

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

**SELVES COLLIDING WITH STRUCTURE: THE  
DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF CHANGE AND NON-  
CHANGE IN NARRATIVES OF RAPE CRISIS  
VOLUNTEERS.**

A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the Master of Arts degree  
(Psychology), in the Faculty of Humanities, University of Cape Town.

2001

by

**Rachelle Joy Chadwick**

Supervisor: Professor Don Foster

We – you and me, she and he, we and they –we differ in the content of the words, in the construction and weaving of sentences but most of all, I feel, in the choice and mixing of utterances, the ethos, the tones, the paces, the cuts, the pauses. The story circulates like a gift; an empty gift which anybody can lay claim to by filling it to taste, yet can never truly possess. A gift built on multiplicity. One that stays inexhaustible within its own limits. Its departures and arrivals. Its quietness...knowing ignorance is strength, ignoring knowledge is sickness; if one is sick of sickness, then one is no longer sick. For a variation, I would say knowledge for knowledge's sake is sickness. Let her who is sick with sickness pass on the story, a gift unasked for like a huge bag of moonlight. Now stars shine white on a black on a colored sky.

*Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989). Woman, native, other, p. 2.*

How can we see what we no longer see? We can devise 'tricks': my grandmother's room which I looked at through the keyhole; because of the focalization I had never seen a room that was so much a room. The city of Algiers which I looked at in the bus windows...Microscopes, telescopes, myopias, magnifying glasses. All this apparatus in us: attention. To think, I knit my brows, I close my eyes, and I look.

*Hélène Cixous (1997). Rootprints: Memory and life writing, p. 4.*

A woman's voice came to me from far away, like a voice from a birth-town, it brought me insights that I once had, intimate insights, naïve and knowing, ancient and fresh like the yellow and violet color of freshias rediscovered, this voice was unknown to me...this voice was not searching for me, it was writing to no one, to all women, to writing, in a foreign tongue, I do not speak it, but my heart understands it....

*Hélène Cixous (1979). Vivre l'orange (To live the orange), p. 10.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Parts of me cannot believe that a written thesis has taken shape out of the mass and swirl of thoughts, confusions, personal experiences, theories and hours of talk that form the contextual landscape within which it was conceived, carried out and written. The process of 'doing' this research far exceeds the document that now stands before me as 'my thesis'. There have been many travels and many moments of despair and frustration. Writing this dissertation was at times difficult and at others magically easy. There were many moments wherein I felt it was simply impossible and that a thesis would never be successfully spawned out of the many diverse and sometimes disparate ideas within my head. But here it is, finally a real and material object that can be read and assessed and examined. That it is here, that it exists as a new contribution to the chorus of voices and thoughts and 'findings' that comprise the research community is thanks to the following people and institutions:

Firstly I would like to thank the women whose voices are present within this research – thus I extend a thank you to Katie, Vicky, Carin, Janet, Sue, Mary and Sharon – women who were generous and kind enough to share their histories, thoughts and lives with me. Without their courage to talk about them-selves this thesis could not exist.

I would also like to thank the A.W. Mellon Foundation for their generous financial assistance over the duration of this research. Their generosity enabled me to think and write without worries or concerns regarding money and subsistence and also gave me the opportunity to spend a semester at The University of California at Berkeley – an experience that will stand as momentous, both personally and intellectually, for many, many years to come.

A special thank you to my parents who have always encouraged me to go for my dreams and have supported my academic pursuits even when money was scarce. Without your continuous support - emotionally, financially and spiritually - I could never have reached this point.

Lastly, I would like to thank my supervisor (as well as friend, mentor and advice-giver) Don Foster who I have worked with for the past three years. Your patience, care and encouragement through the process of doing this research have been invaluable and indispensable. Thank you for knowing when

to let me be and when to 'jack me up'. Thank you also for your time and support during a very stressful period for you as Deputy-Dean and Head of Department.

University of Cape Town

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the discursive construction of subjective change and non-change in the narratives of women volunteering at a Rape Crisis (henceforth RC) centre. Of key interest within the study are the dilemmas and negotiations triggered when selves collide with new structures (and alongside this 'new' or alternative discourses and discursive subject positions). Structurally RC is a rich site offering a plethora of new ways of talking and 'seeing' complex issues surrounding sexuality, violence, heterosexual relationships and gender dynamics and involvement with the organisation thus compels selves to negotiate and reflect upon their current positionings. In order to explore these subjective dilemmas two individual and detailed interviews were conducted with 7 participants (totally a complete set of 14 interviews). The first interview explored relationship histories whilst the second served to probe more directly the impacts and effects 'made' by an involvement with RC. Within the analysis section three detailed case study analyses, as well as an amalgamated analysis of the total pool of narratives are presented, documenting the processes and discursive strategies used in the construction of positions of self-change and self-stasis. I argue that changes in sexuality are narrated as heralding the most complete 'change' within the space of the self and connect this to the interwoven nature of self and sexuality within Western culture. Different discursive techniques are used by the participants to construct particular and careful positions of change and non-change for them-selves. I argue that selves actively construct positions of change or non-change against and within a complex tapestry of past relationships, current investments and projected desires for the future. Drawing from the 'findings' of the analytic material I sketch the outlines of a theoretical framework within which we may begin to understand the processes whereby selves 'take up' positions of subjective change or remain mired within fixed sites. I propose that the concepts of investment (Hollway, 1984; 1989), recognition and reputation serve as useful tools in the construction of such a theoretical framework.

## CONTENTS

### Chapter 1 *Tracing the contours*

1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Telling thesis tales.....	1
1.3 Journeys and detours.....	2
1.4 Theoretical roots.....	4
1.5 My-self and my-thesis.....	5
1.6 Outline of chapters.....	6

### Chapter 2 *Theoretical contexts*

2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 Clarification of key terminology.....	7
2.2.1 <i>Self</i> .....	8
2.2.2 <i>Subjectivity</i> .....	9
2.2.3 <i>Individual</i> .....	11
2.2.4 <i>Person</i> .....	11
2.2.5 <i>Summing up</i> .....	12
2.3 Psychology and selves.....	12
2.4 Discursive selves.....	15
2.4.1 <i>Postmodernism</i> .....	15
2.4.2 <i>Post-structuralism</i> .....	16
2.4.3 <i>Social constructionism</i> .....	17
2.4.4 <i>Constructed selves/subjectivity</i> .....	18
2.4.5 <i>Narrative approaches to self</i> .....	20
2.5 Feminism and selves.....	21

### Chapter 3 *Maps and directives*

3.1 Introduction.....	23
-----------------------	----

3.2 Theoretical dilemmas.....	23
3.3 Re-viewing constructionist frameworks.....	24
3.4 Positioning, the self and discourse.....	30
3.4.1 <i>Wendy Hollway and discursive positioning</i> .....	30
3.4.2 <i>Positioning theory</i> .....	32
3.4.3 <i>Spatial configurations of subjectivity</i> .....	33
3.5 Concluding frame.....	35

**Chapter 4**    *Methodology*

4.1 Fusing theory and method.....	36
4.2 Feminist research.....	36
4.3 Narrative analysis.....	38
4.4 Discourse analysis / rhetorical analysis.....	42
4.5 The study.....	43
4.5.1 <i>Execution of the study</i> .....	44
▪ <i>Sample</i> .....	44
▪ <i>The interviews</i> .....	44
4.6 Analysis of the ‘data’.....	46

**Chapter 5**    *Case studies of change part 1 – Vicky Schultz*

5.1 Introduction.....	48
5.2 Case studies.....	49
5.3 Case study 1 – The story of Vicky Schultz.....	51
5.3.1 <i>Who is Vicky Schultz</i> .....	51
5.3.2 <i>Before the interview</i> .....	51
5.3.3 <i>‘The interview’</i> .....	52
5.3.4 <i>Representing Vicky poetically</i> .....	52
5.3.5 <i>The narrative poem</i> .....	53
5.3.6 <i>Reflecting upon the production of this text</i> .....	61
5.4 The analysis.....	62

5.4.1 <i>Two colliding worlds</i> .....	62
5.4.2 <i>Becoming gay</i> .....	67
5.5 Re-consideration of key questions.....	72

## **Chapter 6**    *Case studies of change part 2: Carin May*

6.1 Introduction to the story of Carin May.....	76
6.2 <i>Who is Carin May?</i> .....	76
6.3 <i>The interviews</i> .....	77
6.4 The analysis.....	77
6.4.1 <i>Relationship history</i> .....	77
6.4.2 <i>Sexual identity change and struggles around being bisexual</i> .....	81
6.4.3 <i>RC and the multiple differences it has made in Carin's life</i> .....	84
6.5 Re-consideration of key questions.....	91

## **Chapter 7**    *Discursive case study of non-change: Katie Reed*

7.1 Introduction.....	94
7.1.1 <i>Who is Katie Reed?</i> .....	94
7.1.2 <i>The interviews</i> .....	94
7.1.3 <i>General introduction to the analysis</i> .....	95
7.2 The analysis.....	95
7.2.1 <i>Relationship history</i> .....	95
7.2.2 <i>Justifying non-change through arguments</i> .....	101
▪ <i>Explaining sexual violence</i> .....	102
▪ <i>Stance towards feminism</i> .....	106
▪ <i>Heterosexuality</i> .....	108
▪ <i>Prizing of the individual</i> .....	109
▪ <i>Relations with women</i> .....	111
7.3 Re-consideration of key questions.....	112

**Chapter 8**    *Analysis of the narratives*

8.1 Introduction..... 114

8.2 Analysis..... 114

8.2.1 *Has RC made a difference to selves?* ..... 114

- *Relations with women*..... 115
- *Increased awareness and fear of violence* ..... 120
- *Development of the self and empowerment*..... 123
- *Relations with men*..... 127

8.2.2 *How is change / non-change negotiated within the narratives?*..... 128

- *Negotiating sexual identity*..... 128

**Chapter 9**    *Re-tracing, reflecting and re-viewing*

9.1 Introduction.....138

9.2 Reflecting upon process.....138

9.3 Reflecting upon my story.....139

9.4 Re-viewing the study.....141

- *Broadly speaking*..... 141

9.5 Reflecting upon theory..... 144

- *Key theoretical concepts*..... 145

9.6 Implications, contributions and limitations..... 149

- *Narrative / discourse methods*..... 149
- *Feminism*..... 150
- *Limitations of the study*..... 151

9.7 Finally..... 152

**Endnotes**.....154

**References**.....156

**Appendix 1 – Interview schedule for interview B**

**Appendix 2 – Transcript example**

## CHAPTER 1

### TRACING THE CONTOURS

#### 1.1 Introduction

The focus of this study falls upon questions of subjective change and non-change. Accompanying such an interest are complex questions surrounding subjectivity, the nature and possibility of change - both social and personal, as well as questions concerning the elusive nature and content of selves. In addressing questions of subjective change I explore the histories and experiences of women volunteering at a Rape Crisis Centre. Of particular interest is the collision between female subjectivities and discourses surrounding sexuality, feminism and violence (circulating within this organisational context), and the personal and relational changes or non-changes that occur at their meeting. Centrally the study aims to explore change and non-change at the level of subjectivities and to document the ways of talking that construct such positions of flux or stability.

#### 1.2 Telling thesis tales

Above I have declared the aims and general interests of my research in a direct and hopefully succinct manner. In presenting these aims right at the beginning, and in presenting them as clear and uncomplicated, it is suggested that this thesis represents a linear, progressive movement, clearly delineated and marked from beginning to end. Conventional thesis formatting demands such clear signposting; it demands that messy routes and detours along the research journey be suppressed and marginalised. According to dominant modernist conceptions of science and academic work, research must be a progression and advancement. A thesis thus becomes a series of manoeuvres, tactics and manipulations, a pattern of seeming movements calculated to portray progression. Chapters are presented in continuity, the argument moves bound and neat from introduction to conclusion. The literature is 'used', the battle-lines forged, the space wherein to speak and say and debate among the dead is outlined and presented. The research area is deterritorialised, occupied and rendered familiar. The grid is constructed and precisely drawn, among the already known a gap is spied and spotted, its feel and look and form already taking shape within the bordered grid. The simple trick of research

becomes the exposition of the already familiar and the expected. The voice of the thesis is as one - clear and resounding and expert – other voices, other routes, other arguments are subjugated beneath a veneer of unison, sameness and agreement.

“If we keep on speaking the same language together, we’re going to reproduce the same history. Begin the same old stories all over again ... The same discussions, the same arguments, the same scenes” (Irigaray, 1985:205).

A thesis remains a narrative reconstruction of embodied, material practices and events. When writing a thesis, stories are presented in relation to other research and theoretical stories, the experience of the researcher, the data, the participants involved as well as stories about the practicalities of the methods used. Usually these descriptions are not framed as stories but as chapters unfolding linearly and truthfully, directly presenting the (supposedly) progressive and steady movement of the research itself. Like most narratives a thesis is a simplification, and in many degrees it is also a misrepresentation of the research process. With the aim of trying to disrupt the notion of my thesis and my research as being neatly bound and directed, I propose to let the stories situated on the margins of this study, located between my personal self, my relationships and my work, to be heard more fully and told more ‘truthfully’. This is in accord with a feminist position which seeks to draw attention to the relationship between ontology (being) and epistemology (knowing) and which also aims to disrupt “the pretence maintained within most research reports that they are seamless coherent texts produced within one moment by a disembodied and disinterested author.” (Burman, 1994:131).

### 1.3 Journeys and detours

This thesis in particular has undergone extreme twists and turns of purpose and focus. Initially it began as a feminist interrogation of masculinity and male violence wherein I intended to interview and talk to men about the links and relationships between their identities as men and forms of violence against women. Instead of remaining within this area I became disillusioned and angered by the feminist literature I was reading and decided that what was in fact needed was an interrogation of the representations and images of women, men and heterosexual that were contained and reproduced by feminist discourses themselves. During this time I was active as a Rape Crisis volunteer and decided (drawing heavily upon my own personal experiences) that

an organisation dealing with sexual violence could be a prime setting in which to investigate the (re)productive powers of a certain brand of sexual violence feminism. I was specifically interested in the personal effects that this kind of work had upon volunteers' relationships, their sexuality and their feelings towards men and sex with men. Half of the interviews were completed before I made yet another journey – this time across time and space. I became for six months a body-in-exchange, a visitor far from home, a temporary resident in a peculiar place – Berkeley, California. It might seem strange that I include this as relevant to my thesis because for all clear intents and purposes, no data was collected there, no direct link was forged between this thesis and that place or time. However I was marked and changed by this experience and in consequence so was my academic and intellectual work – both of that time and now, subsequent to the trip. I attended classes that both expanded my mind and taught me to think in different, complex ways; I talked and shared with students and spent many hours in bookstores and libraries. In short I was changed, my abilities were stretched and my horizons expanded. All of the above impacts upon this thesis and the way in which I choose to format, write and present it. This work is inextricably bound to who I am and is reflective of my positions and my history.

However this work is not solely a reflection of my-selves - the researcher, woman, daughter, friend, sister, partner, student, Rape Crisis volunteer, feminist. It also resonates with the voices and stories of the women I interviewed and their own multiple positionings. Hearing their narratives changed the direction of this study and moved it along towards other paths. The shape and content of this thesis is dependent upon their stories, their talk and their own particular foci. I had to work in a circular, at times regressive manner, moving constantly back and forth between my original ideas, the theory and the literature, what the participants were saying and back to the theory and the literature again. The journey was never smooth or clear and the end-goal remained for the most part indistinct and opaque. The journey was most certainly not linear or neat. As I noted in my journal, at a time when I thought a lot about movement, journeys and foreign spaces (Berkeley, April, 2000):

*Journeys seem so simple don't they?*

*You leave, you inhabit, you return.*

*Linear and chronological*

*A neat red dotted line drawn across a map.*

The key is of course that journeys are not what they seem but occur without clear beginnings or endings – they occur spatially, psychologically, bodily, across time-lines, intellectually. What is common to each is the crossing of boundaries, the movement across clear lines towards something other, something different and new. A thesis is one such movement involving multiple journeys, routes and paths. I journeyed intellectually, emotionally, physically and spatially during the timeframe of this research as well as accompanying the women that I interviewed upon their own particular narrative journeys. There is no real destination-point or ending; the lives and voices that echo through this research continue outside the parchment folds of this document. The point is that this thesis will serve as a descriptive and interpretative slice of life enclosed within a particular time and locality. Journeys have been made and are still being made, but the final centre or truth of things escapes documentation. According to Blanchot (1993:26), “To find is to seek in relation to the center that is, properly speaking, what cannot be found. The center allows finding and turning, but the center is not to be found.”

#### 1.4 Theoretical roots

Despite being a student of psychology for the past six years, my theoretical roots do not lie safe and warm within this intellectual soil. I feel much more ‘at home’ in thinking of myself as rooted within a feminist tradition of research and theory. Alongside these feminist commitments lie theoretical interests within the ‘new’ constructionist and post-structuralist turns. These investments are reflected at all stages of this study – from research topic, theoretical frames, methodology, to style of writing and presentation. For me, positioning myself within a feminist tradition means being committed to non-exploitative methods and a self-consciously reflexive style of writing and reporting (Burman, 1994). It also means a responsibility to be vigilant against getting lost within the quagmire of intellectual reverie and in the process potentially losing the political aims and priorities of a feminist agenda (Wilkinson, 1997).

### 1.5 My-self and my-thesis

My motivations for doing this work, on this particular topic, are multiple. Firstly, my desire to investigate the collisions between personal subjectivity, relationships and Rape Crisis volunteer work is inseparable from my experiences as a feminist, a Rape Crisis volunteer, a postgraduate student, a woman in Cape Town and some-man's girlfriend. These are contradictory experiences and contradictory selves and I struggled personally trying to reach some resolution or reconciliation between them. I was committed to feminism before my entry into Rape Crisis but this commitment was on a theoretical, rather ephemeral plane. I was proficient and knowledgeable of the debates, the complexity and the scope of feminist theory and had been captured by it from the very beginning.

However being involved on a more material level of practical activism changed me in other, perhaps more significant ways. I was both 'turned-on' and 'turned-off' by my experiences with the organisation. Being able to intervene on a community-based level - talking to schools, religious groups, groups of men - felt empowering and significant. However being a bit of a bookish creature, my theoretical sensibilities were sometimes doubtful and sceptical of the discourses being used to talk about some of the issues. Being confronted by groups of girls, such very young girls, coming to talk to me about their fears and their experiences of rape and violence after talks that I gave, angered me. I was also made aware of the relatively safe position I enjoyed as a white, middle-class, educated woman who owned a car and lived in a mostly safe area. These experiences added fuel to my feminist motor and led me to question all aspects of my personal life from a bit of a radical feminist vantage point. It was particularly my heterosexuality that I struggled with.

At the time I was in an on-and-off kind of relationship with a man wherein I, to my chagrin (both now and then), played the part of the vulnerable, pathetic, very feminine woman. I agonized and struggled to empower myself within this relationship and often wondered (when the relationship was on the way down) why I bothered. Were men a waste of time? Were they all bastards? Was heterosexuality an oppressive institution for women? When the relationship was on the up and I felt empowered, I congratulated myself as a 'good' feminist. Looking back

it is all a bit ridiculous but at the time I was embroiled in a struggle between the personal and the political.

At the time I was also reading quite heavily in the area of male violence against women and the combination of this reading and the volunteer work exasperated me. I grew weary of hearing and reading about men's power and women's powerlessness. I was angered by feminist discourses that reproduced these notions, both in my reading and at the organisation. In this climate of personal struggle, the interests fuelling this thesis were born. The study germinated from my own subjective experiences and change and seeks to explore this in the lives of other Rape Crisis volunteers. In a sense this thesis represents my own difficulties at marrying my theory to my life and my perplexities at the difficulties of transcending my own embedded location within certain stereotypical gender positions.

#### 1.6 Outline of chapters

My 'review of the literature' will be spread over the following two chapters. In chapter 2 I will begin to situate the study in relation to theoretical currents and contexts. This lays the foundation for the thesis and for the positions that I take up more explicitly in chapter 3. Chapter 4 takes theory into method and within this space I outline the actual procedures, processes and analytic methods 'used' within the study. My analysis of the material is presented across four chapters, the first three (chapters 5, 6 and 7) containing case study analyses and chapter 8 including a general analysis of the narratives across the pool of material. The final chapter of the thesis (chapter 9) includes my conclusions, synthesis and reflections upon the study, my own story and the various contributions and implications of this research.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL CONTEXTS

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter serves as a contextual introduction to the development of the theoretical framework presented in the following chapter. Within this chapter I will be outlining relevant theory, situating the study, clarifying terminology and flagging issues to be discussed and developed within the next section. Within this two-pronged literature review there will be a visible dearth of empirical studies cited and discussed, notably because there are very few research studies which make the notion of 'change' explicit and central to their investigations (Michael, 1997). As a result my review of the literature will be overwhelmingly theory-oriented and driven.

As intimated in the introduction my study is ultimately interested in addressing questions surrounding change and subjectivities. These questions map onto complex debates circulating within social theory, feminism, social constructionism and post-structuralism concerning the relationship between individuals and society, the nature of selves and agency, the constitutive or constituted nature of subjectivity and the possibilities of political transformation. I will be grappling with these questions and issues throughout this thesis. I now turn to the elaboration and clarification of some of the key terms that will be evoked, used and discredited within this study.

#### 2.2. Clarification of key terminology

Within this study I am looking at talk expressing change or non-change within the most intimate geography of personal selfhood or subjectivity. I have long wrestled and debated with what to call this 'space' - self, person, individual, subjectivity, personal identity? Answers were not easily forthcoming as most academic usage of the terms remains free from interrogation - it seems assumed that we all just 'know' what these words refer to and how they differ from one another (Hollway, 1989; Henriques et al, 1984; Harré, 1998). This might

seem an innocent matter – semantic games at best – when perhaps all that is really at stake is the use of one neutral word over another. Taking language seriously however, means paying attention to the history of terms and their subtle but influential powers of production as well as recognising that the use of certain words is not neutral but is contextually and historically bound. Words ‘do’ things on the basis of their agreed upon meaning within certain cultural ‘forms of life’ (Durrheim, 1997; Crossley, 1996; Schalkwyk, 1996). It is not immediately clear what the differences are between words such as self, person, individual, identity and subjectivity, nor is it clear how they ‘do’ meaning differently. According to Hollway (1989:24):

“The main problem of terminology in theory construction is a simple contradiction: if you use old terminology, it will govern your thinking in the same direction, because it holds that old set of theoretical assumptions.”

In what follows I will be looking at the theoretical assumptions embedded in the above terms and in so doing investigating the ways in which these words have been used to procure different meanings and representations.

### 2.2.1 Self

There has been considerable philosophical and psychological theorisation directed towards the concept of self (See for example Cushman, 1990; Cromby and Standen, 1999; Gergen, 1971; Gergen, 1991; Harré, 1998; Lapsley and Power, 1988; Yardley and Honess, 1987; Smith, 1994; Neisser and Jopling, 1997) but as remarked by Harré (1998:ix) despite the masses of literature dealing with ‘self’, “there seems to be uncertainties in the way the central concept itself is understood.” Much of the more recent writing on the self questions traditional understandings of the self as unitary and self-contained. The notion that an entity or ‘thing’ such as the self exists is a commonsense and taken-for-granted ‘truth’ in the lay knowledge of the Western world. The word ‘self’ is used to refer to the bounded, contained and coherent personal uniqueness that seems universally definitive of humanity. The problem is that this ‘self’ is not a universal or an a-historical reality but is instead rooted in the goals and trajectories of a modernist era. This modernist self is often referred to as the Cartesian self, a self that is “by definition autonomous, an ego that realizes its essential qualities divorced from contingent

circumstances.” (Hekman, 1995:72; Jopling, 1997). The term ‘self’ has been referred to as less than theoretically ideal (Cromby and Standen, 1999) mainly because of its relationship to liberal individualism and humanism<sup>1</sup> as well as its tendency to suggest conceptual entrapment within the individual / society dualism (Hollway, 1989). Theorists wanting to transcend the notion of self regard the term as essentially referring to a presupposed ‘thing’ or object (thereby guaranteeing fixity and singularity). Others have attempted to overcome this problem by conceptualising the self as a process instead of a thing (Crossley, 1996). The self as process is reflexive, constantly turning back upon itself in the form of the ‘I’ and the ‘me’, and is intertwined with social practices (Crossley, 1996; Burkitt, 1991). What is useful about these conceptualisations is that the self is no longer seen as alone unto itself and apart from others and society but is rather deemed to be internally already socially constituted (in the form of the ‘me’ linked to Mead’s concept of the generalized other) as well as internally differentiated instead of singular. This links to Sampson’s (1989:4) contention that “society constitutes and inhabits the very core of whatever passes for personhood: each is interpenetrated by its other.”

In accord with an anti-essentialist position (see Fuss, 1989) I argue that there is no final word on what the self ‘is’, if it ‘is’ anything at all. Theorists use the term in varied and multiple ways to refer to that nebulous something that defines us as being recognisably ‘us’ – the term does suggest something relatively continuous and fixed residing within our physical bodies<sup>2</sup> and is eschewed by many for this very reason (e.g. Hollway, 1989; Braidotti, 1994; Flax, 1993). However it is debatable whether the rejection of the term is either necessary or useful. There is a call by some for the restoration of the term and a reconsideration of the need to understand continuity<sup>3</sup> as well as variability in people’s experiences (Cromby and Standen, 1999). I regard this as an important plea and will be developing the notion of the self and its relation to change, variability and continuity further in Chapter 3.

