarchal rule but rather as an element of diffuse social discursive practices, it is useful to draw on theoretical terms such as 'ideology', 'dominance' and 'patriarchy.' While these terms may carry a somewhat anti-Foucauldian sentiment in terms of Foucault's (1977) conceptualisation of disciplinary power and self-surveillance, they do resonate with Foucault's (1978) work on the historical construction of sexuality and its relationship to state control and his recognition of the interplay between institutional practices and discourse. This said, it is necessary to acknowledge the theoretical tension in utilising terms that may, in some ways, contradict the Foucauldian framework of this report. However, given the subordinate position of female sexuality in the context of South Africa, these terms do offer a necessary understanding of the production and reproduction of dominant and subordinate social relations. As such, in the context of this report the term 'discourse' focuses on the internal and linguistic functions of communicative processes while 'ideology' focuses on external practices of social actions. Importantly, ideology is not meant to be understood in a reductionist sense but rather as a means to understand the role discourse plays in the constitution of social subjects and society more generally. That is, discourse constitutes subjects and "ideology represents those specific forms of discourse whose contents are inadequate to articulate those social categories (classes, groups, etc.) who are constituted through those discourses" (Purvis & Hunt, 1993, p. 484).

While ideology remained a significant concept throughout the investigation, Foucault's theories on discourse production and disciplinary power were paramount. As such, an exploration of the

way female sexual subjectivity is constituted, produced and regulated was conducted through the investigation of broader discursive practices that come to speak through the female sexual offenders. By doing so, this research provides a framework for the understanding of how points of disciplinary power are embedded within the discursive practices of female sexual offenders and how this, in turn, produces the offenders' subject positions. Because dominant patriarchal systems arise through discursive practices, this study focuses predominantly on actual moments of discourse. Additionally, these discursive moments are understood in terms of their political, ideological, historical and social implications. In light of this, this research report seeks to answer the following research questions. How is disciplinary power effected and relayed through sexualised and gendered discursive practices? How do discourses on sexuality, gender, maternity, criminality and perversity shape the self-knowledge of incarcerated female sexual offenders? And, by extension, how do discursive practices produced at the intersection of knowledge and power account for the continued denial of female sexual perpetration at the level of the offenders themselves?

1.4. STRUCTURE AND OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

Chapter 2 reviews the literature in order to locate the study within the context of gendered and sexualised social constructions and within the theoretical framework of Foucault's concepts of sexuality, disciplinary power and discourse. The literature review provides a comprehensive outline of gender and sexuality by taking into account various ideas put forward by leading feminist writers including Judith Butler, Sandra Bem and Jeffrey Weeks. Furthermore, the review considers sexual offending, both as a production of modern power and as a result of sexualised prevailing discourses. By doing so, the review positions the female sexual offender's identity at the intersection of her gender and her sexuality. These ideas form the foundation of further arguments built into the literature review concerning the legal and medical regulation of female sexual offenders as well as the representation of these women in the media. Previous studies are also discussed in order to surface various scientific oversights that ensure the maintenance of the female sexual offender as an unfathomable construct.

Chapter 3 outlines the research design and method utilised in order to develop the study. The sampling techniques, means of data collection, and data analysis approach are described and

supported with theory. Significant ethical considerations are also discussed and a section on self-reflexivity is included in order to account for the researcher's subjective role in the research process.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the analysis. The chapter is structured as a discussion that locates the various discourses arising from the texts in light of the arguments put forward in the literature review. A broad description of the sample is followed by an analysis of the female sexual offenders' discourse which included rationalising discourse, gendered discourse, inversions of their femaleness, perceptions of the legal and correctional systems, institutionalised discourse, discourse on rehabilitation and expressions of morality and docility.

Chapter 5 concludes the research report with a summary of the findings. It also provides both theoretical and practical recommendations as well as acknowledging the various strengths and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. THE FEMALE SEXUAL OFFENDER: AN OVERVIEW

Sexual perpetration discourses are rooted in constructions of the male perpetrator and the female victim. These prevailing discourses are central to most understandings of sexual offending including those of the medical system, the legal system, the media, the scientific literature and the public domain. As such, sexual perpetration is constructed as a predominantly male activity and female sexual perpetration is considered rare, insignificant and harmless (Denov, 2001). These beliefs are reinforced by recent scientific studies that acknowledge the existence of female sexual perpetration yet continue to insist that it is nonetheless rare (Cooper, Swaminath, Baxter & Poulin, 1990; Davin, Hislop & Dunbar, 1999; Higgs, Canavan & Meyer, 1992). Moreover, these studies are in direct conflict with self-reports which suggest that female sexual perpetration is, in fact, “not rare, but rather under-recognized” (Denov, 2001, p. 306). This disparity results in conflicting prevalence rates of female sexual offenders which range from 1-8% in scientific studies as opposed to the approximately 58% reflected in self-reports (Denov, 2003). In South Africa, only 6.9% of all incarcerated female offenders are sexual perpetrators (Department of Correctional Services, 2008).

When female sexual offenders are recognised and acknowledged, they are generally grouped into one of three categories. Such typologies only serve to limit the true heterogeneity of female sexual offenders (Brockman & Bluglass, 1996). That is, the creation of categories creates discrete classifications that cannot represent the complexity of the individual they label. Additionally, these typologies often bear no relationship to legal or treatment requirements thus only serving to construct deviancy (Freeman, 1996).

The first category relating to female sexual offenders is the ‘Lover/Teacher’ type who rarely inflicts physical harm and views herself as a sexual educator. Her victims are primarily male children and adolescents (Higgs et al., 1992). Both prepubescent and adolescent victims seldom view an incident of female sexual perpetration as traumatic and subsequently criminality in this

category of female sexual offenders is often overlooked. This lack of recognition is in line with the prevailing belief that sexual interaction with an older woman provides “the ultimate educational experience” (Travers, 1999, p. 36). The second category of female sexual offenders is the ‘Predisposed’ type. These female sexual offenders are regarded as arising from “a long transgenerational familial history of sexual abuse... [resulting in] intense feelings of worthlessness” (Higgs et al., 1992, p. 136). This type is “described as very emotionally disturbed, psychotic or sociopathic” (Travers, 1999, p. 35). Such pathologising discourse is often used by the medico-legal system as a means to justify and rationalise the female sexual offender’s crimes. It also fails to recognise that many female sexual offenders were raised in homes with positive emotional climates or come from families that have never been abusive (Bourke, 2007). Finally, the third category encompasses the ‘Male-Coerced’ type which describes female sexual perpetrators that act under the often abusive instruction of a male accomplice (Higgs et al., 1992). In most of these cases the female offender is romantically involved with or married to the male offender and the victim is usually a family member or their own child. While the majority of these relationships are described as abusive, there are cases where the female offender is an aggressive rather than a coerced participant (Vandiver, 2006). Either way this typology reinforces traditional sexual scripts which implicate females as passive or as victims of male sexual aggressors without considering the alternative (Denov, 2003). It also ensures that responsibility for sexual perpetration is placed on the male rather than the female accomplice and that the female perpetrator becomes the female victim (Bourke, 2007). For Denov (2003) female victimisation and passivity is used to explain female sexual perpetration because gendered discourse constrains the possibilities of generating alternative conceptual frameworks for these women’s behaviours.

Research conducted on the basis of these three apparent categories maintains that most female sexual offenders are white women aged between 20 and 30 who target both male and female victims that are usually younger than 12 years old. Additionally, solo offenders are more likely to act with a male victim while offenders acting with a male accomplice seem to target female victims (Vandiver, 2006). Outside of these three categories are other explanations for female sexual perpetration. Some perpetrators are understood as acting out of a financial need. This is particularly with regards to mothers who sell their children for prostitution. These women are

characterised as both impoverished as well as corrupted by an underprivileged lifestyle. Other perpetrators are regarded as mentally ill, hypersexual or as suffering from menstruation or hormonal effects. This theory is however limited as most of the evidence is developed from samples that are already in psychiatric care for other reasons. Additionally, female sexual perpetrators are far more likely to be sent for psychiatric help than their male counterparts (Bourke, 2007). Female sexual offenders are also often regarded as alcoholics or drug abusers (Vandiver, 2006). Significantly, none of these typologies or theories of causation locate the responsibility for the crimes entirely within the perpetrator. The fault seems to have an indirect frame of reference rather than the more direct one that is often applied to male perpetrators. That is, female sexual offenders' crimes are likely to be justified according to a variety of aetiologies whereas male sexual offenders are often simply understood as being unable to control their natural tendency to be sexually aggressive. This understanding is particularly based on gendered sexual scripts that imply that men have difficulty controlling their innate sexual urges (Denov, 2003).

According to Brockman and Bluglass (1996), other studies that have been conducted on female sexual offenders depict these women as a heterogeneous group that cannot be categorised as neatly as Higgs et al. (1992) have suggested. This is emphasised by self-reports that depict female sexual perpetrators as exhibiting a range of acts that cannot be compiled into simple typologies. Such acts include child sexual abuse, non-consensual sexual interaction with men, forcing men to perform cunnilingus, statutory rape, gang rape and the raping of incapacitated or unconscious victims (Bourke, 2007).

Lawson (2008) maintains that despite the continued denial and justification of the female sexual offender's actions, there is currently an increased scientific interest in the area. The motivation to admit female sexual perpetration into awareness came in the late 1970s as a result of sexual abuse becoming a central social issue. It was also due to the need to undermine feminist thought that male aggression and sexuality resulted in female sexual victimisation. Before this, gender was only discussed in terms of sexual perpetration as a means to demonstrate the absence of female sexual perpetration (Bourke, 2007). The current increased awareness of female sexual offenders is a slight movement away from the previous outright denial of female sexual

perpetration, especially with regards to rape (Freeman, 1996). Sexual perpetration, in general, has been the object of a long history whereby previous permissive sexual behaviours have gradually become classified, regulated and placed under the surveillance of disciplinary power and knowledge (Foucault, 1978). In light of this, female sexual perpetration cannot be understood outside of the historical and social productions of sexuality, and in turn gender, that serve to maintain its status as an inconceivable concept.

2.2. SEXUALITY AND GENDER AS SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTS

The categories of sexuality and gender can be more critically appreciated through the understanding of their historical, social and cultural contexts which in turn provide insight into the way discourse and power interact to produce subject positions. Discourses, as sets of institutionalised set of norms practices and knowledge, “constitute the objects they describe, address subjects in particular ways, and reproduce power relations and ideological effects” (Wilbraham, 2004, p. 489). However, as indicated by Wilbraham (2004), because discourses produce ideologies, they remain invisible as ‘taken-for-granted’ knowledge. Subsequently, subject positions made available in prevailing discourses and regulated by disciplinary power are understood by the individual as self-knowledge.

The fundamental assumption of this study rests on Foucault’s (1978) notion that sexuality and gender are discursive constructs arising out of historical and institutionalised practices that seek to relay modern power onto all forms of existence through the operation of disciplinary power. That is, the construction of gender and sexuality has a regulatory function. From an ideological position, such an assumption is based on the existence and maintenance of a status quo founded on a patriarchal system that, despite feminist efforts, has been able to uphold its position across time and space. Foucault (1978), however, would argue against state sanctioned patriarchal power and rather views power as diffuse points that exist everywhere. Additionally, Foucault (1978) uses the term ‘biopower’ to delineate that “the anchor points for exercises of power are always bodies” (McWhorter, 2002, p. 42). That is, power and discipline regulate the body and are also practiced and reproduced by the body. While Foucault’s concept of biopower is useful in understanding sexuality and its relationship to power, a more ideological understanding of gender provides a vehicle for the investigation of the historical production of gender ideals and

their persistence across history. This is important as an historical understanding provides explanatory power for the present condition in which gender ideals continue to be upheld. While some may argue that gender norms have changed across history, in agreement with Weeks (1981), this report aims to illustrate that these changes are in fact masked by the same underlying patriarchal currents that have sustained themselves across historical periods. This is not to say that patriarchy is ahistorical but rather that patriarchy is an outcome of historical discursive production and has since reconfigured itself according to the historical, political and social context in order to maintain various positions of power. This is especially evident in the way that patriarchy is the primary operator in allowing and controlling these apparent changes in gender norms. The investigation of the historical production of gender ideals also allows for an interrogation of the relationship between sexuality and gender (Butler, 2004). This is especially of interest because gender roles, such as the maternal figure, are almost always founded on notions of sexuality (Weeks, 1981). Additionally, it is critical to consider as to why it is that gender and sexuality alike have been understood by Western culture as ahistorical, primordial and natural (Bem, 1993). In light of this, a constructionist approach must be drawn upon in order to negate the more radical essentialist conceptualisation of gender and sexuality as inexorable biological instincts. That is not to say that biological sexuality does not exist, but rather that it “is only a precondition, a set of potentialities, which is never unmediated by human reality” (Weeks, 1981, p. 11).

In essence then, it is necessary to discuss an ontological framework for the conceptualisation of both sexuality and gender. In agreement with Butler (2004), this report argues that gender and sexuality cannot be defined in strict and rigid terms. A simple and narrow definition of gender or sexuality forecloses the possibility of interrogating their contextual, historical and institutionalised characters. Moreover, gender cannot be understood outside of sexuality as sexuality informs the very meaning of masculinity and femininity. That is, gender roles are based on the assumption of heterosexuality. As such, any meaning associated with gender relies heavily on the meaning of sexuality and vice versa. Thus, in line with Foucault (1978), both gender and sexuality should be understood as historical and malleable products that have been moulded and continue to be remoulded by a variety of social events. Furthermore, the way gender and sexuality are mapped onto the individual body and introjected into the identity has

profound macro-level political effects as well as micro-level relational and subjective effects and this has obvious implications for both the way female sexual offenders are perceived as well as the way these women perceive themselves.

2.2.1. THE PRODUCTION OF SEXUALITY

The widespread belief in Western culture has long been that heterosexuality is an ahistorical and biological fact (Bem, 1993). In his seminal work, *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1978, p. 105) contradicts this assumption with the assertion that “sexuality...is the name that can be given to a historical construct” and he therefore tracks the development of modern society’s current understanding of sexuality back to the seventeenth century. During this period sexual discourse and practices were not restricted by a legal system that acted in the name of some natural order. Nor were there medical categories available to describe and classify instances of sexual deviancy. Even sexual interaction between adults and children occurred with little consequence. As the institutional character of society gradually developed, previous permissive discourses around sex and sexuality were shut down and replaced with silence, shame and taboo (Foucault, 1978). However, Foucault (1978) cautions that this silence must not be interpreted as a repression of sexuality but must rather be understood as being recoded so that it existed in proliferations in other forms of discourse. This formed part of the mechanisms of hegemony, knowledge production and power. As indicated by Weeks (1981, p. 5), “sexual behaviour is organised not through mechanisms of ‘repression’ but through powers of ‘incitement’, definition and regulation”. That is, sexuality has been constructed through discourses by powerful systems that serve to control and dominate society and “contribute to the maintenance and transformation of power relations” (Phillips & Jørgenson, 2002, p. 75). Thus this silence was merely a means of censorship, restriction and prohibition. And, in fact, Foucault (1978, p. 18) argues that rather than repressing the idea of sexuality, these sexual restrictions resulted in a “multiplication of discourses concerning sex”. This became most evident in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when powerful institutions such as the realms of science, medicine and the law analysed, documented, classified and diagnosed apparently different forms of sexuality. That is, sexual discourse provided the hegemonic patriarchal state with the means to police and regulate society despite the fact that sex was exploited “as *the secret*” (Foucault, 1978, p. 35). Hence, through legal, medical and scientific discourses, normal standards of sexuality and sexual development

came to exist and in this way the very perversions and abnormalities patriarchal ideologies claim to resist and oppose are simultaneously produced and sustained by those same ideologies (Weeks, 1995).

These standards were produced by a specific dominant group- white, heterosexual and middleclass males. As indicated by Weeks (1981, p. 33), sexuality “was originally and fundamentally bourgeois in origins... [as] it was in the great middle classes that sexuality...first became of major ideological significance”. As a privileged group in the social hierarchy, these men in power produced institutions based on masculinity and constructed into those institutions assumptions about the social world that they came to have by virtue of their powerful positions in the social system (Bem, 1993). As such, male superiority has been sustained through the implication that the male standard is the norm and subsequently the female experience has been understood as a deviation from that norm. This said, an understanding of male power must be approached with caution. Male power resides particularly in those men who are also heterosexual, white and middleclass and thus anyone, man or woman, outside of these constructed categories may be othered in institutionalised discursive practices. Additionally, even white heterosexual males are not outside of the system’s oppression, punishment and policing. Rather, males are also implicated in that they are unrealistically required to “suppress every human impulse with even the slightest hint of femininity... [and] also to attain...power and privilege in their social community” (Bem, 1993, p. 166). Furthermore, because this study attempts to view social subjects from both an ideological as well as a Foucauldian standpoint, it is important to acknowledge that Foucault (1978) would argue against an ideological position that implies that men have always had more power over women or that some social subjects own power while others lack it. Rather, a Foucauldian position would assert that power is everywhere and that all social subjects participate in exercises and relations of power. That is, there is an “event of power struggle with everybody attempting to affect the others and everybody resisting the effect of others” (McWhorter, 2004, p. 42). This understanding of power displays how social subjects, whether male or female, are all relays in the operations of biopower.

During the course of history, the production of standardised norms extended to the medical system. Here, multiple types of ‘pathological’ sexual deviations came to be produced, defined and accepted as ‘truth’ through discursive practices that implied these ‘abnormalities’ “are unnatural or immoral from a religious perspective or...biologically anomalous or psychologically pathological from a scientific perspective” (Bem, 1993, p. 81). Categorisation and classification of sexuality and gender allowed for the unexplainable to be explained and the not so obviously sexual to become sexualised (Lützen, 1995) thus producing the sexually abnormal in what had, up till now, appeared to be acceptable (Weeks, 1981). Specifically, exclusive heterosexuality was privileged and desired resulting in the institutionalised requirement that the biological sex of the body match the gender of the identity (Bem, 1993). This also resulted in the division of sexualities so that any behaviour that did not fit neatly into these categories became marked as a deviation from the norm (Weeks, 1995). That is, ‘abnormal’ categories were produced for sexualities that did not conform to the heterosexual requirement. Sexuality can hence be understood as a cultural and social product constructed with the objective of social regulation and control (McNay, 1991). A significant point is that this control occurs through production, rather than through prohibition. That is, regulation occurs “through imposing a grid of definition on the possibilities of the body” (Weeks, 1981, p. 7). Power was therefore able to take the form of discipline and surveillance through “examination and insistent observation... [and] the medicalization of the sexually peculiar” (Foucault, 1978, p. 44), thus “proliferating, innovating, annexing, creating and penetrating bodies in an increasingly detailed way” (Weeks, 1981, p. 8). The sexually peculiar was understood as anything outside of heterosexuality and reproduction which resulted in the “hysterization of women’s bodies” and the medicalization of female sexuality amongst other manifestations (Foucault, 1978, p. 104). The apparent justification for the subordination of women’s bodies was the need to protect children, the family and society in general.

This historical presentation of the production of sexuality is, however, not as straightforward as it appears. For example, while there was and continues to be an implied heterosexual requirement in Western society, lesbianism has never been considered as ‘abnormal’ or as ‘problematic’ as male homosexuality. For example, male homosexuality has been opposed by the church across the course of history (Weeks, 1981). Also, until recently, male homosexuality was criminalised

by the law in most countries and still continues to be in some countries. Moreover, up until 1973, male homosexuality was classified as a mental illness. The same religious, legal and medical restrictions have not applied to lesbian behaviour. Additionally, lesbianism is made far less visible than male homosexuality in modern society and is also deemed as more acceptable (Rich, 1980). This, however, is a complex argument as the marginalisation of lesbianism may be a result of women being subjected to less disciplinary surveillance than men rather than lesbianism being more acceptable than male homosexuality. It also may be due to the fact that male homosexuality compromises the reproductive value of the human race and, in turn, its survival (Weeks, 1981). Lesbian bodies, however, still have reproductive value. All this said, lesbianism does not go entirely unrestricted. For example, Ciasullo (2001) explains that only certain kinds of lesbians are deemed socially acceptable and it these 'types' that are consequently made visible in society. Specifically, 'femme' lesbians that embody seemingly heterosexual feminine attributes are discursively circulated and widely accepted in society. In fact, they are even offered up for heterosexual desire in mainstream cinema and the media. 'Butch' lesbians, however, are not so widely accepted and are rather vilified for their inability to conform to their gender requirements. The concerns put forward by Weeks (1995) and McNay (1991) regarding the construction of 'abnormal' or 'pathological' categories are thus applicable to nonheterosexual identities, however the nuances in these arguments need to be recognised so that they are not understood in a reductionist and fixed sense.

Significantly, 'perversions' and 'pathologies' are not natural biological, genetic or psychological occurrences but are rather historical products of discursive practices. That is, sexual deviation is produced at the nexus of power and knowledge which (at least in the case of eighteenth century biopower) seeks to maintain the status quo through the regulation of social bodies (Foucault, 1978). By extension then, "it is through 'discourses', ensembles of beliefs, concepts, organising ideas, that our relation to reality is organised" (Weeks, 1981, p. 5). Therefore an understanding of the historical production and reproduction of sexual deviancy through various dominant discourses portrays that, in fact, there is no 'natural' or 'normal' type of sexuality but rather there are *normalised* sexualities that have become both invincible and invisible through their maintenance as ideals. It is the abnormal that is made visible and available for transformation. Even today, in our apparently liberated times, "the penalties are...more severe [for other

sexualities] than those for equivalent heterosexual offences” (Freeman, 1996, p. 430). This is in line with Weeks’ (1981) suggestion that as society develops, so more behaviours become defined in terms of sexuality thus allowing for increased social control.

This illusion of natural versus unnatural categories of sexuality has been upheld because institutionalised systems in power such as the medical and legal domains claim that this is knowledge, this is the ‘truth’ and in turn this ‘truth’ is accepted because it is provided in a specific type of discourse: “a scientific sounding vocabulary” (Foucault, 1978, p.55). As indicated by Bem (1993), scientific language initially naturalises and then perpetuates and reinforces categorisation. This illusion also instils fear because the knowledge and subsequent control and restriction placed on society are justified with the objective of protecting or defending society. And, of course, those structures that produce and own knowledge in turn produce and own power, thus creating power relations between constructed dominant and subordinate groups. It is in this way that we have the creation of a patriarchal state dominated by ‘normal’ heterosexual, white, masculine and middle-class groups that produce knowledge and ‘truth’ in order to sustain their power. This, of course, is an overt ideological position. While such a position does have value for this study it is also necessary to recognise that it is flawed in that some democracies remain patriarchal even when ruled by black or female leaders. Foucault (1978) solves this dilemma by offering an alternative understanding of patriarchy. That is, patriarchy exists within discourse and thus beyond its material foundations such as patriarchal figures. As such, patriarchal discourses, rather than patriarchal groups, practice their own control and restrict themselves (Foucault, 1981). As indicated by Fairclough and Wodak (1997) society, culture and power relations are all constituted by discourse. Thus “it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together” (Foucault, 1978, p. 100). Power and domination are therefore made legitimate through discursive practices (van Dijk, 2001). However, an ideological understanding of the production of dominant groups is useful to in order to display that a macro-level patriarchal status quo is maintained because institutionalised normative behaviours are played out at the micro-level. For Collins (1998, p. 63) this micro-level replication of macro-level ideologies occurs within the family context which she argues “is organized not around a biological core, but a state-sanctioned, heterosexual marriage that confers legitimacy not only on the family structure itself but on the children born into it”. Discursive

practices that legitimate power and domination may take the form of laws, social rules and standardised norms that transmit the power of dominant groups in the form of hegemonic structures which in turn limits the freedom of subordinate groups (van Dijk, 2001). Phillips & Jørgenson (2002, p. 63) argue that “the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups...creates subjects and agents” which are ideologically positioned. Power relations are therefore illustrated in who has agency in this world and what subject positions certain identities are located in.

Institutionalised structures such as religion, medicine, science, law and the media transmit sexual narratives that provide boundaries and categories for identities with the justification of upholding social order (Laumann & Gagnon, 1995). In order to investigate this production process, it is also necessary to acknowledge that this shaping of sexual identity acts through disciplinary power upon a *pre-existing*, and as such, a *prediscursive* subject (Butler, 2004). That is, a subject exists before it is exposed to the discursive world and therefore before it is subjected to surveillance and regulation. Thus, during a socialisation process, the individual internalises social constructs and builds an identity based on these (Bem, 1993). Here, Bem (1993) is in agreement with Foucault (1978) that gender and sexuality are mapped onto the body through the internalisation of cultural productions and thus, even self-knowledge is socially constructed. To go back to Bem’s (1993) point that normative discourses are often pathologising, this process of self-knowledge production has obvious implications for subjectivity and identity formation. It is in this way that social productions and their accompanying regulations provide “the conditions within which those defined can begin to develop their own consciousness and identity” (Weeks, 1981, p. 108). For Butler (1999), these productions are more than simply the consequence of socialisation. They are also performances. That is, gender is merely a social expectation “that ends up producing the very phenomenon that it anticipates” (Butler, 1999, p. 7). Butler’s (1999) concept of performativity cannot be understood as a singular act but should rather be regarded as a continuous ritual that serves to naturalise gender on the site of the body. Thus gender, sexuality and in fact all aspects of identity are performed, acted out and in, this way, reinforced. Norms therefore persist “to the extent that... [they are] acted out in social practice and reidealized and reinstated in and through the daily social rituals of bodily life” (Butler, 2004, p. 48). For example, femininity has no essential meaning outside of the institutions (such as marriage and

the nuclear family) that it operates within. This said, gender, sexuality and other identity elements must also be understood as part of a technology of self, as an organisation of relations within the subject.

Following these ideas, it is useful to draw on Freudian notions of sexuality and identity and their relationship to the Oedipal complex in order to understand how normative discourses come to rest on a pre-existing subject. For Freud (1905), every individual is born with a bisexual disposition and all children, despite their anatomical sex, contain aspects of both masculine and feminine constructs. Moreover, children experience their sexuality as polymorphously perverse with a variety of sexual object-choices available and few limits on their sexual aims. During the Oedipal phase, the child relinquishes any desire for the opposite-sex parent and instead identifies with the same-sex parent. This phase ends with a latency period in which infantile sexual impulses are repressed because they are “incompatible with our aesthetic standards of culture” (Freud, 1912, p. 258). It is during this phase that the sexual instinct is culturally directed in order for the child to become a socially acceptable civilian in a culture that taboos and prohibits sexual freedom. As such, the child takes up its appropriate gendered role (Freud, 1905). Freud’s critics have argued that his theories are sexist and merely serve to reinforce patriarchal norms. However, rather than reinforcing patriarchy, psychoanalysis investigates patriarchy and how it is that men and women enter culture in a gendered state. That is, Freud demonstrates that masculine and feminine identities are made rather than biologically inherited (Bem, 1993). As argued by Butler (2004, p. 120), “to become part of culture means to have passed through the gender-differentiating mechanism of this [incest] taboo and to accomplish both normative heterosexuality and discrete gender identity at once”. Weeks (1981, p. 153) builds on this and maintains that “the Oedipal situation...is the mechanism through which the laws of society are introjected into the individual” and that it is in this way that “social forces...shape the human conscious and unconscious”.

What Freud does, however, fail to do is to explicitly demonstrate how the social order becomes internalised. This issue is taken up by another psychoanalyst, Lacan, who emphasises that “the Oedipus complex is...not primarily a natural or biological phenomenon; rather, it is a cultural phenomenon” that initiates the child into the Symbolic order of language (Bem, 1993, p. 62).

For Lacan, gender is “a position constructed in language” and thus femininity, for example, is “a position that can be taken up by men as well as women” (Moi, 2004, p. 842). Such an understanding of gender implies that subjects are free to take up certain positions and, as such, challenges the Freudian notion of anatomical destiny. This said, this apparent freedom is constrained by the discursive limits on gendered and sexualised positions. In other words, the Oedipus complex marks the end of an undifferentiated sexuality and the beginning of a sexuality confined to limited categories made available in discourse. As such, children are taught social and cultural meanings and practices of sexuality and gender rather than merely inheriting a biological destiny (Bem, 1993). This is made possible by the transference of institutionalised norms onto the individual through intermediate modes such as the family, the school, the church and other social contexts. In fact, for Collins (1998), the family is the primary space where gender hierarchies and heterosexuality are reinforced and other sexualities are made invisible and it is in this way that the individual replicates macro-level gendered discursive practices and thus becomes “a deeply implicated...collaborator in the social reproduction of male power” (Bem, 1993, p. 139).

While sexual and gender norms have the power to shape identity and consequently self-knowledge, this shaping is not monolithic or impervious to multiple contestations of its totality. This is primarily because the production of subjects is not a static phenomenon with an ultimate end product. Rather, gender and sexual identity formation is a dynamic process subject to both production and reproduction. Additionally, sexuality and gender are relational and can only be understood in their appearance through social interaction as well as in the subjective meaning applied to them by the individual (Weeks, 1981). As such, social structural forces operate with individual psychological forces in producing the subject (Bem, 1993). As argued by Butler (2004, p. 15), “norms do not exercise a final or fatalistic control... [and] sexuality is never fully captured by any regulation”. In fact, Butler (2004) proposes that sexuality can and often does surpass norms, regulation and naturalised discursive practices by taking on alternative forms in response to these normative rules. Butler (2004, p. 29) gives the examples of “drag, butch, femme, transgender, transsexual persons...[who] make us not only question what is real, and what “must” be, but they also show us how the norms that govern contemporary notions of reality can be questioned and how new modes of reality can become instituted.” These moments

of transgression are socially interpreted as opposite and contradictory to the norm. For example, a butch woman is regarded as antifeminine. However, this assumption ignores the fact that butch women are attracted to the feminine and as such, are not antifeminine at all. In light of this, sexuality is not inevitably determined by disciplinary power however, its possibilities are limited by constraints imposed by such power. For example, if one were described as 'not very feminine', then this subject is still being understood in terms of the normalised masculine-feminine binary. In other words, a restrictive discourse exists that aims to limit sexual and gender possibilities. It also aims to isolate those individuals who do not fit the norm by implying that these lives are not valuable (Butler, 2004). This understanding is occasioned through normative discourses of cause and cure which assume that "something has misfired in the biology or experience of these individuals and needs to be fixed" (Bem, 1993, p. 167). In this way, the production of reality is not only a means of social regulation and control but also a process of othering. This othering is so extensive in its inference that 'abnormal' genders and sexualities are unauthentic that it subtly implies that the other cannot be categorised as human and real. Thus, "the very notion of the "human" is presupposed; it is defined in advance, and in terms that are distinctively western, very often American, and therefore parochial" (Butler, 2004, p. 222).

Instances of transgression, such as female sexual perpetration, most clearly demonstrate that an entrenched ontology of gender exists as it is in these instances that expressions of what is said to be real and unreal arise. Said differently, these instances would be considered unauthentic presentations of gender and sexuality. Moreover, there is a proclivity in modern discourse to read sexuality into most phenomena and consequently, that which is considered sexual in the present may not have been regarded in this light in the past (Lützen, 1995). In fact, previously acceptable behaviour is becoming more heavily scrutinised by society resulting in more stringent regulations and consequently the manifestation of an epidemic of sexual transgressions (Hopper, 2007). This is complicated by the fact that cultural discourses provide guidelines for sexual roles and behaviours (Laumann & Gagnon, 1995) which informs the way individuals exhibit their sexualities and thus that which is regarded as sexually inappropriate and abnormal in one culture may be deemed acceptable by another (Weeks, 1995). In agreement with Foucault (1978) and Weeks (1995), Bem (1993) notes that while it is obviously critical to discuss and acknowledge

how society punishes sexual and gender transgressions, it is as important to recognise that those who do not transgress are equally subjected to heavy policing informed by limited sexual discourse.

2.2.2. FEMALENESS IN SEXUALITY AND GENDER

As sexuality and gender are clearly intertwined, a significant question arises as to how these two concepts relate. Weeks (1981) argues that sexuality governs gendered roles and that this can be most clearly demonstrated in the way that sexuality is implicit in meanings of manhood, maternity and even childhood. Butler (2004) tackles this relationship from the opposite direction and argues that an individual's gender does not necessarily determine his/her sexuality and in this way these two concepts can be unrelated at the individual level. However, at the macro level of society Butler (2004) argues that gender regulation has always been due to the operation of heterosexist normativity. Gendered subject positions imply sexual subject positions governed by limited regulatory discourse. Thus, "the "am" of "I am a man" encodes the prohibition "I may not love a man," so that the ontological claim carries the force of prohibition itself" (Butler, 2004, p. 199). Sexual and gender constructions inform one another because heteronormative sexual constructions produce and reinforce gender binaries (Butler, 1999). Butler (2004, p. 13) argues that "norms encode operations of power" and thus "power emerges in language". These sexual and gendered norms, although sometimes explicit, are, for the most part, implicitly embedded in language such that they are only clearly decipherable in the consequences that they produce (Butler, 2004). To further this argument, gender and sexual assumptions are so entrenched in social discourses, institutions, and individual psychologies that they are able to invisibly reproduce patriarchal power across generations (Bem, 1993). Bem (1993) calls such assumptions or norms, the 'lenses of gender'. These norms operate at the nexus of power and knowledge and thus the organisation of gender and sexuality in turn organise understandings of the social world (Foucault, 1978). That is, norms form the foundation of knowledge and consequently reality and, as such, the creators and sustainers of such knowledge possess a social power that permits organisation, regulation and control. Such norms arise from a restricting gendered discourse that emphasises the binary of masculine and feminine as the exclusive way to understand gender. This serves a regulatory function of power that naturalises patriarchal hegemony and forecloses the possibility of its destruction (Butler, 2004). As such, patriarchy is

sustained and consequently the dominant hegemonic group remains all powerful and in control of the subordinate groups. Bem (1993, p. 41) builds on this notion of norms and argues that they strengthen “the privileging of male experience and the “otherizing” of female experience” in their treatment of masculinity as a universal standard. Butler (2004) proposes that norms are inadequate measurements of identity as they are set out beforehand, are constrained by boundaries and are incapable of depicting those identities outside of the given organisation of truth.

Normative discourses are not only regulatory but are also a mode for the operation of discipline and surveillance (Foucault, 1978). This is possible because “relations of power...circumscribe in advance what will and will not count as truth, which order[s] the world in certain regular and regulatable ways, and which we come to accept as the given field of knowledge” (Butler, 2004, p. 57-58). As such, sexual and gender regulations make gendered and sexual agency difficult. Additionally, pathologising sexual and gendered discourses that map out the normal-abnormal binary allow subject positions to be taken up that either restrict or allow freedom. By submitting to these discourses, one can seemingly gain such freedom. However, in light of this pattern, freedom is really, what Butler (2004, p. 101) calls “unfreedom” as it is heavily policed, surveilled and regulated through disciplinary power. In summary then, “we live, more or less implicitly, with received notions of reality, implicit accounts of ontology, which determine what kinds of bodies and sexualities will be considered real and true, and which kind will not” (Butler, 2004, p. 214).

Just as modern discourses privilege heterosexual norms, “discourses on masculinity and femininity...privilege gender traditionalism and pathologize gender deviance by naturalizing what is essentially just conformity to the cultural requirement” (Bem, 1993, p. 115). Thus, as soon as a woman opposes the constructions of femininity, she is regarded as abnormal (Klein, 1976). Butler (1999) claims that the regulation of gender serves to uphold the ideology of phallic-centred heteronormativity and thus the range of possibilities in gendered and in fact human life is foreclosed by constructed gender binaries. Ideological constructs of sexual norms invest the body with meanings and identities that are mistakenly accepted as biological truths and thus, that which is socially created is deemed natural (Weeks, 1995). In this way sexuality,

circumscribed with normative codes, becomes interwoven into rigid classifications of identity structures. The result is a plethora of binary divisions including male and female as well as normal and abnormal sexualities. Bem (1993) argues that these binaries are sustained by the scientific and medical legitimacy and authority placed on the value and the 'fact' of exclusive heterosexuality and the matching of sex to gender. This is particularly emphasised within and across the authoritative institutions of science, medicine, psychology, sexology and psychiatry as well as supported by other social structures such as the law, the education system and the media. For Bem (1993, p. 1),

[t]hroughout the history of Western culture, three beliefs about women and men have prevailed: that they have fundamentally different psychological and sexual natures, that men are inherently the dominant or superior sex, and that both male-female difference and male dominance are natural. Until the mid-nineteenth century, this naturalness was typically conceived in religious terms, as part of God's grand creation. Since then, it has typically been conceived in scientific terms, as part of biology's-or evolution's- grand creation.

Thus, patriarchal hegemony, rather than biology, shapes and directs sexual desires and behaviours. Consequently "social life...is dichotomously organised around the male-female distinction" (Bem, 1993, p. 80). The naturalisation of these gender differences results in the belief that gender is an internal quality rather than what Butler (1999) refers to as a performance.

Butler (2004, p. 47) argues that "gender operates to secure certain forms of reproductive sexualities and to prohibit other forms". This process is facilitated by implicit social taboos placed on non-procreative sexual acts such as prostitution and homosexuality (Bem, 1993). For example, lesbians have often been regarded as subjects operating to destroy socially imposed feminine responsibilities such as maternity. This assumption implies that lesbians cannot be mothers (Butler, 2004). Weeks (1981) agrees with Butler's position on reproduction and biology but takes this one step further by linking it to homosexuality. Previous laws against homosexuality and sodomy are understood by Weeks (1981, p. 99) as arising from the fact that "homosexuality was regarded not as a particular attribute of a certain type of person but as a potential in all sensual creatures... [and thus] the prime task seems to have been protection of reproductive sex in marriage". This links to the point that lesbianism has never been accorded the same types of

prohibitions imposed on male sexuality because lesbian bodies do not threaten the reproductive value of the human body in the way that male homosexual bodies do. In fact, for Weeks (1981), reproduction is the key to understanding sexuality and gender as social productions. He maintains that gender roles, such as motherhood, are centred on reproduction and the survival of a healthy and nurtured human population. Thus women who negate the role of motherhood are perceived as negating their very role as females and consequently as being psychologically and sexually abnormal. This is all the more pronounced as sexuality tends to be organised within the framework of the family particularly because it is through the family that the survival and maintenance of the human race can be guaranteed. As a product of these domestic ideologies, heterosexual marriage becomes “deeply engrained in the social consciousness” (Weeks, 1981, p. 214) and “the heterosexually constituted family...[thus becomes] the basic social unit” (Rich, 1980, p. 657).

Gendered normative discourses operate dichotomously such that masculinity and femininity are co-dependent. The same can be said for sexual discourses where it is clear that heterosexuality and homosexuality cannot be defined without reliance on the meaning of the other. Sexual and gender difference thus arises through language and functions in producing the symbolic world in which we exist, in this way maintaining deeply entrenched power differentials between men and women and between heterosexuals and homosexuals (Butler, 2004). This can easily be seen in how women are objectified for the male subject’s gaze by the media. Men are rarely produced as the object and when they are it is usually assumed to be for the gaze of the homosexual male subject which makes the image abhorrently outside of heteronormativity as well as keeps the female away from the powerful gazing subject position (Bem, 1993). These notions are reinforced within historicised normative discourse that implies that men are “experts on sexuality” who by nature find sexual interaction pleasurable whereas women are “expected to be sexually ignorant and in need of tutoring” (Laumann & Gagnon, 1995, p. 203) and only capable of deriving sexual pleasure in the act of subordination (Butler, 1999). Men are perceived as having “masculine, irresistible sex urges” (Klein, 1976, p. 9) while women are viewed as maternal caregivers who provide nurture and protection and are incapable of being associated with sexual offence. Additionally, there are prevailing myths that imply that the maternal figure is asexual (Travers, 1999). This said, women have also been discursively structured as

voracious, highly sexualised, erotic and insatiable. In turn, female sexuality has often been understood as difficult to control and, by extension, difficult to understand (Rich, 1980). Thus we have the emergence of the madonna-whore complex. All this said, it must be acknowledged that these discursive strategies and binary structures around female sexuality are much less explicit today and the media do support female sexual assertion and desire. Likewise, lesbians no longer occupy a marginal space when compared to male homosexuals but are rather produced as visible subjects in the media and within broader discursive practices (Rich, 1980; Ciasullo, 2001). In other words, the male-female binary is currently being discernibly eroded. This may be due to the fact that, in line with Hopper's (2007) argument, previously acceptable behaviour is becoming more heavily criticised resulting in increased surveillance and the tightening of social standards. Previously, women, by virtue of their gender, were able to operate outside of the incitement to discourse. However, with increased disciplinary surveillance, women's ability to remain below the surveillance radar is reduced. This is only a suggestion and there may be a number of other reasons for the erosion of these binaries including modern practices such as the development of contraceptive pills and women's entry into the economic domain. It is, however, noteworthy to acknowledge that despite the current modern tendency to assert female sexuality and desire, this tendency is still immersed in the implicit assumption that such desire and its accompanying behaviour should take place in a heterosexual context with the long-term ambition of marriage and reproduction. This again maintains normative boundaries such that any allowance of sexual liberation is confined to heterosexual interaction and "always within the framework of female subordination" (Weeks, 1981, p. 284). These gendered constructions are especially salient in a South African context where constructions of masculinity and femininity around sexual behaviour are particularly strong (O'Sullivan, Harrison, Morrell, Monroe-Wise & Kubeka, 2006). As a consequence of these gendered constructions, many instances of female sexual perpetration go unnoticed.

A Foucauldian analysis of power and knowledge illustrates how the material body is made visible through the technologies of modern power. Here, power needs to be understood as created by the relationships that sustain it rather than as a unitary and single force. Moreover, power operates in relation to knowledge productions (Weeks, 1981). This is because knowledge production, especially if produced within an authoritative, scientific or religious discourse, gives

its producers power by implying that these productions represent sound and rational 'truth'. Further, power does not only produce knowledge but "power and knowledge directly imply one another... [and thus] there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute...power relations" (Foucault, 1977, p. 27). It is in this way that gender constructions, as 'knowledge' based on anatomical differences, serve to maintain social hierarchies within the patriarchal system. As such, rather than claiming that gender differences are based on natural body differences, the body should be understood as a fundamental space on which these gender constructions can be mapped (McNay, 1991). Foucault (1977, p. 28) uses the term 'body politic' to describe such discourse and practices "that serve as weapons, relays, communication routes and supports for the power and knowledge relations that invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge". As proposed by Butler (2004, p. 197) it is essential to recognise the way gender is mapped onto the body through discourse so that we can begin to acknowledge that "there may be ways that masculinity emerges in woman, and that feminine and masculine do not belong to differently sexed bodies". In fact, for Butler (2004), the existence of 'transgressions' allows for the demonstration that a particular ontology of gender exists in the world and, more importantly, that this ontological framework is open to re-articulation. For Bem (1993), historical and social critique enables us to investigate and make visible the culture's gender lenses so that we can explore them from the outside rather than live within them from the inside thus allowing the more subtle ways in which the culture produces and reproduces male power to become evident. It also opposes a more essentialist paradigm that implies natural inevitability by ignoring history, society and culture as mediating elements in the production of gender and sexuality. As Weeks (1981, p. 288) reminds us, the meanings applied to gender and sexuality "are not eternal givens, are not simple products of objective forces outside human control, but are products of human endeavour in the context of given historical circumstances".

Bem (1993, p. 3) notes that the male dominance that sustains "cultural discourses and social institutions" does not only disadvantage women, but also minority races, classes and sexualities. Additionally, even feminists fail to acknowledge the full range of available genders and sexualities and thus restrict the diversity and variety that exists in human identity (Petchesky, 2008). For example, women are understood as a single and united category rather than as

expressing a range of classes, races, nationalities, economic statuses and educational backgrounds. The assumption is thus made that all women are subjected to the same level of oppression which fails to acknowledge the specificity and complexity of each individual woman's particular identity and experience (Fuss, 1989). Because this study takes place in the multiracial and multicultural context of South Africa these are significant comments to take into account when analysing transcribed interviews of South African female sexual offenders.

2.3. THE FEMALE FIGURE AS A SEXUAL OFFENDER

In light of the above review it is necessary to examine the female sexual offender both with reference to her status as a woman and with reference to her status as a sexual transgressor. These two aspects of her identity intersect at the level of female sexuality. In this regard sexuality needs to be understood "as an especially dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women" (Foucault, 1978, p.103).

Freeman (1996, p.403) indicates that sexual transgression is "construed as an anomaly and, as an event which disturbs reality, it constitutes a threat to the social order and occasions the intervention of social control". For example, despite contradicting evidence, there is a widespread belief that the majority of sexual perpetrators were sexually abused as children, that many are psychopathological or mentally disabled and that there is an association between sexual offence and substance abuse (Levenson et al., 2007). Further, due to underreporting, many sexual offences go undetected yet unreliable statistics are continuously pummelled out to the public as if they were fact. This is even more significant with regard to female offenders where reporting is likely to be even less accurate due to gender stereotypes, research limitations and professional biases (Freeman, 1996; Giguere & Bumby, 2007). Additionally, the diversity in sexual offending patterns is rarely recognised (Levenson et al., 2007). All sexual transgressors tend to be aggregated under the category of sexual offenders without taking into account the differences in their victims and the differences between rape, incest, indecent assault and child sexual abuse which each have different consequences (Freeman, 1996).

Female sexual perpetration has largely been ignored, denied or rationalised in academic, legal and psychiatric domains. As Bourke (2007, p. 221) puts forward,

[p]roponents of...explanations for why women are severely under-represented in rape statistics eventually had to face up to the fact that some women *did* act in sexually aggressive ways. This position has been resisted by many criminologists, psychologists and legal commentators. Indisputably the most common approach was simply to deny any particular significance to the presence of women among perpetrators. At best many writers on sexual abuse acknowledged in a footnote that women did act in sexually abusive ways, before proceeding to develop a theory premised entirely on heterosexual male perpetrators. But, when pressed, every serious commentator had to admit that woman could also be sexually aggressive toward children, boyfriends and husbands, as well as strangers. Women molest other women. They rape men.

Within the current literature, female sexual perpetrators are recognised as a heterogeneous group; however they are simultaneously categorised as severely sexually, physically or emotionally abused with histories of familial dysfunction and maternal-child conflict (Brockman & Bluglass, 1996; Roe-Sepowitz & Krysik, 2008). They are also perceived as less violent than their male counterparts and as more likely to act with an accomplice (Lawson, 2008). Moreover, they are described as most often committing sexual offences when they are premenstrual or acting as victimised co-partners under the influence of a male perpetrator (Freeman, 1996). The accomplice suggestion is cited most commonly with reference to ‘battered woman syndrome’ and is often accompanied by excuses that such perpetrators are “victims of a patriarchal rule and should be absolved of responsibility for their actions” (Bourke, 2007, p. 228). Here, gender constructions of the male aggressor and the female victim are reinforced. More importantly, patriarchy is utilised here as a justification for women’s sex crimes rather than as an explanation for why women’s sex crimes are often ignored. The aforementioned classifications serve to rationalise the female perpetrator’s existence and are in direct conflict with the acknowledgement that because of their heterogeneity female sexual offenders cannot be categorised. It appears that the notion of a woman being capable of sexual perpetration is unfathomable and constitutes one of the greatest taboos (Travers, 1999). As such, female sexuality remains a culturally ambivalent subject (Denov, 2003) and, in turn, female sexual perpetration becomes a highly sensitive and uncomfortable issue that ensures “deliberate avoidance” (Bourke, 2007, p. 215).

In light of this it seems that female sexuality is constructed differently to male sexuality resulting in the use of different frameworks to describe similar behaviours. Freeman (1996) gives the

example of male adultery being more acceptable than female adultery simply because the male gender is constructed as sexualised as well as pressurised into the institution of marriage. This results in double standards across the gender binaries. In much the same way, sexual offending has historically been understood as a masculine crime due to the global discursive practices that locate women as nurturing, harmless, law-abiding and sexually submissive and men as sexually aggressive (Naffine, 1987). In fact, some theories go so far as to assert that men are sexually aggressive towards children and women because this is “normal gender practice in patriarchal culture” (Bourke, 2007, p. 230). Moreover, there is the fundamental belief that men are incapable of being “aroused if they are unwilling participants” (Giguere & Bumby, 2007, p. 3). Thus, victims of female sexual perpetration that have experienced arousal or ejaculation are often regarded as consenting parties rather than as victims and their experiences are often used in court as evidence that female sexual perpetration is not possible in such cases (Bourke, 2007). This said, it should be noted that the reverse is also true for women who experience an orgasm during a rape incident. A further point concerning the differences between male and female sexual constructions is that, until recently, rape was understood as the forced “penetration of a vagina by a penis” and feminist writers asserted that this act was a representation of “male sexual dominance” (Freeman, 1996, p. 416). This understanding of rape, which is still highly pronounced in the public consciousness, implies that the woman is harmless because she lacks a dangerous phallic weapon, the penis. This belief also masks the fact that there are many ways to perform an act of sexual assault without the use of the penis. For this reason, even when a woman is convicted of rape, it is still perceived as less emotionally and physically damaging than penile penetration. This is so, even when the sexual perpetration occurs between a mother and a child. It is, however, most pronounced with male victims as men are believed to always desire and enjoy sexual interaction with a woman, even under forced circumstances (Bourke, 2007).

Standards of acceptable behaviour have been created by a patriarchal society on the basis of masculine behaviour and thus it is difficult to categorise female offenders accordingly. As such, patriarchal discourses and structures inadvertently protect female sexual offenders by not allowing them to exist within academic, scientific and public space. More importantly, when they are allowed to exist, female sexual perpetrators are often represented in a pornographic light so that they become sexualised and in this way they are maintained as the object of the male’s

gaze and their perpetrations are thus made harmless (Bourke, 2007). As Higgs et al. (1992) maintain, society is more able to accept a woman who acts out her sexual aggression through promiscuity than one who does so through assault or abuse. This has obvious implications for the male victim who, like the female perpetrator, is made invisible despite the fact that the consequences of sexual assault transcend gendered roles. It also reinforces the madonna-whore dichotomy so that the sexual female cannot also be a maternal female. This emphasises the impossibility of female child sexual abuse despite the fact that women, by virtue of their gender stereotype, have more access to children and are also most likely to be engaged in child-rearing activities such as bathing and dressing (Vandiver, 2006).