### 2.2.2 Subjectivity

Postmodern and post-structuralist thinkers largely favour the term ‘subjectivity’ over ‘self’ (Flax, 1993; Weedon, 1987; Burke, 1998; Butler, 1990; Kirby, 1996a). Statements proclaiming the death of the subject<sup>4</sup> (or of ‘man’<sup>5</sup>) are often associated with key post-structuralist figures

such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan (Crossley, 2000; Lóvolie, 1992). Far from being insignificant however, questions of the subject and of subjectivity are of extreme importance to the work of these figures and the above declaration or statement is misleading (Hekman, 1995). Burke (1998:114) remarks that, "Foucault's corpus can be read as prolonged meditation on the question of subjectivity rather than on the absence of the subject" and it is certainly evident that Foucault was preoccupied with documenting the history of subjectivity (Foucault, 1994a, 1994b, 1988). Hekman (1995:76) states, "Far from abandoning the subject, postmodern theories are better characterized as obsessed with subjectivity ... they are not abandoning the subject but, rather, redefining it." It has largely been French post-structuralist intellectuals that have drawn most heavily on the term 'subjectivity'. This has resulted in certain terminological problems because of the differences in meaning between the French and English versions of the word – in French the word is '*asujetissement*'<sup>6</sup>, meaning simultaneously 'to produce subjectivity' and 'to make subject' (Henriques et al, 1984) whilst the English word 'subjectivity' fails to capture this distinction. Theories of the subject and subjectivity tend to refer to those approaches which problematise the existence of the bounded, singular, static self and which place emphasis upon the constituted nature of subjectivity, the importance of language in this constitution and which also stress the way in which "the social domain constitutes subjects rather than the other way around" (Henriques et al, 1984:2). Henriques et al (1984:3) neatly sum up what subjectivity means for post-structuralism:

"We use 'subjectivity' to refer to individuality and self-awareness – the condition of being a subject – but understand in this usage that subjects are dynamic and multiple, always positioned in relation to discourse and practices and produced by these – the condition of being 'subject'."

There still tends however, to be slippages in the usage of terms such as self, subject and subjectivity. Those advocating the preservation of a sense of personal agency tend to want to keep the notion of 'self' and often accuse post-structuralists of not taking the self and agency seriously enough (Cromby and Standen, 1999; Burr, 1999). What is beneficial about a term such as 'subjectivity' is that it is multiply encoded and is not used in lay terms to refer to singular bounded entities (as is the concept of 'self'). The term does seem to successfully escape easy containment and spills over and across boundaries. I propose to use this term in my

work for these very reasons, however I will use it alongside a usage of the concept of self (the reasons for this will be further explicated in Chapter 3).

### 2.2.3 Individual

The term 'individual' is largely a psychological one (see Venn, 1984) and is usually understood as a rational, unitary agent (Kendall and Wickham, 1999). In many ways this echoes themes pertaining to the meaning of 'self', however the term 'individual' suggests a more objectified status. We use 'self' to refer back upon ourselves; it is a term largely used reflexively. Harré (1998) sees the 'job' of the word 'self' as being precisely this –namely it fulfills a need that we have for a word referring to persons as seen by themselves (aka self). The concept 'individual' has a history as a psychologically measurable entity, an object of research and scrutiny separate and apart from society and culture (Kitzinger, 1992; Potter and Wetherell, 1987). The individual has long served as the opposite pole of the individual / social dualism and is bound up with a science (psychology) that strove, and still strives, to create, map and consolidate its very own space of expertise – that being the individual. Because of its conservative connotations, the term 'individual' will not be used within this thesis.

### 2.2.4 Person

The term 'person' is not often or readily used within theoretical debates. Rom Harré (1983; 1987; 1998) is however supportive of the use of such a term in replacement of notions such as 'self'. In his view the self is not an entity, but a site, a place or places from which we (as persons) see and experience the world (Harré, 1998). Harré (1998:3) is of the view that there are only persons, selves being merely "grammatical fictions, necessary characteristics of person-oriented discourses." Harré's (1983:26) person is defined as, "the socially defined, publicly visible embodied being, endowed with all kinds of powers and capabilities for public, meaningful action..." I am flagging Harré's (1998) stance as merely another intriguing aspect or dimension to the debate but am not making it, or the term 'person' central to my project or purposes.

### 2.2.5 Summing up

After briefly considering the connotations and contextual histories of the above terms I now turn to an explication of my position in relation to them. For the purposes of this study I am interested in keeping two of the above terms alive – these being self and subjectivity. My work is located within a post-structuralist stance and thus embraces the complexities and multiplicities of all that the term ‘subjectivity’ implies. However I am also keen to retain the term ‘self’, primarily because I think it implies more of a personal agency than does ‘subjectivity’. It is a very fine line to walk between championing notions of the self/subjectivity as being constituted and produced through discourses and social practices, and on the other to somehow want to retain notions of personal choices and agency. In my view the self/subjectivity is both constituted and constitutive. There are spaces and opportunities within the discursive matrix wherein selves/subjectivities have the openings to rewrite their positions (albeit always within the scope provided by competing and contradictory discourses).

I now turn to a brief consideration of the self from a psychological angle.

### 2.3 Psychology and Selves

As stated earlier the term ‘individual’ is far more strongly associated with the discipline of psychology than any other. However ‘self’ is also a term that has been widely discussed, written about and referred to within psychological circles. The self that is depicted within mainstream psychology is a bounded, self-contained, integrated whole (Cromby and Standen, 1999). This version of the self has been demonstrated to be inadequate and erroneous on both conceptual and empirical grounds (Cromby and Standen, 1999). Evidence for this comes from numerous studies – historical, anthropological and cross-cultural, all of which demonstrate the variability of the self across time and place (e.g. Barth, 1997). Crossley (2000) as well as Potter and Wetherell (1987) have mapped out different psychological approaches featuring the self. Crossley (2000) sets out four different arenas within psychology wherein the self is assumed, examined or contested. These are (i) experimentally based social psychology, (ii) humanistic

psychology, (iii) psychoanalytic / psychodynamic psychology and (iv) social constructionist psychology (Crossley, 2000).

Experimentally oriented social psychology is premised on the assumptions of the mainstream psychological self, described as “empty, lifeless selves” by Crossley (2000:7). Humanistic approaches are steeped in rhetoric of personal agency and control (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Crossley, 2000). Within a humanistic frame there is a ‘true’ self, an ‘authentic’ self at the centre or core of our being (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). The primary objective of humanistic approaches to self would be something like “to capture in all its full complexity the subjective nature of self and world experienced by each idiosyncratic individual” (Crossley, 2000:7). Henriques et al (1984:93) refer to the humanist self as a “unitary, essentially non-contradictory, rational entity ... the Cartesian subject in modern form.” What is problematic about humanistic approaches to self is that a number of dubious assumptions concerning truth, experience and social life are made within the framework. It is assumed that the ‘truth’ of the self can be known and that some kind of truth lives as a core self underneath the layers and sediments of our false personalities. Humanistic theory also privileges human experience as reflecting some kind of truth – experience is not questioned but seamlessly accepted as an unproblematic route to knowledge (Lazreg, 1998; Petersen, 1998) without considering the role of ideology and hegemonic discourses in the construction of ‘reality’ and ‘truth’. This serves the danger of reaffirming and reproducing conservative ideas, beliefs and ways of thinking as right and reflexive of some kind of unquestionable experiential reality. Within a humanist tradition it is the individual self or person that is seen as the harbinger of change and action whilst the power of institutions and social structures remain masked. During the height of humanistic psychology there was a wide availability and popularization of experiential groups whose goal was personal change (Hollway, 1989). A key premise of the humanistic approach is located within a position of voluntarism and the idea that change is dependent upon the individual’s actions and initiatives (Hollway, 1989).

The third psychological approach to ‘self’ is the psychoanalytic / psychodynamic one (Crossley, 2000). The subject introduced by Freud was progressive in that it represented a constructed self, a self partially determined by processes and forces out of its rational control,

suggesting that the processes and forces governing subjectivity were not singular but dynamic and multiple (Hollway, 1989). Freud unfortunately remained largely mired within biologically essentialist thinking with the result that the subject constructed within his theory remained largely compatible with the Cartesian version of self. Later, object relations variants of psychoanalytic theory would stress the relational aspects of the self – “a self that has no separate, essential core but, rather, becomes a ‘self’ through relations with others” (Hekman, 1995:73). Object relations theorists and advocates of the relational self define their position as a new paradigm in psychoanalytic theory as well as a challenge to the Freudian version of the subject (Hekman, 1995). Their relational version of self is promising for its move away from a focus upon the self as an isolated, separate and internally coherent whole.

Crossley (2000) also refers to social constructionist psychology as a relevant approach to the self. I am not going to go into any details here concerning this approach; it will be discussed in detail within Section 2.4.3 dealing with social constructionism. Apart from the above outlined approaches, Potter and Wetherell (1987) also mention trait theory and role theory as forming part of the more traditional models of self developed within specifically social psychology. Trait theory sees the self as a ‘personality’ made up of measurable characteristics (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). What the person ‘is’, is an outcome of the sum total of traits, attributes and abilities that they possess (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Persons are viewed as completely in sync and at one with their dispositions – no room is left for inconsistency or variability in behaviour or self-presentation. The social situation is not entertained as relevant within this theory. Within role theory the behaviour of individual persons is not based upon inner measurable qualities or traits but is a function of the social situation they are in and the particular ‘role’ that this situation demands (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). What determines a person’s self is “the social positions they occupy; dispositions are varied and socially manufactured” (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:98). One person is thus made up of many multiple selves, roles and positions and is fragmented and divided according to situational context.

## 2.4 Discursive Selves

A “linguistic turn” has been evidenced across the spectrum of the social sciences – a movement placing emphasis upon the interdependence of ‘truth(s)’ with the language systems that are used to construct and (re)produce them (Anderson, 1995:8). This discursive revolution came relatively late to the discipline of psychology<sup>7</sup> and arrived under the guise of social constructionism. Social constructionism is one theoretical perspective, along with postmodernist and post-structuralist theory, belonging underneath a general umbrella of approaches that all place key emphasis upon language, texts and discourse. It must be noted that none of these terms are singular – they are plural and multiple in that there is no fixed or final meaning for what any of these terms finally signifies (Weedon, 1987). It is not finally clear to what extent and in what precise form the three approaches differ, cohere or agree. There is definite overlap between the usage of the terms and a clear sense in which these approaches strive against definition and clarification (Gavey, 1997). It is therefore with a sense of trepidation that I will attempt to outline postmodernism, post-structuralism and social constructionism before considering the implications of a discursive stance for an understanding of self/subjectivity.

### 2.4.1 Postmodernism

Tied to the term postmodernism is a thicket of other, albeit confusedly, related terms. These include postmodernity, modernity, modernisation and modernism (Sarup, 1993). Postmodernity<sup>8</sup> and modernity usually refer to historical epochs characterised by definite social, economic and political systems (Sarup, 1993). Modernity has been characterised by the various changes wrought by industrialisation and developing capitalism (Crossley, 2000). Postmodernity is said to be the period following modernity, featuring a proliferation of high technology (e.g. in the form of computers and the media). These changes in our environment and cultural landscape have been linked to changes in psychological experiences of selfhood and subjectivity (see Gergen, 1991).

Both modernism and postmodernism are associated with artistic and cultural styles and aesthetics - the term 'postmodernism' actually originating amongst artists and critics in 1960's New York (Sarup, 1993; O'Neill, 1995). In the 1970s the term was embraced by European theorists – most notably by Jean-Francois Lyotard (Sarup, 1993). Postmodernism is usually conceptualised as a movement characterised by the rejection of metanarratives, totalities and “big stories” (Sarup, 1993:145). According to Kvale (1992a: 6), “Postmodern discourse is heterogeneous; it emphasises differences and continual changes of perspectives, and it attempts to avoid dichotomized and reified concepts.” Postmodernism is interested in surface rather than depth, local narratives and microanalysis. The notion of 'truth' is rejected as a fallacy – according to postmodernism there are only multiple and fragmented 'truths' and realities. The scientific notions of progress and objectivity are also debunked (Farginis, 1994). Difference is emphasized as the “authentic characteristic of lived experience” (Farginis, 1994:120) and attention is directed towards characteristics of stylistic eclecticism, pastiche, parody and playfulness (Sarup, 1993). Postmodern thought is also characteristic for its understanding of language as constitutive of reality and its focus upon the linguistic and social construction of reality (Kvale, 1992b).

#### 2.4.2 Post-structuralism

Postmodernist and post-structuralist theory are overlapping and in many respects coterminous. Post-structuralism however is less of a cultural and artistic movement than an intellectual and theoretical school. It remains difficult to delineate and clarify the bounds of this school as many of the scholars and theorists associated with it express reluctance and resistance to being contained within its parameters (Gavey, 1997). Some of the theorists that have not escaped association with the school (despite sometimes to their own consternation) include Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva.

Post-structuralist theory comes under various guises and forms, most of which differ in their political implications and particular practices (Weedon, 1987). For example the genealogical histories of Michel Foucault differ widely from the textual deconstructionist work of Jacques Derrida. The range and complexity<sup>9</sup> of work represented underneath the banner of post-

structuralism is phenomenal and each specific theorist deserves isolated and detailed attention. However this is beyond the narrow confines of this thesis and I shall be discussing post-structuralism in general rather than specific terms. What stands as common across the various unique post-structuralist positions are some fundamental assumptions regarding language, meaning and subjectivity (Weedon, 1987). The primary preoccupation of post-structuralism is language – language is heralded as the construction site of identity, subjectivity and social structure (Weedon, 1987). Although in principle postmodern theory shares this emphasis with the pivotal role of language, the intricacies of language are not theorised, analysed and dissected to the same extent within postmodern theory as they are within post-structuralism. For post-structuralists language is productive and constructive of subjectivity, social life and reality. Meaning is structured out of the differences between words (see Sampson, 1989 for an excellent clarification of difference and of Derrida's concept of *differance*); meaning does not inhere within any one site or locality but is created through an endless stream of relationships. Thus what a word or expression 'means' at any point in time "depends on the discursive relations within which it is located" (Weedon, 1987:25). Meanings are never fixed or pre-given but are released in the processes of reading and interpretation (Belsey, 1988).

#### 2.4.3 Social Constructionism

Laying out the contours and defining lines of social constructionism is not a simple matter – not least for the very reason that some (e.g. Jonathan Potter – who has been described as a social constructionist) argue that there is no one thing that can be firmly described as social constructionist and "that constructionism is itself a construction" (Cromby and Nightingale, 1999:3). Thus there is no such 'thing' as a social constructionist theory – there are only multiple and complex variations and permutations on a theme (Gergen, 1998; Velody and Williams, 1998). Burr (1995:2) cites a certain "family resemblance" as the common link between the various writers and theorists associated with social constructionism; Ken Gergen (1985:266) refers to a common "shared consciousness" with both theorists agreeing that there is no one characteristic or defining feature that could identify a social constructionist position. Burr (1995) however does outline the following four assumptions as foundational elements of social constructionism:

1. Taken-for-granted knowledge is questioned
2. Understanding and knowledge are conceived as historically, socially and culturally specific
3. Knowledge and truth is seen as constructed through linguistic and social practices
4. Social action is deemed to be intertwined with knowledge

Social constructionism is often defined as a metatheoretical alternative to mainstream conceptions of science and knowledge (Durrheim, 1997). As such, constructionism emphasises the social, interactional, relational, linguistic and contextual dynamics of truth, knowledge and human consciousness. It represents a radical break from empiricist science in arguing that knowledge is always perspectival and situation-bound (Durrheim, 1997).

Looking back at the above three linguistically-oriented movements, theories or positions referred to as postmodernism, post-structuralism and social constructionism, it is palpably clear that they all share many common tenets and understandings. There are subtle and slight differences between positions (but also, as we have seen, very obviously differences within these so-called positions). Depending upon where in academia one is situated (i.e. in which discipline) the words and names used to describe one's theoretical stance will be different. For my purposes I will treat these three schools as roughly approximate and will be discussing their collective implications with regards to conceptualising selves/subjectivity.

#### 2.4.4 Constructed Selves/subjectivity

In contrast to modernist, Cartesian caricatures of self, constructionist positions conceive of the self/subjectivity as incoherent, multiple and contradictory (Flax, 1993; Hekman, 1995). Various theorists have their own unique versions of what the self or subjectivity means under the new theoretical umbrella. Extreme postmodernists might be guilty of overstressing the fragmented nature of the self (Hekman, 1995) - an issue that has caused great concerns among feminists (e.g. Nicholson, 1990; Wilkinson, 1997; Jackson, 1993; Ferguson and Wicke, 1994) who question the compatibility of postmodernism and feminist politics. What is central to

constructionist conceptions of self/subjectivity is the foregrounding of language as constitutive of our selves/subjectivity. Selves do not exist prior to discourse and discursive practice<sup>10</sup> but acquire selfhood and subjectivity via language. Hekman (1995) recognizes two distinct strands within postmodern/constructionist theorisation of selves/subjectivity. These include the semiotic and psychoanalytic theories of the subject put forward by Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan, the second flows predominantly from the work of Michel Foucault. The project of the first branch of theories has been to deconstruct the transcendental, phallogentric self, to the point where subjectivity becomes the result of a “play of meanings within language” and nothing remains outside of textual games (Hekman, 1995:78). It is maintained by such theorists that no alternative ‘theory’ of subjectivity is being offered by their work, precisely because to do so would be to engage in the “tyranny of theory” (Hekman, 1995: 79). For those wanting an alternative theory amenable to political purposes (i.e. feminists) such a position falls significantly short. The second tradition following from the work of Michel Foucault, has been routed by some feminists as being more conducive to feminist goals (see for example McNay, 1992; Sawicki, 1991; Faith, 1994; Ramazanoglu, 1993).

Central to the potentialities of Foucault’s work is his radical reconceptualisation of the notion of power and of the self/subjectivity as a product of power (Hekman, 1995; Sawicki, 1991). Foucault’s project can be read as made up of genealogies of the self - examinations of the historical processes whereby the self is formed, established or produced. To this end Foucault (1994c: 87) refers to “techniques of the self” cited as “the procedures ... suggested or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of ends, through relations of self-mastery or self-knowledge.” These ‘techniques of the self’ are embodied in discourses and the self becomes that which is fashioned and constructed discursively. Different forms of subjectivity are incurred through the emergence and dominance<sup>11</sup> of different discourses - which does go some way in explaining the historical variation in understandings and expressions of selfhood. Discourses produce subjects, speak through them, give life and truth and subjectivity<sup>12</sup>, all the while remaining masked and veiled beneath a veneer of commonsense, ‘reality’ and just plain ‘natural facts’. My work is very firmly planted within this poststructuralist line of argument and rests heavily on the work done by Foucault and others concerning subjectivity, power and resistance. However as will be

developed and discussed further in the following chapter I am also interested in interrogating these arguments as far as their ability to theorise and account for change and agency is concerned.

#### 2.4.5 Narrative Approaches to Self

Narrative approaches to the study of self have been placed underneath the general umbrella of social constructionism (Crossley, 2000) and share the same emphasis upon language, meaning and interpretation. For those interested in the (re)construction of self and personal identity, narrative methods form an important alternative to more quantitatively-based methodologies. Telling stories and narratives about the self is a very important part of creating and consolidating personal identity (Linde, 1993; Plummer, 1995; Gergen, 1994) and also serves as a structural site wherein meaning is constructed and negotiated (Reissman, 1993). Narrative methods have emerged as critical and important to feminist research in particular (Personal Narratives group, 1989; Gluck and Patai, 1991; Jackson, 1998; Davies, 1992; De la Rey, 1999). It is the ability to link a linguistic focus with a concentration upon the experiential and personal dimensions of people's lives that sets narrative analysis apart from more conventional discursive analyses (Crossley, 2000; Josselson, 1995). Narrative approaches enable a joint consideration of the construction of self and identity via discourse and talk, along with an analysis of the contextual and unique features of individual lives that result in the identification of the self within certain discourses and not others. The self, personal identity and subjectivity form a very central part of a narrative approach – this is in contrast to most discourse analytic approaches wherein the self often becomes lost within an exclusive focus upon talk and discourse (e.g. Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

Narrative approaches combine features of a humanistic orientation (i.e. an emphasis upon the unique lived experience of the individual) with a constructionist concentration upon language, difference and the interconnection of selves and structures. What is potentially useful is this ability to straddle a serious consideration of self and personal subjective uniqueness with an acknowledgement of the discursively constituted nature of selves/subjectivities. It is through stories and narratives that we acquire selfhood and a sense of meaning in relation to the

experiences and events that happen in our lives. It is also through narratives that we orient and position ourselves and rewrite our 'truths', realities and perspectives.

## 2.5 Feminism and Selves

Situating feminism in relation to theories of self/subjectivity is not a simple task. Feminism is a complex and hybrid set of theories, positions and goals and is not easily definable (Burman, 1996; Farginis, 1994). There is no one clear feminist theory of subjectivity or the female subject, there are only a series of stances, alliances and arguments surrounding the topic. There are feminists aligned with post-structuralism (see for example Braidotti, 1991, 1994; Butler, 1990; Spivak, 1993; Haraway, 1991; Elam, 1994), social constructionism (for example Burman, 1999; Gergen, M, 1995; Wilkinson, 1997; Bohan, 1997), psychoanalysis (e.g. Benjamin, 1988, 1998; Flax, 1993; Brennan, 1989; Gallop, 1982), so-called 'French feminists'<sup>13</sup> (e.g. Irigaray, 1985; Cixous, 1997), ecofeminists (Salleh, 1997; Ruether, 1996), radical feminists (e.g. Dworkin, 1987) and various others. What meanings are attributed to self and subjectivity varies across the various camps and groupings. What is perhaps most important in any discussion surrounding feminism and subjectivity/selves is the recognition that feminism is not just another collection of theories but is a political movement committed to change, liberation and an "end to sexist oppression" (hooks, 1984:62).

Feminism is complexly intertwined with so-called 'alternative' approaches to knowledge, truth and research and is generally associated with social constructionism<sup>14</sup> (Whelehan, 1995). What is useful about a constructionist position is that gender/sexuality/sex can be refigured as constructed rather than natural and given<sup>15</sup>. As a result of dialogue and conversations between feminism and postmodernism the acknowledgement of difference(s) has become an important feminist theme (see for example Barrett, 1987; Felski, 1997; Eistenstein and Jardine, 1985; Moore, 1994). The acknowledgement of differences between women and within the category 'woman' itself is related to a parallel acknowledgement of the difference(s) constituting our 'inner' selves and subjectivities. The danger that some feminists are alerted to by such an acknowledgement and line of reasoning is the potentially immanent dissolution of the subject

'woman' and consequently the movement of feminism itself (which is, after all, in all clear senses predicated upon the coherence of the category 'woman')<sup>16</sup>.

The dilemma that faces feminism is similar to the one that I am faced with within this thesis. Namely, how does one embrace constructionist and post-structuralist notions of dissolution, fragmentation and internal difference within selves/subjectivity and somehow maintain a concurrent acknowledgement of the active, powerful self as agent – capable of choice and rational change?<sup>17</sup> This is indeed the theoretical task that follows within the following chapter, wherein I attempt to map, grid and chart a framework that is able to think both fluidity and fixity, change and continuity.

University of Cape Town

## CHAPTER 3

### MAPS AND DIRECTIVES

#### 3.1 Introduction

Within this chapter I will be concerned with explicating and mapping a theoretical framework that is able to accommodate questions surrounding changing selves and the roles played by discourse, ideology and post-structuralist conceptions of subjectivity within such a theorisation. I will be re-viewing aspects of constructionist and feminist theory relevant to my project and will be arguing that a grid aiming to adequately theorise change and non-change requires an attention to positioning and spatial configurations of subjectivity. Elements and concepts deemed useful for my purposes will be appropriated from various theorists in my synthesis and presentation of a theoretical route-map. Firstly however I will be discussing the central dilemmas, oppressive binaries and conceptual snares functioning within current theory surrounding the above-mentioned issues and signaling my intentions to attempt a melding/fusion/ blurring /straddling of certain problematic theoretical dead-ends.

#### 3.2 Theoretical dilemmas

As I have flagged in the previous chapter (see Chapter 2) there are problematic issues raised by research which is both explicitly aligned with post-structuralist and constructionist approaches to knowledge and subjectivity and which also wants to think about the self as agent, capable of choice and personal re-inscriptions. Change is everywhere suggested within theory and research work, specifically within work that has defining goals of emancipation (e.g. feminism). It remains however un-interrogated to a large extent, blindly present as an assumptive goal or aim. What change 'means' or does not 'mean', whether change is a useful or in some senses even a permissible concept within the theoretical paradigm of the research is hardly ever explicitly discussed or questioned. Change as goal just sits there, unacknowledged, assumed and theoretically unexamined. This study attempts to rectify this theoretical blind spot by heralding change as a key constituent of the research in multiple and variegated guises. 'Change' is a particularly elusive kind of concept – it is difficult to conceive of ways in which it might adequately be measured or studied – explaining perhaps the dearth of studies that make

it a central dimension of empirical investigation. There are of course numerous ‘scales’ and quantitative ‘measures’ that claim to be measuring things such as changes in self-concept, self-esteem etcetera (For example Breakwell, 1992; Neisser and Jopling, 1997). My study clearly operates within a very different metatheoretical umbrella and concomitantly rejects quantitative measures as artificial and largely unable to represent or say anything meaningful regarding human subjectivity and experience. Documenting change beneath a more qualitatively oriented research agenda proves equally difficult. Within this study, for example, it remains tricky to theorise what exactly it meant when participants talk about subjective change – is it ‘really’ change that I am dealing with or merely discourse around change? This question immediately raises one of the central theoretical dilemmas that I am grappling with within this thesis – namely what is the relationship between discourse and agency? Have participants claiming to have changed ‘really’ changed or are they merely reproducing change as a discursive ideological effect? The nature of subjectivity is clearly relevant here and once again throws up questions surrounding the constituted or constitutive nature of selves and subjectivity. Questions of power, the ‘truth’ value of participant’s accounts and stories, as well as of ideology as productive of subjects, are all highly pertinent to these predicaments. In order to probe these debates more fully I move now to a more detailed consideration of these dilemmas within the light of work done by post-structuralist discourse theorists.

### 3.3 Re-viewing constructionist frameworks

This work has already been located broadly within a constructionist position, however in this section I intend to examine the merits of such a position for thinking specifically about selves/subjectivity and change. What do constructionist frameworks offer to researchers interested in attending to the multiple but interrelated issues concerning discourse, power, selves as powerful agents and subjectivity as ideological effect?

As highlighted in chapter 2 constructionist frameworks put the theoretical spotlight upon language and its role in the construction of selves, ideology and reality. Selves often all but disappear behind talk of subjectivity, subjects and *asujetissement*, discourse and discursive practices (Cromby and Standen, 1999). Belsey (1988:47) notes that it is the role of ideology “to construct people as subjects” and “that people are unique, distinguishable, irreplaceable

identities is 'the elementary ideological effect'." Poststructuralists would argue that what is left of the person after a deconstruction of the self is something like a "dazzling collection of integrated fragments" (Braidotti, 1991:281). That the fragments are 'integrated' despite internal flux is attributed to the effects of ideology and power. This presents a problem for those strands of post-structuralism interested in societal transformation because some concept of agency is required in the ends of such interests (Henriques et al, 1984). Is agency merely the "effect of the subject's self-delusion" (Henriques et al, 1984:97) or is there more to the subject/self than meets the postmodern eye? Crossley (2000:41) argues that there is more cohesion to the self than is argued by a postmodern framework and claims that:

When we actually turn to examine the full range of experiences, knowledge and understandings of the self that people live and struggle with, therein resides a sense of unity, continuity and coherence which simply does not gel with the radical fragmentation, disunity and absence promoted in postmodernism and discourse analysis.

Often post-structuralist work leaves one with the impression that all there is – at least all that is in any sense 'real' is the discursive. People are merely the sites and vessels of discursive inscriptions. Michael (1997) argues that social constructionist positions are weak in theorising the processes of change. He remarks:

Change ... as conceived in Foucauldian accounts, is 'discontinuous' (or to put it less technically, mysterious), operating at the abstract level of 'discursive structures'. And yet discourses have to be articulated by persons in contexts ... Presumably, some of these utterances are new to their utterers. They used to say X, now they say Y. In other words, people, as is popularly believed, undergo change – they accommodate, adopt and appropriate what are, for them, novel discourses (or texts of identity). Moreover, we might expect that there are sites at which new discourses (or discursive fragments) are 'innovated'. How do we narrate this movement of (new) discourses from one (set of) humans/utterers to another? (Michael, 1997:327).

Central to the above quote is the idea that people "accommodate, adopt and appropriate" (Michael, 1997:327) discourses – selves use discourses to achieve aims and goals whilst the simultaneous effect of taking up these discourses is the (re)positioning and (re)production of subjectivity. Fairclough (1992) refers to this kind of argument as a dialectical understanding of the relation between subjectivity and discourse. Drawn from the work of Foucault is the idea

that power and resistance are coterminous; it is therefore a logical progression to see subjectivity as not only the effect of power and ideology but also of resistance to dominant power configurations. Nodes and openings for resistance are found between discourses, in the gaps and spaces of contradiction and in the multiple and complicated variety of subject positions that are provided by discourses.

Selves are constrained by their (relatively) fixed positions within certain locational markers of identity (i.e. sex, nationality, race, gender, class); restrictions that do affect the access which selves will have to particular discourses. Selves are not completely free to 'use' discourse and alternate between discursive positions at whim – there are ideological constraints. However discursive positions are rendered fluid in places where there is contradiction – it is in these places that wars of meaning and representation are waged (thinking for example of feminism and the gay and lesbian struggle). Mills (1997:35) writes that, "Discourse theory has ... difficulty in locating, describing and even accounting for this individual subject who resists power." I disagree with Mills (1997) here – theorising the subject as simultaneously both the product of power and discourse as well as the agent of resistance and disruption to dominant ideological discourses does make sense to me and to a line of reasoning which celebrates dialectical thinking. Fairclough (1992:96) writes from this kind of position and refers to change as motivated by "the problematisations of conventions" which are based in contradictions and dilemmas (Hollway, 1984). In describing change Fairclough (1992:96) writes:

Change involves forms of transgression, crossing boundaries, such as putting together existing conventions in new combinations, or drawing upon conventions in situations which usually preclude them.

The relationship between selves and discourses is one of dynamic dialogue and interdependence. Both are dependent upon the other for continued existence and reproduction. Part of a dialectical understanding is the recognition of change as characteristic of all things, all systems and all entities (Harvey, 1996). This kind of argument does run the risk of becoming theoretically redundant when trying to seriously think about why some changes become entrenched, continuous and formalised as strong discursive positions. As an example let us consider the feminist movement which has been responsible for the production and proliferation of a multitude of new subject positions and discourses for women. The changes

that feminism has wrought have been radical and so effective that the movement is now being dismissed as unnecessary and 'old-hat'. This might be read as the sign of success or alternatively as the indication of a new wave of counter-discourses set to reproduce oppressive gender relations in new ways.<sup>18</sup> Change might be everywhere but it is also clear that some changes become stabilised and fixed discursively despite the threat of ever-present contradictions and dilemmas. Dominant and hegemonic discourses are refashioned and retooled in response to the proliferation of new alternatives (thinking for example of the rise of the men's movement in response to feminism). The discursive realm is in continuous flux and slippage that provides spaces for change, resistance and the re-creation of positions and meanings. Alongside this flux is also a fixity provided by material conditions and structural constraints. Thus for example there might be gaps wherein alternative genders and sexual proclivities can be proclaimed, celebrated and voiced (i.e. gay and lesbian marches) however within other hegemonic structures (i.e. schools, the military, organised religion) there are constraints restricting the visibility of certain discourses (and the subjectivities voicing them). Harvey (1996:7-8) neatly captures the problematic relation between the notion of fluidity, flux and fixity in the following description:

The reduction of everything to fluxes and flows, and the consequent emphasis upon the transitoriness of all forms and positions has its limits. If everything that is solid is always instantaneously melting into air, then it is very hard to accomplish anything or even set one's mind to do anything. Faced with that difficulty the temptation is strong to go back to some simple foundational beliefs ... and dismiss the process-based arguments out of hand. I believe such a maneuver would be fundamentally wrong. But while I accept the general argument that process, flux, and flow should be given a certain ontological priority in understanding the world, I also want to insist that this is precisely the reason why we should pay so much more careful attention to what I will later call the "permanences" that surround us and which we also construct to help solidify and give meaning to our lives.

Change and resistance are always present as potentialities alongside and across the web of relationships between discourse, power, selves, structures and material conditions and contexts. What our 'reality' is made up of is dependent upon the relations between these elements. Power is dynamically involved in the reproduction of hegemony and oppression as well as necessarily operating along a field of resistances and struggles. Changing flows and fluidities are definitional of social life yet it is as true that solidity and fixity are also characteristic of

structured human life. Is this a problem? Do we have to choose between notions of fluidity and fixity, fragmentation and cohesion? Harvey (1996:81) writes:

But flows often crystallize into “things,” “elements,” and isolable “domains” or “systems” which assume a relative permanence ... within the social process. Reifications of free-flowing processes are always occurring to create actual “permanences” in the social and material world around us.

Following from this I argue that it is not a question of having to choose between notions of fluidity or stability in the theorisation of selves and discourses. To make such a question paramount would make me complicit in the entrenchment of an artificial binary. It is possible to see selves and subjectivity as both constituted and constitutive, fluid and yet also constrained and fixed. There is a continuous dimension to human experience that does not fit with postmodern claims of fragmentation, concurrent with and alongside this is a moment-to-moment and temporal discontinuity and relational flux to subjectivity that does not align neatly with modernist conceptions of selves as stable, discrete entities. Selves are dynamic, relational, produced by discourse, context, place and material surroundings as well as agents of discursive, contextual and material change and disruption. Selves are not one 'thing' or one set shape; the self is constantly in process and in dialogue with other selves, structures and discourses. Change is imminent and potentially everywhere – just as power and resistance are as theorised by Foucault. Within this thesis selves are powerful agents as well as products of power; selves and discourses mutually determine one another and mutually affect and are dependent upon one another for continued existence and re-production.

Selves consume discourses – they choose to position themselves within some discourses and discard others – at the same time however selves are also the products of such consumerism. It is a dialectical interplay, a mutual constitution. This analogy of consumerism leads me to another central question that needs to be asked in the context of this thesis – namely why do selves choose to position themselves within certain discursive spaces and not others? Asking such a question assumes a prior acknowledgement of selves as agents capable of active positioning. I hope that the above discussion has successfully demonstrated that it is possible via a dialectical understanding to conceive of selves as simultaneously both powerful effectors of resistance and change as well as the effects of power. Within the analysis of narratives and discursive accounts that I present in chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 I attempt to show by example how

selves are both fluid and fixed and how these positions of stability or change are discursively constructed. Being a self is the result of careful self-creation and continuous re-productions – selves have to work to present themselves as relatively bounded, stable and cohesive (just think for example what happens to those selves that portray radical positions of subjective fragmentation and multiplicity and are as a result labelled ‘mad’). In the analysis section of the thesis I will discuss the ways in which selves use discourse and narratives to create for themselves personal positions of change or non-change. Choosing to combine a narrative analysis with a discourse analysis is one way in which I attempt within this thesis to straddle an acknowledgement of selves as powerful tellers and producers of stories and meanings<sup>19</sup> alongside a consideration of the powers of discourse to reproduce subjectivities. I also keep alive both the terms ‘self’ and ‘subjectivity’ for the same reason – namely I want to ensure the visibility of the constitutive powers of ‘self’ along with the acknowledgement of the simultaneously constituted nature of ‘subjectivity’.

Constructionist frameworks are powerful in enabling the theorisation of selves as sites of power, discourse and ideology. They allow a consideration of the interpenetration of the cultural, social and ideological into the personal geography of selfhood. Problematically however there is often a tendency in constructionist frameworks to cast selves as passive dupes determined by discourses which seem to be simply floating around waiting to embody themselves within human persons. I have tried to suggest that this is not an inevitable or insoluble problem but that through a dialectical approach interested in simultaneously keeping hold of the constituted and constitutive nature of selves/subjectivity, oppressive and paralysing binary thinking around this issue can be halted. It is also through the addition of a narrative approach as a supplement to a focus upon discourse that the fuller complexity surrounding the nature of selves/subjectivity can be approached. Widdicombe (1992:491) argues that:

Without some notion of a ‘core self’, social construction accounts of selves do not match with everyday experience ... because they cannot explain each person’s uniqueness in relation to language and meaning ... finally without some notion of a ‘core subject’, we cannot produce an account of the ‘mechanism’ or motivation for positioning in discourses, and in the absence of such an explanation the implication is that we are discursively determined.

While not particularly in favour of resurrecting a notion of something such as a ‘core self’ or ‘core subject’ I do agree with Widdicombe (1992) that there needs to be some acknowledgement of the experience of selfhood as continuous and personally meaningful. The second issue that she raises concerning positioning will be more fully discussed in the following section. Within this thesis I aim to keep alive both sides of the dichotomy between self as passive and self as active, arguing for self/subjectivity as both agent and product. In the following section I move to a consideration of ‘why’ selves position themselves as they do – why do some embrace change, emancipation and discourses of liberation and others remain satisfied located within hegemonic discourses that might or might not be oppressive to them? In order to explore such a question I draw upon the work of certain discourse theorists, feminists and social constructionists who have attempted to think around this issue.

### 3.4. Positioning, the self and discourse

Asking ‘why’ certain discursive positions are consistently re-entrenched and re-produced via human agents is pivotal and crucial for any understanding of the persistence of ideology and possibilities for positive change and social transformation. The understanding of identity and selfhood as something that is “available for use” rather than something that just ‘is’ or that has any real being is linked to a concern with the processes whereby identities are mobilised in talk via discursive strategies (Widdicombe, 1998: 191). Widdicombe (1998: 200) describes this as a “shift from questions of ‘who I am’ to notions of ‘where I am’ ” signalling the importance of questions surrounding place and position and their discursive construction. There is a need for theory to begin to question ‘why’ certain positions are embraced (as well as the mechanisms whereby they are achieved). For example why do women continue to position themselves and other women within stereotypical and oppressive gender roles? This question is key to my thesis as I will later ask why certain women embrace discourses of personal change within sexual violence activism and others provide reasons and arguments for their continued subscription to dominant discourses.

#### 3.4.1 Wendy Hollway and discursive positioning

The post-structuralist discourse work done by Wendy Hollway is seminal for its attempts to think about the above questions. Hollway (1984) made it her project to analyse the

constructions of subjectivity within the particular area of heterosexual relations. Hollway (1984:236) summarises her position in the following few points:

- Discourses make available positions for subjects to take up. These positions are in relation to other people.
- Taking up subject or object positions is not equally available to men and women.
- Positions are specified for the category 'man' or 'woman' in general – nonetheless particular men and women fill these positions.
- Practices and meanings have histories, developed through the lives of the people concerned. These histories are not the product of a single discourse.
- Because discourses do not exist independently of their reproduction through the practices and meanings of particular women and men, we must account for changes in the dominance of certain discourses, and the development of new ones ... by taking account of men's and women's subjectivity.

Useful in Hollway's schema is the acknowledgement of selves/subjectivity as capable of actively placing or positioning themselves within discourses. Discourses are comprised of positions and selves take these up, in the process rewriting them and being simultaneously rewritten as selves. Key to Hollway's (1984) work is the emphasis upon the dynamics of personal histories that impact upon the discursive positions that selves choose to take up later in life. It is important to consider the question of discursive change through a serious consideration of subjectivity (see Hollway's last point above) but I also think that other issues need consideration. For example, it is alongside political and material struggles and structural hegemonic 'realities' that discursive change is to be contextualised. The subjective is but one dimension in a complicated discursive and material field of events, moments, structures and pasts. Within my study I am interested chiefly in the interplay between the subjective and the structural world – the blurred distinction and in-distinction apparent between them. It is Hollway's (1984) contention that selves take up positions because they are invested in them. There is some or other kind of reward received for these selves by their continued placement within these positions. Hollway (1984:238) writes, "By claiming that people have investments in taking up certain positions in discourses ... I mean that there will be some satisfaction or pay-off or reward for that person." It is usually within the realm of relationships that selves

receive their payment for positioning themselves within certain discursive spaces. According to Hollway (1989:60), "Over and over again in my material, I found that the positions that people took up in gender-differentiated discourses made sense in terms of their interest in gaining them enough power in relation to the other to protect their vulnerable selves ... it led me to think that it was not so much desire but power which is the motor for positioning in discourses." Hollway (1989) is also concerned with theorising the unconscious elements involved in subjective meaning and positioning and makes use of psychodynamic theory in her theorisation. This axis of her grid will not receive investigation within this study; instead I concentrate upon the dimensions of personal history, relationships, social locations and structural contexts in my analysis of the discursive positions constructed and taken up around subjective change and non-change.

#### 3.4.2 Positioning theory

'Positioning theory' can be placed underneath the general umbrella of social constructionism and is described as "one possible conceptual apparatus that allows for social constructionist theorizing based on a dynamic analysis of conversations and discourses" (Harré and Van Langenhove, 1999:2). The dynamics of positioning theory as discussed in the edited collection by Harré and Van Langenhove (1999) is interested in the more analytical and structural elements involved in positioning as a discursive practice. Thus Van Langenhove and Harré (1999) set out the core of positioning theory in their discussion of the various 'modes of positioning' within conversations. These include first and second order positioning, performative and accountive positioning as well as moral and personal positioning (See Van Langenhove and Harré, 1999). Positioning theory as laid out here is interested in positioning within specifically conversational contexts and is process rather than content or theory oriented. Whilst providing an interesting new lens for the analysis of discursive accounts, this particular branch of positioning theory will not be heavily drawn upon within this thesis. My interests are more easily aligned with those of Hollway (1984; 1989) and other feminist theorists interested in using the metaphors and concepts of space, place, location and position to enrich an understanding of subjectivity and its concomitant fluidity and fixity. Thus I now move on to a discussion of spatial configurations and metaphors within feminist theory and argue that these offer potentially rich sites for the theorisation of selves/subjectivity.

### 3.4.3 Spatial configurations of subjectivity

Metaphors of space, place and position have become extremely trendy within contemporary academic writing – especially within feminist theory (McDowell, 1996). Feminism has been described as a movement “located within the geography of difference” (Awkward, 1995: 6), placed within a “house of difference” (Lorde cited in Haraway, 1991: 139), “on the edge” (hooks cited in Shotter, 1993: 38) and sufficiently upon the margins to effect an “oppositional consciousness” (Haraway, 1991: 155) and an “outsider’s eye” (Rich, 1986: 3). The preoccupation that feminism seems to have with spatial semantics might be driven by its “insistence or need for embodied theory, situated knowledges and the politics of location” (Stanley, 1997:199). An emphasis upon difference, both between and within, has also managed to radically transform feminist theory and politics and is in itself a concept that is heavily spatialised (Kirby, 1996b). Is the ‘turn to space’ merely another passing fancy within academia or are there actually noteworthy merits to taking space seriously? Kirby (1996b:7) claims that:

The new emphasis on space might derive from the combination of politicized with poststructural theory; space helps us to recognize that “subjects” are determined by their anchoring within particular bodies or countries. At the same time, space in the abstract maintains a fluidity, a reversibility, that appeals to the reformative impulses of today.

Using metaphors and concepts of space and place help with the theorisation of subjectivity as simultaneously both fixed and fluid. Political impulses demand that the material ‘realities’ of places and positions within social hierarchies and structures be noted, acknowledged and taken seriously. Selves are constructed by their locations within these places – lives and futures and opportunities are (largely) determined by these material positions. The complexity of inputs and experiences impacting upon and influencing selves render this only ever partially determined and only relatively rather than finally fixed. Taking note of material place translates into the acknowledgement of the differences within selves/subjectivity as a result of the geographies – including physical, psychological, environmental, relational, discursive and institutional geographies – that selves inhabit and experience. It thus allows for a complex understanding of the multiple contextual axes, spaces and discourses that selves live within, next to and across. Selves also cross over, move and travel between places and spaces allowing for fluidity and flux within the realm of the subjective. Selves/subjectivities are shaped to a

large extent by the various spaces within which they find themselves but as moving bodies capable of action selves are also empowered with the (relative) ability to transfer themselves to other places and locations.

Kirby (1996b) goes on to discuss the differences between notions of space and place and the usefulness of the distinctions between the terms for theorising and closing the gap between material and discursive worlds. Space as an abstract concept retains fluidity and indeterminacy whilst place is suggestive and indicative of the more fixed material and physical world (Kirby, 1996b). Kirby (1996b:19) writes:

Place seems to assume set boundaries that one fills to achieve a solid identity ... If place is organic and stable, space is malleable, a fabric of continually shifting sites and boundaries ... (we need to) maintain place in order to foreground the materiality of subjectivity, but invest in space to demonstrate and promote the subjects' malleability.

Utilising the notion of space and place provides a conceptual grid for thinking of selves/subjectivities dialectically – as both fluid and flexible, determined as well as agents of action and thus allows for a multidimensional analysis of subjectivity/selves. Such a grid is also useful because it manages to capture the twin interests of both a post-structural and feminist trajectory – namely it attends to material conditions as well as allowing the self/subject to be seen as “a set of multiple and contradictory positionings and subjectivities” (Moore, 1994:55). The various places and locations wherein selves have been positioned historically (across relationships, material places and within organised structures) impacts upon their choices to take up certain discursive positions and not others. Selves are constrained by place but also enabled by their characteristic spatial mobility to re-position and re-place themselves in alternative spaces. Selves are relatively fixed but also always potentially fluid.

I embrace an emphasis upon spatial configurations within this study and have argued above that such a grid enables a route through which selves/subjectivity can be theorised as simultaneously fixed by places, positions and locations and also as potentially always capable of fluid mobility and active re-positioning.

### 3.5 Concluding frame

Within this chapter I have outlined various theoretical positions in the interests of finding and articulating a framework that is able to accommodate questions surrounding changing selves. I have argued for a dialectical view of selves/subjectivity as both fluid and stable, determined and determining. Acknowledging the power and agency of selves allows questions surrounding 'why' selves choose to locate themselves in certain discursive spaces to be asked. Hollway's (1984; 1989) work was drawn upon in the discussion of these questions and will be drawn upon again in my analysis within chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. Theorising selves/subjectivity as dialectically both fluid and fixed was helped and enriched by an attention to spatial configurations and maps of subjectivity.

In the analysis section that follows I will be showing by example how the above theoretical grid is analytically powerful in allowing selves/subjectivity to be viewed dynamically and dialectically. Questions surrounding place and position will be continually posed in the interests of thinking about why, as well as how, selves construct discursive positions of personal change or non-change in the context of sexual violence activism.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Fusing theory and method

Academic conventions regarding the organisation of theses demand that a chapter be devoted to 'methods' or 'methodology'. Within this section it is expected that the strategies and techniques employed by the researcher be presented and discussed in a neat and orderly way. It is not clear to me however how 'methodology' and 'methods'<sup>20</sup> are separable from the theoretical and epistemological assumptions and foundations of research. Methodology and methods 'used' are inseparable from theory and epistemology. The theoretical investments and assumptions of researchers, whether acknowledged or not, shape and form research questions, methods and modes of analysis. Each dimension is interdependent upon the other, flowing into, between and across terminological divisions. A key constituent of a feminist research agenda in particular, is a reflection upon and acknowledgement of the positions – both personal and theoretical, which impact upon and construct research products (Gill, 1995; Reinhartz, 1983). Within chapter 2 and 3 I presented the various theoretical contexts and underpinnings of this research and firmly located it dialogically between narrative, discursive and feminist positions and methods. Within this chapter I will be discussing how these theoretical commitments translate into practical decisions surrounding methods, research process and the analysis of data.

#### 4.2 Feminist research

As I have already discussed in earlier chapters, feminism is a rich, multidimensional movement, body of theories and positions. It should therefore come as no surprise that no single, defining statement can be made concerning the principles or outlines of feminist research per se (Gill, 1998). This does not mean to say that we are left bereft, without stances, arguments and positions. Within feminism there are various frames and orientations towards methodology and epistemology (See for example Stanley and Wise, 1990; Klein, 1983; Roberts, 1981; Alcoff and Potter, 1993). Harding (1986) usefully sets out three feminist positions regarding knowledge, research and epistemology – these include feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint epistemologies and feminist postmodernism. The first two stances privilege

female or feminist ways of knowing, with standpoint theorists clearly conceptualising the oppressed position as a better site for the production of knowledge (Gill, 1998). Standpoint feminism asserts that there is no such 'thing' as knowledge from nowhere, all knowing is situated and located within communities and contexts. This is useful and helps to challenge positivistic notions of objectivity and the idea that there can ever be pure, untainted, uninterested knowledge.<sup>21</sup> While acknowledging the inadequacies of androcentric knowledge and scientific methods, feminist empiricism nonetheless sees merit within positivistic methodology and seeks to reform rather than transform mainstream empiricism. Feminism and postmodernism share in the critique of mainstream positivism, with both emphasizing the contextual elements of knowledge. Feminism is however a political movement and feminist postmodernism (whilst heavily fragmented and debated) retains a commitment to politics and non-exploitative methods and research. This research (as is clear from previous chapters) is located within such a position, combining a postmodernist epistemology with a feminist agenda.