Female sexual offenders represent a challenge to the dichotomy of the sexes especially because they serve as a reminder that “not only the female body, but the male body as well, is violable, penetrable” (Bourke, 2007, p. 212). Much like homosexuality, this poses a threat to the classification scheme of discrete genders (Freeman, 1996). In fact, “societal scripts about appropriate behaviour have kept us relatively in the dark about the nature and extent of women’s abuse” (Levine, 2006, p. 357). This is in line with the belief that, unlike male children, female children are not socialised into acting violently or sexually as a means of expression and thus males are more likely to become offenders (Bourke, 2007). In fact Higgs et al. (1992, p. 137-138) go so far as to assert that “males of most species appear to possess a biologically based drive which renders them more sexually aggressive than females”. Denov (2003) maintains that such ideas are built on the belief that men are unable to control their sexual drives and urges. These gendered constructions have provided men with more freedom to deviate from the norm as their deviance is paradoxically normalised by social constructions that construct men as innately aggressive and daring (Naffine, 1987). This would lead to the hypothesis that masculine women should therefore have a greater tendency for criminal behaviour than their feminine counterparts. In fact, female offenders have been accused of rebelling against their feminine roles and treatment suggestions have focused on a readjustment to femininity (Klein, 1976). The justification here is often based on the assumption that female sexual offenders have had poor maternal childhood relationships and thus subsequently failed to internalise the nurturing and maternal aspect of the female character (Higgs et al., 1992). However, this is not the case and women, both masculine and feminine, do behave in ways that negate the gender constructions

rife under a patriarchal hegemony (Travers, 1999). For Butler (2004), drawing on instances of apparent ‘transgressions’ provides evidence that sexuality is not constrained by gender and, more significantly, that gender is not necessarily biologically determined by sex. Bourke (2007) builds on this idea and asserts that perhaps the most difficult aspect of female sexual perpetration is that it allows the woman in question to undermine masculine power and, more significantly, she does so without a penis. Bourke (2007) goes on to claim that female sexual perpetration may be a vehicle for women to live out their fantasies around both sexuality and power. It also allows for the demonstration that bipolar binaries such as masculine-feminine or perpetrator-victim are fictions that mask the range of subject positions people may occupy in different contexts. As Bourke (2007, p. 248) points out, “nurturing housewife and child abuser may be the same person”.

Recently, in South Africa, there was a major sex trial that caused public alarm involving an upper-middle class advocate by the name of Cezanne Visser, more widely known as Advocate Barbie. The complexities concerning female sexual offenders were clearly played out in Visser’s story. While she has been accused of sexual assault against children and the manufacturing of child pornography, her behaviour was also rationalised by the media, the legal system and the psychiatric institution as a result of ‘battered woman’s syndrome’. She is understood to have been acting under the influence and abuse of her male accomplice, Dirk Prinsloo, who has been characterised by the media and the law as a “sex monster” (Piliso & Philp, 2009). Even more significant was the legal, psychiatric and media proclivity to position Visser at either end of the madonna-whore spectrum at different points in her trial. Visser has been described as both a compassionate and emotionally driven woman who has been damaged by “an unhappy home” (Venter, 2009) as well as “the pretty blonde” (Venter, 2009) that “unashamedly touts her surgically-enhanced wares on a modelling website” (Schmidt, 2005). Additionally, the appellation ‘Advocate Barbie’ clearly demonstrates the contradiction inherent in her status as an advocate, a sex symbol as well as a woman who spends “thousands of rands on sex toys” and has “admitted to playing with a vibrator in front of [the alleged victim]” (Mail & Guardian, 2009). Another recent sex trial involved two English women, Vanessa George and Angela Allen, who have been accused of child sexual abuse. As in the case of Visser, the media and the legal system have drawn on gendered discourse to describe these women and the trial more generally.

Their behaviour has been understood as resulting from the manipulation of their male accomplice, Colin Blanchard (Davenport & Cheston, 2009). Moreover, the media have used this case to emphasise that female sexual perpetration is “very rare” and that “the majority of sexual abuse cases involve men” (Taylor, 2009). The participants in the current study draw on similar gendered discourse in negotiating their profiles as female sexual offenders.

2.4. REGULATING OFFENDERS: THE ROLE OF LEGAL AND MEDICAL STRUCTURES

As noted by Foucault (1978), ‘normal’ sexuality was gradually constructed through various institutionalised discourses of power such as the legal and medical systems. It is through these constructions that multiple types of ‘abnormal’ sexual deviations came to be produced, defined and accepted as truth. Over the course of history, the legal and medical systems exerted control over these “perversions, for the sake of a general protection of society and race” (Foucault, 1978, p. 122). Here “sex is placed by power in a binary system: licit and illicit, permitted and forbidden” (Foucault, 1978, p. 83). The legal and psychiatric institutions are primary examples of how dominant patriarchal groups draw on and control discursive practices in order to sustain social power (van Dijk, 2001). In fact, the legal system is so fixed in its position of power that it has become “the principal vehicle of standard-setting” (Freeman, 1996, p. 399). In this way the morality of the legal system has been set up as the norm despite its possible conflict with the moral standards of other cultures, classes, sexualities and reference groups outside of the hegemonic system. The legal system is thus oppressive in its insistence on upholding values and interests of one group to the detriment of others (Freeman, 1996).

In modern society, constructions of sexual perversions continue to result in harsher sentencing for sexual offenders and disproportionate interest and prejudice from the realm of psychiatry compared to other offenders (Brockman & Bluglass, 1996). This persists despite evidence that demonstrates legal intervention to be ineffective as indicated by high recidivism rates in spite of psychiatric treatment (Freeman, 1996). However, with regard to female offenders gender constructions tend to override prevailing discourses concerning sexual offenders as “sexual abuse perpetrated by women is perceived in a gendered context” (Denov, 2003, p. 312). Consequently notions of gender differences “play a role in the willingness of various criminal justice and treatment professionals to acknowledge female sexual offending” (Giguere &

Bumby, 2007, p. 3). As Denov (2003, p. 311) has illustrated, “both psychiatrists and police officers... [make] efforts, either consciously or unconsciously, to transform the female sex offender and her offence to realign them with more culturally acceptable notions of female behaviour”. This leads to the denial of the existence of female sexual perpetration and consequently the diminishment of the impact on the victim. This said, it must be acknowledged that ChildLine in Britain has recently begun to take female child sexual perpetration more seriously which has assisted in the disintegration of gendered myths about child sexual abuse (Holden, 2009). This has resulted in the visibilisation of female child sexual abuse and, as such, the gradual appropriation of women’s sex into disciplinary surveillance. However, the same cannot be said for other types of female sexual offences and thus this surveillance remains limited to female child sexual abuse.

In the treatment of sexual offending “the therapeutic model is now all-powerful” and is aimed at regulating offenders in much the same way as the legal system by “locking up a person’s mind with drugs” (Freeman, 1996, p. 440). Moreover, the fields of psychiatry and psychology have been upheld as the primary professions that are able to determine socially unacceptable and deviant behaviour. Therapeutic contexts thus have a socio-political function in that they determine and construct that which is both pathological and healthy according to broader socio-political requirements (Hook, 2002). In doing so, these professions reproduce and maintain the power hierarchies evident in a patriarchal social structure.

The therapeutic model is significant as it speaks back to a Foucauldian understanding of sexual discourse and self-regulation. For Foucault (1978) one of the primary means of self-construction occurs through the process of confession. This process dates back to the traditional penance and “the obligation to admit to violations of the laws of sex” (Foucault, 1978, p. 20). These historical instances of confession have become so deeply engrained in the structure of society that the confessional context has become the normalised means of truth production. This has resulted in the invisibility of the disciplinary obligation to confess and, in turn, the invisibility of the modern power that relays such obligations (Foucault, 1978). Thus, for Foucault (1978), sexual abnormalities are produced not only through normalising discourse but also through the confession which provides evidence for a particular construct. As such, “the self is not disclosed

by confession, it is constituted by confession” (Tell, 2007, p. 4). Today, the therapeutic context has replaced the church as an appropriate space for confession. The therapeutic model thus provides another means for the production of categories of sexual offences as well as a space for sexual offenders to produce themselves as subjects. As indicated by Stevens (2008), the confessional context allows for the speaker to enact moments of self-regulation. This is possible because the confession is an intimate interaction characterised by surveillance which is regulated by disciplinary technologies. More importantly, this interaction occurs between a speaker and an ‘expert’ other and thus provides the speaker with an opportunity to persuade the ‘expert’ other that he/she is self-regulated, psychologically healthy and socially acceptable.

Despite the medical system’s proclivity to diagnose, treat, examine and regulate sexual offenders, when female sexual offenders are presented to mental health professionals they are met with “scepticism and marginalisation” and are subsequently overlooked (Giguere & Bumby, 2007, p. 3). Smart (1976, p. 33) argues that when the female offender is acknowledged she is regarded as “not only an abnormal woman [but also]...like a man” and has to bear the burden of both legal conviction for her offences and social condemnation for her abnormalities. In turn, the psychiatric profession treats the female sexual offender as a male and provides interventions that are either based on a male sexual offender model or geared toward feminine readjustment with gender-responsive management strategies (Giguere & Bumby, 2007). Female sexual perpetrators are also often viewed as severely mentally and emotionally maladjusted. As Bourke (2007, p. 225) has portrayed, “the myth of female sexual purity... [results in the belief] that all exceptions are lunatics”. As such, the legal system often sends the female sexual offender for psychiatric care as opposed to the correctional centre.

According to Giguere and Bumby (2007, p. 3) law enforcement training “tends to be geared exclusively around men as sex offenders and women as victims”. Furthermore, enforcement policies and rape law assume that perpetrators are male and victims are female (Levine, 2006). Also, as a result of globally circulated gender biases, the legal system does not have access to a language that can institutionally conceive of or concede to the existence of female sexual perpetration (Denov, 2003). This results in police officers disbelieving allegations of female sexual perpetration, victims refusing to report cases and the justice system refusing to pursue

cases (Giguere & Bumby, 2007). Consequently, those incidents that do get exposed to the legal system tend to be justified in some way and the female offender often receives a lighter sentence than would a male offender (Brockman & Bluglass). For example, if consensual sexual contact occurs between an older male and an adolescent female, the male is convicted of statutory rape. However, if the same incident occurs between an older female and an adolescent male, the female is often not convicted at all (Duncan & Williams, 1998). Female sexual perpetration is also often registered as obscene conduct rather than as sexual assault and so the legal statistics displaying extreme disparities in prevalence rates between male and female sex offenders are often misrepresentative (Bourke, 2007, Denov, 2003). The legal system thus appears to display greater leniency towards female offenders and this, in conjunction with low reporting rates of female offences, results in the perception that the female sexual offender does not exist (Smart, 1976). Additionally, male sexual offenders are much more likely to be rearrested after release than female sexual offenders (Freeman & Sandler, 2008). All this said, it does appear to be the case that when female sexual offenders act with a male accomplice, victims are more likely to report the abuse and the legal system is more likely to sentence the female offender. Consequently, most incarcerated female sexual offenders are co-offenders acting with a male accomplice which is unfortunately not indicative of the true diversity of these women (Vandiver, 2006). This is most certainly the case with the previously mentioned recent South African and English female sexual perpetration trials.

In South Africa the new Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Bill does make allowance for female sexual offenders by “repealing the common law offence of rape and replacing it with a new...offence of rape, applicable to all forms of sexual penetration...irrespective of gender” (Minister for Justice and Constitutional Development, 2007, p. 3). However, “women and children [remain]...particularly vulnerable...victims of sexual offences” (Minister for Justice and Constitutional Development, 2007, p. 4) and correctional services incarcerate very few female sexual offenders despite the fact that there appears to be an increasing number of incarcerated sexual offenders in South Africa (Department of Correctional Services, 2008). Additionally, the issue of gender as a significant rehabilitative topic is most pronounced “in relation to male offenders whose victims were women and children” (White Paper on Corrections in South Africa, 2005, p. 13).

With regards to incarceration, Foucault (1977) maintains that correctional centres are much like other institutionalised systems in that the offender is taken as the object of knowledge to be measured, treated and disciplined by those in power. More importantly, the offender becomes the object of surveillance and regulation and the body becomes the site on which criminal knowledge and institutional power are played out. That is, the body, as an object, becomes “the target of power” (Foucault, 1977, p. 136). As such, the body becomes docile: “subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault, 1977, p. 136). In fact, it is through this observational character of the legal and criminal institutions that offenders were originally divided up according to their crimes, sentence lengths and observed danger to society. Further, such observation, measurement and surveillance of offenders over the course of history has resulted in an accumulation of ‘knowledge’ concerning crime and offenders which has gradually become normalised as ‘truth’ and in this way the correctional context has become a powerful “apparatus of knowledge” (Foucault, 1977, p. 126). As such, the correctional context is a primary example of the use of disciplinary power and how such power arises out of observation, surveillance and normalising discourse. It also legitimises and naturalises disciplinary power which acts through surveillance or “a normalizing gaze...that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish” (Foucault, 1977, p. 184). Even the architecture composed of high walls, surveillance cameras and observation towers seems to amplify this disciplinary function of correctional centres. However, despite this function, the very character of the correctional centre as a socially isolated and surveilled context, merely acts to reinforce delinquency and, in turn, to increase recidivism rates. This pattern is evident in South African correctional centres where overcrowding, unsuitable staff-offender ratios, ineffective rehabilitation and high levels of regulation and surveillance lead to boredom, despair and a sense of hopelessness in the offenders which in turn increases recidivism rates (Stevens, 2008). Thus, in essence, the implied function of the correctional centre has never succeeded yet “the failure of the prison has always been accompanied by its maintenance” (Foucault, 1977, p. 272). And it is for this reason that Foucault (1977) maintains that the objective to abolish criminality is merely a masking of the true function of the correctional system. Foucault (1977) explains this by stating that, on observation, it appears that the majority of offenders come from the lower class populace. In sharp distinction, the judges, advocates, lawyers and legal advisors come from a higher social class. More importantly, the actual discourse of the legal system belongs to this higher class. In

essence then, this system, along with its discourses and practices, allows for the continuation of a patriarchal hegemony whereby the upper-middle classes maintain their supremacy by producing and reproducing the apparent delinquency of the lower classes through normalising discourse and surveillance. This observation brings to mind the question as to whether Advocate Visser, who is charged with child pornography manufacturing and sexual assault, will reap similar legal consequences to less educated and less wealthy women who have committed similar crimes. Significantly, the participants in the current study all belong to a lower class populace. For clarity purposes, the term 'lower class' in this study will refer to both an objective and a subjective experience of relative deprivation when compared to the average South African citizen.

Historically, correctional centres have been characterised by punishment, discipline and regulation. However, the humanitarian ethos of modern society no longer allows for such obvious relations of authority and obedience. Thus, as Foucault (1977, p. 256) observes "the prison...is the place where the power to punish, which no longer dares to manifest itself openly, silently organizes a field of objectivity in which punishment will be able to function openly as treatment and the sentence be inscribed among the discourses of knowledge". The South African Correctional Services has the view that rehabilitation of repeat offenders is "best achieved through correction and development, as opposed to punishment and treatment" and that this should take place "within a humane and secure environment" (White Paper on Corrections in South Africa, 2005, p. 12). This is a move away from the military character of South African correctional centres in the past. However, while both the White Paper on Corrections in South Africa (2005) and the Correctional Services Act (1998) emphasise rehabilitation, human development and psychological services there appears to be little emphasis on particular crimes, such as sexual offences, or on specific rehabilitation techniques for male and female offenders. There is, however, a call for needs-based interventions targeted at the individual as well as the promotion of gender-training. However, this gender-training seems to be focused on "men whose victims have been children and women" (White Paper on Corrections in South Africa, 2005, p. 69) and thus may serve only to reinforce gender stereotypes. The White Paper on Corrections in South Africa (2005, p. 36) aims to promote "the ethics enshrined in the Constitution...[which] allow for self-discipline". Here, Foucault's (1977) observation that

discourse belongs to a specific group or class is significant as these ethics may not be in the language or value-system of the offenders that are expected to incorporate them. The group of participants in this study further unpacks correctional centre issues around rehabilitation and discipline and how these issues apply to and affect female offenders.

2.5. FILTERING THE PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS: THE MEDIA AS MESSENGER

As indicated by van Dijk (2001), the media's power rests in its ability to reproduce and reinforce ideologies set up by patriarchal hegemonic structures. The media's authority is strengthened through discursive practices such as presenting "interpretations as if they were facts" (Phillips & Jørgenson, 2002, p. 84). The general public demonstrate a variety of misperceptions concerning sexual offenders which often results in collective anxiety and panic (McGuickin & Brown, 2001). These misperceptions are generally shaped by the "myths perpetuated and reinforced by the media" (Levenson et al., 2007, p. 6) which is often biased by the agenda to sell stories (McGuickin & Brown, 2001). Such myths include images of child sexual abusers as lurking predators with the potential to kill. The reality is that most child sexual abusers are people that the child is related to or knows fairly well and are unlikely to be violent with the child. Similarly, rape is believed to happen in dark alleys with strangers and sex crime rates are deemed to be on the rise. However, evidence reveals that rape often occurs with an acquaintance and sex crime rates have started to decline (Levenson et al., 2007). Additionally, the media portray all sex offenders as rapists or paedophiles without unpacking different forms of sexual offences and "newspaper headlines often demean sex offenders by using words which are primed to capture attention and invite feelings of condemnation and disgust" (McGuickin & Brown, 2001, p. 49). It is therefore apparent that the media tends to dramatise sexual offences (Brockman & Bluglass, 1996). This is reinforced by media messages that imply that rehabilitation is impossible and that every sexual offender has always had and will always have the proclivity to sexually assault. Furthermore, the media tend to warn community members about the release of sex offenders from correctional centres and their consequent whereabouts. This only serves to cause increased public fear and panic and to undermine the work achieved by the legal and correctional systems (McGuickin & Brown, 2001).

According to Lawson (2008), female sexual offenders believe that the general public have faulty perceptions of them in that they are judged according to their offences rather than according to who they are as people. However, contrary to these perceptions, the media often make light of female sexual perpetration and draw on terms such as “affair”, “offensive touching”, “lewd acts” or “having sex” rather than the harsher terms that are used to describe male sexual perpetration (Simmons, 2006; Hammonton, 2006; Morrystown, 2003). The media also reinforces gender constructions and legal justifications with statements such as “the majority of sex offenders are men” (Hammonton, 2006), “the woman has cerebral palsy and uses a motorized wheelchair” (Koch, 2005) and headlines claiming “8-Year-Old Boy Charged For Sexual Conduct With 14-Year-Old Female Sitter” (KUTV, 2005). In an article on female sexual offenders, Green (2000) explains that one woman only sexually offended when she was “drunk or high” and only as a result of childhood sexual abuse. Another woman’s sexual perpetration of a 12 year old boy is explained away because “sadly...she fell in love with [the child]”. Moreover, the majority of media coverage concerning female sexual perpetration highlights incidences of sexual interaction between teachers and students which fails to represent the full range of female sexual offences (Giguere & Bumby, 2007). The descriptions and representations put forward by the media are significant as they are reminiscent of early sexological accounts of male paedophiles as well as male sexual offenders more generally (Travers, 1999). As such, it may be that the development of understandings of female sexual perpetration will follow a similar path to historical reactions based on male sexual offending that moved from outright denial to eventual full acknowledgement, anger and punishment. The recent increased interest in female sexual offending may therefore ultimately result in the fuller surveillance that male sexual offenders are currently subjected to.

Female sexual offenders are also often sexualised by the media. This can be clearly demonstrated in the case of Advocate Visser where the media has described her as a “child-sex aficionado” who poses on her “raunchy website” in “a revealing bikini” to show off “a muscled stomach” (Schmidt, 2005). As indicated by Bourke (2007, p. 217), sexual perpetration by females is represented by the media “as the source of envy or wry humour” and this is especially pronounced when the victim is a male, regardless of his age.

Even more concerning is the South African community development project launched by Soul City and Jacuna Education. This project aims to educate the public about various forms of violence including sexual assault. In an attempt to educate the general South African public, the project produced booklets, magazines and posters. One of these magazines focused on rape which was defined as “forcing a woman to have sex when she doesn’t want to” (Soul City & Jacuna Education, n.d., p. 14). Additionally, sexual harassment “means talking about sex when the woman does not want to talk about it” and “touching the private parts of the body when the woman does not want it” (Soul City & Jacuna Education, n.d., p. 14). These definitions fail to include men as possible victims of sexual perpetration and thus this educative tool really only serves to uphold gendered myths concerning sexual violence. All this said, there have recently been reports in the media that attempt to acknowledge female sexual perpetration. However, this acknowledgement remains constrained to cases involving children and male accomplices which in turn maintains the myth that women cannot sexually abuse adult men.

Because the media is so influential in shaping public perceptions, Levenson et al. (2007, p. 20) argue that “the media should be enlisted as a partner in educating the public...through the dissemination...of research-based information about sexual violence” rather than maintaining its position as a mode of sensationalism. This, in turn, would aid preventative efforts and decrease gendered perceptions and beliefs.

2.6. PREVIOUS STUDIES

Scientific literature has focused on female sexual offending sporadically since 1960. Recently this literature base has grown significantly, culminating in increased knowledge about female sexual perpetration (Lawson, 2008). Yet still,

[i]n contrast to the burgeoning body of literature describing male sexual offenders, the research on female sexual offenders is considerably underdeveloped. Much of what exists is purely descriptive in nature and tends to be based on small samples of women...making it impossible to draw reliable inferences (Giguere & Bumby, 2007, p. 4).

In line with other areas such as the media, legal and medical domains, the current scientific literature aligns with the general denial or at least the justification of the female sexual offender’s existence. Notably, a study conducted by Higgs et al. (1992) aimed to compile a case-report of

an adolescent female sexual offender. The entire case-report was based on the offender's experience of childhood sexual abuse and parental neglect as opposed to considering the offender's individual role in her actions. Studies also "strive to demonstrate differences between male and female [offenders] when they may not exist" (Brockman & Bluglass, 1996, p. 8). For example, Gannon, Rose and Ward's (2008) study emphasises the similarities and differences in female and male sexual offenders' types of offences and their aetiologies to reach a clinical model for female sexual perpetration. Furthermore, the majority of research steers away from female rapists and therefore fuels the belief that only men can rape (Brockman & Bluglass, 1996).

Other examples include Roe-Sepowitz and Krysik's (2008) study which asserts that female juvenile sexual offences are related to a history of sexual abuse and Lawson's (2008) conclusion that female sexual offenders regret their criminal actions despite the fact that her study demonstrated that women offenders "blamed their offences on someone else" (Lawson, 2008, p. 338). Lawson (2008) also aligns with gender norms by focusing on relationships and communication when studying female offenders. Other studies display gender bias in that they focus only on male perpetration and female victimisation (Giguere & Bumby, 2007).

A study conducted by Vandiver (2006) succeeds in illuminating the existence of the female sexual offender. However, this study aims to expose differences between solo and co-offenders and thus reinforces the typologies that Brockman and Bluglass (1996) have criticised as serving to limit the true heterogeneity of these women. The study is also a quantitative analysis and, as such, it fails to gather the in-depth perceptions of the offenders, the victims or the professionals working with them. Significantly, one study conducted by Geiger and Fischer (2005) examined offenders' discursive constructions of their criminal identities. Female offenders struggled to negotiate their status as criminals with female gendered roles such as motherhood, passivity and submission. This study is limited, however, in that it contrasts male and female offenders according to gendered discourses and thus simply reinforces the prevailing masculine-feminine dichotomy under a patriarchal hegemony. A study conducted by Denov (2003) seems to circumvent some of the problems inherent in the above-mentioned research by acknowledging and unpacking the function of traditional sexual and gender roles in maintaining myths about

female sexual offenders. However, Denov's (2003) study is limited in that it only focuses on female child sexual abuse and does not consider alternative kinds of female sexual perpetration. It also draws on descriptive statistics from previous studies to map out various populations and prevalence rates of female sexual offenders and, in doing so, ignores the in-depth subjective data that could arise from more qualitative research with female sexual offenders. This said, Denov (2003) does consider some previous case report studies in order to unpack the opinions of lawmakers, victims and professionals.

Thus, patriarchal society and scientific literature speak to one another through discourses around the submissive sexual orientation of women, therefore rendering the female sexual offender an unfathomable construct. The current study aims to avoid this pattern of reporting by focusing on the relationship between female sexual offenders' subjective experiences and broader discursive practices at play in society. By extension then, this study investigates the 'natural' and the 'truth' as embodied in the sexual transgressor. This is especially with regards to the way female sexual offenders draw on discourses on sexuality, gender, maternity, criminality and perversity in producing themselves as subjects.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

This research is solidly embedded in a qualitative framework. As such, the research report draws on words, language, descriptions and participants' responses as data (Whitley, 2002) in order to critically analyse, interpret, reflect and conceptualise the available information (Parker, 2003). The researcher is thus a crucial part of the process as the subjective instrument by which the data is interpreted. Qualitative analysis is appropriate for this particular research as it results in rich and detailed data in the form of an extensive corpus of transcribed interviews that allow for a thorough interpretation of the various perceptions offered by the participants. More significantly, this study aims to examine sexualised and gendered discourse and its relationship to power. Butler (2004, p. 67) suggests that the most productive means to measure aspects of identity entails qualitative self-reporting which is performative in that it takes place "before a certain audience for whom a verbal and visual picture of selfhood is being produced". In this way, gender and sexuality can move beyond its binary structure and rather acquire a framework based on multiplicity. Moreover, performativity allows for dominant gender norms and more subordinate forms of gender to be equalized. Gender performativity also makes way for the exposure of norms as well as a demonstration of how such norms can be both reproduced and altered. Thus qualitative discourse analysis provides the most sophisticated methodological framework for the investigation of gendered and sexualised discursive practices and their relationship to broader social practices.

3.2. PARTICIPANTS

The sample was purposively selected from the population of incarcerated female sexual offenders in the Johannesburg and Pretoria female correctional centres. Once ethics clearance had been obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand, a research proposal and ethics clearance certificate was submitted to the South African Department of Correctional Services in order to obtain permission for access to the proposed sample. The proposal was granted ethical clearance by the Department of Correctional Services' Research Directorate. A summary of the proposal was thereafter submitted to the regional commissioner who granted the researcher

permission to access the sample. Subsequently, the researcher was put in contact with various social workers at the Pretoria and Johannesburg correctional services who then guided the process. The researcher was able to visit the participants according to the Correctional Services Act's (1998, p. 81) assertion that "the Commissioner may permit any person...to visit a prisoner, a prison or any specific section of a prison for any special or general purpose".