Apart from these various stances towards epistemology and knowing more broadly, individual feminists have also tried to set out general, non-prescriptive guidelines for research locating itself within a feminist trajectory. Gill (1998) sees common themes within feminist research including broad critiques of mainstream social science research (especially concerning the claimed impartiality of research processes and concomitant claims to truth) as well as a shared challenge to the notion of the uninterested and disengaged researcher as producer of knowledge and truth. Others see the primary characteristic of feminist research as relatively simple and straightforward; feminist research is political and has political purposes (Haug, 1998; Wilkinson, 1997; Fine, 1992). Stanley and Wise (1990) set out a more detailed set of principles or sites within the research process that should be attended to by feminist researchers. These include the following:

1. Researcher – researched relationship
2. Emotion as a research experience
3. Intellectual autobiography of researchers
4. Management of the differing 'realities' and understandings of researchers and researched

## 5. Question of power within research and writing

Within this research study various feminist principles and goals are interwoven into the research questions, the choice of data collection method as well as the transcription and analysis of the material. Being continually reflexive and self-interrogatory as far as possible, bringing my-self into the thesis writing as well as into the practicalities of actually 'doing' the research all stem primarily from a feminist perspective. An attention to power dynamics within the research interviews as well as to the potential powers of appropriation of participants' stories and talk possible within an interview method, are explicitly feminist in agenda and will be discussed further in section 4.5.1. This research stems from the experiences of a feminist within a feminist organisation and entails investigating and exploring the narratives and experiences of other women identified with this organisation. Whilst the research has implications beyond its focus upon a feminist context (i.e. in terms of theory and understandings of subjective change and the way in which it is talked about and narrated) the research is profoundly located within and alongside a feminist<sup>22</sup> history, context and trajectory.

### 4.3 Narrative Analysis

Along with the proliferation of various linguistic and constructionist turns, contemporary times have also been defined as representative of an "age of narrative" (Josselson, 1995:31), a time wherein "stories have ... moved to centre stage in social thought" (Plummer, 1995:18). It is certainly true that narratives and stories are in fashion within the social sciences and that work in narrative spills widely across disciplinary boundaries (Crossley, 2000; Josselson, 1995). It has been claimed that human psychology has "an essentially narrative structure" (Crossley, 2000:46) and that the nature of narrative and storytelling is "ceaseless ... in all societies" (Plummer, 1995:5). A focus upon stories and telling of various kinds is certainly compatible with a postmodern preoccupation with texts and the textual dimensions of 'reality' and human experiences. As flagged in Chapter 2 (Section 2.4.5) narrative approaches are also characterised by an interest in the personal and subjective experiences of people's lives. Narrative approaches provide the space and opportunity for the fusion of a postmodern textual sensibility with an

emphasis and recognition of personal subjectivity and enable a rich lens through which the discursive construction of self and subjectivity can potentially be viewed.

There is however widespread debate and disagreement in the definition of what precisely the term 'narrative' actually signifies (Polkinghore, 1995; Riessman, 1993; Chase, 1995). Reissman (1993:3) defines narrative as "talk organized around consequential events." Coherence in organization is stressed as a key characteristic of narrative by various other narrative researchers (Polkinghore, 1995; Josselson, 1995; Ginsburg, 1989; Crossley, 2000; Linde, 1993). Polkinghore (1995) has underscored the difference between 'narrative analysis' and the 'analysis of narratives'. Narrative analysis, according to this view, is regarded as preoccupied with the production of stories or case studies, with the synthesis of data rather than its separation and with the presentation of a recognisable individual person, unique and distinct (Polkinghore, 1995; Josselson, 1995). The 'analysis of narratives' however is described as employing a "paradigmatic reasoning"<sup>23</sup> which results in the "description of themes that hold across the stories or in taxonomies of types of stories, characters, or settings." (Polkinghore, 1995:12). Polkinghore (1995) is clearly in favour of a distinctly narrative analysis. Reissman (1993) echoes this concern for the presentation of whole narratives and calls for the preservation rather than the fragmentation of narrative forms. Within this study I combine aspects of both 'narrative analysis' and the 'analysis of narratives'; I will be presenting both individual case studies /stories as well as including a more 'paradigmatic' amalgamation of narrative themes across my total pool of data.

I regard narrative analysis as compatible with both the epistemological and theoretical tenets of this research as well as with the particular research questions that position this study. Being involved in questions surrounding the construction of self and self-change or stasis translates easily into a compatibility with narrative methodology. It is widely recognised that narrative methods are suited to the study of subjectivity and selves (Crossley, 2000; Reissman, 1993; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Josselson and Lieblich, 1995; Chase, 1995; Josselson, 1995). Narrative has been described as "the representation of process, of a self in conversation with itself and with its world over time" (Josselson, 1995:33) and has been routed as enabling an understanding and examination of the process of being self (which is never a final or finished entity) and the dialogue between selves, relationships and structures (Marks, 1989; Personal

Narratives Group, 1989). An emphasis upon the processes and constructions of self via language and upon the ways in which selves use relations with other selves and structures to dialogically create identity, coherence and meaning provides the motif and driving force behind this thesis. Narrative analysis is also compatible with my commitment to a feminist agenda. According to the Personal Narratives Group (1989:4), "Narratives are essential primary documents for feminist research"; various other feminists have also lauded and utilised narrative methodology (Gluck and Patai, 1991; Jackson, 1998; Davies, 1992; De la Rey, 1999).

Another useful aspect of a focus upon narrative is its potential to serve as a political commentary (Emihovich, 1995; Anderson and Jack, 1991; Chase, 1995; Personal Narratives Group, 1989). Narrative approaches do not only illuminate processes and constructions of subjectivity and personal selves but also the interconnections between selfhood and social power relations (Emihovich, 1995). Selves are embedded within social power relations and struggles and as noted by Anderson and Jack (1991:18), "A person's self-reflection is not just a private, subjective act. The categories and concepts we use for reflecting upon and ourselves come from a cultural context."

Reflecting upon the political implications of narratives raises questions surrounding the 'truth' value of people's stories. Participants rarely couch their narratives along the recognition of the dynamics and politics of power relations; their story is their story and is seen as reflective of their own personal idiosyncratic 'true' experiences and meanings. Researchers, particularly feminists, who want to interrogate existing 'natural' truths and social 'realities', clearly face a dilemma here (Reissman, 1993; Personal Narratives Group, 1989). As a solution to this conundrum various writers have proposed that narratives should not be seen as either true or false but as reflections of multiple truths. Gubrium and Holstein (1995:47) report that narratives are not accurate reports but are "artfully and situationally constructed communications" and the Personal Narratives Group (1989:6) declare that there are many truths embedded within narratives but not "*a truth or the truth.*"

When utilising a narrative methodology it is important to consider questions surrounding the possible appropriation and exploitation of participant's stories. Being positioned as a researcher is synonymous with being privileged with power and authority to represent people's accounts

(Emihovich, 1995; Nespore and Barber, 1995; Ginsburg, 1989). There has been talk among feminists about 'giving voice' to the suppressed and silenced stories of women. Reissman (1993:8) highlights that we, as researchers, cannot 'give voice' but can only "hear voices that we record and interpret." There is no possibility of researchers neutrally and simply presenting participant's narratives and remaining invisible mediums of transmission. Within the processes of collecting data, transcribing material, deciding what is relevant and what not, interpreting, analysing and finally writing reports, papers and theses, the researcher is all the while involved in the production of their very own narrative. Fine (1992) outlines three different positions assumed by researchers in their writing. These are labeled ventriloquy, voices, and activism (Fine, 1992). Within a ventriloquist position researchers write as if they have no voice of their own – their voice is subsumed underneath the authorial signature of Truth, they have no race, gender, class or personal positions (Fine, 1992). Indicated by 'voices' is the mere appearance within the writing of allowing the other – the participants - to speak whilst the researcher remains distanced, remote, in effect hiding unproblematically (Fine, 1992). A researcher aligned within an activist mode however, self-consciously positions themselves in relation to all processes of the research. Fine (1992: 220-221) describes such research as "committed to the study of change, the move towards change, and/or is provocative of change" where the researcher is "explicit about the space in which she stands politically and theoretically – even as her stances are multiple, shifting and mobile." My own position would (I hope) be located within Fine's (1992) activist stance in that this research is clearly interested in questions of change; I have also made it clear from the beginning (see Chapter 1) that this thesis is my own construction<sup>24</sup> - my own narrative and have along the way included discussions surrounding my own personal life and various positions. As a researcher working with the narratives of others I acknowledge my own culpability in re-constructing these stories in the interests of fulfilling my own research aims and thesis requirements. Within the analyses that follow I have attempted however, to allow the voices of the participants to be heard (as far as possible) alongside my own. These attempts consist of the inclusion of case studies as well as the poetic representation, within my analysis, of one woman's story using only her own words<sup>25</sup>.

#### 4.4 Discourse analysis /Rhetorical analysis

Discourse analysis is intertwined with strands of postmodern and constructionist theory and represents a theory-method (Potter, 1997) that embraces the constructive and (re)productive powers of language (Parker, 1989; 1992; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Stenner and Eccleson, 1994; Burman, 1991). There are various 'brands' of discourse analysis, ranging from work inspired by Michel Foucault (e.g. Parker, 1992 and Fairclough, 1992), to ethnomethodology (e.g. Potter and Wetherell, 1987) and psychodynamic theory (e.g. Hollway, 1989). The term 'discourse' itself is contested and is used across a divergent set of disciplinary contexts including critical theory, linguistics, social psychology and literary theory (Wills, 1997). Within this research I will be continually drawing upon a discourse perspective and within Chapter 7 will be presenting one detailed case study analysing the arguments (rhetoric) used to construct a subjective position of non-change.

Within the framework provided by Parker (1992:8-9) discourses are described as "the sets of meanings which constitute objects" and which offer up spaces for "particular types of selves" to step in. It is not with the description of the world that a Parkerian type of discourse analysis is interested, rather it is interested in the way(s) in which discourses become naturalized as 'truths' and 'realities' (Durrheim, 1997). The aim is that commonsense taken-for-granted assumptions are disrupted and exposed as merely fictional constructions. Discourses are interrogated as to the positions in which they 'fix' objects, the types of subjectivities they produce and the voice given to subjects within their parameters (Parker, 1992; 1994). What is most useful about this brand of discourse analysis is its political potential. It is recognised however that discourse analysis is not inherently progressive (Burman and Parker, 1993) and that its value as a politically progressive tool is linked to the purposes and strategies of its deployment. It has been noted that a discourse perspective destabilises and blurs the distinction between the individual and society and between ideology and subjectivity (Burman, Kottler, Levett and Parker, 1997). This is a useful supplement to my use of a narrative analysis that has a focal interest with personal subjectivity. Within the thesis I aim to continually straddle the boundaries between subjectivity and politics. Using a combination of both a discourse perspective and a narrative approach is one of the ways in which I attempt to do so.

Within the discursive strand of my analysis I attend to the framework provided by Parker (1992), paying attention to what discourse 'does' and how it works to construct subjective positions. Alongside this I also draw upon the work of Michael Billig (1987; 1991) dealing with the rhetorical dimensions of talk and discourse. This approach emphasises the 'dilemmatic' and argumentative quality of thinking and ideology. It is Billig's (1991:17) contention that argumentation is not restricted to certain contexts "when tempers are lost and doors are slammed" but is "spread throughout social life." Thinking itself is also likened to a series of arguments wherein to think is defined as deliberating, persuading and arguing with oneself (Billig, 1991). It is through rhetorical devices that certain discourses are repeatedly re-entrenched. It is also via rhetoric and arguments that selves constantly re-position and re-orient themselves in relation to dominant and alternative discourses. Within my analysis I pay strong attention to the way in which arguments are used to position selves within a position of stasis and stability and to the way in which these arguments draw upon and are linked to dominant ideologies and discourses.

#### 4.5 The Study

As already discussed in Chapter 1 this study stems primarily from my own personal experiences as a volunteer, feminist and research student at a Rape Crisis centre. From the beginnings of the project I was subjectively and emotionally involved in the research topic and can therefore enact no veneer of objectivity. I was initially primarily interested in the practical effects upon relationships, particularly heterosexual relationships, of work within the area of sexual violence. As the research progressed and interviews were analysed, I did become more theoretically swayed by the material and intellectually interested in broad questions surrounding change and the relation between politics and subjectivity. What increasingly intrigued me, alongside with the negotiation of heterosexuality within the context of sexual violence activism, was the ways in which rhetoric and narrative were used discursively to achieve positions of change or stasis. This led me to question why selves position themselves as they do. Increasingly the dimensions and foci of this research shifted and moved. I do not regard this as a problem within the paradigm of qualitative research that is known for circular and unexpected movements. This research was continually in a process of mutation and change

alongside my own changes (both personal and theoretical during this time) as well as the documented changes of the participants.

#### 4.5.1 Execution of the study

- Sample

My sample was comprised of volunteers working at a Rape Crisis centre. Included were volunteers from both the counselling and public education divisions of the organisation. The sample was not stratified according to dimensions of age, race or sexual orientation but nonetheless included a variety of women across these dimensions. Of a total number of 7 participants, two self-identified as heterosexual, three said they were gay/lesbian and two labelled them-selves as bisexual. Four of the women were white and three 'coloured'. All of the women had engaged in some kind of tertiary education. Sampling was convenience based and did not operate according to any kind of 'technique'. My study is interested in depth of accounts and narratives and is not aiming for any degree of generalisability or claims of representivity. Sample sizes in narrative studies tend to be small (Reissman, 1993) especially if the research interests are in narrative detail and the presentation of case studies as opposed to a more superficial and broader analysis of general themes. As this study combines in-depth case studies with a more general analysis of narratives and rhetoric, a total of 14 interviews provided sufficiently rich and detailed material.

- The interviews

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as a data collection strategy primarily because they are able to be both fluid and flexible and allow the exploration of accounts, stories and experiences (Burman, 1994). Interviews were conducted individually to accommodate my interests with narrative reconstructions<sup>26</sup> and the exploration of personal, subjective meaning as well as to maximise the possibilities of obtaining rich, detailed and reflective material.

Two interviews were conducted with each participant, the first comprising of a relationship history and the second more directly probing the meanings and impacts of volunteer work at

Rape Crisis upon participants' personal lives. A relationship history was conducted because of my interests in reconstructing contextual narrative stories about participants. Obtaining detailed and historical material concerning participants past experiences and relationships enabled me to later more fully understand the discursive positions taken up by these women in relation to their work at Rape Crisis. Theoretically the material derived from these interviews turned out to be an invaluable resource in later helping me to think about and propose explanations surrounding the reasons why some selves take up change and others refrain from doing so.

The first interview involved only one broad and general orienting question so as to facilitate the narration of participants' own stories and was therefore largely unstructured. An unstructured and responsive model of interviewing aligns with a desire to maximise the empowerment of participants through an attempt at shared interpretative control (Opie, 1992). Obviously the existence of power dynamics are unavoidable within interviews; the point is merely that the "appropriation" of the researched – although mostly inevitable – is counterbalanced as far as possible (Opie, 1992:52). The second interview was conducted using a more structured set of questions but also provided the space for participants to lead the interview in other interesting directions. This interview probed the impacts of work at Rape Crisis upon subjectivity, sexuality and relationships (See Appendix 1 for detailed outline of questions posed). Interviews 1 and 2 ranged in duration from 1 to 3 hours and were conducted in a wide variety of settings including my office at university, a room at Rape Crisis and the homes of some participants. Participants were contacted telephonically (as a volunteer myself I had a copy of phone numbers) as well as through a request for participation that I made during a focus group meeting.

During the interviews I consciously positioned myself as a co-participant and did not shy away from debating and sharing my own experiences with the participants. This was my attempt to deviate from an objective ideal of researchers as "cool, distant and rational" (Fontana and Frey, 1994:361); I tried as far as possible to frame the interviews as dialogic, negotiated and reciprocal interactions.

The interviews were audiotaped (with the permission of participants) and transcribed fully<sup>27</sup> by myself. Structural details like pause length, intonation, and detailed nuances of pronunciation

were not attended to within my transcriptions. My interest was in the content of the material and not the stylistic elements of the conversation or talk. Transcripts were therefore geared for readability.

#### 4.5.3 Analysis of the 'data'

This study is multiply positioned between a feminist modality and both narrative and discourse analysis. Feminist principles were adhered to throughout the study in the various guises that I have discussed under section 4.2. From the beginning of this project I had envisioned using a narrative methodology – hence the particular ways in which I conducted the interviews and posed questions to participants. After sifting through interview transcripts however I began to note that a narrative analysis would be usefully supplemented by an attention to discursive and rhetorical devices used in the talk of participants. I became aware that different discursive modes were used to achieve different purposes. I noted that participants constructing positions of self-transformation and change tended to use narrative modes of talking – changes in self were narrated as a stories. Those participants constructing positions of self-stasis and non-change did not use narratives but discursive arguments and rhetorical devices to create their positions. This struck me as interesting and important and I therefore opted for two official 'types' of analysis.

After the transcriptions were completed I spent a lot of time reading through the transcripts to familiarise myself with the material. Thereafter I wrote up summary outlines of each participant's relationship history and an amalgamated summary of themes across interview 2. Working with the transcript of one participant in particular whose narrative was powerfully metaphoric, alongside a parallel reading of literature dealing with the oral qualities of speech (Salvaggio, 1999) and the poetic representation of research findings (Richardson, 1997) inspired me to attempt a conversion of this particular transcript into a narrative poem. I used only the words of the participant and allowed the poem to unfold sequentially in the order in which it was spoken. I think this captures a more holistic sense of the story than does a more conventional qualitative type representation of participant's speech as snippets and blurbs taken out of their broader context. I discuss this poem and its implications in more detail in my case

analysis thereof (see chapter 5). Apart from this poem I also include two other case studies as well as a broader discussion or analysis of the narratives more generally across the total sample.

University of Cape Town

## CHAPTER 5

### CASE STUDIES OF CHANGE PART 1: VICKY SCHULTZ

#### 5.1 Introduction

Within this chapter I present my first detailed case study documenting the processes and trajectory involved in a narrative of subjective change. I will be addressing the following key questions within this analysis:

1. Has RC made a difference to this self?
2. How is change constructed via narrative?
3. Why does this self embrace a position of change?
4. How does RC function within the ongoing narrative of this person's life?

Interpretations of interview material are informed by the various theories held by the researcher regarding the individual self/subject (Wengraf, 2000). I have already outlined a dialectical/spatial grid for the understanding of the self/subject (See Chapter 3). This framework will be used and tested against the material and the utility of the grid as a tool for understanding and theorising about selves and change will be assessed. Basically this thesis asks: what happens when selves collide with, and are challenged by, new structural and discursive positions? – how is change and non-change achieved discursively and why do selves choose these positions? Using both a narrative and a discourse analytic methodology is one way in which I attempt to cling simultaneously to a dual view of selves as both constitutive and constituted. Also by presenting both individual case examples and more general thematic and discursive analyses I hope to enable rich, detailed re-presentations of selves as individual agents as well as a parallel attention to and concern with power and ideology.

Arriving at this analytic point in the research process has been complicated and messy. The material is too rich and multi-layered with meaning and signification to ever fit within one analysis or one thesis. I have made decisions regarding the re-presentation of this material based upon various theoretical, political and personal commitments that I have already outlined in previous chapters. At this stage of the research process story-telling and fictional re-

constructions become even more pivotal. The analyses and re-presentations that follow are reflections and mirror-images of my-self, the selves I interacted with during the research interviews and the spaces between us – like splinters and bits of glass the re-presentations of talk (as transcribed ‘quotes’), re-constructed stories (as narrative ‘poetry’), descriptions and interpretations (as written ‘analysis’) interwoven with personal anecdotes and academic theory reflect fragments of a whole that is too wide and complex to be contained within this discrete and in many senses already determined academic dissertation space.

In the following two chapters I present two detailed case study narrative analyses in which two selves are variously embroiled in a collision between the personal and the political<sup>28</sup>, the subjective and the structural and in a struggle for change in consciousness and identity. I will be exploring these narratives as meaningful and detailed examples of the conflicts that selves face in negotiating their positioning(s) within discourses and will argue that selves are active users and consumers of these discursive positions, partially determined by their unique histories and relationships but never fully determined.

## **5.2. Case Studies**

Two narratives in particular stood out as remarkable for their interwoven and blurred stories of self and RC. Self and structure meet and fuse dynamically within these narratives with RC serving as a unifying structure throughout. Different metaphors and biographical details are evident but in both cases RC makes a huge difference to the subjective identities and sexuality of these selves. I will be analysing these narratives in detail over the following two chapters and presenting these stories of subjective change as examples of the way(s) in which selves actively construct positions of change whilst still creating selves that are coherent and continuous over time.

Case studies might be criticised for their presentation of selves as individual, self-contained entities. It might also be argued that there is an over-emphasis upon the self within this method of data organisation. However in alignment with a dialectical view of the self is the understanding that self, and subjectivity, is not separate from the social, the political, the cultural and the ideological. Selves are interpenetrated by all of the above and are profoundly

inter-subjective and dialogical in character. There can be no separation between ‘the individual’ and ‘the social’ – such a distinction remains part of a humanistic fantasy currently impersonating as the natural order of things, life and reality. Case studies provide researchers with the rich material that is needed for a complex engagement with questions of subjectivity, ideology and agency and provide insights into the negotiations – at a micro-analytic level of analysis - involved in the internalisation and naturalisation of various assumedly ‘social’ and ideological processes (as if ‘the social’ and ‘the ideological’ were separate discrete forces with life-forces of their own somehow magically responsible for the creation and construction of truths removed from inter-subjective negotiations and struggles). Case studies succeed at keeping alive the uniqueness and particularity of different narratives and are able to weld together specific stories with concrete, embodied, complex and specific persons. Simply collapsing narratives together and generalising from such an amalgamation results in the loss of various features of narrative study, features which are strengths and powerful potentialities of the method<sup>29</sup>.

The narrative that I will be presenting within this chapter belongs to Vicky, a 25-year old ‘Coloured’ woman currently self-identified as gay. Vicky’s involvement with RC spans a period of four years and includes participation across multiple levels of the organisation. This is a narrative wherein RC is constructed as responsible for a huge subjective change and difference within the identity and life-choices of the self/subject. Within this narrative RC functions as a dynamic symbol around which life events and choices are narrated and made sense of. What struck me most regarding this story was its powerful and tight use of metaphor, which inspired me to convert the transcript into a loose and rough narrative poem, using only Vicky’s words, descriptions and metaphors. This proved fruitful as a method of re-presentation because it allows the holistic and sequential sense of the narrative to be understood and also allows the interviewee to be heard more fully, deeply and richly than in the reductive snippets often quoted here and there in a typical qualitative analysis.<sup>30</sup> Vicky’s story serves as one exemplifying the negotiations and conflicts that are experienced at the juncture(s) between selves and structures and tells of the processes, most significantly played out at a relational level, whereby the personal and the political collide.

### **5.3. Case Study 1**

#### *The story of Vicky Schultz*

##### **5.3.1 Who is Vicky Schultz?**

Vicky is a middle-class 25-year old 'Coloured' woman who currently identifies her-self as gay. She holds a university degree and has been active in the NGO sector for numerous years. Vicky is immediately striking as a vibrant and outgoing woman, whose passion and enthusiasm for activism, especially within the field of sexual violence against women, had been evident to me before the interview as a result of our joint involvement with RC. Vicky exudes dynamism and liveliness and has a very honest and direct manner. She is always colourfully and fashionably dressed, and presents herself as 'feminine' in her clothing and make-up.

##### **5.3.2 Before the interview**

When I telephonically contacted Vicky and requested her participation in the study, she did not hesitate in giving her agreement. We agreed to conduct the interview at Vicky's house. At the time it was mid-December and swelteringly hot; I arrived early and remember most particularly the unpleasant heat I felt whilst sitting waiting within my car. At the appropriate time I made my way to the door and buzzed the gate. Vicky's partner, Linda, also involved with RC, opened the door. Vicky had apparently not arrived yet, so I was, with great friendliness, ushered into the house. Linda and I went into the lounge and proceeded to watch cricket whilst I waited for Vicky. The atmosphere in the house was light and festive (not surprising of course, considering the time of year), pets abounded and I felt most 'at home'. Vicky arrived about 10 minutes later, grabbed something to eat and the two of us retired to her bedroom to begin the, by definition, private and 'official' interview. What up until that point had remained very informal became increasingly more formal as we moved into the interview as a defining situation / context. Once inside the room I once again sketched my interests for the interview and reassured Vicky of the absolute confidentiality of the proceeding. Although the encounter had now adopted a more formal flavour, it nonetheless remained informal in setting; both Vicky and I sat, or alternatively half-lay upon her bed whilst the interview unfolded.

### **5.3.3 ‘The interview’**

So, with Vicky and I both comfortably established upon her bed, the record button was pressed and ‘the interview’ began. It was an easy interview from my perspective; Vicky spoke quite spontaneously about her life and relationships. She did not go into great descriptive details but was direct and pointed in her storytelling. I felt relaxed and from all appearances, Vicky did too. The interview seemed to be facilitated by our common interest and position within RC, almost as if it were an unspoken tie between us.

### **5.3.4 Representing Vicky poetically**

Instead of starting by speaking on behalf of Vicky and fragmenting the movement and sequence of her narrative to fit my own ‘analysis’, I have decided instead to begin her story at its (almost) raw form – presenting below the following narrative poem that I constructed from the interview transcript. It seems impossible to escape the re-presentation of ‘others’ and their voices in research and I acknowledge the formative role played by myself in the construction of this poem. However, as a researcher I am compelled to somehow ‘manage’ and discipline the narratives and words of the women I have interviewed so that I can present a logical and coherent analysis of their stories. This is inescapable. Using a poetic form including only the words of Vicky, I have tried to capture some of the oral qualities of her speech, as well as a more holistic sense of the movement of her narrative. Within this particular case study I am not simply or exclusively interested in the content of the narrative, although this does remain central – I am also intrigued by the way in which her story is told and the structures she uses to tell it in her own particular way.