The criterion for participation was incarceration in a female correctional centre for charges of sexual offence. Here sexual offence refers to any offence outlined by both the Sexual Offences Act (1957) and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act including instances of sexual assault, incest, sexual offences against children and rape (Minister for Justice and Constitutional Development, 2007). The final sample consisted of eight incarcerated female sexual offenders. It must be acknowledged here that drawing on a sample of incarcerated offenders is limiting in that it excludes offenders that have not been charged for sexual offences. This is significant as many female sexual offenders are never charged or sentenced for their crimes. This limitation may lead to poor typicality across the population of female sexual offenders (Vandiver, 2006). That is, the findings cannot claim to be 'typical' of all female sexual offenders (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002).

3.3. DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE

A semi-structured interview was drawn upon as a means to gather relevant data (see Appendix A). This type of interactively fluid and informal interview allowed the participant to talk about her experiences and perceptions in a comfortable manner. Further, because semi-structured interviews have no required order and structure, the researcher was able to adapt predetermined questions according to each participant. In this way the interview took the form of a discussion around female sexual offenders' experiences while simultaneously remaining focused on the central research questions.

Each interview took place in a specific time and space between the researcher and a particular participant. Therefore it should be taken into account that in an alternative context the resulting data may have arisen somewhat differently. This is particularly important to note as this research report is based on a social constructionist perspective and thus acknowledges that the narratives

emerging from the interview process are co-constructed by the participant and the researcher. That is, the interview is the primary site of knowledge production in the research process (Riach, 2009). Furthermore, because this research takes the Foucauldian confession into account, the emerging data is understood particularly in the context of the confession as a mode of self-construction. The element of confession was particularly emphasised during the interview process as the researcher, as the receiver of the confession, was often experienced as an ‘expert’ by the participants. This was a result of both the researcher’s affiliation with a university institution as well as her title as a training psychological researcher.

The interview questions covered a range of areas in order to explore and analyse different aspects of the participants’ self-perceptions. This said, the interviews were semi-structured and thus the interview schedule was merely a framework on which to conduct the interviews. Questions were primarily asked according to a particular participant’s lead and thus not every question in the schedule was utilised in every interview. Different questions applied to different participants and particular participants directed the interviews away from predetermined questions. Thus the interview schedule was simply an outline of possible questions that may have been asked during the interview process.

Specifically, the interviews explored participants’ background life histories and their experiences of their crimes, sentences and lives inside a female correctional centre. Participants were also asked to discuss how they think others perceive them. This was with reference to correctional staff, other offenders, legal representatives and available mental health professionals. Media coverage on similar crimes was also discussed as was their perceptions of men and children. These questions aimed to identify possible discourses on sexuality, gender, maternity, criminality and perversity that female sexual offenders draw upon in producing themselves as subjects.

3.4. SELF-REFLEXIVITY

Macbeth (2001) describes reflexivity as a deconstructive process that locates the researcher’s impact and influence on both the data collection process as well as on the data analysis. As such, the research process is understood as “producing multiple realities” (Riach, 2009, p. 357). Moreover, identifying reflexivity in the research process simultaneously allows for the

deconstruction of power dynamics, resistance and social-historical influences. In this way the researcher is able to position “knowledge in agency” (Macbeth, 2001, p. 40). Stevens (2008) takes this further and argues that the social relationships between the participants and the researcher are characterised by power and status positions. Thus self-reflexivity cannot be regarded without further taking into account the positional reflexivity between researcher and participant (Macbeth, 2001). More specifically then, the production of gender and sexual discursive practices cannot simply be understood as emanating from within the participants but also needs to be regarded as a result of the confessional context set up between the researcher and the participant. Here, the Foucauldian understanding of the confession as a site for the production of knowledge becomes significant. By applying a reflexive approach to both the interview context and the method of data analysis, an understanding of the researcher’s impact on the participants and the study results is made visible. This is particularly significant for this study as it is framed by an acknowledgement that knowledge is socially produced.

Cupples (2002) cautions that researchers in the field of sexuality should not overlook the role and impact of their subjectivity and identity on the research process and outcome. Social productions of gender, sexuality and ethnicity do not escape the research process and thus the researcher needs to be conscious of his/her ideological positions as well as the possible ways others may be viewing him/her. Thus, in this particular case, the researcher as a heterosexual female had to be aware of her possible biases in making heteronormative assumptions about the participants. Likewise, the researcher needed to attempt to view herself in the eyes of the participants, particularly with respect to the researcher’s intentions and her own sexuality. This is even more complicated in cross-cultural settings where self and other become more pronounced and sexualities are likely to be exoticised (Cupples, 2002). As a white middle class woman, the researcher had to avoid reproducing the colonising character of much cross-cultural research by giving the participants primary vocal space and acknowledging how and when sexualised or ethnic constructions were playing out within the interview context. This was especially important in the context of this research as the majority of the participants had different cultural, ethnic, language and racial backgrounds to the researcher. These cultural boundaries also impacted the confessional site of the interview. For example, the university culture and its various academic practices are foreign concepts to most of the participants. This,

in conjunction with the participants' inability to fully access the English language often resulted in the researcher being shaped as the 'expert' which in turn shaped the interview context into a confessional space. The researcher may also have been perceived as an 'expert' as a result of the implications set up in the participant information sheet (See Appendix B). For example, this introductory document explained that the study will have a psychological and legal focus and that the results will be relevant to policy makers who design prevention programmes. These references to professional institutions were most probably emphasised by the statement that the study will contribute to the participants' own understanding of their circumstances. Such a statement inadvertently places the researcher in a position of power through the implied suggestion that the participant will undergo a process of heightened self-awareness during her interaction with the researcher.

The researcher's motivation for conducting research on the self-perceptions of female sexual offenders is two-fold. Firstly, I am particularly invested in examining how social constructions of gender and sexuality influence our perceptions of social 'reality'. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, I am interested in what happens to the identities of those women who refuse to conform to social standards of acceptable gendered behaviour and, more importantly, how these women negotiate their identities in response to the consequences of their non-gendered behaviour. As such, I had to be cautious of leading the participants towards a gendered discussion on identity politics that fed into my own intentions. However, it must be acknowledged that this ability to be self-reflexive was often hampered by the interview dynamics and the differential access to power. The power and status positions in the interview context continuously changed according to the content of the discussion. At times, I was placed in a position of power by my status as a researcher working within the profession of psychology. This was emphasised by my ongoing relationship with the social workers and the Department of Correctional Services which was always made visible to the participants. As such, by the very status of my position as a scientific researcher or 'expert', I often embodied the very disciplinary power I aim to critique. During such moments, I had to ensure that the participants had primary vocal space, that they trusted that my ultimate intention was to assist policymakers and service providers with a better understanding of their circumstances and that they trusted that I was not going to report their personal narratives to the Department of Correctional Services. The

participants' inferior status positions were made manifest by various implications that these women were participating in the research because they felt it was expected from them and that they had to comply with the authority of the social workers. Moreover, many of the participants assumed I had the power to alter their circumstances. For example, participants often requested that I have them sent to a correctional centre where a psychologist was available. Throughout the interviews it was obvious that the participants were conscious of the researcher as an audience to their narratives and that these narratives would potentially be viewed by a much larger audience which may or may not be beneficial to them. As such, the participants often refused to answer certain questions or otherwise became very submissive. This behaviour was particularly exacerbated in the only interview where a warden was present as a translator. The presence of this translator also complicated the interview dynamics. Due to her ability to communicate with both the participant and myself separately the power shifted so that she acquired primary agency. During this interview it often felt as if the translator summarised the participant's narrative and only informed me of the information she deemed necessary. It is therefore most likely that much of the interview content was shifted, altered or adapted. This is particularly problematic in the context of a study drawing on CDA in which the discursive content is the primary target for analysis. As such, the presence of a translator has undoubtedly affected the results drawn from this particular interview. This said, the availability of a translator during this interview was also beneficial as some of the other interviews were characterised by language barriers between myself and the participants. Such barriers were particularly strong in the case of idiom, metaphor and colloquialism usage. As such, my interpretations of the participants' responses may not match up entirely to what the participant was originally intending to express. Again, these language difficulties most likely affected the final results.

Throughout all of the interviews the power and status positions shifted continuously. As such, there were times that I was made more vulnerable and less powerful. In these moments the participants became aggressive or expressed desires to be violent and destructive. These interactions were enhanced by other situations that I had to overcome in the correctional context such as parking my car amidst a group of male offenders working with garden tools, walking through multiple lock-ups and having most of my belongings confiscated before the interviews were scheduled to take place. It must be acknowledged here that I was definitely more fearful

amidst the male offenders than the female offenders and I am thus clearly not outside of the gender constructions I aim to oppose. My vulnerability and fear often gave the participants an upper-hand in the interview context and it cannot be denied that this has had a profound influence on the selection of results and the way I ultimately perceived these women. This said, there were many times where I identified with these women and their recognition of my identification allowed for a more equal power dynamics to characterise the interview relationship. While this process of identification did allow for the existence of equal power dynamics, it also ensured that the participants were able to form identity collusions in the interview context. This was especially reinforced by my status as a woman and many of the interviews were characterised by remarks that I should understand their position simply by virtue of my femininity.

As the relationships in the interviews were clearly imbued with very complex and always shifting power dynamics, I made a concerted effort to apply an open-minded approach to analysing the data and to continue being reflexive when selecting data for inclusion in the report.

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

On completion of data collection, the tape-recorded interviews were transcribed and thereafter compiled into a corpus of transcriptions that formed the raw data for analysis. This process yielded approximately 80 pages of transcribed text for the eight interviews. These were subsequently subjected to a specific type of qualitative analysis known as critical discourse analysis (CDA). Specifically, the CDA approach foregrounded by Fairclough and Wodak (1997) was utilised to analyse the transcripts. For Foucault (1978), historicised and institutionalised discourse is primary in both producing and regulating objects of knowledge. While this theoretical concept applies to this study, Foucault's (1981) genealogical means of analysis does not. That is, for Foucault (1981) analysis should entail the revelation of a scarcity of meaning in discourse through the investigation of history and archives. Moreover, analysis for Foucault (1981) should regard the extra-discursive practices evident in text and society so that what is discursively excluded becomes paramount. That is, discourse analysis should investigate the "restrictive and constraining function" of discursive production (Foucault, 1981, p. 61). While the CDA approach offered by Fairclough and Wodak (1997) has the slightly different ambition

of analysing discourse as a function of both text and society as well as their relationship, this method is at least not in overt opposition to Foucault's theoretical paradigm of discourse.

Weeks (1981) suggests that investigation of sexuality and gender should take place at the level of the state. While this reference to the state as an operator of power is a fairly anti-Foucauldian sentiment, it does allow for the implication that gender and sexuality should be understood with reference to "the role of particular apparatuses, such as the medical, psychiatric, social welfare, charity and legal institutions" in the shaping of these constructs (Weeks, 1981, p. 10). This can be achieved by exploring sexual and gendered behaviour "both in terms of the social categorisation that shapes the experience, and in terms of the response itself" (Weeks, 1981, p. 98). CDA aims to understand "the relationship between text and society" and thus analysis takes place at both the micro level of language within the transcriptions and at the macro level of social discursive practices (Phillips & Jørgenson, 2002, p. 67). That is, a combined analysis took place by relating core themes and patterns within the data to discursive patterns within society. Specifically, metaphors, wording, grammar and body language used by the participants were systematically coded according to the most significant themes that ran through the data and interpreted in terms of how language and the body construct identities and contribute to either the reproduction or the resistance of patriarchal ideological discourses (Phillips & Jørgenson, 2002). Note-taking during the collection phase aided this process.

Fairclough and Wodak (1997, p. 271-280) delineate eight principles that frame the CDA process. These eight principles are that 1) CDA addresses social problems, 2) power relations are discursive, 3) discourse constitutes society and culture, 4) discourse does ideological work, 5) discourse is historical, 6) the link between text and society is mediated, 7) discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory, and 8) discourse is a form of social action. These principles formed the framework for how the data was selected, understood and interpreted. Alongside this, a Foucauldian understanding of discourse as a means "to describe and critique the discursive world people inhabit and to explore their implications for subjectivity and experience" underwrote the analytic procedure (Willig, 2001, p. 91). The actual process of analysis involved the reading of the transcripts according to the above frameworks and selecting discursive themes evident in the data. These themes were then either collapsed into one another to form larger

themes or structured hierarchically to form sets of subthemes with an overarching theme. Themes were thereafter labelled and defined. It must be noted that this process was cyclical and required multiple levels of re-reading and recoding (Willig, 2001). The results are, however, presented linearly for the purpose of clarity.

CDA is not a politically neutral process (Phillips & Jørgenson, 2002). It aims to expose, interpret and override current prevailing discursive practices (van Dijk, 2001). Thus the researcher's ideological stance and value-systems form an integral part of the analytic process and have inevitably emerged in the research material. In line with Butler (1999), this study intends to challenge the prevailing discourses concerning gender and sexuality. As a white, heterosexual, middle class and female training psychological researcher, the researcher's own social experiences have undoubtedly spoken back into the way the data was read, understood and selected for inclusion in the final research report. The findings displayed by this study are therefore open to interpretation and discussion.

3.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

When working with human subjects it is crucial to consider ethical issues that may arise during the course of the research process. This is especially significant when dealing with sensitive issues such as sexual offences. Therefore the researcher carried out certain precautionary procedures laid out by the National Health Act (2004) to ensure that all ethical principles were upheld throughout the research process. The National Health Act (2004) maintains that all research must identify and prioritise relevant social problems, especially those of vulnerable groups. This research investigates reasons for the continued denial of female sexual perpetration thus bringing to light sexual offences that have negative consequences for both the victims and the offenders.

Once permission for access to the sample had been granted by the Department of Correctional Services, every potential research participant received an information sheet with details concerning the aim and rationale of the study, the researcher's contact details, the data gathering procedure as well as the statement that participants are free to withdraw themselves or their information from the study at any point in time or to refuse to answer any questions they choose

not to. To make this possible the researcher provided the participants with both telephonic and mailing contact details. The information sheet also included details about privacy regarding the fact that although confidentiality cannot always be fully protected in correctional centre contexts, participant confidentiality was to be upheld as much as possible throughout the research documentation and all documented data was to remain anonymous. As there are only a small number of incarcerated South African female sexual offenders, the results may allow for the identification of participants which may have negative consequences for the offenders. In light of this, the final report, and any subsequent reporting, pays special attention to maintaining the anonymity of the participants' identities. However, the participants were made aware of possible breaches of privacy as well as the fact that the Department of Correctional Services have access to the final report (See Appendix B).

After participants acquired information concerning the study they were given the opportunity to either accept or decline the invitation to participate. That is, participants were made aware that participation was completely voluntary (Whitley, 2002). In light of this, each potential participant received a consent form which they chose to sign if they agreed to participate in the research (See Appendix C). This is in accordance with the National Health Act (2004, p. 54) which states that research may only be conducted "with the written consent of the person after he or she has been informed of the objects of the research...and any possible positive or negative consequences". On giving informed consent to participate, participants were also required to consent to the recording of the interviews which were quoted from directly (See Appendix D) and were made aware that no identifying information would be drawn from them. Further, it was explained that the tapes would be destroyed by incineration immediately after the completion of transcription. It was also clear that there were no advantages or disadvantages in participating in the study as well as no direct benefits. These ethical considerations attempted to ensure that the study presented no more than minimal risk to the participants.

In accordance with the Correctional Services Act (1998), the researcher signed an agreement form for the Department of Correctional Services. This form ensures that the researcher complies with all correctional service conditions. In terms of this agreement, the researcher would not give money to or receive money from participants, supply participants with any

benefits or rewards or enter correctional services without authorization or interfere with any offenders.

With regards to the research findings, a one page summary of the results will be made available to participants on request. Further, the Department of Correctional Services have access to the full final research report. While the researcher reserves the right to publish articles based on the proposed report, publication of data-driven findings are subject to permission being obtained from the Department of Correctional Services. In interviewing female sexual offenders and providing them with feedback, this research supports the Correctional Service Act's (1998, p. 23) objective which aims to "encourage prisoners to maintain contact with the community and enable them to stay abreast of current affairs".

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research seeks to investigate discourse and power as elements of female sexual offenders' self-knowledge. Primarily, this report examines how disciplinary power is enacted through gendered and sexualised discursive practices. It further investigates how discourse on gender, sexuality, maternity, criminality and perversity shape the self-knowledge of incarcerated female sexual offenders. This enables a discussion on how discursive practices produced at the intersection of knowledge and power account for the continued denial of female sexual perpetration. The aims of this study guided the CDA process and the selection of the results to be reported. Table 1 provides a summary of these results.

Overarching Discursive Themes	Subthemes
Rationalising Discursive Strategies	Claims of Innocence
	Blaming Discourse
	Victim Discourse
	Illness Discourse
Gendered Discourse	Active Male versus Passive Female
	Maternal Discourse
	Masculinity Discourse
Morality Discourse	Religious Discourse
	Self-Integrity Declarations
	Conservatism
Perceptions of the Legal and Correctional Systems	Anger towards the System
	Perceptions of State Lawyers
	Descriptions of Life in the Correctional Centre
	Docile Bodies
Institutionalised Discourse	Legal and Correctional Discourse on Female Sexual Offenders
	Perceptions of Media Discourse on Female Sexual Offenders
Discourse on Rehabilitation	Perceptions of Rehabilitation
	Psychology versus Social Work
Inversions of Femaleness	

Table 1: Summary of results

While these discursive themes are presented categorically for the sake of clarity, they should not be read as fixed and separate entities. Rather, the themes interlink across one another and

various subthemes speak back to other overarching themes and subthemes. This interlinking particularly relates to the fact that all of the themes reflect the influence of particular socio-historical contexts of discourse production on the participants' discursive practices. That is, all the themes jointly demonstrate that institutionalised discursive practices inform the self-knowledge of the participants. By doing so the results account for the macro-level discourses that feed into the micro-level experiences, perceptions and identities of the participants as well as display how disciplinary power is an instrument and effect of the participants' discursive networks. The results thus reveal the way in which subject positions, made available in prevailing discourse, are made invisible and are subsequently understood by the individual as self-knowledge (Wilbraham, 2004). The results are further discussed in this chapter and interpreted in light of the literature provided in the literature review. This discussion follows an initial overview of the participants' profiles as female sexual offenders.

4.1. FEMALE SEXUAL OFFENDER PROFILES

Prior to relating the results of this study it is necessary to make a comment concerning the use of the term 'crime.' Criminality is itself an historical project that cannot be understood outside of context. Additionally, social constructions of criminality are largely phallogentric and are thus not easily aligned with female offenders. However, because the participants are situated within a correctional context that has labelled them as 'criminals', for practical purposes this study uses terms such as 'crime' or 'criminal'. This does not mean to imply an essentialist understanding of the participants as criminals nor does it mean to suggest that these women should be understood in phallogentric criminal terms.

The sample in this study consisted of eight incarcerated South African female sexual offenders. While this sample appears to be relatively small it must be borne in mind that at the time of conducting this research there were only 24 female sexual offenders incarcerated across all South African correctional centres (Department of Correctional Services, 2008). The sample therefore makes up 30 percent of the population of incarcerated South African female sexual offenders.

All of the participants had been incarcerated for charges of sexual offence outlined by either the Sexual Offences Act (1957) or the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters)

Amendment Act (Minister for Justice and Constitutional Development, 2007). While most of the women were charged with rape, the actual sexual acts were by no means similar across the sample. Rather, they included a range of different acts including child prostitution, grievous bodily harm, indecent assault, the production of child pornography and child sexual abuse. Interestingly, all of the offences involved children as victims. In line with Lawson's (2008) study, this research found that the majority of incarcerated female sexual offenders were also charged with child abuse. Here, a number of important issues need to be taken into account. Firstly, while female child sexual perpetration is generally denied, it seems to be at least more acceptable than female sexual perpetration against an adult male. This is perhaps a result of gendered constructions that imply that women are inferior to men and thus cannot possibly assert power over men. A child, however, is already set up as less powerful than an adult woman and thus female child sexual perpetration may be more fathomable. The question thus arises as to whether there are women that sexually perpetrate adult men and, in turn, why these women are not brought forward to the legal system. Secondly, the finding that all the victims were children is unsurprising when maternal constructions that allow women primary access to children are taken into account (Vandiver, 2006). This is especially significant here as all of these women are mothers and most of the victims were their own children. It is important to note that there was no mention of incest by the participants or the correctional staff despite the tendency for the victims to be the participants' own children. Female child sexual abusers thus seem to escape the accusations of incest that most male child sexual abusers are subjected to. For example, most literature on male paedophilia highlights incest as one of the main categories of male child sexual abuse (Araji & Finkelhor, 1986; Berlin & Krout, 1986; Fagan, Wise, Schmidt & Berlin, 2002; Hall & Hall, 2007; Howitt, 1995; Kempe & Kempe, 1984). However, incest is rarely mentioned in the literature on female sexual offenders. This difference in the literature is echoed by the finding that the term 'incest' is not used to describe female child sexual abuse by both the offenders themselves as well as by those people working with the offenders.

Another significant observation regarding these offences is that most of them involved a male accomplice. Those women that acted alone blamed their sons for their crimes. The presence of a male accomplice or a male scapegoat again reinforces the gendered construction of the male aggressor. As such, these women fall under the category of 'Male-Coerced' female sexual

offenders and the system therefore understands them as acting under the abusive instruction of their male partners (Higgs et al., 1992; Lawson, 2008; Freeman, 1996). This male accomplice was thus usually treated far more harshly by the legal system than his female counterpart. However, because this typology limits the true heterogeneity of the offenders (Brockman & Bluglass, 1996), this research will not use this category as a means to understand the participants. Rather, this research is in agreement with Vandiver (2006) that when female sexual offenders act with a male accomplice, victims are more likely to report the abuse and the legal system is more likely to sentence the female offender.

Another important observation about the sample is that all of the women were from a lower class populace. This is in line with Foucault's (1977) understanding of the correctional context as a space that allows for the maintenance of a patriarchal hegemony whereby the dominant classes continue to discipline and regulate the lower classes. While the participants came from a similar background in class, they were all different in age and ethnicity. Specifically, in contrast to previous research that displayed that most female sexual offenders are aged between 20 and 30 (Vandiver, 2006), the age of this study's sample ranged from mid-thirties to mid-sixties. Two of the eight participants were black, two were coloured and four were white Afrikaans women.

The participants had been incarcerated for different lengths of times and thus had varying experiences of the correctional context. Those that had been incarcerated for less than one year were the most hostile and angry. They also provided the most inconsistent and incoherent narratives and were less eager to share their stories. Those who had been incarcerated for longer periods seemed to be calmer and more accepting of their circumstances. Moreover, the longer their time in the correctional centre, the more prepared and rehearsed the narratives of their crimes seemed to be. This mastering of the narrative was evident in the provision of exact times, locations, days and dates for multiple events that had occurred years ago. The same precision did not apply to narratives of events that had occurred more recently.

The legal system seems to treat female sexual offenders inconsistently. While the participants were mostly treated with more leniency than their male counterparts, women with similar offences often had completely different sentences. For example, both P2 and P3 were charged

with rape; however P2 was sentenced to seven years imprisonment whilst P3 was sentenced to life imprisonment. This ambiguous sentencing pattern may be a result of the legal system's inability to negotiate the apparently opposing genders and sexualities of these women. That is, the legal system is founded on the very hegemonic ideology that insists that gender identity and biological sex should match up and, moreover, that females cannot be sexually aggressive (Bem, 1993). Table 2 presents a summary of the participants' criminal profiles.

	Criminal Offence	Sentence
Participant 1 (P1)	Rape	Unknown
Participant 2 (P2)	Rape	Life
Participant 3 (P3)	Rape	Seven years
Participant 4 (P4)	Grievous bodily harm (GBH), indecent assault	Eight years
Participant 5 (P5)	Rape, sexual assault, indecent assault, crimen injuria	Fifteen years
Participant 6 (P6)	Rape, assault, child abuse	Thirty-nine years
Participant 7 (P7)	Rape	Fifteen years
Participant 8 (P8)	Rape	Seventeen years

Table 2: Participants' Criminal Profiles

4.2. RATIONALISING DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES

All of the offenders drew on discursive structures that both rationalised and justified their criminal behaviour. Importantly, the words, idioms and ideas put forward by the participants replicated larger discursive practices at play on a broader societal level. In much the same way as the general public, the media and the medico-legal system, female sexual offenders tend to draw on victim discourse, histories of abuse and claims of psychological ailments to justify their offences. As such, these rationalising discourses are clearly learnt discourses that have come to have meaning for the existence of female sexual perpetration. The rationalisations drawn on by the legal, medical and academic domains are not only lived out by the offenders but are also reinforced and consequently reproduced. Specifically, these women asserted their innocence through the implication that female sexual perpetration is not really possible. These claims of innocence were further supported by blaming discourse that attempted to hold others responsible for their crimes. Additionally, the participants utilised the gendered construction of the female victim to explain their circumstances. When other rationalisations were not appropriate or plausible, some of the offenders explained their behaviour away with physical or mental illness.