The narrative poem will serve as the starting point from which my reading(s) and interpretations of Vicky’s story will flow. I include it as a disruption to the regular movement of an analysis section wherein participants are usually only ever present as bits and pieces, quotational blurbs abstracted from the contexts of whole accounts and stories. The poem that follows unfolds in the sequence that Vicky spoke, using only her descriptions, words, repetitions and metaphors. Reading it as a whole allows the structure and themes of the narrative to unfold clearly and at surface value quite effortlessly. However, I am quite aware

that nothing is ever as simple as it might seem (especially in matters of research and its presentation) and I am not going to pretend that this structure just “unfolded” without any effort on my part. In my construction of the poem I necessarily decided what to omit and what to include and am guilty, as all qualitative researchers are, of snipping away at people’s sentences, paragraphs and stories and of remaking them into a new story fashioned by my own hand. But a story never truly ‘belongs’ to any one person does it? A story is born out of and within an interaction and exchange, and beyond that still, a story – the story – stories, exist before that, circulating within other conversations, amongst other stories, now here then there, continually dynamic and changing. We are left with a multitude and series of inter-textual traces, never a ‘real’ and ‘true’ story or subject behind the story (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). According to Minh-ha (1989):

The story never stops beginning or ending. It appears headless and bottomless for it is built on differences. Its (in)finity subverts every notion of completeness and its frame remains a non-totalizable one ... The story circulates like a gift; an empty gift which anybody can lay claim to by filling it to taste, yet can never truly possess. A gift built on multiplicity.

I (who-ever that is exactly) was present at the birthing of this specific narrative and in a sense feel as though parts of the story have become part of my-self. Whilst constructing the narrative poem I could almost hear Vicky’s voice and her rhythm speaking through my-self. I tried to listen as hard and as carefully as I could to this voice, because I wanted to (try) and be as true as possible to the way in which her words re-sounded and echoed and moved. I wanted the poem to retain the speakerly qualities of Vicky’s language. The poem does in the final analysis not belong to any one person – it is constructed out of a third space somewhere in-between Vicky and I – the speaker and the transcriber/writer. The whole poem can be seen, within my own interpretation, as consisting of 8 separate pieces and plots, each of which contribute towards the development and construction of Vicky’s narrative as a whole.

### 5.3.5 The narrative poem

i (*orientation*)

ja

I was a very slow like developer

my first boyfriend was when I was in Matric  
it was just  
such a like weird experience  
a circle of friends spurring me on  
it spun out completely

I don't think I was really attracted to him  
you know  
I wasn't ever like interested in like  
relationships  
something I could do without

my second boyfriend was in my second year of university  
it was such a weird relationship  
that didn't work out  
it was easy with him

*(do you know what I mean?)*

it didn't feel like I was like really involved  
like I was treading water

ii *(Rape Crisis introduced)*

another reason it didn't work  
in um the second year  
I joined Rape Crisis  
and the training course  
like alone just like  
blew my mind

we had quite an intensive training course  
like 5 days a week  
it was just so difficult for me  
to get all that information  
and then like go back  
to like the real world again

um, and I suddenly became like very paranoid  
you know like  
'Excuse me, you're pushing my boundaries'  
that kind of sensitivity  
that just escalated  
and I know I wasn't the only one, later we like  
spoke about it  
how difficult it was to like  
adjust to the real world and then

this world

it somehow started off that independent activism  
that we all do but in a way  
that was very defensive  
to the outside world

*(do you know what I mean?)*

every time you said some thing  
it was about man-hating  
*(you know what I mean?)*  
like an accusation  
'you're a man-hater'  
and it wasn't about that

iii *(Relationship trigger)*

it was great, um  
it lasted for about 4 months  
it ended because he, I found out that  
he had slept with my friend

it was  
such a betrayal  
made me almost  
like experience  
the betrayal that the women  
I was working with did  
you know

and it felt like, I mean  
I was very, very angry for a lot of  
reasons, for the fact  
that I'd  
somehow made  
what I had learnt at the training course  
to be like two separate worlds  
*(and it was completely different)*

and yet  
now  
I was being subjected to exactly that  
*(you know what I mean?)*  
after having done so  
done such a lot  
of work  
at keeping it separate

it somehow was in  
my world

iv (*Rape Crisis*)

I started getting bored  
of going to dinner-parties  
and people asking –  
so where do you work and what do you do?  
Rape Crisis  
and then  
all of a sudden  
the whole conversation changes  
and you're the focus  
all of a sudden  
sitting in people's company  
having them say sexist jokes  
and thinking-  
'Let them say this at Rape Crisis' –  
some one would have an answer  
to that

it was a conscious effort  
to keep it  
separate  
to not let every one know

v (*Relationship trigger*)

after this whole fiasco  
I just like thought  
fuck men  
I don't want anything  
to do with them  
I don't want any  
relationships

vi (*World of Rape Crisis*)

because of that  
I started  
hanging out  
with the women  
that I worked with  
and some were gay  
not all  
I started to appreciate  
that woman's energy

you know  
completely oblivious  
to where it would lead  
I started going out more  
and partied more  
became like more relaxed and proud  
of who I was  
I started feeling more comfortable  
about  
what I wanted  
out of a relationship

I wanted some one  
who would listen  
to me  
would laugh  
with me  
who didn't have this  
other baggage  
this is what I do  
this is what you do  
roles  
I didn't want  
that whole power play  
I needed some one  
who could listen  
because yes  
the work at Rape Crisis did  
require some one  
that you could talk to

that's why  
hanging out with the women  
was so beneficial  
there was always some one  
that I could talk to  
and like say  
"Today was just like the cake"  
or  
"Did you see this?"

*(was what I needed the most)*

it felt like  
and it started to feel like  
it was an exclusive kind  
of world  
you know

where you don't  
have to like explain  
any thing  
you just like say  
'Today'  
and they all  
like automatically know  
what you're moving towards  
that was nice  
so in sync  
so linked

vii (*Becoming gay*)

there wasn't like  
any intentions  
of being a lesbian  
or even being attracted  
to them  
until  
one day I just  
all of a sudden  
felt like I was  
sitting on the fence  
I don't know where I am  
feeling like I was in the middle  
you know  
there were interactions with men  
along that like time frame  
but it was me  
almost  
knowing where it was going  
to go  
before it started  
I started sussing them out  
using like a stencil  
none of them ever like  
shattered that  
they became so predictable and  
it became  
so boring

so I said  
ja  
fence-sitter  
disgusting  
can't live with myself  
going to have to make a decision

I needed to know  
for my self  
I needed to know

then just going on and moving around  
with the women  
still like not  
I mean I wasn't attracted  
to any of them  
or felt like I was  
completely gay  
it just felt good  
to be in their company  
in their company  
it felt comfortable  
and then I started  
thinking  
a whole lot more  
about like  
what exactly it would mean  
for me  
if it was a woman that I was  
attracted to

it took like ages  
it took like even more like a year  
to just like think about  
what it would be like  
and I just didn't come to any  
it was like  
imagining what some thing would taste like  
and you don't know what it actually is

and then  
at a party one night  
there was this one woman  
and I mean  
she was like funny  
and it was just  
it just like started to  
spark off things  
like she was funny  
and she, I don't know  
she like challenged me  
and I didn't realise that  
I was getting attracted to this woman

ja

if it was like  
if it had been in any other setting  
you would have seen how obvious it was  
you know

I think two weeks after, we went  
to another party  
and she was there as well  
we like picked up  
where we left off  
laughed, joked  
and then the evening came to an end  
and she said –  
“Are you gay or not?”  
and I said -  
“I don’t know”  
so she said –  
“Would you kiss a woman?”  
and I said –  
“I don’t know”  
so she said –  
“Would you kiss me?”  
and I said okay and I kissed her  
it wasn’t like that bad

it was about those breaking of boundaries  
you know  
realising it’s not what they said

right now to me  
it’s about the shell that people come in  
it’s also like by default  
you know  
you want a pink dress and only the  
red-sized 32 fits  
it’s not that I feel  
like look  
I am absolutely gay  
right now  
I mean after two very short relationships  
I know that right now  
I am more easily attracted to women

viii (*Rape Crisis again*)

coming to  
Rape Crisis  
somehow exposed me to both worlds

feeling like  
I had a choice to do some thing  
else, but also  
feeling like  
there has to be like  
some decision  
between the two  
you know

### **5.3.6 Reflecting upon the production of this text**

I was led to attempt the re-presentation of Vicky's transcript as a narrative type poem for various reasons. These included my exposure to seminar classes at Berkeley which encouraged us as students to experiment with alternative academic styles of writing and which stimulated me to question the neat scientific separation between academic, scholarly writing and fiction or poetic writing. I was also inspired by my reading of the work of Laurel Richardson (1997) who has pioneered the representation of academic text as poetry and drama and who continues to blur the edges between fiction, poetry and research. Thus I was inspired to (try) and write my thesis differently. This dream and goal to produce a creative, alternative type dissertation proved to be far trickier and more complicated in 'reality' than I ever imagined as I sat at my desk in California. I desperately want to continue exploring these avenues in the future and am committed to the deconstruction of the rigid boundaries between 'scientific' and poetic writing. 'Scientifically' the above poem is lacking in its ability to provide succinct, no-frills information. It does ramble on and perhaps fails to get to the 'theoretical' point with sufficient speed. Traditionally an interview transcript is presented as pieces here and there, merely visible within the 'actual' thesis text (usually only dutifully 'attached' fully as appendixes) as sentences and paragraphs appropriated for the illumination of an analytical point or as 'evidence' for interpretative statements. Within the textual space of this narrative poem I have given the interviewee the opportunity to be heard in a different way. As yet I have attempted no 'analysis' and the poem remains open and fluid to various interpretations and readings. It stands alone without the draped 'insights' and commentaries of this researcher. However this remains a thesis with already heavily stated purposes and questions and I am not content to simply leave the story of Vicky at the re-presentational level of narrative poem. Vicky as a case example offers us rich and important insights into many of the dilemmas that I have raised as

pivotal for this dissertation. Most importantly these include the narration of subjective change triggered by a collision with Rape Crisis. This particular narrative speaks of a self moving and shifting and embracing a position of change within the very intimate geography of sexual identity. Rape Crisis functions as a dominant motif and symbol threading this story into an intelligible, sensible whole. I argue that this case analysis is able to potentially enrich our understanding of why a self might be motivated to re-position itself within alternative discursive spaces. I now move to a more conventional style of qualitative analysis wherein I use quotes to display the core themes of the narrative.

## 5.4 The analysis

### 5.4.1 *Two colliding worlds*

Vicky's narrative is sharply organised around the metaphor of 'colliding worlds.' Her relational history is dynamically and inextricably interwoven with her experiences at RC. As already mentioned RC becomes the dominant referential motif drawn upon in her narrative to make sense of her change(s), both relational and subjective. Vicky explicitly describes her second relationship as floundering because of her entry into RC and her exposure to the ideas and talk circulating there:

*"Another reason why that relationship didn't work was because in um the second year of our relationship I joined RC and the training course like alone just like blew my mind."*

The training course is experienced as a radical and profound challenge and as an agent of transformation to Vicky's ideas and way(s) of thinking – it "blew her mind." It is not only at the level of ideas and mental reverie that shifts are engendered by this entry into the organisation – Vicky's inter-subjective relations with her partner are challenged to the point where the relationship is no longer functional within Vicky's new mental and relational frame. The organisation as a structure impacts upon the consciousness of this self, Vicky, and also upon her world of relationships. It is the contention of Bourque and Divine (1985) that to understand the contextual climate within which change in women occurs we have to pay attention to precisely these three levels – namely structure, relationship and consciousness.

Shifts within the dynamics between these elements are cited as identifying moment of change. This thesis is interested in the moments of change (and non-change) that are engendered when selves meet with new structures. Some selves embrace an altered consciousness and relationship future as a result of their meeting with RC – Vicky serves as one key example of this.

The collision between self and structure is described as a battle between two spaces and two worlds:

*“It was just so difficult for me to get all that information in the morning slot of each day, um, and then like go back to like the real world again and see how that played out, um, and I suddenly became very paranoid about things, you know, like, ‘Excuse me, you’re pushing my boundaries.’ ”*

*“That kind of sensitivity that just escalated and I know that I wasn’t the only person on my training course that like experienced that because when we came back a lot later we like spoke about it, how difficult it was to like adjust to the real world and then this world ... it was very difficult to adjust because it somehow started off that independent activism that we all do but in a way that was very defensive to the outside world.”*

RC is a world and a space separate from the ‘outside’ and the ‘real’ – a world with its own ‘information’ and its own pattern of discourses. The self is caught in a dilemma between these worlds and nets of discourses, and is forced to deal with the contradictions between these spaces. What Vicky is learning at the training sessions is later ‘played out’ when she is engaged within her regular life and within her regular and ‘real’ world. Fairclough (1992) highlights that it is within meetings between opposing or contradictory sets of discourses and ‘realities’ that change is potentially available to selves. Fairclough (1992:96) writes:

*“Change involves forms of transgression, crossing boundaries, such as putting together existing conventions in new combinations, or drawing upon conventions in situations which preclude them ... contradictions, dilemmas ... have their social conditions in structural contradictions and struggle at the institutional and societal levels.”*

This theory translates into the practical, material life and narrative of Vicky. The personal struggle she finds herself within is connected to an ideological feminist struggle at ‘institutional

and societal levels' which is filtered through and negotiated multiply at intra-personal as well as inter-personal sites. It is personal and relational boundaries that are pushed and stretched and challenged in the contradictory spaces between discursive worlds; Vicky clearly describes this sense of threat in the following words:

*"... and I suddenly became very paranoid about things, you know, like, 'Excuse me, you're pushing my boundaries.'"*

At this point within the narrative Vicky is still locating her-self between worlds, in a kind of inter-space – the worlds are still separate despite a sense of dynamic dialogue and influence between them. Within the two quotes (see page 63) the description of the status of these worlds does shift from initially (first quote) the world outside of RC being labelled the 'real world' to it becoming further removed from the self and RC in her later reference to it as 'the outside world' (see quote 2, page 63). Spatial metaphors and way(s) of talking are rife within Vicky's narrative of self-transformation and signal the importance of spatial configurations of subjectivity even within lay descriptions. Vicky structures her story of self and change against, within and between descriptions of spatial geographies and describes the process whereby she eventually actively positions and locates her-self within a place and a world (not forever fixed but fixed for the moment in which it is narrated). Separating the worlds of RC and regular 'reality' proves to be difficult and is described by Vicky as "work." Separation allows the self to inhabit an in-between space of exchange without necessarily giving up on either world; separation defers a choice between the spaces and allows the self to shift between them. However this is not feasible for Vicky in the long-term – her embracement of the discursive world of RC is such that it forces her to re-position her-self. It is as a result of a relationship trigger that Vicky actively chooses to position her-self more firmly within the world of RC. After meeting a man through a friend at RC and enjoying a brief relationship with him she is devastated when she finds out that he has had sex with a friend of hers:

*"It was just like such a betrayal and it made me, it made me almost like experience the betrayal that the women I was working with did ... and it felt like, I mean I was very, very angry for a lot of reasons, um, for the fact that I'd somehow made what I'd learnt at the training course to be like two separate worlds and that it was completely different, and yet now I was being subjected to exactly that you know what I mean, after having so – done such a lot of work at keeping it separate, it somehow was like in my world."*

Selves embrace positions of change as a result of their locations within other contextual sites. In Vicky's case she finds her-self the object of a relational /sexual betrayal at the hands of a male partner at a critical time of negotiation between worlds. She actively chooses to interpret this betrayal as linked and related to issues that she is dealing with at RC. Thus she links her boyfriend's betrayal to the betrayal experienced by the rape survivors she works with. Her heterosexual relational experience is interpreted against the context provided by RC and her work there. The betrayal seems to be experienced as some kind of 'evidence' that the world constructed by RC is more intimately related to the 'real world' of heterosexual relationships than Vicky might have liked. Her separation of the worlds was spoken of as "work" and as an active construction – Vicky says that she *"made what she had learnt at the training course to be like two separate worlds ... completely different"* and her anger is attributed to the crumbling of this construction and the boundaries she has actively erected between the two worlds. This is an example of the personal and the political colliding with the result being the re-positioning of the self relationally and subjectively:

*"So after this whole fiasco I just thought, 'Fuck men' – I don't want anything to do with them, I don't want any relationships and because of that I started hanging out with the women that I worked with and some of them were gay but not all of them and I started to appreciate that women's energy you know and still be like completely oblivious to where it would lead ..."*

Vicky's openness to re-positioning her-self relationally is influenced by her current heterosexual relationship status (betrayal and disillusionment) and can only be read against her (heterosexual) relationship history. Vicky's relational history is filled by un-happy and sterile heterosexual relationships. She is not even really attracted to her first boyfriend but is involved with him largely as a result of peer pressure to have a boyfriend. Her second relationship is also narrated as being passionless and mundane, she speaks of it as akin to "treading water." Her feelings towards men are also described as ambivalent even before her entry into RC:

*"I had a lot of negative feelings towards men when I was like doing my casual job at the bottle-store – I worked at Rebel as a cashier from Matric through to my second year and just that whole set up there where all the women are cashiers and all the men are packers you know, I mean like all the negative ... and I think that that – there was this one guy that I had a lot of altercations with at Rebel and it*

*was also just because of his issues about being a man and me challenging that you know – like saying ‘Excuse me, you will not speak to me like that’, um ... and I wasn’t popular for those reasons, I didn’t do the humble bow down ... “*

Vicky’s feminism was around before her involvement with RC but is described as without a name prior to her activism. Vicky narrates her-self as being historically independent, self-sufficient and rebellious of traditional gender stereotyped roles. Her contextual history is thus filled with unsuccessful and rather meaningless heterosexual relationships as well as experiences of struggle around being a woman in a patriarchal world. Her betrayal at the hands of her male partner is a trigger for change, but only against the wider history of her heterosexual relationships and against a process of discursive negotiation that is already in process:

*“It was difficult because it was about, I mean it was like about sitting in people’s company and having them say sexist jokes and thinking – ‘Let them say this at RC’ – someone would have an answer to that, and just like letting it slide but not because you weren’t prepared to fight for it but just because it was easier for you, like I started getting completely bored of going to dinner-parties and people asking, ‘So where do you work and what do you do?’ - Rape Crisis and then all of a sudden the whole conversation changes and you’re the focus all of a sudden, and ‘Oh, it must be very stressful’ you know and it just got too much and it was, it was a conscious effort to keep it separate, to not let everyone know, so after this whole fiasco I just thought, ‘Fuck men’ ...”*

Despite Vick’s efforts to keep it separate from her ‘outside’ life, RC seems to slip through to infiltrate every aspect of her reality and her consciousness. It impacts massively upon her social interactions with people and seems to cause her to feel estranged and alien from the conversations and discourse around her happening in the contexts of dinner-parties and other social occasions. Whilst she sits at a dinner table she is engaged not within the dialogue at hand but is imagining the answers / come-backs / commentaries that might belong to a discourse situated within a discursive matrix belonging to the space of RC. The reality within her head is increasingly bound up with way(s) of talking belonging to RC. She is increasingly located ‘within’ and ‘inside’ this discursive space. It is also as though Vicky gets tired of having to justify her work, tired of explaining and having to dispel myths and wider societal imaginings concerning rape, rape survivors and working within the area of sexual violence. It is as if the work and the involvement with the organisation have marked her as in some way remarkable

and distinct from ‘regular’ people – as a result she is called upon to tell her story and the story of sexual violence to the ‘outside’ world, of which she is increasingly not a complete part. This explains Vicky’s need to *“keep it separate, to not let everyone know.”*

For Vicky, RC is a space and a world wherein there is a shared language and common goals, a context wherein she has no need to explain her-self or work at making others understand what is important to her:

*“It felt like and it started to feel like it was an exclusive kind of world you know where you don’t have to explain anything, you just like say ‘Today’ and they all like automatically know what you’re moving towards and that was nice, I don’t think I’ve ever had any interactions with people that have been so in sync and so linked...”*

Within this world she is connected to others, part of a common discursive space and a common struggle against sexual violence. This communion contrasts quite intensely with the sense of (dis)communion she experiences in the outer social world wherein she describes her-self as an outsider. Being so closely aligned with the organisation and its members leads Vicky to question her sexuality and the processes involved in her becoming gay are closely intertwined with her experiences at RC. It is within this section of Vicky’s narrative – her story of becoming gay, that her choice between the so-called ‘two worlds’ is narrated more explicitly. This is a progression of her earlier descriptions of the world of RC and the real world out there as two separate entities.

#### 5.4.2 *Becoming gay*

Vicky points to RC as enabling her awareness of and exposure to the competing realities of the ‘two worlds’ but also speaks of a strong sense of obligation to somehow make a ‘choice’ between these worlds:

*“I think that coming to RC somehow exposed me to both worlds and I think that that’s where me feeling like I had a choice to do something else but also feeling like there has to be like some decision between the two you know.”*

This choice becomes one between heterosexuality and lesbianism and the metaphor of ‘two worlds’ increasingly signifies not only the general world of RC versus external reality but also symbolises the world of heterosexuality versus lesbianism. Vicky’s is a narrative of profound change – not only within the realm of ideas and thinking but also within the space of her sexual subjectivity. Being a rape activist and closely involved with a community of similarly inclined, ‘in-sync’ women whilst also simultaneously being heterosexual, begins to feel strange for Vicky. She describes it as “disgusting” that she is in the middle, not properly fixed in any place:

*“Ja, so I said like ja, fence-sitter, disgusting, can’t live with myself, I’m going to have to make a decision...”*

Vicky needs to confront the ‘choice’ between lesbianism and heterosexuality as an active decision and process, without this she feels in-between and no-where in particular:

*“I said well look, either you’re gay or not, and if you’re not you’ve got your reasons and that’s fine but like I don’t know where I am and it was exactly that like feeling like I was in the middle you know.”*

Vicky is uncomfortable with feeling between, un-fixed and un-placed. As a self she strives for clarity and fixity and therefore insists on obtaining a sense of this via a decision or a choice between what she sees as two positions – gayness or heterosexuality. Vicky does not turn to lesbianism or being gay as a result of feeling “attracted” or physically drawn to women (“*There wasn’t like any intentions of being a lesbian or even being attracted to them...*”). The pull Vicky feels towards women is not based upon a physical attraction but is rather more closely aligned with her embracing the positive energy and power of women (earlier she says, “*I just started to appreciate that women’s energy you know and still be like completely oblivious to where it would lead*”) as well as her parallel rejection of the inner essence of men. She says, “*I mean I still find men very attractive, I just don’t find what’s in them attractive you know.*” Although she is still involved in ‘interactions’ with men, she is disillusioned and bored by them. Her picture of men has been negatively fixed and the content thereof is only repeatedly reconfirmed by the interactions she is involved in:

*“I know I didn’t want to go back to men or like because along that like time-frame there were interactions with men but it was like me almost knowing where it was going to go before it started, because it was almost as if I started sussing them out and using like a stencil, none of them ever like shattered that or did anything different, like they became so predictable and it became so boring.”*

Vicky’s rejection of men and relationships with them is linked inextricably with her increasingly personal connection and alliance with RC. Her experience of betrayal suffered at the hands of a man becomes tied to the violence and hurt suffered by rape survivors (also at the hands of men). Men become categorically ‘bad’ and Vicky turns towards women, initially not sexually, but as companions, friends and comrades.