These rationalisations are in line with broader social discourses that justify female sexual perpetration with underprivileged lifestyles, mental illnesses and histories of abuse (Bourke, 2007). Such discourses allowed the participants to possess an external frame of reference and in turn allowed them to avoid possessing the identity of a sexual offender. Accordingly, instances of blaming, scapegoating and avoidance of agency need to be viewed as powerful discursive mechanisms that assisted the participants in maintaining an identity that aligns with apparently socially desirable forms of femininity.

4.2.1. CLAIMS OF INNOCENCE

There was a general resistance to the confessional across all of the interviews. It seems that the participants, by virtue of their gender, are still operating outside of the incitement to discourse despite current increased acknowledgement of female sexual perpetration (Lawson, 2008) as well as increased social surveillance (Hopper, 2007). The participants' subjective incapacity to view themselves as sexual offenders affected their ability to occupy agency in their offences as well as their ability to confess which in turn resulted in the use of rationalising discourse. Before the different types of rationalising discourse can be examined, it is necessary to establish this discourse as a means to maintain the subjective innocence of the offenders. Not a single participant felt that she was guilty of a crime and this was expressed with various claims of innocence such as "I don't know why I'm here." (P1), "I don't understand the charge" (P2), "I didn't commit a crime" (P2), "I didn't know what was happening" (P6) and "I know I didn't do anything wrong" (P8).

When P3 was questioned about her charges of rape she responded that:

I was shocked for the name. The name shocked me. Because I think how can they give this...how they can put rape on my card¹ because I didn't do anything wrong. The only thing I did wrong was I didn't went to the police to tell them what happened. You see, I kept it for myself. How can they put rape on my card if I didn't do rape at that time.

P4 defended her claims of innocence by implying that the legal system supported her feelings:

¹ The offenders have prison cards that outline their identities and criminal profiles. They have to carry this card at all times.

I am not guilty. Even in court I said I am not guilty. Even court knows...I'm not happy, serious, to be here. I'm really not happy. Because I, I, I'm...I didn't do anything wrong. I didn't.

P5 was accused of producing and thereafter selling child pornography and she sustained her subjective innocence by attempting to reassure both herself and the researcher that she was merely performing and is thus not guilty of her actions:

I had to um, pose for the photos like I was doing stuff. But I didn't do it. I was just posing for the photos.

It is therefore evident that the participants were unable to view themselves as transgressors and consequently they made others accountable for their offences. This avoidance of acknowledging their 'criminal' identities was only possible because the participants drew on rationalising discourse to uphold their innocence. It is in this way that the participants produced themselves as innocent subjects and, in turn, further assisted the general public, academic and legal domains in the production of the female sexual offender as an unfathomable construct.

4.2.2. BLAMING DISCOURSE

Lawson (2008, p. 338) found that most of the female sexual offenders in her study "blamed their offences on someone else." Likewise, most of the participants in this study maintained their subjective innocence by locating a scapegoat for their crimes. These scapegoats included friends, family and even the legal system. For example, P1 claimed that her neighbour had a grudge against her and therefore concocted a story that P1 had taken the neighbour's daughter and used her for child prostitution. Later P1's story changed and she maintained that her neighbour had asserted that P1 had raped the neighbour's daughter. Throughout P1's narrative she used phrases such as "*she did this to me*" in order to uphold her innocence and relay the responsibility onto her neighbour. P1 also claimed that she was supposed to be out on parole; however the judge at the high court had insisted that she was dangerous because, according to P1, he believed that she had bewitched him. In a similar vein, P2 blamed her son for the rape of her daughter, despite the fact that her daughter stated in court that her parents were responsible for the crime. She supported her argument with the claim that her son had often accused his parents of abusing him when this was not true and that this was simply yet another example of

her son's manipulation tactics. Unlike P1, however, P2's narrative was extremely well-rehearsed. She provided exact dates and times and continued to assert that "*I didn't rape. It's my son. My son*". By blaming her son for the crime, P2 simultaneously draws on and reinforces the gendered construction of the male aggressor. P7 also blamed her son for the rape of her niece. However, whereas P2's son was 18 years old, P7's son was only nine years old. P7's implication that her nine year old son is capable of more aggression than she is highlights the entrenchment of gendered constructions in social discourse. This said, it must be acknowledged that precise differences between adulthood and childhood (such as ages of consent) are also socially constructed as are the assumptions that children are naive, harmless and innocent (Ariès, 1960).

P5 used blaming and gendered discourse for similar purposes to P2. She also blamed her family for not assisting her:

P5: *My husband used to abuse us. Me and my daughter. And he made us take photos, make the photos with the children, with the child. I've got only one daughter. Uh, and then it was very hard because I had to do it because my family they didn't want to help me. I went for help and so they just closed the doors. I didn't know what to do. So, I took the photos. I had to pose for photos with my daughter, naked photos.*

Researcher: *And what were the consequences if you didn't? What would your-*

P5: *Well, he didn't buy me food in the house. You know, he was always fighting. Sometimes he didn't come home.*

Researcher: *Okay.*

P5: *Sometimes he used to beat me. Not always but he used to beat me and he used to threaten my life and my daughter's life so I was scared for him.*

Of all the participants, P4 had been incarcerated for the shortest period of time. Interestingly, her narrative was not nearly as mastered as the other offenders' narratives. This was most clear in her attempt to draw on blaming discourse to explain away the rape of her daughter. She was living alone with her daughter at the time and thus had no male accomplice or scapegoat to place the blame on. She therefore explained that some unknown man had entered her house in Johannesburg and raped her daughter. She could not identify this man and asserted that her daughter could not either:

Researcher: *And did she talk about it to you? The rape. Did your daughter talk to you about it?*
P4: *Ya.*
Researcher: *And she told you?*
P4: *Ya.*
Researcher: *And did she know the rapist?*
P4: *No. She didn't know him.*
Researcher: *It was a man?*
P4: *Yes.*
Researcher: *Okay.*
P4: *She is saying she didn't see him before. She didn't see him even that time.*

This ambiguity continued throughout the interview. P4 then explained that her daughter was later raped again in East London while P4 was in Johannesburg and as such P4 could not possibly be involved. She also implied that her boyfriend had been accused of some involvement yet maintained that this was impossible because he was with P4 at the time. Throughout the interview P4 attempted to relay the responsibility of her crime; however the lack of preparedness in her narrative resulted in vague, ambiguous statements. This was the case despite the fact that P4 and her boyfriend had been identified as the offenders by her family, her landlord and her daughter.

P6 also drew on blaming discourse in order to explain her circumstances. However, rather than laying blame on family or community members P6 chose to attribute the responsibility for her crime to the mental health and legal professions. She explained that she had approached social workers multiple times concerning the rape of her children; however they chose to do nothing. P6 maintained that *"if the social worker had opened a case, then that man... [would be] in prison"*. P6 then went on to say that *"the social worker didn't talk the truth in court"*. Further, she felt that the legal system never allowed her to express her side of the story and instead charged her for her apparent complicity in her husband and brother-in-law's crimes. These feelings were articulated despite the fact that her children directly accused her of forcing them into child prostitution and abuse. When asked about this inconsistency P6 again relied on blaming discourse and claimed that *"somebody told them they must... [say] that"*. The participants' apparent relaying of responsibility needs to be understood as a mechanism that

allowed these women to discursively renegotiate their statuses away from a criminal identity and, in turn, as a means to align better with socially acceptable forms of femininity.

4.2.3. VICTIM DISCOURSE

I was really suffering...because of this life...I was living (P6).

Most of the participants perceived themselves as victims rather than perpetrators. This is in line with a broader social discursive pattern which implies that men are perpetrators and women are victims. Such discursive patterns have historically and socially been used as a means to construct power relations (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) and as such the availability of these discourses made it easy for the participants to assert themselves as powerless victims. Moreover, discourses concerning sexual perpetration are rooted in constructions of the male perpetrator and the female victim (Denov, 2001). Access to these constructions allowed most of the victim discourse produced by the participants to be centred on a male aggressor. These traditional sexual scripts also ensure that the responsibility for the sexual perpetration is laid on the male accomplice rather than the female and that the female perpetrator becomes the female victim (Bourke, 2007). As such, in line with observations put forward by Denov (2003), the participants' reproduction of traditional sexual scripts forecloses alternative understandings of female sexual perpetration. The use of the traditional roles of the male perpetrator and the female victim was particularly strong in the narratives of the four Afrikaans women which is unsurprising as the Afrikaans culture is especially patriarchal and traditional (Leach, 1989). For example, P8 claimed that her husband not only abused her but also put sleeping tablets in her coffee so that she would not know that he was raping her daughter.

The most noticeable patterns of victim discourse were expressed by P3 and P6. Both women threaded a discursive pattern of victimisation throughout their narratives which spanned their entire life histories. In line with common explanations for female sexual perpetration put forward by Higgs et al. (1992) and Roe-Sepowitz and Krysik (2008), both P3 and P6 relied on transgenerational familial histories of abuse to explain their behaviour. P6 initiated her interview with a summary of her background that exemplifies this reliance on victim discourse:

I always had a bad life outside...I was living in a house without electricity for seven years and...I was using candles and burning logs and...I was chopping wood everyday to make fire for my children to, to bath. And...sometimes then there's no money, money for...to buy the paraffin for...the paraffin stuff. Then I was making fire outside at five 'o' clock in the morning to make some fire to make porridge or some...some coffee, water and, boiling water for...make for pap. Silence. But...it's alright. Sometimes I...my husband was abuse us. He was hitting us. When he drinks, when we come he hit us...I was have three children. One die and only two left.

In a similar fashion, P3 began by explaining that “my father didn't want me” and “my mom and father was drinking a lot”. P3 was put up for adoption while her younger brother stayed at home. Her explanation for this was that “it's like I was the black sheep from the family”. During her teenage years she returned home because her biological mother was diagnosed with cancer. The descriptions of these years reinforce the male aggressor and the female victim:

*Me and my dad didn't get along. He used to shout at me. He scream me for nothing. He used to take everything out on me. So I thought it's not a good thing but I got...I felt sorry for my mom because she was very sick from cancer that time. So, I went to school, come back, work in the house, clean the house, cook food, everything... I had this...um...step-sister and she was sleeping with **my** dad. And I saw it. And I asked my mom: 'What's going on? Why is she sleeping with **my** dad?'... At the end I was staying with my mom and dad but I didn't talk to him, nothing. I was only for my mom. Because she was sick.*

Initially P3 depicts her mother as a victim of male aggression who also suffered from cancer. She later portrays herself in exactly the same light. This identification with her mother reinforces her status as a victim. It also allows her to believe that, like her mother, she never wanted to hurt her children but was rather forced to hurt them because of her status as a victim of male aggression. She later explained that her husband was sexually abusing her daughters but she could not report it to the police because:

I was scared. We were scared for this man because he was abusing us, he were hitting us. Every day of our lives. My eyes were like- my eyes was popping out the way he was hitting me. He was kicking me.”

P3's discursive reliance on victimhood to explain her youth set up the rest of her narrative which spans a number of abusive relationships with men. P3 relies on psychological discourse which

implies that a difficult background may justify later behaviour. In essence, P3 draws on an understanding of abuse cycles where the victim of abuse later becomes the abuser. Similarly P5 explains that her sentence is “*hard to accept because of the circumstances I was living in*”. She built on this further by maintaining that:

You know some people think ja, you enjoyed it. But it's not the truth, you know? Because if you take your living...your living outside, it's not...it's not nice...I didn't know what to do. I didn't know where to go...from my side I think, ja, if you in a relationship with a man that pretty much abused you and...you get to that point, you don't know what to do, you don't know where to go because it seems like the people doesn't help you. Like my family, sometimes said: 'No! Leave [P], he's a very nice man.' Because for them to see him, now as this nice man, there's nothing wrong with him. But they didn't know what's going on behind your doors. It's very difficult.

It thus seems that P5's self-perception is constructed primarily through self-productions that maintain her status as victim.

4.2.4. ILLNESS DISCOURSE

I'm with my baby, I'm in, into depro and stressing and everything...and that's when it happened (P8).

Bourke (2007) maintains that pathologising discourse is often drawn upon by the legal and medical systems in order to justify incidences of female sexual perpetration. In much the same way, some of the participants identified themselves as physically or mentally unwell and implied that these ailments played a part in their perpetrations. For example, P2 explained that since her school years she has been unable to focus and concentrate due to noises in her head. She went on to claim that working in the hospital at the correctional centre and consequently being exposed to death has exacerbated this problem. She often visits the psychiatrist at the hospital and insists that her mood stabilizers are ineffective. Additionally, she expressed suicidal ideations during her interview. P2 used discourse on mental instability to explain away her continued hostility and aggression in the correctional centre:

P2: *Cos sometimes...sometimes I get mad. Yes...sometimes I get mad.
Cos noise...*
Researcher: *In your head?*

P2: *Ya.*
 Researcher: *What kind of noises?*
 P2: *Sometimes...like screaming.*
 Researcher: *Screaming.*
 P2: *Or that lady when she died. That one...So even...it's not...it's not only her. So sometimes, maybe when I wake up. Going to kitchen to...if maybe member² ...she's talking to me...like...she don't understand. So I'm fighting. Ya, I fight. Cos I don't want noise. Cos I have my own noise.*

P2 also used illness discourse to justify other behaviours. She maintained that she has never spoken to her daughter about the crime and the subsequent consequences because she does not want to “*disturb her [daughter's] mind*”. She also claimed that she cannot partake in the rehabilitation programmes because she is unable to focus and feels mentally unstable. By drawing on mental illness to delineate both her own circumstances and the possible consequences for her daughter, P2 reproduces discourses provided by the medico-legal system to explain female sexual perpetration.

P3 also used illness discourse to explain her behaviour. She has cancer in her left leg, leukaemia, arthritis and diabetes and has to take medication every day. When asked why she did not turn state witness against her husband in court she responded that:

I was deurmekaar in court because I was on drugs. I was sick. I was very very sick that time. In court. I don't even know they gave me seven years imprisonment. I only found out later on when I was with myself. When I came to myself.

Additionally, when asked if her family visits her in the correctional centre, P3 explained that:

My family didn't want to come and see me. My brothers didn't want to come and see me here because I was sick. They were scared I'm gonna die in prison. So they were...they were scared to come and see me in jail, really, they were.

P3 also felt that because she is sick the parole board will take this into account and release her early from the correctional centre. It must be noted however, that despite these claims of illness,

² The correctional staff are also known as ‘members’.

P3 appeared relatively healthy and energetic. While she did walk on a crutch, she also managed to walk around the correctional centre without assistance and partake in the interview in an enthusiastic manner. It thus seems that her reliance on illness discourse serves alternative purposes including rationalising her behaviour and justifying others' behaviour towards her.

While P2 and P3 used illness discourse to produce themselves as unstable subjects, P5 drew on illness as a means to explain the absence of support from her family. P5 explained that her family members could not attend the court or visit P5 in the correctional centre because most of them were suffering from various ailments such as hip replacements or serious illnesses. Similarly, P8 claimed that her mother had not explained the reasons for her incarceration to her children because *"she's very sick...so she can't tell my children the reason for me being in the prison"*.

4.3. GENDERED DISCOURSE

The participants' use of rationalising discourse was partly based on gendered notions of the male aggressor and the female victim. The active male and passive female were further reinforced in descriptions of the offences. These gendered constructions ensured that the offenders' roles in their crimes remained passive and as such these discursive constructions functioned to uphold the impossibility of female sexual perpetration. These findings align with Denov's (2003) findings that traditional gender roles function to uphold myths concerning female sexual perpetration. Access to gendered discourse also allowed the participants to assert themselves as good mothers as well as to reproduce the dichotomy of the genders by drawing on gendered understandings of masculinity and femininity. Significantly, all of the offenders constructed themselves as characteristically female- maternal, passive, victimised and innately virtuous. In this way the participants' self-knowledge systems were defined according to female subject positions made available in broader discursive practices. Such constructions are inconsistent with the notion of a criminal and thus serve to reassure both the offender and the researcher of the offender's innocence. By employing gendered constructions in their self-productions, the participants simultaneously reproduce and sustain them. The participants thus embody the process noted by Bem (1993) whereby a patriarchal society transfers its lenses onto the individual in order to produce and maintain gendered social subjects.

4.3.1. ACTIVE MALE VERSUS PASSIVE FEMALE

When prompted to share their stories, most of the participants framed their criminal backgrounds in terms of their relationships with particular men in their lives. Nearly all of the narratives concerning the perpetrations centred on a male aggressor that left the victimised female few options. Rather than viewing themselves as accomplices in the crimes, the participants adopted the notion of the female victim and constructed themselves accordingly. As such the participants removed their agency from their crimes and rather placed that agency within an abusive male partner. This partner was most often a second husband and was not biologically related to the children. Other male accomplices included sons, boyfriends and a brother-in-law.

The availability of a restricted gendered discourse that emphasises the binary of masculine and feminine as the exclusive means to understand gender (Butler, 2004) made it possible for the participants to contextualise descriptions of the offences in gendered terms. Specifically, in line with Bem's (1993) observations of gendered perceptions, most of the participants relied on gendered social discourse that implies that male dominance is natural and that men are inherently the superior sex. The participants constantly referred to instances of abuse perpetrated by their male partners and easily described their passive victimisation. For example:

Well, my husband, if I take it from his side, um, I wasn't good enough. He always treats me like a dog (P5).

I can talk even to this man. This man hit me when I talk to him. 'Just leave the child alone.' He doesn't want to. Then this man, he come in the house. Then...he pulled my head by the, by the door...And then when he, when he bumped my head by the, by the door, he pulled my, my nightdress... And then he, he put my, this finger, he put it by the door (P6).

However, this easy flow of discourse did not apply to descriptions of their own roles in the perpetrations. Rather, these descriptions were characterised by pauses, incoherence and silences. It seems that the availability of a gendered discourse provided the offenders with a language to contextualise their crimes and identities and that alternative understandings were both unspeakable and inconceivable. This possibly arises from the absence of alternative understandings of gender and sexuality available in circulated social discourse in the context of sexual criminality (Bourke, 2007).

The participants held strongly onto their beliefs that women are good and men are bad and felt that men perceive gender in much the same way. As P7 claimed, “*men look at women as good*”. More importantly, despite their own charges of rape, most of the participants possessed a gendered understanding of rape. For example, P8 defined rape in the following way:

It's like maybe uh, uh you don't want to have sex with that guy but then he force you to have sex with him. And then maybe he push you by the bed and lift your clothes off and then you have sex. That's rape.

Gendered discourse extended beyond the male aggressor and the female victim to include other constructions of the masculine-feminine dichotomy. For instance, most of the offenders believed that their role was to clean the house and look after the children while their husbands' role was to earn a living for the family. For example P6 explained that:

*He's younger than me. But he was looking after us. See, we take **all** his money and he would do everything for us. He was buy food for us in the house. So there was food in the house. I was even take from his money and open for me at the house. I opened for me like a spaza shop.*

In fact, P5 went so far as to assert that “*the reason I got married because...I wasn't able to work at that time and [had] no income*”. Appropriate ways for women to earn money were also gendered. For example, P3 explained how she earned money:

I...work in the house, clean the house, cook food, everything...so I was working in my mom's house. My dad was paying me to do the work in the house.

Here, P3's father is not only characterised as the patriarch of the household, but also as her employer. He was also described as extremely abusive and aggressive. Interestingly, in a mirror image of her father, P3's first recognition of her husband's sexual abuse of her daughter was that “*he used to give her money...I thought, okay there's something going on*”. Such a recognition also aligns with a gendered understanding of women as the commoditised object made available for the paying male subject. This is reinforced later by P3 when she explains that her husband “*gave [my daughter] money to do stuff to her*”.

An interesting pattern evident in the narratives was the recognition of the male aggressor and the simultaneous need to protect him. This need most often seemed to stem from an ongoing fear of the male perpetrator. For example, P3 defended her husband in court despite her belief that he was raping her daughters. Her explanation for this was *"I'm scared"*. While P3 may have feared her husband it is also important to recognise that the reliance on discourse that upholds the male aggressor-female victim dichotomy allowed P3 to deny her role in the crime. P6 also defended her husband. In the midst of explaining how he had made her suffer she suddenly interrupted herself to describe how he had looked after the family:

I was really suffering outside. It was because of this, of this life I was living. Because this man that I was married now but he's in prison. He was, did I tell you he was looking after us? He was pay everything for the children and my food and my daughters of my first husband.

P6 later went on to justify her husband's rape of her daughter with the statement that *"he was love this child too much"*. In P2's case this pattern was complicated by the presence of two male aggressors - her husband and her son. While P2's husband had been charged by the legal system for the rape and abuse of P2's daughter, P2 maintained that her son was actually the culprit. As indicated by P2, *"my husband didn't rape the girl, it was seun he was raping her"*. As such, her narrative constantly highlighted her son as aggressive, hostile, dangerous and manipulative. Her husband, however, was contextualised as caring and a hard-worker and his actions were consistently justified by P2. This protection of the male aggressor was different from the other offenders' rationalisations as it did not stem from fear but rather from a sense of partnership between P2 and her husband. This was only possible because P2 had already set herself up as a victim of another male aggressor - her son. P4's case was somewhat different. Like P2 she defended her boyfriend and maintained that he could not have raped her daughter because P4 was with her boyfriend at the time of the rape. However, unlike P2 and the other offenders, P4 did not set herself up as a victim of a male aggressor. In fact, P4 was the only participant that did not attempt to dichotomise the genders according to broader gendered discourse.

The dichotomising of the genders into an active male aggressor and passive female victim consistently reinforced the participants' victim statuses. As a consequence, most of the participants felt that they do not want to have any further relationships with men. This was

expressed with statements such as “*I’m scared to get married again*” (P3) and “*I’m not going to live with a man anymore*” (P6). As indicated by Butler (2004), the use and re-use of language that asserts sexual and gender difference results in the maintenance of deeply entrenched power differentials between men and women. The participants’ self-perceptions as gendered subjects are thus both produced by and productive of the gendered status quo of broader society.

4.3.2. MATERNAL DISCOURSE

Discourse on femininity implies that a madonna-whore spectrum exists and that women are easily grouped into one of these two categories (Vandiver, 2006). The participants utilised their statuses as mothers as a means to reinforce their femininity and to assert themselves on the madonna end of the spectrum. Further, the participants often spoke about their contact with their children and amplified these interactions even though most of them had no or little contact time with their children. Such discursive strategies allowed the participants to constantly produce and reproduce themselves as maternal subjects. The use of maternal discourse as a means to imply femininity was so strong that it often superseded other gendered understandings of women. For example, P6 felt that the incarceration of women is inappropriate “*because they must be with their children*”. Additionally, when asked how men understand the role of a woman, P1 answered that “*they can look after the children*”. She went on to imply that men do not have the same capabilities:

If the, the mother and the children, you leaving your children, you sitting here, they not safe. It’s not nice because if something wrong come to pass there...my children they don’t have mother, and the father don’t think like the mother.

Most of the participants’ perpetrations involved offences against their own children. However, these offences were discursively renegotiated so that the narratives of the crimes centred on the participant as a protective and caring mother. The participants thus not only upheld their subjective innocence but also problematised themselves as criminals by producing themselves as the protector rather than as the perpetrator. This is significant as women who negate their maternal roles are perceived as negating their very statuses as females and consequently as being deviant (Weeks, 1981). Mothers, however, are viewed as nurturing, protective and asexual and thus incapable of association with sexual offence (Travers, 1999). The use of maternal discourse

thus allowed the participants to avoid producing themselves as deviant subjects. For example, P2's narrative spans the entire series of events leading to her arrest for the rape of her daughter. Throughout this narrative P2 asserted herself as the concerned mother who worried about her daughter being removed from home, questioned by social workers and having to cope with a court case at such a young age. This was all possible because P2 blamed her son for the rape rather than accepting the charges against herself and her husband. When asked why she then never reported her son to the police she reverted back to maternal discourse and responded "*cos we are family...because it's my children, all of them*". Likewise P5 explained that the reason she participated in the production of child pornography was because "*I was actually scared for my daughter*". P8 also drew on maternal constructions in her narrative. P8 explained that her husband would only stop having affairs if she allowed him to sleep with her daughter. P8's apparent response to her husband was: "*you are crazy...how can a mother do this to her own child?*" Similarly, P3's narrative was embedded with statements that she had tried to make her children go and open a case against their step-father. She also stated that she had attempted to send her oldest daughter to her biological father and her youngest daughter to the neighbours but the daughters refused. Here P3 is implying that she tried to be a good mother; however circumstances made this difficult.

In a similar way P6 explained that she approached both police and social workers multiple times. However, her eldest daughter did not want to be helped. She felt that she was trying to be a good mother but "*this child...was giving me hard times...this child was giving me big problems*". Both P3 and P6 thus implied that they are good mothers of bad children rather than the other way around. P6 especially relied on this perception and regularly reinforced it with statements such as "*this child is doing **many** things wrong*". The participants' subjective productions of themselves as good mothers were constantly supported by statements such as "*I'm a good mother for my child*" (P4) and "*I know I'm the mother for her*" (P5). This said, it was evident that there were often confusions concerning the role of a mother. For example P8 stated that "*I was like a big sister with my children*".

Most of the participants highlighted that their children supported them and did not hold them responsible for their crimes. They further implied that their children were concerned about them and wanted them to return home. For example:

She said to me: 'My mother, you'll get out of prison. You're going to come back. Don't worry. It's fine' (P2).

*They didn't want me in jail because I was sick...they still love me a lot. They love me too much. Even my son wants to come and visit me, he wants to kill his dad... And [H] can think better than [P] and my son. And, that's what I love about [H]. And if I say: 'Don't come,' she **will** come. I know that. She won't stay away from me. No, I love my children a lot (P3).*

Oh, she loves me. I, I talk to her on the phone on Sunday cos I phoned her Sunday...She loves me. She even wrote me a nice letter and...so, from my daughter's side...um, it's not like she's, she's hating me or something. And she even tells me in the letter: 'Mommy, I want to see you.' So...I can show you the letter it's no problem...I promise, there's lots of love (P5).

P5's use of the phrase "I promise" highlights her need to convince both the researcher and herself that she continues to have a healthy maternal-child relationship. It is made all the more powerful by the confessional space set up by the nature of the interview context. In fact, this confessional space often resulted in the expression of concerns about the impact the participants had had on their children. For example, P8 stated:

And now I'm hearing that my sister is saying that, that my youngest boy, he's eighteen, is learning from me and he's going to be like me and he's wanting to rape her children.

Interestingly, the common tendency for the participants to resist confession seemed to breakdown when 'purer' bodies in the form of children entered the discussions. This pattern echoes the implied societal obligation to protect the lives of children which is based on the construction of the child as weak, fragile, innocent and innately virtuous (Ariès, 1960).

4.3.3. MASCULINITY DISCOURSE

Just as women were perceived in a gendered context, men were understood in light of masculinity constructions. Specifically, in line with socially constructed meanings of men put

forward by Klein (1976), Naffine (1987), Denov (2003) and Bourke (2007), men were constructed as aggressive and deviant and as having irresistible and uncontrollable sexual urges. As indicated by the participants:

Sometimes they go into temptations...the men are not good. They can rape the children (P1).

*Now, I heard [H] was crying and I went, I went out the tent. I said: 'Why are you crying?' And my son was lying next to [H]. His eyes were big in his head, looking at his father lying next to [H], touching her all over. So he couldn't get out because he was also scared he will **hit** him. That time I came in the tent, I gr- I got him next to [H], touching her all over. I said: 'What are you doing?' He said: 'Just leave me alone, you know what's good for you. You better shut your mouth' (P3).*

The first husband of mine was not right. Because he was...going around with women and he was sleeping around with women behind my back (P6).

Significantly, the participants often spoke about and condemned instances of male sexual perpetration. For example P8 stated that:

You know, you see on TV that man in the crèche that raped that four year old and you know...it's disgusting! It's really disgusting.

However, when asked about women charged with the same offence the participants displayed high levels of empathy. P5 felt that these instances were probably a result of a difficult background and P1 said that "I feel sorry for her". P6 felt that it was unlikely that such a woman would be incarcerated. While there seems to be some level of identification with female sexual perpetrators, the participants responded to these questions with little sense of their own statuses as female sexual perpetrators.

Men were also regarded as patriarchal figures that, by virtue of their masculine statuses, automatically had power over their families. This understanding of the patriarch was most evident in P2's narrative. She explained that her husband punished her son for raping her daughter by beating him with a belt. Throughout the narrative, P2 emphasised that the entire issue was relegated to her husband to deal with. His patriarchal status was further reinforced by

P2's statement that *"the father was beating him...so I don't need to go to police"*. This implies that legal power is unnecessary because of the availability of an alternative patriarchal power. P3 also constructed an image of the patriarch and this was particularly in relationship to her father. She explained that her father actively engaged in the process of giving P3 up for adoption and maintained that *"[my mother] didn't want to give me away but my father...it was all my father's fault"*. This powerful patriarchal image of a man who controls all of the decisions in the household is later reflected in P3's husband. Her husband's perceived control is evident in the following statement:

I mean I couldn't get divorced to him when I was outside. I was scared of him, everything. I didn't have money to do it.

The patriarchal figure was also understood in light of his paternal function. Paternity was most often equated with financial provision. For example P5 claimed that *"he's actually a very good father...he's supporting her...with money and stuff"*. In a similar vein P6 stated that:

So the, the real father of them, he didn't want to look after them. He was only give me R275 for three kids for a month.

4.4. MORALITY DISCOURSE

Women are socially constructed as moralistic, law-abiding, conservative, virtuous and honest (Naffine, 1987). The participants drew on discursive coordinates such as these in order to amplify their femininity. As indicated by Bourke (2007), the social construction of femininity implies goodness and purity. Moreover, exceptions to this construction are considered to be deviant. The participants' use of morality discourse thus allowed them to avoid being associated with deviance. Additionally, the participants drew on conservatism and religiosity in producing themselves as social subjects. Such productions are inconsistent with the participants' sexual perpetrations and thus serve to maintain the impossibility of their statuses as sexual perpetrators. These productions also imply that the participants' sexual crimes were not necessarily based on sexual urges but rather on a number of other complex issues such as financial insecurities and the need to gain power. For example, as in the case of P6, mothers who sell their children for prostitution are often understood as acting out of financial need (Vandiver, 2006). The participants also consistently reinforced their self-integrity. In the confessional context of the

interview, such declarations of self-integrity and morality generally function to convince both the researcher and the participant that the speaker indeed has social, psychological and emotional stability (Stevens, 2008). Morality discourse also allowed the participants to imply that they are capable of feeling remorse and regret for their actions. These implications were however inconsistent with other instances in the interviews where the offenders expressed the desire to violently punish those deemed responsible for their incarcerations.

4.4.1. RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE

Sexual deviance is deemed as “unnatural or immoral from a religious perspective” (Bem, 1993, p. 81). By producing themselves as religious subjects, the participants implied that their sexual deviance is incompatible with their religiosity. This again reinforces the impossibility of their sexual perpetrations. Religious discourse was expressed differently according to the participant’s cultural background. However, despite these different expressions of religiosity, they all served similar functions. Firstly, commitments to religion allowed for the portrayal of integrity, self-discipline and righteousness. Such characteristics are often held to be inconsistent with a criminal profile and thus serve to negate the participants’ profiles as sexual perpetrators whilst simultaneously upholding the participants as virtuous women. For example, P3 constructed herself as a disciplined and spiritual subject by explaining how she has read the book, *The Secret* and was utilising it as a means to focus “*on that positive energy, that force*”. P6 utilised religious discourse to assert her conservatism and commitment to the institution of marriage. She claimed that “*I know Jesus don’t like that*” when discussing lesbian relationships between other female offenders. These claims were reinforced by most of the participants’ enthusiasm around the availability of bible courses and church services in the correctional centres.

Secondly, religiosity provided another set of rationalisations for the offenders as it allowed them to remove the responsibility of their crimes from themselves by making claims such as “*maybe the God is making this plan to bring me in the prison*” (P1). Similarly, P6 stated that:

Maybe God put us, all of us here for a reason. To open our eyes. That’s why from the time that I sit down and come to prison, I learn a lot. And God had opened my

eyes. And he, and he said to me every day, you mustn't, you mustn't live with a man anymore.

P1 especially drew on religious discourse in order to relay responsibility for her crimes. Her self-knowledge was particularly aligned with a traditional African structure of beliefs and she utilised this set of beliefs to produce her profile as a sexual offender. Her narrative was replete with references to Sangomas and methods of bewitching. She even acknowledged that:

I'm going to Sangoma, I know Sangoma. He say to me can give me...something for kill the prosecutor.

P1 also drew on Christian religiosity in order to explain away her crimes. For example, when asked how she perceives other offenders that have also been charged with rape she explained that:

I don't believe that people do this. It's the devil that makes us do that thing.

Religious discourse was also used as a means of self-soothing for the participants. The availability of religiously embedded faith gave the participants both a sense of security as well as a sense of hope. Moreover, it provided the participants with a language of reassurance that was reinforced by the confessional context of the interview. For example, P3 claimed that:

But I've got my God in here. I need him. I can't stay without God. If you've got God, your life is okay.

4.4.2. SELF-INTEGRITY DECLARATIONS

You know what, I'm not scared to go out of prison to show my face because...I'm also human. I'm human...and normal as anybody else outside (P3).

The participants employed discursive coordinates that emphasised elements of humanity and integrity. These declarations assisted in supporting their subjective innocence as well as aligned with their reproductions of socially determined femininity. Moreover, because the interview context was often characterised by the researcher as the 'expert' and differential access to power,

it allowed a space for the participant to develop self-knowledge through the regulation of the researcher. Such interactions often amount to the participant assuming a persuasive position whereby she attempts to convince the researcher that she has an adequately developed self-understanding that is regulated by an ongoing self-discipline (Stevens, 2008). This persuasive position was particularly strong in the interviews and was undoubtedly influenced by the confessional character of the context. In fact, this confessional character was evident in the way the participants positioned themselves discursively against the researcher. These positions were made manifest in comments such as “*mamma, I want to tell you the truth*” (P2).

Examples of assertions of integrity included the common tendency to make claims about knowing wrong from right. For example, P8 claimed that her children “*must know from right and wrong*”. P3’s narrative was immersed with recognitions such as “*he started doing wrong stuff to [my daughter]*” and “*my son...he wants to kill his dad...and it’s wrong*”. However it must be acknowledged that while P3 was capable of recognitions such as viewing her husband’s incarceration as “*the right way*”, her own incarceration was not understood in the context of right and wrong. P3’s discursive pattern of denying her own perpetrations and asserting those of her husband’s in order to assist this denial also extended to her perceptions of other offenders:

*They think it’s a **joke**. They making jokes about their, their crimes. I don’t think it’s funny. And I’m telling them straight it’s not funny. Because it is not. Cos drugs is also like **killing** a person. It’s not fair.*

P8 used a similar discursive strategy in order to assert her integrity and devalue that of her husband’s:

My case for this rape, neh? I accepted... I accept the crime I was doing. And I...and I’m paying for it now for seventeen years... but why can’t he accept it but I accept it and I just go forward with my life, you know?

Self-integrity declarations were supported by comments that highlighted the fact that the participants were well-liked and ‘good’ people. Some examples include, “*the offenders think I’m nice*” (P1) and “*I don’t like all this fighting*” (P8). Another means to assert integrity was through the portrayal of being kind and forgiving. For example, P1 claimed that despite the fact

that her neighbour had set her up in order to have P1 incarcerated, she forgave her neighbour because “*she said she’s sorry*”. P3 asserted her kindness by explaining that “*I help the sick people*”. Participants also drew on discursive strategies that emphasised their ability to have self-insight:

I coped. I coped the whole time. I got through this. And people can get through this. If they do it the right way. (P3)

The participants also expressed regret and remorse about their sexual offences. For example, P1 claimed that “*I can’t feel alright*” when asked about her sexual transgressions. Additionally, P3 stated that “*I know I did wrong*” and P5 claimed that “*I know I did the wrong thing*”. These expressions of regret were supported by comments that implied that the participants will not repeat their past behaviour in the future. As P3 stated:

But if something happens to me ever again, anything like this, I will report it. I will do something. Because now I’ve learnt a lesson.

It must however be noted that despite expressions of remorse, all of the participants continued to maintain that they are innocent. That is, the offenders continued to resist confession throughout their interviews. A possible reason for this is that confession would involve acknowledging themselves as sexual offenders. Sexual offenders are predominantly constructed as masculine and thus these women would have to identify with a socially constructed form of masculine sexuality. This tension is precisely what Klein (1976) highlights in her argument that women who transgress are typically treated as masculine subjects.

4.4.3. CONSERVATISM

Some of the participants displayed high levels of conservatism which seemed inconsistent with their criminal profiles. This mostly applied to the four Afrikaans women. The Afrikaans culture generally promotes conservative ideals (Leach, 1989) and thus this finding is unsurprising. However, while there may be cultural influences, the use of conservative discourse also needs to be recognised for its strategic purposes. Specifically, conservative strategies were drawn upon in order to emphasise participants’ sexual naiveté. As such, these discursive strategies function to negate the participants’ profiles as sexual offenders. They also highlight that the participants’

sexual transgressions may not necessarily have been based on sexual urges but rather arose out of other urges such as the desire to attain power or the need to ensure financial stability. As such, conservative discourse allowed for the continued denial of the sexual nature of the participants' offences.

The participants' conservatism was often expressed through their inability to discuss sexual aspects of their crimes. Names of sexual organs and descriptions of sexual interactions were uttered with difficulty. For example, despite the fact that P5 actively engaged in oral sex with her daughter for the purpose of child pornography, she was unable to express these actions in words:

Researcher: *Um...I mean the thing is that you weren't just charged with sexual assault and injury. You were charged with rape. Do you think that's fair? Do you feel like it fits into your story?*

P5: *Well I had to, um...how can I say? I had to... Long silence. I don't know how to explain but I can...I can try.*

Researcher: *Try, yes.*

P5: *Maybe it's coming out wrong but...*

P6 had similar difficulties:

P6: *Ja, he...I just hear him in, in, in the court that she was saying that he was, that he was putting...his...uh...uh...how can I say? That he was putting his...okay, let me explain. That he was putting his...penis (said very cautiously)...*

Researcher: *His penis, ja.*

P6: *In...in between her legs.*

One of the primary expressions of conservatism occurred around the phenomenon of what the offenders call *ts nange nange*. This refers to sexual relationships between two female sexual offenders. These relationships are characterised by a power differential whereby the stronger and wealthier partner assumes the masculine position and the weaker partner becomes known as the *man-wife*. The *man-wife* is dependent on her partner for protection inside the correctional centre and the supply of food and clothes from outside resources. Interestingly, despite their general reliance on gendered discourse and social constructions, the participants failed to

recognise the gendered nature of these relationships. Instead they heavily criticised them for their lack of gendered constraints. This call for heteronormativity is important because heteronormative sexual constructions produce and reinforce gender binaries (Butler, 1999) and thus these criticisms serve as a means to reinforce the participants' femininity. Examples of these criticisms include:

They call it ts nange nange. Two...women that's sleeping together, touching each other. Doing wrong stuff. I heard there is people that had HIV because of this...I don't care about stuff like that and if I hear someone is doing this I don't want to be part of them. I'm not...in that stuff (P3).

You know...there's this thing here. Women with women. It's disgusting. They call it ts nange nange... Ja, and it makes me feel sick in my heart. And I don't hate blacks but this black and white women and they kissing and they touching each other and it's really, really so disgusting. And then they tell their mothers, you know, bring me this and that. Because this one's the man-wife and the one don't have money because it's expensive outside. But I can't understand. Like my mother, she knows I'm a seven. So if I ask for a six then she must know. But they make their families bring them, bring them things and they just share and it's...it's ridiculous (P8).

P6: *I was here for two years and then when I get sentenced I go to, to Joburg and I saw a lot of things there that was happening in Joburg because the people (starts to whisper) smoking dagga in, in prison and the girls they having to get on with each other, they, having sexual abuse...*

Researcher: *Sexually assaulting each other?*

P6: *Ja.*

Researcher: *Are they both consenting or is it one person assaulting another?*

P6: *Mmmm....they go for each other. (Laughs)*

Researcher: *Okay. But is it, is it out of choice or is it assault?*

P6: *They do it, they do it by their own choices.*

Researcher: *Oh, okay. Alright.*

P6: *They do it by their own choices.*

Researcher: *Okay.*

P6: *So nobody...can stop them.*

Researcher: *Ja.*

P6: *Cos they do it, they do it by their own choices. Maybe two girls together, you know, I, I can't take that.*

Researcher: *Okay.*

P6: *Because I know, I know Jesus don't like that.*

Researcher: *Okay.*
P6: *I know a man and a woman can, can married but not,
not two women. It's not good.*

P3's use of the phrase "*doing wrong stuff*" emphasised her sexually conservative standpoint. This was further reinforced by the implication that HIV is primarily a homosexual disease. However, it must be noted that such a belief around HIV may indicate the lack of available and accurate information rather than indicate a sexually conservative standpoint. P6 confused the lesbian interactions with "*sexual abuse*" which illustrates her sexual naiveté. This is further reinforced by her statement that "*nobody can stop them*", implying that such interactions should be stopped. She also drew on religious discourse in order to emphasise the apparent immorality behind these lesbian relationships. Additionally, she employed gendered discourse and the institution of marriage in order to assert her conservative sexual beliefs. This is significant as the institution of marriage and the nuclear family are primary spaces where gender hierarchies and heterosexuality are reinforced and other sexualities are made invisible (Collins, 1998). In this way, P8 inadvertently replicates macro-level discourses and assists in the reproduction of masculine power. She also reinforces her status as a mother by aligning with ideologies concerning heterosexual marriage. P8's negative comment regarding interracial lesbian relationships displayed how her sexual conservatism intersects with racial conservatism. Despite South Africa's current democracy, racial comments such as these were common in the interviews. For example, in a similar way to P8, P6's sexually conservative discourse intersected with racially conservative discourse. Her comment implied that HIV is particular to the black racial population:

This child is just...packing her things and just, she just go from the house. And she's...she go and...when she go away she sleep with black people. So...they even took her to the doctor and the doctor said when they can bring her back maybe that things that she...that sickness that you get, that things can go over to HIV.

P3 also produced herself as a racially conservative subject. Her comment implied that she cannot perceive herself as integrating across racial boundaries and, on some level, that she continues to live in accordance with separation ideologies set up by the Apartheid era:

*I was always...only the **one** white person in hospital, always. It's only blacks and me. Then there's one coming along, a white one coming along for maybe a few days then she goes. Then I'm alone again.*

4.5. PERCEPTIONS OF THE LEGAL AND CORRECTIONAL SYSTEMS

The participants constructed their perceptions of the legal and correctional systems in a way that allowed them to uphold their subjective innocence and to continue to resist confession. They expressed anger towards the legal system and often stated that their incarcerations were unfair. These statements were supported by discursive strategies that implied that the legal and correctional systems were unsupportive of their circumstances. Additionally, due to the patriarchal structure of these systems, the participants often felt unheard and misunderstood by their mostly male lawyers, judges, wardens and the parole board. However, this critique of the system was not by any means stable within and across interviews. That is, instances when the correctional and legal systems supported the participants' circumstances were reinforced and highlighted. For example, most of the participants' lawyers were heavily criticised for being unsupportive; however the perceptions of these lawyers were renegotiated on occasions when the lawyers denied the possibility of their sexual perpetrations. It thus seems that the participants were able to construct their perceptions in a fluid manner which allowed them to reinforce instances that upheld their innocence.

The participants also used the opportunity to describe life inside a female correctional centre as a means to emphasise their critiques of the system. These discussions also highlighted how the participants seek any means to ensure that other offenders remain unaware of their charges which, in turn, emphasises the participants' continued denial of their statuses as female sexual perpetrators. Their lack of willingness to confess their offences to other offenders ties in with the *resistance to confession motif* that was present throughout all of the interviews. The descriptions of the correctional centres, and in fact their entire narratives more generally, portrayed that the participants are also extremely docile, obedient and compliant. This is in line with a Foucauldian understanding of incarceration which indicates that the offender, as the surveilled object of knowledge, becomes the site on which disciplinary power and knowledge intersect and consequently the offender's body, as the target of power, becomes docile (Foucault, 1977).

4.5.1. ANGER TOWARDS THE SYSTEM

The participants consistently maintained that their incarcerations were unfairly determined and that they had no support from the legal and correctional systems. For example, P1 stated that:

Court was not on my side. They denied my story.

She went on to say that her incarceration was unjust, particularly because she is a mother. Similarly, P2 expressed anger towards the justice system by explaining that her circumstances were not taken into consideration appropriately. She focused her anger at all the key institutional players in her court case. She claimed that *“even the investigator, he didn’t even come to court”* and that there was no available doctor to prove that her daughter had been raped. She also maintained that her husband gave their state lawyer a bank card to retrieve money for them but that this lawyer subsequently disappeared with the card. Additionally, P2 claimed that the magistrate interfered with the social worker’s attempt in assisting her daughter to acknowledge her son as her rapist:

So magistrate says: ‘Stop. Please. Tell that social worker she mustn’t do that. Why she’s busy talking with that girl.....’

She then went on to state that both her husband and her own life sentences were unjustified because there was *“no exhibit or proof”*. P2 also felt that her husband’s death during his incarceration was due to the *“stress”* and *“pressure”* that the system subjected him to. She concluded this commentary with the assertion that, due to her unfair incarceration, *“my future...it’s fucked up”*.

P5 also felt that her incarceration was unfair and that her court case had not been handled efficiently by the system. She stated that:

Sometimes they just look at the one point but not the other point. And I feel with my...with my case...they didn’t look at my side, side of the story. They found me guilty. I am guilty of some of the things but...I feel it’s unfair.

P6 had similar grievances to P2 and P3. She also criticised key players in her court case and maintained that her story remained unheard by the system:

P6: *And, and I can't understand why didn't the court had let me talk in court. Because why, the...the people for the child protection, they was coming to me, they said to me, I must, I must talk like, um...witness for him.*

Researcher: *Turn state witness. Okay, ja.*

P6: *They didn't call me in court! I was sitting the whole day there by the court. They didn't, they didn't call me. You know that they- if they can, if they had can let me talk in court that day then he was, then he will, he was really sitting with his ass in prison.*

Researcher: *Okay.*

P6: *You know how many, how many, it's not right. You know how many years did he get? Three years.*

Researcher: *Three years?*

P6: *Three years community service with three years housing arrest.*

Researcher: *And your husband?*

P6: *Fifty years in prison.*

Researcher: *Fifty?*

P6: *The...the judge say: 'I'm sentenced for you'. It's for me, neh? He said: 'I'm sentence you on your husband's brother's case and on your husband's case for thirty-nine years.' So it means the things that these two men had do...so he sentenced me on their cases.*

Researcher: *So, I don't understand why his brother only got three years house arrest?*

P6: *That's why I'm, that's why I'm complaining. That's why I'm complaining. Because he, he, he was, he was really abused that child.*

This anger at the system was reinforced by comments that the social workers did not support her during the court case and that the system had not allowed her to attend her father and her child's funerals. P8 also felt unsupported by the social workers and claimed that they “*didn't talk nice to me*”. She further explained that she is extremely angry about being incarcerated.

4.5.2. PERCEPTIONS OF STATE LAWYERS

The anger expressed towards the legal and correctional systems often extended to the participants' state lawyers. Most of these lawyers were men and this often led to a gendered

understanding of them. Some of the participants felt that they could not engage with these lawyers and were also not supported by them. These criticisms functioned to maintain the participants' self-perceptions as innocent subjects. However, it must be noted that when the lawyers expressed disbelief about their clients' guilt, these criticisms quickly turned to praise. Thus, the state lawyers were constructed in a fluid-like manner which ensured that the participants were able to maintain their denial about their perpetrations.

An example of these fluid renegotiations of the state lawyers was exhibited by P1. While she expressed anger and frustration towards the legal system and her lawyer, she also added that her lawyer said that *"it's not possible for a woman...to rape"*. In order to reinforce that her lawyer's perception was correct she stated that her lawyer *"fought this whole thing"*. P7 also displayed an inconsistent attitude towards her lawyer. P7 began by explaining that she played no role in the offences she was charged with and that her lawyer did not ensure that the witnesses supported her in court. She then stated that her lawyer *"was right"* and *"was always there for [her and her son]"*. However, in P7's case the sudden praise was not due to the need to uphold her innocence but rather seemed to be a result of her hesitance to talk honestly in front of the warden-translator. This docile and compliant behaviour is discussed further in a later section of this chapter.

While this pattern of constant switching between criticism and praise was common in the interviews, a general disapproval of the state lawyers was much more frequent. P2 complained that her lawyer was untrustworthy and had stolen her husband's bank card. She then requested a new lawyer who P2 maintained was *"only there to make the case fast"*. P4 felt that her lawyer did not conduct the appropriate research required to support her:

Because now I'm sentenced. You understand? Because I, I told him everything. And...eh, the state lawyer didn't like do research about my side.

P5 felt similarly and claimed that her lawyer did not support her and *"didn't even fight for me in court"*. In fact, P5 was so disgruntled that she appealed to a higher court in order to ensure that *"I've got at least a chance to speak"*. There seemed to be a general sense across the interviews that these women felt silenced by their male lawyers. This is problematic as allowing female sexual offenders to speak may make way for new discursive forms that do not necessarily "rely

on “known truths” about women” (Denov, 2003, p. 312). There also seemed to be a general tentativeness to discuss issues such as rape with male lawyers. P8 especially highlighted this in terms of her numerous male lawyers. The only positive comments she made were about her female advocate:

Researcher: *Okay. Let's talk about your court case a bit. Um, did you have your own lawyer?*

P8: *Well, you know, you see I went to high court and this court and that court, court to court and every time I have mense lawyers. But in high court you have to have a advocate so I had a advocate.*

Researcher: *And were these all state lawyers?*

P8: *Ja. And a state advocate.*

Researcher: *Okay...and tell me, did you feel like the men lawyers supported your case?*

P8: *No...It was hard cos you can't talk to the man about this, about rape. You know, it's...it's not comfortable. You can't tell them. And they just look at you like this, you know? Up and down and then somer write.*

Researcher: *And they were all men? The lawyers.*

P8: *Ja. But not the advocate. She was a woman.*

Researcher: *Okay. Did you feel like she supported you? Or like it was easier to talk about rape?*

P8: *Ja. She helped me. Cos the judge wanted to give me life but then she said I already sit and await trial for four years...ja, four years. And then he take off two years for every year and that's how I'm seventeen years.*

4.5.3. DESCRIPTIONS OF LIFE IN THE CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

We don't talk about our crimes (P5).

Life inside the female correctional centre was described in such a way as to ensure the construction of the image of the participant as a victim. Discursive strategies that focused primarily on the negative aspects of incarceration were employed across the interviews. Discourse centred on the isolation and sense of detachment from the outside world as well as the hostile environment of the correctional context and the threatening relationships with other female offenders.

Comments such as “*I don’t know what’s happening outside*” (P6) illustrated a sense of isolation from the external world. This was reinforced by the participants’ precision concerning dates and times from their past but their confusion about present times and dates. This precision may however be a result of the participants rehearsing and constructing their background stories into mastered narratives.