Vicky’s increasing sway towards women and being sexually involved with them is a process born out of a change in consciousness and thinking and is cemented by her involvement in new relational circles. Change is therefore enabled and facilitated by entry and exposure to new structures and discursive spaces because of the opportunities and challenges to re-negotiate subjective positions in the light of alternative discourses and to re-write one-self through involvements with other selves in new relationships. Within Vicky’s story the process of subjective change was not seamless or rapid but was slow, involving lots of thought and contemplation:

*“So it took like ages, it took like even more than a year to just like think about what it would be like and I just didn’t come to any, it was something like imagining what something would taste like and you don’t know what it actually is, and then at a party one night there was this one woman who also had some links to RC sometime back, and I mean she was funny ... and I didn’t realise that I was getting attracted to this woman, ja, it was like if it had been in any other setting you would have seen how obvious it was you know, like the sitting and laughing at her jokes...”*

Even after all the thought and soul-searching regarding the meanings of a possible sexual attraction towards other women, Vicky still finds it difficult to recognise her desire and her attraction towards this woman. *“In any other setting”* it would have been clear, says Vicky, suggesting that in a classic heterosexual scenario the attraction would have been immediately recognisable. This is an indication of the pervasive invisibility of lesbian desire, to the point at which a self finds it difficult to recognise and own their desire and attraction towards another of the same sex. That Vicky is however, in the final analysis, able to recognise and own this desire

is as a result of the change in consciousness she experiences through her involvement with RC. She in effect re-produces various aspects of her-self through her experiences there. Her circle of friends, what she considers appropriate to speak about and not to speak about, her goals for future relationships and her internal sense of self are all re-worked during her time at RC and are directly associated with the organisation:

*“I started hanging out with the women that I worked with ... and started going out with them more and partied with them more and just became like more relaxed and proud of who I was and also started feeling more comfortable about what I wanted out of a relationship.”*

*“I mean it was like about sitting in people’s company and having them say sexist jokes and thinking – ‘Let them say this at RC’ – um, someone would have an answer to that...”*

*“I know that I now won’t sit in company or anything, any like social settings and just be quiet when like sexist jokes are said or something, I’ll always have something to say about it, you know, um, I know that as far as my brother goes and his girlfriend, they’re a lot more like wary around me, you know, about what they say or do and things like that, and I think that that’s like just taken like a lot of work at like making them know that look – you’re not going to shout at your girlfriend or like perform or like say she’s got to get your tea, um, so I think that that’s definitely links up to the work that I did.”*

*“I started to develop exactly what I wanted ... I mean I wanted someone who would listen to me, would laugh with me, who didn’t have any of this other baggage, you know ... so I got like a lot more clearer about like what it was going to be, a person that had these and these qualities and this is why I needed it – I needed someone who could listen because yes, the work at RC did require someone that you could talk to ... and I think that’s why hanging out with the women that I worked with was so beneficial in lots of ways because even though I wasn’t involved there was always someone that I could talk to...”*

*“The course and the organisation didn’t only provide me with the skills to render a service but the skills or the space to develop my-self as well.”*

Vicky’s final re-production of her-self occurs within the realm of sexuality and she moves from a position of fixed heterosexuality to a more fluid gay identity. I describe this identity as fluid because the process of ‘becoming’ gay is never finally fixed within Vicky’s narrative – her identity as gay is not hailed as final or complete:

*“Right now to me it’s about the shell that people come in and unfortunately the shell that I have been attracted to in the past two instances have been women carrying whatever that was – the excitement, the joy, the heartache, the pain, the anger, all of that, but it was the women that brought that ... it’s also like by default you know...”*

*“Right now, I mean after two very short relationships ... it’s not that I feel like look, I am absolutely gay, I know that right now I am more easily attracted to women...”*

Within the space of ‘now’ Vicky is ‘gay’ but she does not embrace this as a necessarily long-term and stable identity, having experienced one huge shift in sexuality she is more open to the idea that sexuality and attraction might shift and change in further directions. The experience of being located within the contextual world of RC, a situational locale containing a hybrid array of women and sexualities, ideas and discourses, is described by Vicky as providing her with a choice to become open to an alternative identity and way of life:

*“I think that coming to RC somehow exposed me to both worlds and I think that that’s where me feeling like I had a choice to do something else but also feeling like there has to be like some decision between the two you know.”*

The story that Vicky chooses to tell about her self, her relationships and her changing sexual identity is all interwoven with her experiences at RC. It is clear that the meeting between this self and structure has had profound implications at many levels. RC has made a difference to Vicky in the most intimate of ways possible – her very sexuality has been re-negotiated and re-positioned. The manner in which Vicky tells the story of becoming gay, the ways in which she repeatedly refers back to RC in her narration thereof, is indicative of the narrative’s powerful positioning of self and the sexual self in relation to the organisation and her work there. RC is the dominant reference point around which the story unfolds. Vicky’s story is the story of a self in dynamic dialogue and interaction with a structure. She positions her-self as ‘developing’ and ‘growing’ within the space provided by RC, actively in process along with the organisation itself. RC is also re-produced through Vicky’s narrative telling as well as through her practices, both material and discursive, both within and without the organisation. This is a narrative of subjective change through relational and discursive struggle, and of a self taking up new discursive positions.

### **5.3.8 Re-consideration of key questions**

Having presented the general contours of Vicky's story in the form of the poem and having discussed the contents of her narrative in my 'analysis' I now turn to a re-consideration of the questions I posed at the beginning of the chapter, namely:

1. Has RC made a difference to Vicky?
2. How is change constructed in her narrative?
3. Why has Vicky embraced a position of change?
4. How does RC function within the narrative of her life?

It is clear that within Vicky's narrative RC functions as the core adhesive used to make sense of the shifts and transformations that she experiences during her involvement at the organisation. RC is narrated as heralding profound changes within Vicky's consciousness, relationships and sexuality. Vicky experiences it as a new kind of world, a different space wherein she is able to explore various aspects of her self and her identity. Coming to the organisation also provides her with the opportunities to form new relationships with women distinct from those in the 'outside world.' Within RC women are drawn together by their efforts to bring change into society and into the lives of rape survivors. The climate at the organisation is therefore one marked by goals of change and societal transformation. The organisation clearly privileges women and the relationships between them and offers volunteers the space to re-think their positions as women within relationships and within wider society. It provides volunteers the opportunity to be involved as advocates of change (especially within the area of public education) and encourages personal reflection and change. Coming to a place such as RC also means coming into a certain politics and struggle history that can either be rejected, ignored or embraced. It means coming into a space striving for and hopeful of change, both within the individual lives of clients and the wider community. It means being part of a group made up exclusively of women - women who are all in some way part of a resistance movement against patriarchal oppression. Being involved in a feminist organisation (regardless of whether or not one is personally and officially identified as 'feminist') offers the space to empower one-self and to re-negotiate histories and futures.

All of the above means that a structure such as RC that offers new discourses and practices is potentially a rich catalyst for personal change. Within Vicky's account, change is taken up through a long process of negotiation and struggle. Entry into RC serves as a turning-point within her life against which she interprets her relationship history and becoming gay. RC offers her choices and opportunities and personal change is produced by these choices. Subjective change within this account thus involves active positioning - the choice of one thing and the rejection of another. Narrating change within this case study involves talking about choices and clearly marked alternatives (and worlds). This helps to make sense of the process of choice and decision-making and constructs a self that is rational and directed. Change is also thereby constructed as a rational process, the result of reasoning and contemplation. The self is the agent behind these choices and behind change. I have already argued for a view of the self as powerful agent capable of effecting change, but have also raised a dialectical view of the self as both producer and product.

Vicky is middle-class and educated and joins RC largely to gain experience within the realm of counselling (she has a history as a psychology student). She also has grown up in a context wherein she has experienced the difficulties of being a woman in a patriarchal world and had struggled prior to her involvement with RC against sexism. RC provides her with the label 'feminism' and the knowledge and tools to struggle more politically within her own life. It provides her with the discursive tools to take up new subject positions (for example Vicky takes up the positions of being a feminist, a gay woman and a rape crisis activist). A self cannot change without exposure to alternative discourses and potential subject positions – however it is also true that being exposed to alternatives does not in itself guarantee change. Selves negotiate change within the slippages and relations between histories, relationships (past and current) and the interaction between 'old' and 'new' discourses. Narratives constitute a strategy of talking about change that is able to construct the self and the process of change as continuous, meaningful and rational. Changing implies instability and flux, processes that were suppressed within Vicky's narrative account. Her-self is constructed as (relatively) fixed, her change as considered and sensible. All this is achieved via a narrative mode of talking. Narrative is able to construct images of the self as continuous and logical and to make sense of experiences from the vantage point of the cohesive, bounded, reflexive, current self who is reporting upon past events. Vicky's narrative achieves a sense of logic and cohesion largely as

an effect of the way in which she constructs her story around the central symbol of RC and her choice between two alternative worlds. The repetition of themes and metaphors helps to create a sense of order and patterning within her story.

The story of change that she tells constructs not a self in flux but a cohesive self caught between two separate and discrete 'choices.' Change is effected through her decision. Clues within the narrative point to these two worlds as being Vicky's own constructions and not naturally separate spheres (she talked of the separation of the worlds as 'work' and directly as her own construction). Separation seems to be the only means whereby she can live within both worlds free of conflict. However the separation eventually collapses and RC begins to infiltrate more and more into her life and relationships until it becomes her chosen world. This choice gives Vicky a feeling of location and place, as well as a sense of security. Why does Vicky choose to position her-self within a new place?

I argue that Vicky does so as a result of a history filled with unhappy heterosexual relationships and a feeling of being an outsider within a patriarchal world. RC makes sense to her within this historical context. Her relationships with the women of the organization are positive, empowering and a revelation for her and she begins to see her-self and her future differently as a result of these interactions. Coming into new structures and discursive spaces serve as powerful catalysts for change because selves are confronted with whole new sets of discourses, practices and relationships. Selves are always in process and therefore shift as a result of new inputs and influences. However selves remain agents in the final analysis and are capable of weaving together their own stories of meaning from the fragments of their pasts and present(s). For Vicky, change is embraced and narrated as a meaningful and considered choice between alternatives. Her decision to embrace this change is complexly interwoven with her history and with the investment she has within RC and the relationships forged within this space. By positioning her-self as gay and an activist she is able to smooth the contradictions felt as a heterosexual activist and is able to gain more power for her-self as somehow more 'fully' located as a member of the inner circles of RC. Thus in line with Hollway's (1984; 1989) work on subject positioning it is clear that Vicky gains a 'pay-off' through her new positioning.

Within this case study I have presented Vicky as an example of a self embroiled in a collision with a structure and a new set of practices, relationships and discourses. Her narrative stands as a story of change and transformation and will be read against the next case study that I present (also a story of change) and against the other voices of change and non-change that will be heard within the following sections of the thesis. I thus now move to the second detailed case study wherein I document the processes of change narrated by another RC volunteer.

University of Cape Town

## CHAPTER 6

### CASE STUDIES OF CHANGE PART 2: CARIN MAY

#### 6.1 Introduction to the story of Carin May

Within this chapter I present my second detailed case study of change. This story is similar to Vicky's in that it is partly a story about change(s) in sexual identity that are linked to an involvement with RC. Once again it is a story wherein the personal and the political mesh and intermingle and the self is re-worked within the most intimate of spaces – within the very geography of sexual subjectivity and identity. Changes are narrated across many areas of Carin's self so that a change in sexual identity constitutes only one of many reported differences. RC features very prominently and significantly within her story and like Vicky, Carin repeatedly refers back to RC when making sense of her relational history and her more current sexual identity change.

#### 6.2 Who is Carin May?

Carin is a middle-class 26-year old 'Coloured' woman currently self-identified as bisexual. She has completed some university training and has been involved within RC as a counsellor, public education trainer and as a "pieceworker" (aka personal assistant). Carin is outgoing, extremely friendly and arresting – she is usually attired in striking outfits and often sports different (always interesting) hairstyles. She is tiny in stature but dynamic and energetic in personality. Carin does not have experience with what would generally be defined as long-term "relationships" but nonetheless had an array of interactions and "thingies" (in her words) to talk about and narrate. Carin has not had penetrative heterosex and remains technically a virgin. Her narrative resonates strongly with Vicky's – both are powerful examples of selves negotiating subjective change. Within both stories the active motif is of selves being re-fashioned and re-constituted by the process(es) of taking up, in particular ways, the new way(s) of speaking and being offered by RC as discursive/material place.

### 6.3 The interviews

Both of the interviews that I conducted with Carin were lengthy and detailed. Carin had no problem in providing great details concerning her life and history and was extremely open in sharing her self with me. Both interviews were conducted in my office at university and together reached a total interview time of almost 5 hours. The interviews were both very informal, at some points resembling more of an interactive discussion than a so-called 'individual' interview. Carin and I had been friendly before the interviews and she volunteered her-self as a participant when I mentioned the project. Carin was most keen and enthusiastic about the research and seemed pleased at the chance to talk about her life.

### 6.4 The analysis

Carin's story can be divided into the following central sections:

1. Relationship history
2. Sexual identity change and struggle(s) around being bisexual
3. RC and the multiple differences it has made in her life

In the analysis that follows I will be presenting and interpreting Carin's story according to the above three central concerns / sections of her narrative.

#### 6.4.1 Relationship history

As mentioned earlier Carin describes her-self as never having actually been involved in relationships (she says, "*I've never been in a relationship really, I've had this thingie that is non-definable, but I've not really had what a person would say is a relationship...*"). This raises the tricky question concerning what exactly a "relationship" is. According to Carin it seems that a relationship is present only when both parties have agreed that such a 'thing' exists between them. However perhaps "relationships" are more elusive than this – after all one can have very intense imaginary relationships with people that one might not even really 'know'. A relationship always involves more than one self but does not necessarily have to be real for

more than one, or involve more than one, embodied person. This means of course that we are all many selves within the externally singular shape of 'person'. Thus there can be various relationships and dialogues between one's-selves - this is linked to the contention of Mead (in Crossley, 1996) that the self exists as a process characterised by dialogue and reflexivity – selves are inter-subjective, dialogic creations. Despite never having been in 'official' relationships Carin's history is replete with many rich examples of the powers of inter-subjective relations in the dynamic and constant re-production of selfhood.

Within her history Carin is heterosexually identified – this is an identification that is never questioned:

*"I mean I grew up in Oceanview and it was like normal being attracted to guys, I never even contemplated being attracted to a woman..."*

*"I don't think it was ever a question you know ... I think a lot of people accept heterosexual identity just because they've never been exposed to anything else..."*

Heterosexuality remained the invisible, un-interrogated norm of life. As a child she describes her-self as a tomboy with few girl friends who experienced difficulties in connecting with girls and 'girl-stuff':

*"I never had female friends until I got to varsity where I only had female friends ... for me it used to be this big competition with girls you know, how you dress and how you look and who's got a boy and who's got the cutest boyfriend ... and I just didn't subscribe to things like that, I wasn't comfortable with that really, it just wasn't my scene, I'd rather play with a boy than talk with them and sit there talking about girl-stuff ... I just couldn't relate to the girls, I couldn't relate to just standing there or playing like certain kinds of games that the girls played, I just didn't, I wasn't interested."*

Carin's history is marked by her non-conformism and struggles around being female, both as a child, an adolescent and an adult woman negotiating her heterosexuality. Although estranged from the traditional feminine gender role and connections with other girls, Carin is also plagued by troublesome relationships with boys and men. Her history is marked by negative feelings and experiences with men:

*“I mean I never really liked men as a whole ...and it’s my upbringing I mean I just had issues when I was a child, I saw a lot of abuse happen and I had a lot of dislike for men in any case ... I mean I just saw a lot of abuse and growing up and that shaped my perceptions of men you know, and not really liking them a lot, whenever at school when most of my friends were guys I used to call men pigs all the time, had arguments with them, I was like a little feminist at school, didn’t know really what the term meant but I was like a hectic feminist at school, really, I used to hate the whole male race with a passion....”*

*“I mean at school I used to be one of those people, I used to open up my mouth, I think that was one of the things that used to scare guys off from me is like I always used to have a loud mouth in the sense that I never kept my mouth, I used to have major arguments with guys and especially about the whole female role and the, where they think women should be ... so even at school I used to be that way you know, quite radical for the system that I came from, where a woman was supposed to play these roles...”*

Carin also relates one story from her school days which tells of the many struggle(s) she experienced as a result of her resistance to the male-dominant system:

*“I mean I just think about when I was in Std 7, I was in this one Std 7 class and I knew that if I stayed in that class I would be in a hell of a lot of trouble with the boys cause I just knew the kind of guys that were there, I would not keep my mouth shut with them and I would be beaten up and I mean I pressured the principal to get me out of that class and put me in another Std 7 class and it took them about three months before they moved me and the one final incident that my head-, the deputy principal moved me – this one guy in my class, we were arguing about something and he slapped me, it wasn’t like a hard slap but it was a slap nonetheless and I went to the teacher, ended up being a male teacher, and the guy that slapped me was a Muslim guy and the teacher was a Muslim teacher and I don’t know whether it was just a guy thing or whether it was a Muslim thing but the teacher didn’t do anything about it...he didn’t do anything so I went to the principal ...and then about a week later they had me out of that class and it’s a good thing cause I heard this guy ended up touching the girls ... they used to touch the girls, sexually touching them, getting them into the corners and I knew they would have tried it with me and I wouldn’t have stood for it and obviously means I would have been beaten up...”*

Carin is clearly involved in resistance against sexism and male-dominated patriarchy long before her entry into RC. As a young woman she suffers for this resistance – she is always aware of the possibilities of male violence and experiences this violence directly because of her “loud mouth” – she is put back into her place by this violence as well as through male non-recognition of her as an attractive young woman:

*“I used to be teased about my weight because I was short and I never grew much so I used to still have some weight on my frame and then think that’s the reason guys don’t find me attractive because I’m a bit fatter than that other girl there but then again there’s some other girl that’s fatter than me has got boyfriends so what is it you lack? You know so is it the fact that I won’t play the game, is it about the fact that I’ll tell him ‘piss off’ if I think he’s being stupid or I don’t want him to touch me ... I wasn’t prepared to change who I was just so that some man could accept me.”*

As an adolescent she experiences an on-and-off kind of romantic exchange with a male friend. He sends her repeated mixed signals and she is left feeling out of control, powerless and confused. At this point she begins to make decisions regarding future relationships – she promises her-self that she will not relinquish control so easily again:

*“I think that’s when I started making decisions for myself in terms of how I approach future relationships, for me I decided like first of all I don’t play any games, I need to know where I stand in a relationship, then I promised myself I’d never cry over a guy again, ever, and I haven’t ever cried about a guy since, not knowing I’d cry about a woman (laughs)”*

This translates into an attempt by Carin to take back control and to take back her power. She therefore proceeds to “do something” about the next crushes that she experiences and actively approaches men that she is interested in. She describes this as “liberating” for her. The next significant heterosexual interaction within Carin’s life ends badly. At this stage she is a university student and she becomes romantically ‘involved’ with a male friend. Once again she is sent “mixed signals.” He becomes involved with another woman whilst still semi-involved with Carin. When she confronts him he responds by sending her a horrible letter (she says, “I got this really crap letter from him afterwards like really ripping me to shreds”). Carin identifies this as an important incident within her life, a trigger for the subsequent directions she takes (concerning her involvement with RC and her sexual identity change):

*“But I think it was a good thing for me cause I think that experience, um, opened me up to a lot of new things that I was able to experience, man, like being able to get involved with RC ... I think that a lot of the things he said about me was cruel and wasn’t founded ...and I mean I don’t know it just opened my eyes to a lot of things and you know when something happens and it shakes your foundation, which is a bad thing when it happens, but it’s a good thing if you can learn from that and open yourself up to other things... I mean I have to say if that hadn’t happened I*

*don't know whether or not I would have been comfortable being attracted to a woman or whether it ever would have happened... ”*

Carin's history is one filled with an array of unsatisfactory heterosexual encounters as well as more general negative experiences with men. Despite this Carin does not question her heterosexuality until becoming involved with RC. She does however point to her background as enabling her involvement with the organisation. Within the following section I discuss Carin's sexual identity change and the struggles she experiences in relation to this.

#### *6.4.2 Sexual identity change and struggle(s) around being bisexual*

Carin's first attraction towards a woman occurs within the physical space of the RC building, quite literally right at the very beginning of her involvement there – the RC training course:

*“I think that, that being at RC probably precipitated my, my sexual identity change, whether it would have happened if I hadn't been at RC I can't say, you can never say, that's where it changed – literally.”*

*“...when I came to RC um one of the facilitators was like “boom” for me, like “oh my god,” I was like freaking out...”*

Carin describes the environment at RC as being conducive to her acceptance of these feelings of attraction towards women:

*“On my first day of the course it happened, but I think maybe on a different level without me being aware of it, it opened up my consciousness man, you know and, and um I think because it happened in that environment where it did happen you know, made it easier for me to accept it, if the same experience had happened to me in a different environment I don't know whether I would have been as accepting of it as I have been...”*

RC is thus cited as an important element in helping Carin to be comfortable and accepting of her growing sexual attraction towards women. Carin speaks a lot about the difficulties she experienced and still experiences as a bisexual woman. A great deal of this difficulty comes from her negotiation of the label 'bisexual':

*“My biggest problem I had to overcome about my sexuality was this whole thing about being ‘bi’, I have this thing about being ‘bi’, I totally dislike it ... so when I had to like view the idea that I’m more bisexual than either heterosexual or lesbian, was difficult, well like I am still grasping with the issue of having to be comfortable, that’s why I label my-self you know... at this point I think me labelling my-self as bisexual is more of a – fighting my own demons I think, and having to accept the fact that you know this is my identity...”*

*“I need to label things and ja I don’t necessarily subscribe to labels as being steadfast but I think for me I need to be able to have structure and um control and for me control is about naming things and having a label put on them and once the label is there I can forget about it, but I need to know what it is, I need to know what it is before I can deal with it...so for me labelling my-self as bisexual is about knowing where I am in my sexual identity.”*

Amidst change labels are needed to provide continuity and meaning and to ward off confusion. Carin ‘needs’ the label, the category, to be able to feel as if she has some kind of recognisable position – so that she can ‘know’ where exactly she ‘is’ in terms of her sexuality. Labelling and naming are important in the construction of personal identity and in the taking up of positions (“so for me labelling my-self as bisexual is about knowing where I am in my sexual identity”). The word ‘bisexual’ constructs meaning for Carin because it provides her with a coherent subject position and has a discursive history as identity and term. It gives her a ‘place’ within the discursive matrix but is still described as a difficult place to be in:

*“I think being bisexual is being very in the middle and it’s very difficult as well in the gay community being bisexual, there’s a lot of prejudice against bisexuals, I mean there was this one woman that I was flirting with the other time that totally is a lesbian and stuff even though she’s had like um heterosexual relationships – but it wasn’t like she was ever really heterosexual she’s always been lesbian, and she goes to me - ‘No, she doesn’t like ‘draadsitters’ – fence-sitters, but I know who I am, I know what I want, just because I call my-self bisexual doesn’t mean I don’t know who I am, in terms of my sexuality I know exactly who I am and what I want and where I am...”*

Carin likens this experience of feeling “in the middle” to her identity as a ‘coloured’ – she says, “It’s a difficult space to be in ...so I mean it’s like being coloured, you’re not white enough to fit in with the white people but you’re not black enough to fit in with the black people, you know it’s the same thing.” As a bisexual she claims to experience prejudice from both heterosexual and gay sectors of the community. There is a certain amount of fluidity present in the bisexual identity but concurrently there is also stability and cohesion because bisexuality remains a

recognisable and group articulated identity. Adopting such an identity label means that Carin becomes exposed to the ideological content of the word. Thus she is forced to negotiate the meanings that have historically become attached to the term – most obviously she has to make sense of her bisexual position that has been constructed as ‘in the middle’ and akin to being a “draadsitter.” Of all the women that I spoke to within this research only two women identified them-selves as bisexual (Carin and Sharon); three other women identified as lesbian or gay despite having had heterosexual relationships (and not all excluded the possibility of further heterosexual encounters in the future). How or why did Carin choose to position her-self as bisexual and not gay? The answer is that she does not even consistently refer to her-self as only bisexual but also talks about her lesbianism and heterosexuality. Carin’s sexual identity is not completed or final but is characterized by a degree of movement and shifts between the identities of lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual.

*“I think I’m in a very weird position in that for 25 years of my life I was heterosexual in everything that I thought about and who I was and I’ve been lesbian and ‘bi’ for about a year, not even a full year, so I’m not even a full year being comfortable with being a lesbian and less than a year, not even a few months when I’ve had to start getting comfortable with the identity of being bisexual...”*

*“Even though I say I’m bisexual I’m more comfortable with the idea of being lesbian at this point in my life, there’s just so many issues that came up with working with women and the abuse that women experience at the hands of men...”*

Carin thus slips between identities and it is not completely clear where she is situated. At various points in her narrative her positions shift between the various identities although she does, in the final analysis, formally identify as bisexual. One of the reasons Carin chooses the identity of bisexuality over lesbianism is because she retains a desire (albeit ambivalent) for a long-term heterosexual type relationship replete with children:

*“Why can’t you have your cake and eat it as well? You know why can’t you have the babies and possibly the male relationship but also wanting to have the female one you know...”*

*“I can’t say what the future holds, I still think that I’ll probably end up being with a man in terms of long-term...”*

The duality of desire encapsulated by a bisexual identification retains the possibilities of shifts and differences. The change in sexual identity that is experienced by Carin is narrated as one change alongside many that she undergoes whilst involved with RC (*“I had so many other changes happening in my life in terms of my personality and my growth that that was just another thing”*). In comparison with Vicky, Carin does not narrate as profound a connection between her change in sexuality and her involvement with RC. The connection is nonetheless still there. She does narrate at length various other aspects of her-self that are altered by her involvement with the organisation and lists her sexuality as but one facet of this change. In the following section I discuss these reported differences.