The participants constructed the correctional centre as an uncomfortable and hostile environment where they were rarely treated humanely. These descriptions contradict the South African Correctional Service’s view that the correctional context is a “humane and secure environment” (White Paper on Corrections in South Africa, 2005, p. 12). Examples of these constructions include:

It’s too...crowded and the beds is too on top of each other. There’s no space for me (P3).

We all live on top of each other here...and everyone somer pushes and fights for the food (P8).

It’s not nice to, to- this place, to live in here... Really, it’s not nice. That’s why I said if you can do crimes outside, they mustn’t do it. They mustn’t do it. They don’t know how it’s like inside. Really, they don’t know how it’s like in the prison... Sometimes...in Joburg we were sleeping forty people in a cell. With one toilet...uh, ja one toilet, two showers that you must shower together or you can shower alone and one basin to wash your dishes in and one basin to wash your washing in (P6).

Most of the participants described the other female offenders as aggressive and antagonistic. These constructions assisted in the participants’ self-productions as innocent subjects as they implied that the participants could not possibly be aligned with the more hostile images of other offenders. The participants also explained that they have not told any of the other offenders about their charges, further ensuring that the denial of their sexual perpetrations is upheld and that the resistance to confession is maintained. Those that did speak about their crimes usually constructed a false story. This interesting pattern of constructing a crime in order to avoid being labelled as a sexual perpetrator especially reinforces the discomfort that the participants feel with regards to their criminal profiles. Such a discomfort aligns more generally with a socio-

historical context of discourse production that denies the existence of female sexual perpetration (Denov, 2003). For example, P3 stated that:

*Because, actually, in jail, I was never telling no one about my crime...And you can't just trust people in here. You can't. You've got like maybe a good friend, tomorrow she's not your friend anymore. She **stabs** you in the back and talk about you. We had this before in jail. People is doing this...people in prison, they don't actually know why I'm here. They think I'm here for fraud. Always when they ask me I say fraud. Because they talk too much. That's why I don't tell no one.*

Similarly, P8 stated that:

But the people in here...(whispers) they like to fight, hey. They can't talk nicely like you and me. And they just...and also it's hard, you know? Because say I'm in for rape and then another one is in for murder and then they know and they say you a murderer, you did this and this and this and you a rapist, you can do these things... No, no. It's better to just keep your mouth shut. Then no one can say nothing about you.

It is interesting to note that while the participants refused to discuss their perpetrations with other inmates, they were generally willing to share their stories with the researcher. This aligns with the Foucauldian understanding of the confessional space and an 'expert' other where the implication of disciplinary surveillance results in instances of self-policing. Such instances of a self-monitored confession allow the speaker to produce a self that is regulated and disciplined and thus socially acceptable. This finding is reinforced by the fact that the participants also requested increased access to psychological professionals. It also demonstrates the power of disciplinary surveillance in the context of the correctional centre.

4.5.4. DOCILE BODIES

According to Foucault (1977), correctional centres replicate other institutionalised systems in their proclivity to treat bodies as objects of knowledge. For Foucault (1977), the offender's body is the site on which institutional power is played out through the production and reproduction of criminal knowledge. At this point it is necessary to acknowledge that this study is itself a

formidable relay in the production of criminal knowledge in its attempt to objectify the female sexual offender. Thus this study reinforces the very objectification it aims to critique.

The objectification of bodies in the correctional context occurs through surveillance systems which aim to observe, measure, treat and, above all, discipline the body so that the offender becomes a socially regulated object. As such, the offender's body is, in essence, the target of disciplinary power which in turn leads to the body becoming docile, compliant and thus 'improved.' The correctional context thus aligns with other institutionalised systems in power that produce self-knowledge and enforce self-discipline through disciplinary power as a means to maintain supremacy and control (Foucault, 1978).

Foucault's (1977) theoretical standpoint on corrections, power and docility were clearly played out in the discursive practices of the participants. This was most evident in the way the correctional institution was regarded as an abstracted authority or a diffuse form of productive power. While the participants often critiqued the legal and correctional systems, they also emphasised their good behaviour and respect for those in charge. Moreover, there seemed to be a general fear of those in authority as well as a belief that this research will be reported back to the correctional system. As such, the participants were often cautious in the interviews and refused to answer particular questions. These questions were most often related to their relationships with correctional staff. The avoidance of these questions further illustrates the participants' precautionary interaction with authoritative figures. These instances of docility were undoubtedly further influenced by the power differential set up between the researcher as the 'expert' and the participant as the offending criminal. They were also certainly influenced by the general practices and normative standards of behaviour set up by the correctional system. For example, in one of the correctional centres there was a large poster titled *The Nine Commandments* which gave instructions to the offenders on how to behave appropriately. The poster not only acts as a stand-in for those in authority but it also makes reference to godliness and the bible, thus instilling fear through disciplinary practices. Another means of objectifying the offender body occurs through the use of prison cards. These cards categorise the offenders according to their crime and must be carried at all times. As indicated by P8:

Only the members know [our crimes]. Because you have to carry this...here...this prison card. So it says your name here and your crime. And when we go to work they take the cards. Then we take them back to go to get lunch. Then we leave one-thirty, we get the cards back again. There's big trouble when you don't carry your card all the time.

The offenders' docility was often expressed through discursive strategies that acted as reassurance tools. These reassurance strategies implied that the correctional context is a safe and caring environment. This was often inconsistent with other expressions that critiqued the system. In fact, the offenders would most usually begin their narratives by articulating their anger, frustration and resentment towards the system. They would then unexpectedly move towards a more docile position as if they had suddenly recalled that a larger audience may be exposed to their narratives. For example, throughout her narrative P3 maintained that she was innocent and criticised both the correctional and legal systems for their inability to recognise this. However, there were suddenly moments in her narrative where she stated that "*I think...[my incarceration] was fair*" and other moments when she would unexpectedly label her actions as a crime.

P1 was especially docile and seemed very wary of the researcher's intentions. She consistently spoke from a submissive position. For example, she stated that "*it's very safe here in the prison*" and that "*the life is fine because I'm sleep nice, I'm eating nice, I go to hospital they treat me nice*". Moreover, when asked about her charges she simply stated that "*it's the truth*". She also described her lawyer, the wardens and other offenders as "*nice*" and refused to build further on these descriptions.

Other participants attempted to assert their respect for those in authority positions. P2 provided an example of this asserted respect:

P2: *Okay, right. The police here...me, me neh? I'm a hard worker.*
Researcher: *A hard worker. Okay.*
P2: *They trust me.*
Researcher: *They trust you.*
P2: *Ya. And they like me...too much.*

Researcher: *They like you too much. Okay, that's good. And, and the other-*
P2: *Cos I have respect.*
Researcher: *Okay.*
P2: *For them.*

P3 also asserted her respect and felt the need to provide reassurance that due to her respectful behaviour she is well-liked by the correctional staff and the other offenders:

Researcher: *Okay, um...how do you think the correctional staff perceive you? How do you think they view you?*
P3: *Oh, they're very nice to me. All of them. All of them. I can greet them twenty or fifty times a day, they greet me with respect because, you know, the other morning the captain came in. He said: 'You know what. You sick, you've got cancer in your legs but every time we come in here you jump out of bed to say good morning and you ask how we are. And you always tell us to have a nice day.' Really, they, they like me a lot because I respect them a lot. Because they are looking after us. You have to respect them.*
Researcher: *Okay. And the other offenders that you have been exposed to, how do you think they view you?*
P3: *Uhh...how do you...?*
Researcher: *The other offenders. Other people who have been incarcerated?*
P3: *No, I get along with **everyone**.*
Researcher: *Do you?*
P3: *Yes, everybody. Up here in the sections, down- because sometimes people is coming down to go and see the doctor. They always greet me, ask me how I am. A lot of people know me because I'm here already two years and a few months. No, everybody's getting along with me fine.*
Researcher: *Okay.*
P3: *There's no fighting, nothing.*

P3 also defended the correctional staff. On explaining that many offenders pass away in the correctional hospital, she further asserted that:

It's not the sisters' fault. They do whatever they can. Really.

Docility was also expressed through the participants' reassurance that living in the correctional centre has been a rehabilitative and educational experience. For example, P6 stated that "*I learn a lot in prison*". Other participants made similar statements:

Prison opened my eyes actually. I think it's a good thing for me to come here and see what is going on in this place and how you have to pay your crime to be here. I think it's...a good thing for me to be here. In prison... Because now I've learnt a lesson. To be in prison is a lesson. It's a big lesson we learn here (P3).

*Since I'm in prison I learnt to...to be myself. And I learn...I'm a woman. You know there's a lot of stuff you **do** learn in prison. And...you learn how...to accept yourself (P5).*

Interestingly, P5 gendered her rehabilitative experience implying that women are naturally deemed as 'good' and law-abiding. It also allowed her to construct herself as characteristically feminine and thus characteristically 'good'. This is significant as by gendering her rehabilitation, P5 simultaneously reinforces and reproduces wider social constructions around femininity.

Docility was further expressed through the implication that participants have learnt how to be well behaved and that they were aware of the consequences if they were badly behaved. They used these descriptions as an opportunity to suggest that other offenders were not as well behaved as they were:

So people saying prison is so bad. Yes, they treat you bad, if you are not responding to them and do what they want. They will be bad to you. But they charge you if you don't listen. But you get people that don't listen. They want it their way. That's why they, they can't do the time they here in prison. That's why they can't get through it. But if you've got manners and you do what they want, it's everything is okay for you... I just go along with everything. That's all I do. I don't ask nothing. I just go along and do my sentence to get it finished. To...go out of here to be a better person again (P3).

If you don't, if you don't listen. If you want things...but if you are a quiet person and you don't do nothing to, to, to every...like the Captains here, if you don't do nothing and you quiet and you behaving and you alright, and then you are rehabilitated (P6).

P8 was the most expressive about the rules that governed the offenders' lifestyles. She described many of the restrictions placed on them as a means to ensure regulation and discipline. These included her statement that "*I don't think we're allowed the paper and the YOU*" as well as that "*we not allowed to talk to [those awaiting trial] and they not allowed to talk to us*". The use of the word *allowed* amplifies her sense of being regulated and disciplined. In fact P8 manifests Foucault's (1977) suggestion that the relaying of disciplinary power ensures that institutionalised regulation becomes self-regulation in her comment that:

Agh...just, you know...but you learn a lot in prison, hey. Before I came here I was hardegat, neh? People would talk to me and I'd just shout for them. But ja, in here I'm somer calm. I can't wake in the morning and shout for people. It's like I rehabilitate myself, you know?

4.6. INSTITUTIONALISED DISCOURSE

Despite the fact that female sexual perpetration has recently become the object of increased legal, medical and media attention, the legal and correctional domains continue to insist that such incidences are rare (Giguere & Bumby, 2007). As such, key institutional players in these domains make conscious or unconscious efforts to reconstruct the image of female sexual offenders so that they align with circulated images and discourse on femininity (Denov, 2003). In this way, discursive practices, played out at the levels of the institution and society, reinforce gendered understandings of both men and women. These discursive practices were evident in a precursory study that investigated professional perceptions of female paedophiles. Despite concerted efforts to acknowledge female paedophilia, the professionals in the study continued to view paedophilic actions in gendered and thus in masculine terms. These professionals included police officials, psychologists, social workers and academics (Kramer, 2008). A similar gender bias was evident in the current study in the way social workers and other correctional staff spoke about the female offenders as well as in the way these women are treated by the system. More importantly, the offenders used this institutionalised legal and correctional discourse in order to support their claims that they were innocent victims of a patriarchal system. This is in line with Foucault's (1978) concept of disciplinary power which assumes that the circulation of institutionalised knowledge onto all forms of existence ensures that individuals take up this knowledge and produce it as self-knowledge.

While legal discourse on female sexual perpetration was upheld by the participants, media discourse was undermined. In contrast to Giguere and Bumby's (2007) assumption that the media underplays female sexual perpetration, the offenders generally felt that the media was insensitive to their cases. This is in line with the female sexual offenders' beliefs in Lawson's (2008) study. Thus, when discussing media discourse the participants generally criticised it for being sensationalistic and in this way they refuted its plausibility. It seems that in order to uphold their subjective innocence, the offenders constantly oscillated between reinforcing and reproducing some institutionalised discursive practices whilst contesting others.

4.6.1. LEGAL AND CORRECTIONAL DISCOURSE ON FEMALE SEXUAL OFFENDERS

The manner in which female offenders are treated by correctional staff strengthens the constructed ideas that women are harmless and have certain stereotypical care giving roles to play. For example, when the researcher expressed unease about interviewing the offenders without a warden present, the social workers maintained that this uneasiness was unnecessary because they are *female* offenders. In fact, the social workers found this expression of unease quite humorous. Further, in one of the correctional centres all of the male offenders were dressed in orange uniforms which emphasised both their criminal statuses and the discipline that they are subjected to. The female offenders, however, mostly wore their own clothes. Those that wore the blue correctional tracksuits usually wore an additional item of their own clothing. This bares the implication that male offenders require more disciplining than their female counterparts. Another observation was that most of the correctional occupations offered to the female offenders were based on female stereotypes. These included care giving at the correctional hospital and knitting blankets in the correctional workshop. Furthermore, female offenders that are mothers at the time of their incarceration are able to have their children stay with them in the correctional centre if the children are still very young. This seems to be the case regardless of the offenders' charges. For example, despite the fact that P1 had been accused of child sexual abuse, her young child was permitted to stay with her in the correctional centre:

- P1: *Mmmm. The little one, she was here in the prison with me, 2000. Small.*
Researcher: *How old?*
P1: *Now she's got ten years.*

Researcher: *She was here in the prison?*
P1: *Yes. She was still young while she was staying with me in prison. Some mothers are staying with their children in prison.*
Researcher: *Oh. So they took her away when she was a little bit older?*
P1: *Yes.*

From these observations it is clear that the correctional system treats female offenders more leniently than male offenders. This is in line with Naffine's (1987) observation that correctional and legal systems have double standards across the gender binaries. Moreover, the correctional system's reliance on gendered understandings of men and women assist in the continued denial of female sexual perpetration as well as other female offences more generally (Denov, 2003). The same can be said of the legal system as all of those participants that had male accomplices were given lighter sentences than their male partners. These gender discrepancies may arise out of the fact that enforcement policies and criminal law assume that perpetrators are male and victims are female (Levine, 2006) which further results in an inability to access language that permits the existence of female perpetration (Denov, 2003).

Some of the participants had been subjected to legal and correctional discourse that upheld the belief that female sexual perpetration is impossible. This discourse was often repeated and referred to in the interviews as a means to support the offenders' claims of innocence. For example, P1 stated that:

The...the big lawyer, neh? The one he is on top of the magistrate and he says that it's not possible for a woman, for a woman to rape neh? It's like if there is a rape neh? Maybe there can be like two men and maybe one wife helping. But not for a woman to rape.

P8 made a similar statement whilst simultaneously implying that she is misunderstood by a patriarchal system:

And when I went to parole board on the twelfth, that man ask me. He said to me this is the first time he see a case like mine. So then he said to me I must explain.

So...it's only mense sitting on the parole board. So I was a little bit of scared to talk to them.

For P7, her reference to the impossibility of her crime was upheld as a result of the support her translator provided. P7's translator was a female warden who not only seemed to identify with P7 but also made emotionally charged empathic statements such as "*oh shame...they charge her.*"

4.6.2. PERCEPTIONS OF MEDIA DISCOURSE ON FEMALE SEXUAL OFFENDERS

The participants emphasised or selectively supported institutionalised legal and correctional discourse as such discourse usually reinforced their 'impossible' criminal statuses. The same was not true for media discourse. While Giguere and Bumby (2007) have indicated that the media tend to make light of female sexual perpetration, the participants felt that media discourse highlights their statuses as sexual criminals. This finding echoes Lawson's (2008) earlier finding that female sexual offenders believe that media coverage displays female sexual perpetration in a misleading and faulty way. As such, the participants refused to acknowledge the media as a reliable source which again assisted the participants in maintaining their subjective innocence. This was most evident in a discussion with P6:

Researcher: *Okay. And tell me, how do you think the media or the newspaper, the journalists, how do you think they saw Advocate Barbie? How do you think they wrote about her?*

P6: *You know...that's why I said, it's like, if the...if like the media can come to a case now, everything. They mustn't know about this thing. Because you must hold on one side. Because they, sometimes they talk a lot of nonsense, neh?*

Researcher: *The media?*

P6: *Mmm.*

Researcher: *Ja.*

P6: *So that's why when, when your court case is in court, they say no, nobody or anybody must come in there. Only maybe you and, you know, the, the peoples whose in the, the court case. Only them.*

Researcher: *Okay.*

P6: *Ja, because sometimes they can talk a lot of nonsense in the newspaper.*

- Researcher: *And do you think they talk more nonsense about men or more nonsense about women criminals?*
- P6: *Well...*
- Researcher: *From what you've seen.*
- P6: *Well, sometimes, sometimes I will say they can, they can really lie about something. But sometimes, sometimes when something happened, it's the truth. Like my case. The things that they were saying in that newspaper...*
- Researcher: *What were they saying?*
- P6: *They say the children was saying we...was hitting them and we was...uh...hit their heads and we was trying to make them dead with a knife. Everything. And it was not, it was not the truth. It was not the truth.*
- Researcher: *Ja.*
- P6: *You see. Sometimes papers, they can lie.*

Interestingly, while the participants refused to believe the media's descriptions of their own and other women's sexual perpetrations they easily accepted the media's descriptions of male sexual crimes. For example, P8 stated:

You know, you see on TV that man in the crèche that raped that four year old and you know...it's disgusting!

4.7. DISCOURSE ON REHABILITATION

An important finding in the previously mentioned precursory study was that there is a relative absence of rehabilitation programmes for female sexual offenders, especially in South Africa (Kramer, 2008). In the current study, most of the participants believed that they require some form of rehabilitation; however this was most often expressed in light of their abusive pasts rather than in terms of their perpetrations. This said, the rehabilitation programmes do not seem to be taken very seriously by the participants and this is perhaps a result of the voluntary and casual nature of these programmes. Additionally, while both the White Paper on Corrections in South Africa (2005) and the Correctional Services Act (1998) emphasise rehabilitation and psychological services, there appears to be little availability of either. Social workers are available in the correctional centres; however most of the participants did not find them helpful and preferred interaction with a qualified psychologist. This is problematic as there are no psychologists in Johannesburg Correctional Centre. Additionally, while there is a psychologist

in the Pretoria Correctional Centre, the participants struggled to get appointments with her. It thus seems that the correctional system's view of rehabilitation is inconsistent with the offenders' experience of rehabilitation.

4.7.1 PERCEPTIONS OF REHABILITATION

While there are rehabilitation courses available for the female offenders, the participants knew very little about them. Some of the participants had attended a bible or baking course but most had attended no courses at all. Furthermore, the correctional staff members do not seem to motivate the offenders to attend these programmes. The social workers have a list of available programmes which include life skills, problem solving, dealing with depression, managing negative emotions, parental skills and communication skills. There are also programmes aimed at specific offences such as robbery, fraud, homicide and child abuse. Notably, programmes for sexual offences were absent as were modules on the understanding of and sensitivity to gender issues. In fact, gender as a significant rehabilitative topic seems to apply mostly "to male offenders whose victims were women and children" (White Paper on Corrections in South Africa, 2005, p. 13). While these programmes are available on paper, their tangible availability remains unclear. Additionally, the programmes' voluntary nature is consistently emphasised by the social workers and the participants maintained that they are really only important if one is being considered for parole. In fact discussions around the programmes were often contextualised by apathetic feelings. This was evident in P1's discourse:

- Researcher: *Okay. So have you attended the courses?*
P1: *The course?*
Researcher: *Yes.*
P1: *Not yet. It's voluntary.*
Researcher: *Are you going to go? (Silence). Will you attend the programmes?*
P1: *Eh.*
Researcher: *Umm...why haven't you gone...before?*
P1: *You have to register your name with the social workers if you must attend programme.*

However, when there was a genuine possibility for parole, the participants were less apathetic and were more inclined to express a desire to participate in the courses:

I did my three [years] and I'm nearly finished with my half now. I saw...small parole board, now I must do the course and then...maybe I'll get the date. I'm praying (P3).

I must also have to do courses. So, ja maybe when you want parole (P8).

Despite this apparent desire, few of the participants had actually attended a course. When questioned about this most of the participants reverted to blaming and justificatory discourse to escape responsibility for their rehabilitation. For example, P3 justified her nonattendance in the following way:

Researcher: *Okay. So...then also...I know there are programmes. The life skill programmes-*

P3: *Yes. Yes.*

Researcher: *Have you ever done...or been part of that?*

P3: *I was writing them a letter last year asking them to do the courses. They never called me.*

Researcher: *Oh.*

P3: *And...[S] also, sometimes she somer throws the thing in this, the bin. Don't care. So I said what must I do now, my time is coming now that I must do the course to go home.*

P4 stated that she had not attended courses “because I’m still new” despite the fact that she has been incarcerated since 2006. Similarly, P5 claimed that “I’m still waiting for the...course”. P8 justified her non-attendance in the following way:

I work, you know, so I only hear about the courses two, three days later and then I can't somer go to there and say I only heard now.

Despite the non-attendance of programmes and the general apathy towards the available rehabilitation, most of the participants expressed some desire to receive rehabilitative help. For example, P5 was especially interested if this research report was going to result in a new rehabilitation programme for female sexual offenders. She also stated:

This...thing you doing. I hope it can help us in any way as...as women.

4.7.2. PSYCHOLOGY VERSUS SOCIAL WORK

The participants set up a dichotomy between the professions of social work and psychology in their discourse. Throughout the narratives, the social workers and the courses they offered were deemed unhelpful. Those participants who had been able to receive psychological treatment maintained that it was more helpful than the courses or the assistance offered by the social workers. It is unclear as to whether this dichotomy is a reflection of a poor social work system in the correctional context or rather a reflection of the participants' perceptions that psychology is more powerful than social work. Such a perception reiterates a larger social belief that the profession of psychology has a powerful healing effect. This belief is only possible because psychology, as a product of scientific knowledge, has been upheld as the primary means by which individuals can be studied, observed, measured, diagnosed and consequently treated. In this way psychologists have come to possess a powerful expert position (Hook, 2002). For P2, her perceptions of the 'expert' psychologist were also extended to the sisters and doctors at the hospital. The dichotomising of social work and other apparently more expertise professions was clearly reflected in her discourse:

- P2: *So, I'm not feeling well.*
Researcher: *Your mind?*
P2: *Ya, so I was talking to sisters. And social workers I was come to see them to...supposed to once a week. But I didn't come.*
Researcher: *Why not?*
P2: *I'm talking with the sisters.*
Researcher: *At the hospital?*
P2: *Sisters, ya. So...doctor, they are giving me the drugs.*
Researcher: *You're taking drugs?*
P2: *Ya.*
Researcher: *Okay. What drugs?*
P2: *Sleeping drugs.*
Researcher: *Sleeping tablets. And did the doctor give them to you?*
P2: *Ya. And mood...mood drugs.*
Researcher: *Mood stabilizers. Okay. So they have a psychiatrist in the hospital that you can see?*
P2: *Ya.*
Researcher: *Okay...*
P2: *Sisters talking with me. I say I want to go to psychologist. Cos here, no psychologist.*

Researcher: *Ja, I know there's no psychologists.*
 P2: *They say, psychology is in Pretoria.*
 Researcher: *Ja.*
 P2: *Okay doctor write a letter...*
 Researcher: *For you to go to Pretoria?*
 P2: *Ya. So, I'm still waiting.*
 Researcher: *So, if...I'm not sure I understand something...if in Pretoria the psychologists say they can see you, do they take you there?*
 P2: *Ya.*
 Researcher: *They take you to Pretoria?*
 P2: *Ya. And then maybe after 6 months or 3 months or 4 months, if maybe, if I...so I'm still waiting.*

Other expressions of uncertainty regarding the social workers were evident in statements such as “*the social worker didn't do nothing*” (P6) and “*what only helped was the psychologist*” (P8).

As a result of their reservations regarding the social workers and the courses, the participants called for the availability of more psychologists. This is problematic as there are no available psychologists in Johannesburg Correctional Centre. In Pretoria the availability of only one psychologist makes it difficult to get an appointment. The frustrations concerning the lack of available psychological treatment were expressed in statements such as:

It's only the social workers we can talk to. And, you know, sometimes they are so busy...we had Mrs [S] here, she was the...um...psychologist. Yes. But when I came here that time, 2007, she was here. I saw her, for I think, twice. Twice or three times. Then she was gone all of a sudden we didn't see her anymore. Then they said there's no one coming here anymore. I wish there was someone. It's not that I do need it but I feel like I can talk to someone about this, you know. Just to...maybe I'll feel better (P3).

Those participants that had an opportunity to engage with a psychologist maintained that the interaction was helpful. For example:

But, I'm seeing the psychologist now. I started to see the psychologist. So, hopefully that will come to an end. Coming to an end is, you know, is for me a starting point...get rid of all my stress inside...and it's quite a...big difference (P5).

The psychologist, she help me lots. It took one year and six months for me to deal with being in prison now and she help me. You know, with her the anger, it came on the outside (P8).

Similarly, P5 stated that the psychologist had been “*very helpful*” and that she “*feels much better*”.