#### 6.4.3 RC - the multiple differences it has made in Carin's life

Carin speaks of her experiences at RC as profoundly significant for the development and empowerment of her-self. She says:

*“I think its been an amazing experience for me in terms of personal growth you know, I look back at my-self when I started on the course to the way I am now and um RC has helped me in fulfilling a lot of personal goals for my-self that I might not always have been aware of before I started here but I became aware of it when I was here and it just helped me to grow personally...”*

*“I ended up looking at my-self quite differently...it helped me focus on my-self in a different way, and making my-self, looking at the things that I want ...and it's just realising this is my life, it is my life and I need to make choices for me...”*

*“Being involved with this organisation and being involved with women that are so strong and that have taken chances to certain extents personally, realising that my needs are important you know ...and keeping that encouragement and saying “no” you need to make changes for your-self.”*

Being involved with RC means a greater awareness and concentration upon ‘self’ for Carin. She sees her-self differently and recognises personal goals that she might not have been aware of if not for this involvement. The project of ‘self’ becomes central and significant. “Growth” is induced and the individual self seems to gain an increased sense of power and recognition of self-direction and control (*“saying “no” you need to make changes for your-self”*). According to Snoek (1985:187) changes in personal conceptions of self occur in the following three ways:

“...by a process of self-discovery, by a change in self-acceptance, and by personal growth. *Self discovery* consists of becoming aware of things we believe, values we cherish, or capacities we possess when we had previously been unaware of these attributes...*Self-acceptance* occurs when we evaluate what we have always done or wanted to do in a new, more positive way. It is a very significant aspect of personal change, because it allows us to come out of hiding and to be more direct and assertive about what we want... The assumption of new behaviors brings about *personal growth* in which we challenge or develop latent capacities or arouse new interests.”

It is clear that changes in all three of the above processes are narrated by Carin. She reports greater self-discovery, self-acceptance and personal growth as a result of her involvement with RC. All of the above processes involve reflexivity and a re-viewing of the self. For Carin, RC is a space that encourages reflection upon self, identity and personal beliefs and goals. Although RC is a community of women fighting for collective change there is nonetheless a strong emphasis upon the individual and self-empowerment here. Being involved in the organisation exposes selves to new techniques, tools and practices in the constant process of re-producing them-selves. For Foucault (1994a: 95) the self is a “set of carefully worked-out procedures”, an entity that is constructed via work and ‘care’. Self-application and ‘caring’ for one’s self are processes increasingly carried out by the individual within modernity, functioning to create the mass cultivation of ‘the self’ within society (Foucault, 1988). A process such as ‘self-discovery’ attests to the open and dynamic nature of self – aspects of self are re-created and re-written as selves come into contact with new discursive options and choose to recognise and ‘discover’ them-selves within certain positions. Selves change in response to a kind of recognition of them-selves within new discourses. The recognition happens or does not on the basis of complicated histories and concurrent positions within which the new position either ‘fits’ or does not fit. Benjamin (1988) posits a theory of inter-subjectivity that points to the importance of the concept of recognition as a need in inter-subjective relationships. Benjamin (1988:22-23) writes:

“Recognition is not a sequence of events, like the phases of maturation and development, but a constant element through all events and phases. Recognition might be compared to that essential element in photosynthesis, sunlight, which provides the energy for the plant’s constant transformation of substance...the need for mutual recognition, the necessity of recognising as well as being recognised by the other – this is what so many theories of the self have missed.”

‘Self-discovery’ translates into a process of recognition wherein the relations between selves and others (other selves and other subject-positions within discourses) means a re-positioning of the self. I am proposing that the process of recognition is not only important between selves but is also present as a relationship between a self and a promised or proposed subject-position within discourse. Thus being involved in RC means that selves are tempted with an array of new subject-positions – taking these up involves a certain amount of recognition with the hypothetical self that is constructed by the specific discourse. The relationship between discursive subject positions and selves is inter-subjective, a mutual recognition and ‘fit’ between these two subjective spaces is dependent upon history, current situation and projected desires for the future (similarly to a romantic ‘fit’ between any two persons).

The change(s) in the process of self that are narrated by Carin indicate the dialectical interplay present between discursive structures and selves. Selves, discourses and organisations are constantly shifting through meetings and collisions with other selves, discourses and structures. All remain open entities, never finally formed. However continuity is constructed via certain relatively entrenched patterns governing the relationships between certain selves, certain discourses and certain structures. These entrenchments are ideological and mask oppression and inequality as natural and unchangeable. The ‘reality’ of social life is however marked by complexities and dynamism as well as resistance to strongly entrenched codes and relations. As a result power is always tenuous and open to transformation. Sites of resistance to dominant ideologies are present in certain discursive spaces – RC might be described as one such location. However RC is constituted by a set of discourses that also potentially carry the risk of becoming conservative and hegemonic (within the space of the organisation). RC offers selves new options and choices but it also restricts others. As all discourses and structures it is both enabling and constraining, productive and itself a product. It does however offer an important space for the visibility and acceptance of alternative sexualities and functions as a trigger offering choice to many women. Card (1995) insists on the importance of such choices within an oppressive patriarchal and heterosexist society. Card (1995:41) also explains the different implications of the word “choice” and claims that we can distinguish between, “‘Choice’ as an option (of which one may or may not be aware) and ‘choice’ as the act of choosing from among many options (which presupposes one’s awareness of them).” RC could be described as a

situation encouraging the awareness of sexual options outside of the hegemonic heterosexual norm.

Within Carin's narrative RC is associated with many diverse changes. These include her already discussed sexual identity change as well as an increased attention to and focus upon her self. Apart from these differences RC is also narrated as exerting a powerful influence upon the increased visibility of certain things within society. Carin claims that she 'sees' new things as a result of her involvement with the organisation:

*"It just gives you the space to start looking at things differently..."*

*"Being involved with RC it's like the norm that you see are men being violent to women, are men disrespecting women, are men like totally violating women and not thinking anything about it, and being involved with RC just opened my eyes up to so many things that I didn't see..."*

Carin's eyes are 'opened up' mostly to an increased visibility of sexual violence as perpetrated by men. Carin 'sees' rape where she never did before. Speaking of Barbara Cartland novels:

*"I can see now, that I didn't really see before was like how many of those instances were rape, you know how many of these women were raped and making it seem fine you know, like these women were thrown onto the bed and they kept on saying 'no' ...and you know I can't really read romance novels now and not see those, you know those things that are rape and before I didn't see, I used to think it was fine."*

*"A lot of times men aren't aware of what they are doing, they are not and then their relationships are messed up and they don't realise why and the women don't always know why is it at a certain point I just cannot stand my boyfriend, I love him, he's a good guy but why – and you actually look back to their sexual, their sexual relationship and then you know both of them, not even being aware of the fact that they're stuck in the cycle of rape and they're not even aware of it you know ... they're very nice guys, they're not horrible people, if you asked them they would never, if a woman said 'no', but it's their girlfriend and they've been together and you don't really say 'no' in relationships and that kind of thing, when you actually look at it, how many women are raped really and how many men rape?"*

Such an increased awareness and 'seeing' of sexual violence and rape does impact upon Carin's feelings towards men and being involved in relationships with them:

*“There’s so many issues that come up with working with women and the abuse that women experience at the hands of men that just ... I think it just scares me on a physical level of being with a man and really freaking me out that on a sexual level that you are extremely vulnerable on that level you know, and men can do a lot of damage to you physically no matter how liberated you are, no matter how emancipated you are, or think you are or whatever.”*

*“It makes you realise the kinds of things men can get up to, cause a lot of my other feelings towards around men were based on very maybe small experiences whereas you meet women in this line of work almost everyday that’s lives have been disrupted, destroyed you know, and a lot of shit they have to deal with is because some man did something to them you know, so I think it builds up a lot of anger sometimes...”*

*“You have this sort of thing inside you that makes you that, just a little bit more cautious of a man than you would have been before you got involved with RC...”*

Carin’s work within RC has clearly shifted her feelings towards men (which were not positive at the outset) in an even more negative direction. Hearing about violence and rape leads Carin to ‘seeing’ it more within everyday life and society. She says, *“Being involved with RC it’s like the norm that you see are men being violent to women, are men disrespecting women ... and being involved with RC just opened my eyes up to so many things that I didn’t see...”* This interesting association between ‘hearing’ stories of rape and abuse and ‘seeing’ violence raises a question concerning the relationship between discourse and visibility. Fraser (1999:7) speaks of the visible as a further dimension of discourse and states that, *“The visible ... does not refer simply to what is, literally, ‘seeable’ but is also productive of what we are and are not able to visualize”* and goes on to talk of the link between the visible and the articulable. Power, invested and realised in discourse, incites us both to see and to speak (Fraser, 1999). New discourses enable us to ‘see’ new things because they work to construct particular kinds of subjects and both subjective and material ‘realities’. Speaking and seeing are inseparable. According to Blanchot (1993:28-29):

Language acts as though we are able to see the thing from all sides. And then begins the perversion. Speech no longer presents itself as speech, but as sight freed from the limitations of sight. Not a way of saying, but a transcendent way of seeing.

The way in which we use language is based first and foremost on sight, both on an everyday level and at the level of academic language use. Both in our research and in our writing we try to unveil truths, to make what is secret visible and known. Writing is bound up with clarification, seeing and making the truth known (and by association seen). Invisibility, obliqueness and layered meanings are not generally appreciated or accepted as good, scholarly academic language. Scott (1991:365-366) writes:

Knowledge is gained through vision; vision is a direct apprehension of a world of transparent objects ... writing is then put at its service ... Writing is reproduction, transmission.

It has become an increasing project, among feminists and other critical theorists, to disrupt this over-dependence upon vision and sight within academia and within writing. Salvaggio (1997) documents the turn towards the oral qualities of language within feminist theory and points to the value of this move in a shift towards an epistemology acknowledging the importance of hearing, sound and the oral dimensions to speech. My own attempt at disrupting conventional methods of writing up voices as 'quotes' was to include the story of Vicky as a narrative poem which hopefully retains some sense of orality and sound movement.

Changes in 'seeing' were therefore narrated by Carin as one dimension of the changes that she experienced as a result of being involved with RC. These changes in sight were engendered through exposure to new discourses within the organisation as well as to listening to rape survivors' stories and accounts of violence. It is perhaps not so much a new way of seeing that Carin experiences but rather a different way of hearing and reading interactions, accounts and texts around her. We see here the abilities of discourse to create new 'realities' for selves and to change the ways in which other discourses and texts are 'seen' and read.

RC does not only function to impact upon Carin's feelings towards men but also works to shift her relationships with women. In her history Carin had already spoken about the difficulties she experienced in forming friendships with other girls. Coming to RC shifts the pattern of her previous relationships with women:

*“Thinking of something that you sort of asked me earlier or mentioned about um being involved with the organisation and what that meant for me and my identity, my sexual identity, is that it was weird, before I could never see my-self being just friends with a woman, you know, I liked being friends with guys more cause I could relate to them.... Whereas since I've been at RC I've realised the joy of just being in the company of women, being around women...it's just the idea of being around women in a women-safe space where I can walk the way I want, I can dress the way I want to and I know I'm safe on every level...”*

RC offers women the opportunity to build relationships with women within a woman-only space. Within a system of hetero-patriarchy women are separated and alienated from one another and are forced to compete against each other for men. All of the women that I interviewed rated the experience of being within this woman-only space as positive and important. The space is especially important to the women identifying as lesbian and bisexual. Maher and Pusch (1995) note the lack of social structures and places of support for lesbian women and highlight the importance of a sense of connection and community for a group that feels un-safe and out-of-place within wider society. It is also true that an organisation operating along 'woman-only' lines serves to re-produce gender divisions between men and women instead of transgressing them. Carin speaks of the changes that are happening within the organisation itself regarding the sexual orientation of its members:

*“I mean I think there's a big change in the organisation from what it used to be...I think when the organisation started there were only lesbian women, but over time it has shifted and actually at this point I think there are more heterosexual women in the organisation I think that's why women cling so hard to the, the whole lesbian identity or the whole visible thing of making that a safe lesbian space.”*

*“When we do the training course we speak about sexuality and we emphasise the acceptance of the 'other' – the lesbian – acceptance of it because I think people still have that consciousness of it's difficult out there for women who are lesbian...it is difficult because it isn't as predominantly lesbian anymore, I mean certain women come to the organisation because they know it's a lesbian organisation and actually being rudely awakened that it isn't as much anymore...”*

It is not only selves that are changing in collision with RC but the organisation itself is also open to transformation and change. As already noted, selves and structures mutually produce one another dialectically. Maintaining RC as a woman-only lesbian identified organisation might prove to be increasingly difficult as heterosexual women and the discourses within which

they position them-selves increasingly co-construct the organisation. Structures such as RC are not fixed but fluid and constantly shifting. A shift from a collective identity as lesbian to a more generalised kind of non-identity (i.e. heterosexuality)<sup>31</sup> might engender a huge shift in the organisation because it would involve massive sets of discourses and would affect the organisation materially and practically.

### 6.5 Re-consideration of key questions

I have presented three central sections of Carin's narrative, including her relationship history, sexual identity change and the difference(s) that RC has made to her life and her self. I now turn to a consideration of how this case study applies to the key questions of the thesis surrounding change. It is clear from my above analysis that RC is implicated in many changes narrated by Carin. These include her sexual identity change, changes in self-growth and self-discovery as well as changes in her vision of the world, seen increasingly as a place rife with sexual violence. Related to this is the perpetuation of negative feelings towards men and an improvement in relationships with other women.

Change is narrated within this narrative as multiple and varied. Carin actually talks about her sexual identity change as "*just another thing*" among many changes that were happening in her life as a result of her involvement with RC. However all of the changes that Carin reports are part of a project of self re-construction and re-production. The changes also all feed into her sexual identity change that could be considered one of the greatest changes in self possible. According to Foucault (1990) selfhood and sexual identity are closely bound and entangled in each other. The 'truth' at the 'core' of the self has been constructed as lying within the space of sexuality – the self acquires intelligibility through its possession of sexuality (Fraser, 1999). Thus, if sexuality is re-worked it means that the self is necessarily profoundly shifted and re-made. All of the changes that Carin narrates enable and add to her change in sexual identity. For example, the changes that she experiences in terms of an increased awareness of sexual violence and a concomitant negative evaluation of men and positive evaluation of women contribute massively to the change that she chooses regarding her sexuality. Her heightened awareness and applied attention to her self also contribute to a reflexiveness (a kind of self-monitoring) that fosters her new 'gaze' upon her sexual identity.

Carin constructs a sense of stability and cohesion amidst change by embracing labels and categories. These help her to make sense of the flux in identity that she is experiencing – she needs the label ‘bisexual’ so that she can create a sense that she knows ‘where’ she is in terms of her sexual identity. Once again spatial metaphors are used to construct images and ideas concerning subjectivity and identity. Akin to Vicky, Carin also experiences her self as in-between and in the middle of things – a ‘draadsitter’ or fence-sitter. Unlike Vicky however Carin does not feel the compulsion to choose between either heterosexuality or lesbianism but continues in some senses to position her self in-between in the identity of bi-sexual. The label and the category of course guarantee that the position is not without cohesion and meaning – it is a recognised place and identity dependent upon the heterosexual / lesbian dichotomy for existence.

Change is constructed within Carin’s narrative through the presentation of multiple stories surrounding the changes that she has experienced due to her involvement with RC. Change is presented underneath the guise of such things as ‘personal growth’ and ‘self-discovery’. Carin’s self is re-worked and re-formed through her greater attention to and focus upon her identity, her goals and beliefs. RC is described as a type of trigger for the ‘opening up’ of her consciousness. In this way change becomes construed as a natural and logical progression in exposure to new people, ideas and activities. The self remains continuous and coherent within this narrative re-construction of change. It is not fundamentally presented as in flux and changing but as ‘growing’ and ‘developing’ and ‘opening’ up. The core at the centre remains intact via such a discursive construction.

One of the key questions for the thesis remains ‘why’ selves choose to position them-selves within spaces of change. Why does Carin choose to re-position her-self as bisexual? From her relationship history we saw that Carin was plagued by ‘bad’ and negative interactions with men, both within her childhood (saw a lot of abuse) as well as within both romantic and peer relationships. Her adolescence was marked by struggles around being female and actual violent physical encounters with males as a result of her transgressive behaviour. Carin has a heterosexual history filled with un-happy encounters with the male gender. Coming to RC serves to perpetuate these negative feelings about men and she recognises her-self within the

struggle discourse that is one part of the discursive matrix constituting RC. She recognises herself as a feminist, an activist and a woman at odds with conventional gender stereotyped roles and positions. Being involved in the organisation also offers her the opportunity to re-negotiate her pattern of unsuccessful female relationships. This she does and discovers the 'joys' of female company. I argue that Carin's history is crucial in the outcome of her narrative (i.e. massive personal change and identification as bisexual). Her former positioning within a heterosexual identification proved unsuccessful and makes her open to a re-negotiation of that positioning – the rewards of being invested in heterosexuality have not proved significant for Carin. The opportunity to forge new relationships with other women is another catalyst for the change Carin experiences in her sexual identity. RC offers Carin the space within which to develop new relationships and to encounter and recognize her self within alternative discursive subject-positions. RC thus functions as a trigger and a catalyst for changes(s) within the narrative of Carin. It offers new discursive tools for the re-constitution of the self that might or might not be taken up. Carin takes these up because she recognises her-self within a discourse of feminism and resistance and because the 'reality' generated by these discourse 'fits' with many of her earlier historical experiences.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **DISCURSIVE CASE STUDY OF NON-CHANGE – KATIE REED**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

Within this chapter I present my third case study through the lenses of both narrative and discursive analysis. This specifically is a case wherein a position of non-change is constructed. This position is achieved not via stories but through discursive arguments that are heavily linked to dominant hegemonic discourses. It is an important contrast to the case studies of change that I have already outlined in Chapters 5 and 6 and stands as an important resource in thinking about why some selves reject positions of change and opt instead to construct themselves as fixed. Within this analysis I thus present the case complete with relational history and aim to show how a self chooses actively to remain entrenched within dominant societal discursive positions and resists adopting the discourses (many of which advocate change) proliferating within RC.

##### **7.1.1 Who is Katie Reed?**

Katie is an upper middle-class 30-year old white woman who identifies her-self as heterosexual. She is married, holds a postgraduate degree and has worked successfully for a number of years as a businesswoman. Katie is a very striking and attractive woman who is incredibly articulate and assertive. Her intelligence is obvious and she comes across as strong and purposeful.

##### **7.1.2 The interviews**

Both of the interviews that I conducted with Katie were lengthy and detailed. Katie spoke freely and easily regarding her relationship history, ideas and opinions. She is a woman of great conviction who seems always readily equipped with a clear position on issues. Both of the interviews were conducted at my office at university and totalled a complete interview time of about 4 and a-half hours. The first interview dealing with the relationship history was easy,

relaxed and comfortable. I was impressed by Katie's confidence and the way in which she narrated her-self as approaching relationships (as a strong, principled woman clear on exactly what she wanted). However I found the second interview more challenging and slightly frustrating probably because I did not agree with a lot of the sentiments that Katie expressed. In the other interviews I felt linked and connected to the participants because of our joint involvement with RC and with the broader principles in operation there. Katie challenged this ease and I found my-self slightly annoyed in places. Although Katie is similar to me in many respects (white, heterosexual, postgraduate education) I felt less connected to her than I did to other participants who were less similar to me racially and relationally.

### **7.1.3 General introduction to the analysis**

Within this analysis I will be weaving together aspects of the relational history told by Katie with a more discourse analytic focus upon the arguments that she later uses to establish a position of fixity. I will be showing how her history and her position of non-change are connected. I begin the analysis section by outlining Katie's heterosexual history and then move on to a more discursive analysis of the rhetorical arguments she uses to construct her position. The key questions that are relevant within this analysis are the following:

1. How is non-change discursively constructed?
2. Why does this self reject change and embrace fixity?

## **7.2 The analysis**

### *7.2.1 Relationship history*

Within her narrative Katie speaks of her heterosexuality as unproblematic across her lifetime. It is something that just 'is' – it is uncomplicated, simple and un-negotiated:

*"I don't really have a concept of sexuality, it isn't really particularly an issue ... I think it was sorted out fairly early on you see, I sort of knew what I liked early on*

*... the fact that I enjoyed male company was not really an issue, but I mean that was also supported by my experience... ”*

*“I even as a very young child, I um, I suppose partly because of my relationship with my father which was quite close at that time, I liked the company of men... ”*

*“It was quite clear, I never um, ja, I liked the company of male people um and ja, even when my relationship with my father went downhill um I still, it didn't affect the fact that I still like male company ... um I don't know I liked boys... I was always attracted to boys and I liked, I sought out male company.”*

Katie paints a picture in the above quotes of her-self as uncomplicatedly heterosexual and always clearly physically attracted to men (“*I was always attracted to boys*”). She also refers to her “experience” with men as supporting her attraction towards them. Such a portrait fits into a kind of thinking that posits sexual proclivity as ‘simply there’ and unchanging. It is a description that constructs her heterosexuality as a static and natural essence of her self. However at later points within her history Katie clearly contradicts this picture of her heterosexuality. She narrates an adjacent story wherein sexual attraction is largely missing from her interactions with men – interactions that are not always positive or “supportive” of her heterosexuality. Any indications of choice / active decision-making concerning her sexual identity are missing from her narrative. Despite negative experiences Katie does not experience her sexuality as open or as in any way resembling a “choice”. Active sexual desire for men is absent from her narrative until the age of 16 although she identifies her-self as heterosexual way before this:

*“...and then I don't really go out with a guy until I was 17 but that was because I thought I should, I wasn't actually, all of these other guys I've told you about I wasn't ever really sexually attracted to...um it was more for the companionship, the first guy I was ever really sexually attracted to, where I actually felt there was something there, was when I came home when I was 16 and um the plumber was there...I don't remember him being particularly good-looking but he was somehow very sexually attractive and there was, I felt almost like I was tingling, it was definitely something going on, that was the first time I actually realised what, what being sexually attracted was.”*

She goes on to narrate in detail the various heterosexual relationships she experiences after this. Despite having realised and experienced the feelings involved in sexual attraction she nonetheless enters into serious relationships with men where this dynamic is simply missing:

*“Um, and then actually straight after that virtually I went out with my first boyfriend, and I’m not really quite sure what went on there but I suppose I was attracted to him but I don’t, I don’t really think it was the same, I don’t think it was a sexual attraction, I was attracted to him probably for other reasons...”*

Katie ‘loses’ her virginity within this relationship and talks about the lack of knowledge that both she and other girls had concerning their own bodies and sexuality:

*“Girls sort of explored themselves sexually but not many of them, cause I remember one girl in the class confessing to masturbating and everyone was ‘wow’, cause she was the only one and you know this is quite ‘wow’, she was only fifteen or something, quite a few of my friends starting having sexual relationships when they were fifteen, but um I didn’t certainly know much about my body at that stage, um, or even when I was eighteen (Katie and Rachelle laugh) ja, I don’t know we just didn’t, it wasn’t something that one really talked about, in terms of you know I certainly never talked with any of my girlfriends about masturbating ever, I’ve never ever, ever done so, so um ja, not like the guys where it’s a group thing, so um I found all of that sort of stuff out with my first boyfriend...”*

Within this relationship and others subsequent to it, Katie experiences little sexual satisfaction within her relationships:

*“I think my whole sexuality was a bit switched off really, um I liked the closeness but I didn’t ever um, he, I never had a satisfying sexual relationship with him ever...”*

(Speaking of a different relationship):

*“I was sexually attracted to him, but my relationship with him also wasn’t, he was more experienced than me, he was more experienced than Bill but he, he didn’t know how to um make a woman come (Katie and Rachelle laugh) ...and I was passive about it, I didn’t sort of tell him, cause I didn’t really actually know myself.”*

Sexual attraction and satisfaction remain missing from Katie's history for a long period despite her claims that she just 'is' and always was "attracted to boys." It is also not true that Katie only has positive relationships with men (she earlier claims that her 'experience' with men served to support her heterosexuality). Her relationships with men are marked by deception and sexual betrayal. One relationship is filled with lies and jealousy (*"I mean there were a lot of problems, he lied, tried to make me jealous, he, he, I mean I would like to say it was equal but to be very honest I would feel that he treated me very badly..."*) another eventually ends because her partner of the time manages to impregnate another woman. We might wonder at this stage why it is that Katie remains committed to a heterosexual identity – what makes her identity fixed and the identities of others (such as Vicky and Carin) more open to change? Negative experiences with men are certainly a factor but in the case of Katie are not enough to move her identity. During her school years Katie is just as outspoken and rebellious against authority figures as the other two women:

*"When I was growing up they thought I was going to be the next Margaret Thatcher because I had a mouth and I wasn't afraid to say what I thought, um but I also wasn't stupid, and that was very much unacceptable really ... men didn't like it, my teachers didn't like it and the boys didn't like it, and they didn't, they showed that they didn't like it by not fancying me..."*

*"I didn't like that pseudo-girliness, I hated that, it was not, I didn't like it and it was very much that being stupid and that, cause like I didn't care, I knew that my teachers, I sensed that my teachers and the guys in my class didn't like um, didn't like the fact that I argued, they didn't stop me (Rachelle laughs) and I thought you know, I just, why should I shut up, why, why should you pretend to be stupid so that they, so that they can feel better? I didn't like that."*

*"I don't go for authority figures, I don't like...to give somebody authority just cause they're older or a man or something like that it just doesn't cut it with me..."*

All three of the women (Katie, Vicky and Carin) describe histories wherein they are in some sense outside of the dominant system. None of them fit completely into the conventional female gender role and resist it in different ways. What they do have in common is this resistance. Katie however narrates her-self as having a great deal of investment within heterosexuality. When asked what she wanted out of her relationships:

*“I wanted a husband; I always wanted a husband...well not a husband, I wanted a permanent relationship...I wanted, because I wanted to replace the, the family I didn't have, I wanted to make my own, I wanted that, I wanted some emotional stability basically.”*

Katie is invested in a heterosexual future replete with notions of “family”, permanency, “stability” and a “husband”. Katie is an only child whose family background is filled with unhappiness and instability. She experiences a strained relationship with both her father, mother and her later step-father which later leads to a complete split between her and her family. Katie is very invested in ‘getting’ back security through the creation of her own special family. Katie also speaks of extremely negative experiences with women as being part of her history:

*“Women attack you, women are not nice, I'm actually, I feel much safer with men than I do with women and that's why going to RC was such a big deal for me, cause I was very wary of going to an organisation full of women, I wasn't sure that this was going to work, cause also I, my female, actually that's the point, my female relationships um, had been quite, had been quite disastrous often...”*

Katie is unique in that she speaks of feeling ‘safer’ with men than she does with women and relates various stories surrounding the negative experiences she has had with women. She acknowledges that a lot of this negativity between women is as a result of heterosexual relations:

*“I think women, I think a lot of the shit between women is because of men, and because of the fact that they want to control men...I think women, I think, I think women are, are, fight each other for men, I think men are almost just a toy, they're just the thing, I mean it's not really very difficult to get a guy, I mean it really isn't, um, so I think that they just fight about men most of the time, I've certainly found that, that I mean I know it's been my experience with my, with many of my closest female friends.”*

Apart from being invested in notions of family and conventional heterosexual type relationships Katie also describes her-self as ambivalently positioned between resisting

stereotypical gender roles and simultaneously also wanting to 'succeed' within this kind of role:

*"I very much wanted to be very female, I wanted to wear pink, I wanted to be sexy, I wanted to be fancied by all the guys, I wanted to be acknowledged as a sexual person, as a woman that other men find attractive and that was very much connected to my class and the role that I had in my class when I was growing up..."*

Katie reacts to her alienation within her class (as the clever, argumentative one) by over-playing the stereotypical gender role 'woman' – i.e. as someone sexy, feminine and attractive to men. This points to the very un-natural status of gender roles and indicates that gender has to be worked at and achieved. This is compatible with the well-known feminist argument surrounding the "doing" of gender. This argument posits that gender is not an essence tied to sex but a series of acts and activities constantly re-worked and never fully or forever achieved (West and Zimmerman, 1991; Butler, 1990).