The call for more available psychologists and the belief that psychologists have a powerful healing effect align with a Foucauldian understanding that a disciplinary obligation to confess is deeply engrained into the normative practices of society and that psychology, as a confessional space, allows for the process of self-construction and self-regulation through the presence of an ‘expert’ other (Foucault, 1978). Thus, psychotherapy technologies are also technologies of self-government (Rose, 1999). That is, in confessing, an individual is not only subjectified by an ‘expert’ other, but is also constituted and produced by the process. Accordingly, while this process increases an individual’s exposure to surveillance and discipline, it simultaneously allows for the affirmation of one’s identity. The availability of a confessional space also allows the speaker an opportunity to persuade this ‘expert’ other that he/she is self-regulated, psychologically healthy and socially acceptable (Stevens, 2008). As such, the technologies of psychological practices play “a key role in constructing ‘governable subjects’” (Rose, 1999, p. vii). The participants embody this Foucauldian understanding in their calls for psychological treatment as well as in their beliefs that a psychological space would assist them better than alternative rehabilitative spaces.

4.8. INVERSIONS OF FEMALENESS

The previous sections display that all of the participants clearly perceive themselves as feminine, maternal and vulnerable. These gendered self-perceptions were constantly produced and reproduced within the narrative space between the participant and the researcher. However, despite these productions of femininity, many of the participants often slipped into discursive moments that reflected an inversion of such femininity. This was particularly expressed through aggression, hostility and violence. In these moments the participants aligned themselves with masculine social constructions.

P4 was particularly hostile and this hostility was mostly projected towards the researcher. However, the other participants' hostility was expressed through their narratives. For example:

I was screaming at him. I was swearing him. I think I'm gonna kill him. I wanted to kill him. I put a knife here...but it wasn't too deep. It was only...um...a small amount inside the heart. Not too much. I said: 'I will kill you' (P3).

So ja, if I see this thing again then, then I'll somer stab him with a knife. Just like this. Stab him. And I don't want to come back to prison for murder, you know? (P8)

And then...this big child of mine...she...she said to the man: 'Just take, just take a knife and, and kill my mother' (P6).

All of these hostile expressions involve the narration of a violent incident with a knife. In fact P7 explained that she had been accused of forcing her son to rape her niece by holding a knife to her son's neck. Thus, when inverting their femininity and producing themselves as more masculinised subjects, the participants simultaneously invert other gendered objects. Here, rather than using the knife in the kitchen in the normative gendered female sense, the participants' utilise it as a weapon and thus in the mode of masculinity.

Other inversions of femaleness also reflect the possession of a masculinised subject position. These expressions usually entailed the repositioning of the women so that they became the head of their households. As such, these expressions allowed the participants the opportunity to attain some form of patriarchal status. Examples include:

So I went up to my dad, I said to him: 'If you ever touches me, I will make a case against you. I'll put you in jail' (P3).

I'm the breadwinner (P4).

He write to me and he ask me, I must try to send for him money (P6).

Significantly, despite these obvious inversions of femininity, the participants continued to view themselves in gendered terms. This was supported by their reliance on gendered and institutionalised discourse as well as rationalisations that ensured the maintenance of their statuses as victimised females. This said, these moments of gender inversion do demonstrate that

gender is not as fixed as social constructions of gender imply. This aligns with Bourke's (2007) suggestion that bipolar gender binaries are fictions that mask the fluidity of identity and the range of different subject positions people may occupy in different contexts. However, gender constructions prevail and thus, much like the offenders in Geiger and Fischer's (2005) study, the participants struggled to negotiate their criminal profiles with female gendered roles such as motherhood, passivity, victimhood and submission.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This research utilised female sexual offender's self-knowledge as a vehicle to demonstrate broader social discourses around female sexual subjectivity and their relationship to patriarchal systems in power. Specifically, because the participants in this study had a proclivity to rely on social constructions of men, women, motherhood and sexuality, the findings in this study demonstrate that gendered and sexualised constructions continue to structure broader understandings of identity. Consequently, this research exposes power relations operant in society and, in turn, calls for a more complex, variable and dynamic understanding of both gender and sexuality. That is, this research opposes an essentialist paradigm. Essentialism implies natural inevitability by ignoring history, society and culture as mediating elements in the production of gender and sexuality. Such paradigms view gender and sexuality as a predetermined result of biological production rather than as a production of knowledge and power. In contrast, this research calls for the awareness of social constructions in our understandings of 'truth' and 'reality'.

In line with aims put forward by Butler (2004), this study therefore utilises moments of apparent sexual transgression to demonstrate that a particular ontology of gender exists in the world and, more importantly, that this ontological framework is open to rearticulation. As such, in agreement with Butler (2004), this research calls for a revisioning of historical and institutionalised terms such that they give value to individual difference and autonomy and avoid depending on radical biological essentialism as an explanation for such differences. This would involve decentring gender and sexuality from the cultural consciousness as primary modes for thinking about identity. Bem (1993) calls this process 'gender depolarization' and further maintains that it would require both a social and a psychological revolution. Additionally, it requires a new conception of the human state as unpredictable and malleable rather than as fixed and stable. She believes that this can be possible by drawing on instances of apparent transgressions as evidence that sexuality is not constrained by gender and, more significantly, that gender is not necessarily biologically determined by sex. In essence, both Bem (1993) and

Butler (2004) call for the rearticulation of the ontological framework of humanness. As maintained by Butler (2004, p. 222) “the necessity of keeping our notion of the “human” open to a future articulation is essential to the project of a critical international human rights discourse and politics”.

This theoretical implication has practical implications for future understandings of female sexual offenders. As indicated by Denov (2003), the legal, academic and medical tendency to rely on constructed truths about women results in narrow and limited frames of reference for female sexual offenders. Furthermore patriarchal discourses and structures inadvertently protect female sexual offenders by not allowing them to exist within academic, scientific and public space. This was evident in the way the participants were treated more leniently than their male accomplices. While the resulting legal leniency may be advantageous to female sexual offenders, these women continue to deny responsibility for their perpetrations as well as agency in their actions. If these women were given spaces to speak without being silenced by ‘expert’ discourse, it may allow for the opening of new possibilities in knowledge and discourse for the expression of female sexuality. The rearticulation of gender as a dynamic and changing essence will also allow for a new understanding of female sexual perpetration such that it is no longer an unfathomable construct. In turn, this will allow for victims to report such incidences and for the legal system to take such incidences seriously.

According to Levenson et al (2007, p. 21), myths and misperceptions concerning sexual offenders are widespread in society and “exposure to more accurate information can facilitate attitudinal changes about important social issues” which in turn “could enhance public education and prevention”. This research exposes how and why these misperceptions are socially constructed so that academics, policy makers and the general public have access to a different and novel understanding of female sexuality in light of sexual offending. This has practical implications for the acknowledgement and awareness of female sexual perpetration as well as for future preventative efforts. Levenson et al. (2007, p. 20) further argue that because the media is so influential in shaping public perceptions, “the media should be enlisted as a partner in educating the public...through the dissemination of accurate and research-based information about sexual violence” rather than maintaining its position as a mode of sensationalism. This, in

turn, would aid preventative efforts and would further assist in decreasing faulty gendered perceptions and beliefs.

On a more practical level, this research demonstrated that the available rehabilitation in South African female correctional services is limited and under-resourced. The participants' calls for available psychologists and effective rehabilitation programmes are significant as both the White Paper on Corrections in South Africa (2005) and the Correctional Services Act (1998) emphasise rehabilitation and psychological services. As such, the Department of Correctional Services should enlist psychologists as primary sources of rehabilitative care.

Finally, while there is a large body of literature concerning male sexual perpetration, the research on female sexual perpetration is significantly limited (Giguere & Bumby, 2007). This research therefore builds on the existing knowledge base concerning female sexual perpetration whilst simultaneously attempting to fill the knowledge gaps resulting from previously limited literature bases.

5.2. STUDY LIMITATIONS

The sample in this study consisted of incarcerated female sexual offenders. Drawing on a sample of incarcerated offenders is limiting in that it excludes offenders that have not been charged with sexual offences. This is significant as many female sexual offenders are never charged or sentenced for their crimes. Additionally, female sexual perpetrators are also often viewed as severely mentally and emotionally maladjusted. As such, the legal system often sends the female sexual offender for psychiatric care as opposed to the correctional centre. Furthermore, all of the participants' victims were children and most of the participants acted with a male accomplice. This is unsurprising as when female sexual offenders act with a male accomplice, victims are more likely to report the abuse and the legal system is more likely to sentence the female offender (Vandiver, 2006). However, it limits the sample so that other types of female sexual perpetration are not taken into account. Another important observation about the sample is that all of the women were from a lower class populace. This again limits the sample as it does not account for female sexual perpetrators in other classes. These limitations may lead to poor typicality across the population of female sexual offenders (Vandiver, 2006).

This is further exacerbated by the purposive sampling strategy drawn on in the data collection phase.

This research demonstrated that institutionalised discourse emanating from the legal, medical and academic domains influence and mould the self-knowledge of female sexual perpetrators. However, this research fails to actively engage with discourse at the level of these institutions. Thus, while the findings may implicate these domains, little can be said of them until they are subjected to rigorous research.

This study calls for the rearticulation of gender as a malleable and dynamic construct. However, despite the fact that the constructionist ambitions of this research were to provide an understanding of the construction of sexuality and consequently a means to alter the way various so-called sexual transgressors are portrayed, the theory is still located within the very language that oppresses, polices, disciplines and controls bodies. Thus, the attempt to contest patriarchy is problematic as it is as biased and distorted as the masculine hegemony it is intended to disrupt. For Butler (2004), this is proved by the very fact that a theoretical desire to do away with sexual difference exists and this, in turn, reinforces the enduring and efficacious character of sexual difference. That is, “anything that might be said against it is oblique proof that it structures what we say” (Butler, 2004, p. 177). In this way, this research may become circular as it draws on the very discourses it aims to disintegrate.

5.3. FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

In terms of the study limitations outlined above, it is recommended that future studies take sampling issues into account. Firstly, it would be beneficial to replicate this study with female sexual offenders that have been placed in psychiatric care as this would demonstrate whether the findings of the current study are replicable across other populations of female sexual offenders. This could also be extended to women who have been accused of sexual perpetration but were not incarcerated by the legal system. Additionally, future South African studies should attempt to include a range of classes and socio-economic backgrounds in their samples. Most importantly, future studies should attempt to take other types of female sexual perpetration into

account so that the literature does not remain limited to child sexual abuse. They should also include women that have acted without the assistance of a male accomplice.

Future studies should also focus on broader discursive practices that occur at the level of the system. This could be achieved by interviewing legal, medical and academic practitioners with regards to their perceptions of female sexual offenders. Whilst a similar aim laid the foundation for the previously mentioned precursory study (Kramer, 2008), a more detailed investigation may bring the process of disciplinary power to light especially in terms of its function as a relay between institutionalised knowledge and self-knowledge.

One of the most notable themes that arose in this study was the participants' tendency to resist confession despite the confessional milieu set up by the interview context. It seems that these women are still, by virtue of their gender, operating outside of the incitement to discourse. This seems to be the case despite previously acceptable behaviour becoming more heavily scrutinised. That is, although it seems that women have recently become the subjects of increased surveillance and discipline, these women are still operating outside of such surveillance. This is an avenue worth exploring in future studies especially in terms of whether male sexual offenders are able and willing to confess.

Finally, this study acknowledges social constructions as a function of an oppressive patriarchal language. When making such acknowledgements, we simultaneously reclaim agency at both the individual and the social level. In turn, this reclamation allows us to rehearse other ways of being. Future practical interventions for female sexual offenders should take this into account so that treatment focuses on awareness of gender and sexual stereotypes. In turn, this consciousness will assist female sexual offenders in becoming capable of viewing themselves as sexual offenders as well as in attaining agency in their actions. It will also give female sexual offenders a platform from which their voices can be heard.

5.4. CONCLUSION

This research examined the intersections between female sexual subjectivity and sexual offending by considering the discourses female sexual offenders draw on in order to construct

their identities. An exploration of the way female sexual subjectivity is constituted, produced and regulated was conducted through the investigation of broader discursive practices that come to speak through the female sexual offenders. This provided a framework for the understanding of how points of disciplinary power are embedded within the discursive practices of female sexual offenders and how this, in turn, produces the offenders' subject positions. By taking into account the macro-level discourses that feed into female sexual offenders' micro-level experiences and identities, this study illuminated how disciplinary power acts to produce self-knowledge that in turn leads to the discursive coordinates by which female sexual offenders come to define themselves.

The participants in this study relied on social constructions of men, women, motherhood, sexuality and religion in producing their subjectivities. Significantly, all of the offenders constructed themselves as characteristically female- maternal, passive, vulnerable, victimised and innately virtuous. Their discourse included rationalising discourse, gendered discourse, inversions of their femaleness, perceptions of the legal and correctional systems, institutionalised discourse, discourse on rehabilitation and expressions of morality and docility. Most of these discursive patterns both replicate and reproduce broader social discursive practices that imply that women are harmless, nurturing and incapable of female sexual perpetration. In fact, the availability of medical, academic and legal discourse on gender and sexuality allowed the participants to draw on victim discourse, histories of abuse and claims of psychological ailments to justify their perpetrations. These rationalising discourses are clearly learnt discourses that have come to have meaning for the existence of female sexual perpetration. These rationalisations also worked in conjunction with gendered discursive strategies that imply that men are aggressive perpetrators whilst women are harmless victims. That is, the participants produced themselves as innocent victims of patriarchal abuse. As such, the responsibility for the participants' crimes was most often relayed onto their male accomplices. Moreover, the participants removed their agency from their crimes and rather placed that agency within an abusive male partner. In this way, the participants not only upheld their own subjective innocence but also assisted in the maintenance of the female sexual perpetrator as an unfathomable and impossible construct. This was further emphasised by the fact that not a single

participant believed she was guilty of a crime. As such, the participants' reproductions of traditional sexual scripts foreclosed alternative understandings of female sexual perpetration.

Access to gendered discourse also allowed the participants to assert themselves as good mothers. In fact, maternal discourse was one of the strongest discursive themes across all of the interviews. This is possibly because gendered discourse not only amplifies the participants' femininity but also contrasts the criminal profile of a sexual perpetrator. However, these maternal constructions made little sense in the context of the participants' perpetrations as most of the participants were incarcerated for the sexual perpetration of their own children. The lack of other types of female sexual perpetrators in the correctional centre may be a result of the fact that while female child sexual perpetration is generally denied, it seems to be at least more 'acceptable' or 'thinkable' than female sexual perpetration against an adult male. The question thus arises as to whether there are women that sexually perpetrate adult men and, in turn, why these women are not brought forward to the legal system.

While the participants mostly constructed themselves as gendered subjects, there were also obvious moments of gender inversion. These instances were characterised by hostility, aggression or assertiveness. Such characterisations align better with constructions of masculinity than with femininity. However, despite these obvious inversions of femininity, the participants continued to view themselves in gendered terms. This said, these moments of gender inversion demonstrate that gender is not as fixed as social constructions of gender imply. As such, these inversions depict that gender constructions only act to conceal the true heterogeneity of identity and, in turn, to regulate subject positions so that it was impossible for the participants in this study to negotiate their profiles as both mothers and sexual perpetrators.

In conclusion then, this study demonstrates how gender prescriptions and boundaries co-opt individuals into subject positions so that gender is actively performed and demonstrated. Gendered and sexualised realities relayed through disciplinary power have powerful social and psychological effects that ensure the maintenance of both social and individual 'truths.' Such 'truths' imply that gender is dichotomous and that females are incapable of sexual perpetration. This research thus provides a platform from which to account for the discursive silence on

female sexual offenders. This discursive silence is however problematic as it ensures that female sexual offenders cannot view themselves as sexual perpetrators and as females simultaneously thus resulting in blaming discourse and instances of denial. In turn, the consequences for the sexual perpetration are never dealt with by the victim or by the perpetrator. As such, in agreement with Butler (2004), this report argues that gender and sexuality cannot be defined in strict and rigid terms. A simple and narrow definition of gender or sexuality forecloses the possibility of alternative discourse that may make female sexual perpetration fathomable to the legal, medical and academic domains as well as to the perpetrators and the victims. Instances of transgression, such as female sexual perpetration, clearly demonstrate that an entrenched ontology of gender exists. Female sexual offenders also represent a challenge to the dichotomy of the sexes. For Butler (2004), drawing on instances of apparent transgression provides evidence that sexuality is not constrained by gender and, more significantly, that gender is not necessarily biologically determined by sex. As such, gender and sexuality need to move beyond their binary structures and rather acquire a framework based on multiplicity. Thus, in line with Foucault (1978), both gender and sexuality should be understood as historical and malleable products that have been moulded and continue to be remoulded by a variety of social events. This conception of gender and sexuality allows for the understanding of identity as a fluid and unstable entity that is able to encompass aspects of both femininity and masculinity. The re-articulation of gender and sexuality would therefore form the foundation for a novel and more variable framework for understanding female sexual perpetration.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- Please describe your background life history.
- What offence(s) were you charged with? What were you found guilty of? What sentence(s) were you given?
- Do you believe this finding is an adequate description of your actions? Explain your answer.
- How would you personally describe your actions which resulted in your incarceration?
- Do you think it is fair to label your actions as a “crime”? Explain your answer.
- Describe life inside a female correctional centre.
- How do you think the correctional staff perceive you?
- How do you think the other offenders perceive you?
- Describe your experiences in the courtroom. How do you think the legal system views you? Do you think your case was handled adequately by your legal representatives? Did you have your own lawyer or was one appointed for you? How do you think he/she perceived you? Did you have any public, family or community support during the trial?
- Is there rehabilitation available to you in the correctional service for your offence? If so, describe the rehabilitation treatment procedure. Do you believe this treatment is necessary? How do you think the available mental health professionals perceive you?
- Have you ever seen media coverage on similar crimes to your own? Describe your feelings when experiencing these.
- How do you perceive men? How do you think men perceive you?
- How do you perceive children? How do you think children perceive you?

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



School of Human and Community Development

Private Bag, 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa

Tel: (011) 717-4500 Fax: (011) 717-4599

Dear Madam

My name is Sherianne Kramer, and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters Degree in the Discipline of Research Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. The aim of my research is to try to explore and further understand the views and experiences of incarcerated female sexual offenders. I am concentrating this research on offenders' own views and experiences at the psychological and legal levels and how these match up or do not match up to how the public at large understands and perceives female sexual offenders. Statistics have shown that there are in fact many more female sexual offenders than was thought yet the public at large still responds to the idea of female sexual offenders with suspicion. This may lead to general misunderstandings of female sexual offenders. Understanding the experiences and views of female sexual offenders may therefore expose academics and the public to more accurate information which could in turn be used to make better information available to academics, the public and the policy maker who could design prevention programmes. The research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr Brett Bowman. We would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Participation in this research will involve being interviewed by myself, at a time and place that is convenient for you and correctional services. The interview will last for approximately one hour. With your permission this interview will be recorded in order to ensure that whatever you tell me can be analysed accurately. Participation is voluntary, and you will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not to participate in the study. All of your responses will be kept confidential, and no information that could identify you will be included in the research report. As we are only interested in discussing your views and experiences of the events particular to the offence for which you are currently in the Correctional

Centre, no other acts or events that could be considered criminal should be discussed. That is, there should be no mention of the knowledge of or planning of a future crime or escape. Also, as there is such a small number of incarcerated female sexual offenders, it is possible that the results may imply your identification. This possible breach of privacy may or may not bring about negative consequences. Additionally, confidentiality cannot always be fully protected in correctional centres. However, I will do whatever I can to make sure that it remains unlikely that the results in the final report imply your identification. Additionally, the interview questions and study procedure does attempt to present no more than minimal risk to you as a participant. The interview material (tapes and transcripts) will not be seen or heard by any person in this organisation at any time, and will only be seen and studied by myself and possibly the supervisor. All tape recordings will be destroyed immediately after they have been transcribed and these anonymous transcriptions will be kept in a secure place by the University of the Witwatersrand throughout the study. You may refuse to answer any questions you would prefer not to, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point.

If you choose to participate in the study please fill in your details on the form below. For any further information I can be contacted telephonically on (011) 884-0493 or via e-mail at kramer1@mweb.co.za and my supervisor can be contacted at (011) 717-8335.

This research will contribute both to a larger body of knowledge on the female sexual perpetrator, as well as to your own understanding of your circumstances. A one page summary of the research results will be made available on request.

Sincerely,
Sherianne Kramer

I have read and understood the Information Sheet

Signed _____

Date _____

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT TO BE INTERVIEWED

I _____ hereby consent to being interviewed by Sherianne Kramer for her study on female sexual perpetration.

I understand that:

- Participation in this interview is voluntary.
- That I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential.
- Direct quotes from this interview may be used in the research report
- There are no direct risks or benefits involved in my participation

Signed _____

Date _____

APPENDIX D: CONSENT TO BE AUDIO-RECORDED

I _____ hereby consent to my interview with Sherianne Kramer for her study on female sexual perpetration being tape-recorded.

I understand that:

- The tapes and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person in this organisation at any time, and will only be processed by the researcher.
- All tape recordings will be destroyed after the research is complete.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.
- The transcriptions will be kept in a safe place throughout the research process
- Direct quotes from the interview may be used in the research report

Signed _____

Date _____

APPENDIX E: SANITIZED LETTER TO THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONER FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES



School of Human and Community Development

Private Bag, 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa

Tel: (011) 717-4500 Fax: (011) 717-4599

Dear Advocate M,

My name is Sherianne Kramer and I am currently conducting a research report as part of my Masters degree in Research Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand under the supervision of Dr Brett Bowman. My research involves the investigation of incarcerated female sexual offenders and, as such, requires me to interview female inmates. Accordingly, I made an application to the research office at the DCS. I have recently received permission to conduct my research from the research office. This letter intends to inform you about the general purpose of my research and what it will involve in terms of methodology. Consequently, I hope to receive your permission to proceed forward with my research and contact the relevant area commissioners.

My research is titled *Discourse and power in the self-perceptions of incarcerated South African female sexual offenders*. Female sexual offenders have recently become the subject of increased medical, legal and public attention. However, these systems insist that female sex crimes are rare regardless of the fact that when sexual victimization experiences are surveyed, the incidence of female perpetrated sex crimes is often higher than expected. Consequently, lay discourses concerning female sexual perpetration remain charged with expressions of disbelief and the vast majority of attention on sexual crimes therefore remains focused on male offenders. As a result, female sexual offenders are understood and treated differently to their male counterparts in the media and medico-legal contexts. In light of this, this research explores reasons for the continued denial of female sexual perpetration and how such beliefs around female sexuality shape the self-knowledge of female sexual offenders. By doing so, this investigation aims to illuminate how social constructions of gender and sexuality shape self-knowledge. Specifically,

this research will focus on the language female sexual offenders draw on to define themselves in order to note moments of conformity or resistance to gendered and sexualized norms. In doing so, academics, policy makers and the general public will have access to a different and novel understanding of female sexuality in light of sexual offending. This has practical implications for the acknowledgement and awareness of female sexual perpetration as well as future preventative efforts.

I have requested permission to conduct interviews with eight incarcerated female sexual offenders at the Pretoria and Johannesburg correctional centres in the Gauteng region. Criteria for participant inclusion are incarceration at one of these centres for charges of sexual offence. Here sexual offence refers to any offence outlined by the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (2007) including instances of sexual assault, incest, sexual offences against children and rape. Every potential research participant will receive an information sheet with details concerning the aim and rationale of the study, my contact details, the data gathering procedure as well as the statement that participants are free to withdraw themselves or their information from the study at any point in time or to refuse to answer any questions they choose not to. To make this possible I will provide the participants with both telephonic and mailing contact details. The information sheet also includes details about privacy regarding the fact that although confidentiality cannot always be fully protected in prison contexts, participant confidentiality will be upheld as much as possible throughout the research documentation and all documented data will remain anonymous. As there are a small number of incarcerated South African female sexual offenders, the results may allow for the identification of participants which may have negative consequences for the inmates. In light of this, the final report and any subsequent reporting will pay special attention to anonymisation of identity possible. However, the participants will be made aware of possible breaches of privacy as well as the fact that the DCS will have access to the final report. After participants have acquired information concerning the study they will be given the opportunity to either accept or decline the invitation to participate. Each potential participant will receive a consent form which they can choose to sign if they agree to participate in the research. On giving informed consent to participate, participants will also be required to consent to the recording of the interviews which may be quoted from directly and will be made aware that no identifying information will be drawn from them. Further, it will be

explained that the tapes will be destroyed by incineration immediately after the completion of transcription. Thereafter, transcriptions will be kept in a safe place and be seen by only myself and my supervisor. It will also be clear that there are no advantages or disadvantages in participating in the study as well as no direct benefits. The interviews will last approximately one hour and will take place in a time and space negotiated with the area commissioner and head of correctional centre with regards to their convenience.

In accordance with the Correctional Services Act (1998), I have signed an agreement form for the DCS in which I agree to comply with all correctional service conditions. In terms of this agreement, I will not give or receive money from participants, supply participants with any benefits or rewards, enter correctional services without authorization or interfere with any prisoners. I will also bring my own stationery, identity card and permission letter every time I enter the correctional centres. Further, I will request that a warden be present during every interview so that protection and security is ensured throughout the data collection process for all parties involved.

This research serves an important starting point in the recognition of female sexual perpetration. This is significant as recognition will, in turn, allow for the development of treatment programmes aimed at the reduction of recidivism rates. As such, I hope you will permit me to proceed with this research.

Kind Regards

Sherianne Kramer

E-mail: kramer1@mweb.coza

Cel: 0837048554

NOTE: This letter has been sanitized in order to ensure that the relevant parties involved in the research process remain anonymous.

* Advocate M is a pseudonym

**APPENDIX F: NOTIFICATION OF PERMISSION FROM THE ETHICS COMMITTEE AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND**

Ethics Protocol Number: H090308

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