Katie also speaks of how she succeeds in 'doing' this version of 'woman' and achieves a social position as a heterosexually desirable, attractive woman. In the final relationship included in her narration (with the man that she is currently married to) Katie describes a very stable and loving partnership wherein she is sexually happy and emotionally connected. I would argue that her status as a happily married woman is a critically important factor when thinking about why she does not embrace a position of change. She is massively invested in heterosexuality when entering into the organisation. If Katie had entered into RC at a different period or time of her life she might have been more open to change than she is as an attractive, married, middle-class, successful woman. Selves are more fluid and open to shifts at various points within their life course, most significantly when they experience dissatisfaction with their current positions and choices. Being involved with RC supplies women with the discursive tools to re-examine their current status and to change if they see something more advantageous for them-selves positioned within other, alternative discourses. Katie would have nothing to gain personally by experiencing a huge feminist inspired 'realisation'. She is content, comfortable and secure in a relationship and is therefore not open to transformation at the same kind of level as Vicky and

Carin. In the section that follows I present the various arguments that Katie uses to maintain (and achieve) a position of fixity.

### *7.2.2 Justifying non-change through arguments*

Katie discursively constructs a position of non-change through the presentation and use of arguments surrounding the following areas:

1. Explanations for sexual violence
2. Stance towards feminism
3. Heterosexuality
4. Prizing of the individual
5. Relations with women

All of the above are very important issues for RC and the women working within the organisation. There are very specific ways of talking about these issues that circulate within the organisation (some of which we have already encountered via the case studies of Vicky and Carin). Katie goes against the grain (of RC speak) and offers ways of talking about the above issues that are part of conservative (and hegemonic) discourses.

For Katie RC does not figure within her story of self, it is not a part of her self-narrative. She does not talk about the organisation and what it represents as intimately relevant to her life, her identity and her relationships. Remaining stable and unchanged, fixed in positions is achieved via argumentative strategies. Argumentation is used to justify standpoints and positions (van Eemren, Grootendorst, Jackson and Jacobs, 1997). It makes sense that the construction of an outsider-like position in relation to RC requires the use of a series of arguments justifying the boundaries between the self and the organisation. Selves have to constantly work to remain fixed within positions – self-stasis is as discursively constructed as self-change. Katie has to use discourse constantly as an active agent in order to achieve a desired position. Katie stands as an important example highlighting both the agency and the constraints involved in being a

self. She is both an active agent capable of negotiation and change (or non-change) but also remains constrained by her current relational situation and her history.

Katie's involvement with RC means that she is exposed to a wide set of discourses and practices which encourage self-reflection, female empowerment and consciousness of sexism and the abuse of women. Feminist discourse is not present in any unilateral or simplistic way – there is no one feminism advocated or embraced by the women that constitute the organisation. However feminism is present as a complex and variegated thread that in many senses holds the organisation together and sustains it. Each woman coming to RC has to negotiate her own position in relation to feminism as well as to other kinds of related issues (sexuality, relationships with men and with women, self empowerment and societal change). Being exposed to these discourses does not translate into immediate change although it does necessitate a level of negotiation. Becoming aware of contradictions between opposing discourses requires such an inter-space of re-consideration. Katie is involved in a process of negotiation between discourses and uses arguments to re-position her-self within discourses that are in some senses antithetical to feminism and the impetus behind sexual violence activism. In the analysis that follows I present the argumentative processes whereby Katie constructs a subjective position of non-change.

- *Explaining sexual violence*

RC is intensely involved in explaining sexual violence; the entire agenda of the organisation rotates around explaining, countering and resisting sexual violence against women. In explaining sexual violence RC adopts a model that identifies rape as embedded in unequal power relations between men and women endemic within patriarchy. The mission statement of the organisation reads as follows:

**“We, the women of Rape Crisis Cape Town, have a feminist/political understanding of violence against women. We seek to confront and challenge rape in communities on the level of the individual as well as on the level of social structure and beliefs; our approach is integrated and empowering.”**

What a feminist understanding of sexual violence means is unpacked within the third edition of “The counsellor’s handbook” (Jeannes and Dey, 1999):

*“We also adopt a feminist approach that is based on the knowledge that rape, battering, harassment and exploitation are extensions of sexism and patriarchy or entrenched ideas about the inferiority of women, and therefore a sensitivity about power relationships underpins our work.”*

When talking about sexual violence and offering explanations for its occurrence, Katie does not embrace or use a feminist approach (highlighted as compatible with RC), instead Katie clearly adopts a model that enables her to distance her self from feeling vulnerable to rape and which also serves to ignore the contributions of patriarchal (and heterosexual) relations to sexual violence. Katie explains rape according to a psychological ‘trauma’ type model seeing rapists as ‘damaged’, ‘abnormal’ and ‘traumatised’ members of society. Such an explanation is incompatible with a feminist power analysis that stresses the ‘normalcy’ of rape within a patriarchal society. Katie explains:

*“So I kind of see many rapists as, as having been traumatised in some way and they become dysfunctional in their relationships, and frustrations to do with the dysfunctional relationships which they have manifest themselves in a need to exert power over somebody, to take control over somebody.”*

*“Rape is a symptom sometimes of the perpetrator’s inability to communicate with anybody, maybe not just with women but with anybody ... I think it’s to do with being traumatised, I think it’s a way that men deal with trauma and um, it’s a behavioural thing sometimes, I think sometimes it’s a behavioural thing you know if guys could try, you know if rehabilitation programmes could focus on effective communication skills, on being able to make them-selves heard, I wonder whether that would not help.”*

*“Maybe it’s on one extreme having an argument and the other extreme is murdering somebody, well one step from murdering somebody is raping somebody, it’s something that two people do together, they are communicating something but I think that both of them are dysfunctional, it’s a dysfunctional means of communication...I think it’s symbolic of a communication failure, of an expressing the self failure...”*

A psychological discourse is drawn upon heavily within Katie's talk. She uses words such as "dysfunctional", "traumatised" and "behavioural" and describes rape as an "expressing the self failure". All of these words and phrases are heavily imbued with ideological traces of meaning stemming from the discipline of psychology. Psychological discourse has managed to filter down into social consciousness and is everywhere implicated within everyday levels of talk, explanation and argumentation. Rose (1996:10) has written extensively about the relationship between psychology as an "intellectual technology" and the regulation and articulation of selves. It is Rose's (1996) claim that the rise of psychology is intrinsically linked to the emergence of new forms of subjectivity and personhood. One of the primary effects of a psychological mode of thinking is an over-reliance upon the notion of the individual. Heavily present within a psychological discourse would be the tendency to explain phenomena at an individual or inter-personal level. Thus, within such a model rape is seen as an extra-ordinary event performed by a damaged individual. Gender analysis becomes invisible within such a frame – it is 'the individual' devoid of gender and sex that rapes.

Feminists have been responsible for highlighting and questioning the simple fact that it is men who rape and men who are implicated in the majority of violent crimes. The words used by Katie to talk about rape construct a picture of rapists as abnormal men, damaged and psychologically 'unhealthy'. At RC it is highlighted to volunteers upon the training course that rapists are not abnormal men but are usually remarkably 'healthy' individuals. Rapists are not deranged or psychotic but are ordinary men raping because in a patriarchal society rape is an option and an act that although seen legally as a crime goes largely unpunished. Katie does not embrace this kind of feminist theorising regarding rape but chooses to locate her argument within a psychological model.

Why does Katie choose to do so? I would propose that embracing a psychological model enables Katie to ease the contradictions present between a heterosexual identity and a feminist analysis of rape and sexual violence. A psychologically embedded explanation enables Katie to separate the men that rape from the men that she has relationships (and a marriage with) and the men that she loves. What is especially troubling about Katie's explanations is her suggestion that rape is "*something that two people do together*" and her description of both

parties as “dysfunctional” and of rape as the effect of miscommunication. Miscommunication theory, claiming that sexual violence as a problem can be solved through better communication skills, is used not only by social scientists but also by young women to explain rape and sexual coercion (Frith and Kitzinger, 1997). Frith and Kitzinger (1997) argue that miscommunication theory is a useful explanation for sexual violence for those women attempting to sustain heterosexual relationships because it avoids blaming men, gives women a sense of control and obscures institutionalised power relations. Explaining rape through miscommunication theory and the individual pathology of rapists serves to distance sexual violence from the personal and intimate world of heterosexual lives. Katie uses the argument stemming from a psychological model in order to achieve various discursive goals. She effectively justifies and re-establishes the validity of her position as a strong heterosexual woman involved in a successful relationship by blaming rape upon individual pathology and dysfunctional relational dynamics. A set of discourses is drawn upon which enable Katie to ‘do’ certain things and to re-position her-self intelligibly within a certain discursive (and subjective) position. This attests to the validity of a consumer-like model in understanding the relationship between selves and discourses and signals the active agency of selves as discourse-users.

Katie also talks about sexual violence as something that is removed from her own sector of the community. This constructs a position of in-vulnerability and distance. She speaks about rape as:

*“A function of the past, the recent past, and a brutalized group of people is waging a war on itself if you like, and I think that this happens because the men, it’s a very patriarchal society and the men in the, from the normally disadvantaged people before, under apartheid, I think that the men had to live in such conflict with themselves and such physical violence that they were traumatised and it sort of gets perpetuated...”*

*“It’s the looking at why that people don’t want to do, because it means that you have to look at trauma and it means you have to look at the past and everybody wants to forget about the past and people, I think also the African and Coloured communities have a very big problem with actually acknowledging that they’re fucked up, to be very honest.”*

Katie engages in an active process of ‘othering’ wherein rape and sexual violence become effectively constructed as problems prevalent within ‘other’ communities; rape becomes the problem of ‘other’ people and groups of people. Katie’s community or social group is not implicated as even ‘having’ any kind of problem with sexual violence. Her group is not ‘fucked up’ in the way that she describes other groups as being. Locating the problem of rape squarely and solely within a certain group or groups obscures the fact that sexual violence is not confined to certain ‘groups’ within South Africa but is a problem across the wide spectrum of South African society. Dealing with sexual violence in such a manner enables Katie to separate her self from the stories and talk that she encounters as a counsellor active within RC. She is able to package this overload of information regarding rape and sexual violence by constructing it as a problem somewhere else, within other communities apart and separate from her own personal space and reality. Creating a separation between volunteer-work at RC, the discourses proliferating here and her own personal life-world allow Katie to remain un-changed in her relational positions. It is important to note that it might be misleading to claim that Katie undergoes no change through her involvement with RC— the very fact that she is forced to re-negotiate her views and standpoints shows that change is endemic within social and subjective relations. Nothing is fixed in stone – every-thing and every-one requires constant re-construction and re-making. Katie uses a psychological model of discourse to talk about sexual violence – a model that obscures gender and power relations from the analysis. She also actively engages in a practice of ‘othering’ in order to lessen her own sense of vulnerability. I have shown that the arguments she uses are useful for her in enabling a justification of heterosexual relations and of her own subjective positions.

- *Stance towards feminism*

Katie has a cautious attitude towards the fact that RC is a feminist and women’s-only organisation from the very beginning. She says of the training course:

*“It’s quite touchy-feely which is quite funny ... yeah the whole thing about drawing your body and all that sort of, that was, well at least you weren’t asked to get out your little hand-mirrors (Rachelle laughs) but it was fine...”*

*“Then through the training programme showed me that they didn’t, you didn’t have to sort of buy the T-shirt, you um, you know....”*

*“I found Raheeda quite full on, um and that’s great, I suppose in a way I’ve just grown up in a different environment and I never felt I had to bang my drum as a woman ever...so that’s not something I identify with terribly much.”*

Katie does not feel any need to embrace a feminist identity or consciousness and describes herself as never needing to ‘bang’ her drum “as a woman”. She talks about never having felt discriminated against or disadvantaged because of her sex:

*“The whole feminine/female revolution thing was not such a big issue for me, cause I’ve never felt constrained in any way by being female, other people might have a problem with it but I didn’t really care...”*

The above description is at odds with parts of her narrative history in which she describes struggles at school surrounding her outspokenness and intelligence (see quotes on page 98). Feminism is described as making no huge difference to her life. She says, *“I don’t understand my-self differently as a woman because of it, it’s not like I’ve had some sort of epiphany...”* Her issue with feminism is described in the following terms:

*“I think, I think the problem I have with feminism is that, that at the end of the day we should not need it, you know to, to get beyond it and maybe when we get beyond it maybe we can understand why women attack women so much, I have to say I’ve experienced quite a lot of that...”*

Katie constructs an image of her-self as unchanged by feminist discourses by using various arguments to counter the adoption of such a position. Thus feminism is constructed as something that should not generally be needed and which is not needed in her own personal life. She raises the point that a feminist position is unable to look critically at issues surrounding female violence. By implication it is suggested that feminism is over-involved in looking critically at men. Katie does not recognise her-self within a feminist discourse – subject positions offered by feminist discourses are not helpful to her. She is successful both professionally and relationally and has no investment in adopting such a position.

- *Heterosexuality*

Katie describes a split between the counseling staff and the ‘permanent’ staff that she largely ascribes to sexuality and a more “full on” type of feminism. When asked if feminism was pushed upon her:

*“No, I mean men are around, but that’s only in the counselling section, I think perhaps the permanent staff are more full on about that.*

*Rachelle: What do you mean men are around?*

*Katie: Well it’s like Joyce has a husband, a partner and people have boyfriends, you know they don’t come to, they’re not allowed into RC virtually but I mean they can come here in terms of picking you up...”*

It is interesting to note the ways in which Katie interweaves feminism and sexuality suggesting that in a context of heterosexual identification (*“I mean men are around ... it’s like Joyce has a husband, a partner and people have boyfriends...”*) feminism is not taken to the extreme where it becomes “full on”. Katie suggests that relationships with men are incompatible with a radical feminist position - this helps to illuminate the reasons behind Katie’s choice to remain outside of feminist discourses. She speaks about the difficulties involved in negotiating heterosexuality, feelings about men and masculinity and sexual violence. When asked if there is conflict between a heterosexual identity and sexual violence work:

*“ Um, no, not for me anyway, simply because I, I like men and I always have, even when they’ve been really horrible to me, I’ve never sort of blamed the species, I’d like to blame the person rather, you know it may be more effective, it’s just I, I also recognise masculine sides of my-self and I like them, you know, I think we are mixtures of the two, but it’s very hard if you are heterosexual to reject that...the masculine, or men, it’s who you are and it’s who you can, can physically relate to...”*

The above extract displays discursive techniques that are used by Katie to ease contradictions present between heterosexuality and sexual violence work. Katie chooses to construct the perpetrators as individuals, as persons rather than men and in effect erases gender and gender dynamics from the equation. She notes that this strategy *“may be more effective”* – it is certainly effective as a means of easing a negotiation between heterosexuality and the realities

of male violence. By obfuscating gender and patriarchal power relations and choosing to see perpetrators as gender-less Katie is able to re-produce her own position as a heterosexual and dispel contradictions between her heterosexuality and her work at RC. Katie protects her heterosexual identification by positioning her-self outside of a feminist discourse insisting upon an attention to gender and power relations. She chooses instead to use arguments surrounding 'the individual' to explain and account for sexual violence as well as to maintain her identity and position.

- *Prizing of the individual*

Nested within the above arguments used to maintain a heterosexual position is a prizing of the individual and of an individualistic level of analysis. Rape is explained as the action of a dysfunctional individual pathology; it is 'persons' and not men that engage in sexual violence. Feminism is also rejected along similar lines – Katie chooses to position her-self as a person, as a gender-less self rather than 'a woman'. She says:

*"The whole feminine/female revolution thing was not such a big issue for me, cause I'd never felt constrained in any way by being female, other people might have a problem with it, but I didn't really care...I suppose I did alter my behaviour but it was because I wanted other things, it wasn't about being a woman it was about wanting something for my-self rather..."*

Appealing to notions such as 'the individual' and 'person' makes invisible the gendered, classed and raced aspects of identities. Arguments lauding individual modes of analysis tend to be apolitical and insensitive to context and power relations. 'Prizing the individual' also usually translates into an unhelpful position with regards to change:

*"I am fundamentally not a missionary, I really do not think one person can change the world cause I don't think one person can change human nature, I think one person can be very effective or very destructive but I don't think you're going to change anything fundamentally, I don't believe in, I don't believe in progress like that, I don't believe in progress."*

Focusing only upon the potential of a person or an individual to effect change leads to a position of paralysis regarding large-scale social change. Katie does not embrace a collective ethics in relation to the possibilities of change but sees change narrowly through the guise of the individual. Such a position is antithetical to the rhetoric of RC – an organisation involved in promoting and struggling for change within society. Katie rejects this kind of struggle politics and instead positions her-self within a more apolitical model based primarily upon the psychology of the individual (which allows her to remain comfortably positioned within a heterosexual identification). It should be noted that Katie is involved only as a counsellor within RC and is not active within the areas of public education or social activism (as both Vicky and Carin were). Even when talking about the issue of female sexual pleasure, Katie favours a strong individual position and argues that sexual pleasure is not a right but a personal responsibility:

*“Um, well they, I can't really understand right, I don't believe in rights, I think you have to take responsibility for your own sexual pleasure and women often don't, it's very normal for men, for young boys to masturbate but I don't know of many young girls that do, certainly many young girls in my school class didn't...I think you're responsible for your own sexual pleasure cause your body is your body and it's up to you to make sure you get what you want and what you need...”*

Individualistic rhetoric is intertwined with notions of personal responsibility and accountability. Institutionalised power relations and ideology remain masked and unseen within such a discourse. Politics requires that there is some kind of resistance and revolt against the notion of the blank, neutral, decontextualised human individual that is seen as the centre of action and meaning within Katie's talk. Using an argument that prizes the individual enables Katie to distance her-self from a rhetoric of change and transformation. Such an argument also manages to 'let her off the hook' in that it constructs individual change as limited and largely inconsequential within the larger scheme of things (such as “human nature”) thereby justifying her own non-change and stasis.

- *Relations with women*

The final set of arguments that Katie uses to justify the maintenance of her position and identity concerns her experiences and relationships with women. Katie is the only participant who speaks about feeling 'safer' with men than with women – which she relates to a long history of difficult female relationships. Within her account, Katie repeatedly draws attention to the aggression and attacking nature of women rather than men. She says:

*"In terms of the community um attacking the victim, it's often done by women, men don't often, they tend to say something, but it's the women who give the woman dirty looks, it's the women who come up to them and beat them up cause it's their boyfriend who's in prison..."*

*"...they were denied bail cause it was a very brutal rape and the girlfriends, well this girl was walking along with a friend of hers and they dragged her by the hair across the road, they bashed her on the head with a brick, you know she has several injuries from these girls who were angry because their boyfriends were going to be in prison for Christmas and New Year, and the mothers as well, the mothers then come round, the mothers of the perpetrators come round and try and bribe or blackmail or, or threaten, it happens very often."*

*"The problem that I have with feminism at the end of the day, we should not need it, you know to, to get beyond it and when we get beyond it maybe we can understand why women attack women so much, I have to say I've experienced quite a lot of that."*

*"Women attack you, women are not nice, I'm actually, I feel much safer with men than I do with women and that's why going to RC was such a big deal for me, cause I was very wary of going to an organization full of women..."*

Katie chooses to focus upon the violence of women against women rather than the violence of men against women. What is problematic is her tendency to nonetheless ignore the contributions of patriarchal and heterosexual relations in this violence. She concludes that "women are not nice", suggesting that there is some kind of natural tendency for women to be nasty. When talking about men and their violence however she maintains an individualistic angle and states that, *"I like men and I always have, even when they've been really horrible to me, I've never sort of blamed the species, I'd like to blame the person rather, you know it may be more effective."* It suits Katie's purposes to construct male violence as the result of

individual peculiarity and female violence as somehow more dangerous and insidious. It assists in her construction of non-change and justifies her choice to remain positioned outside of feminist discourses (feminism is seen as unable to 'explain' female violence and nastiness). Katie neatly ignores the role of heterosexuality in the violent incidents narrated in the above quotes – she does not recognise that the women who are attacking in this example are protecting their men and their heterosexually arranged relationships (boyfriends and sons). Women are implicated within patriarchy but an analysis of this complicity requires an acknowledgment of the heterosexist and sexist society within which women are positioned.

### **7.3 Re-consideration of key questions**

The primary questions illuminated by the above analysis include the following:

1. How is non-change discursively constructed?
2. Why does this self reject change and embrace fixity?

I have argued in this case study that a position of self-stasis is achieved by the use of various discursive arguments which serve to justify and re-produce identity maintenance. Change is a dominant theme of the organisation and it thus requires a series of arguments to construct distance between this discursive theme and personal subjectivity. Through a discussion of Katie's relationship history I demonstrated that Katie is highly invested within a heterosexual position – she is happily married and espouses ideals of 'family', 'security' and 'commitment'. This position is however not closed or set in stone and the maintenance thereof requires that Katie 'work' on presenting arguments to re-establish and solidify her current positionings. Positions and identities are never completely solidified or fixed, hence the need to constantly re-construct them. In constructing a position outside RC, Katie uses explanations and arguments regarding sexual violence, feminism, the individual, heterosexuality and relations with women to justify her current positions. By using these arguments she distances her-self from organisational discourse and eases contradictions between a heterosexual identity and sexual violence work. This attests to the active agency of selves in positioning themselves between discourses and arguments in the interests of attaining discursive ends. Katie has

nothing to gain by shifting positions and remains invested within heterosexuality. Achieving this requires drawing upon various pieces of discourse in the interests of weaving together a stance that consolidates her position. Katie 'uses' discourse and arguments but is also re-made in the process of using them. The self and discourse are inseparable and mutually determining.

This particular self does not embrace change but chooses to remain (relatively) fixed. A position of fixity requires construction and discursive 'work', similarly to a position of change. This suggests that selves are neither 'fixed' nor 'fluid' but veer between and against flux and fixity – both of which are constructions. Katie is established and satisfied relationally and therefore fights to re-produce her identity as an independent, strong, heterosexual individual. Selves do not change automatically as a result of a collision with an organisation and a new set of discourses; instead selves pick and choose among discourses in the interests of gaining benefits for them-selves. The relationship between selves, discourses and organisations is not set but open and dependent upon histories and contexts.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **ANALYSIS OF THE NARRATIVES**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

Within this final chapter of the analysis I present a general discussion of the complete set of narratives (of all 7 participants). I have already commented in detail upon the narratives of change and non-change evidenced by Vicky, Carin and Katie. The issues that I will be looking at within this section cohere around the following central questions:

1. Has RC made a difference to selves?
2. How is change / non-change negotiated within the narratives?

Simply collapsing all of the narratives together and presenting only a general analysis would not be able to document the finer processes involved in 'why' some selves choose to change and others do not as a result of their involvement with RC. This question was far more amenable to a detailed individual case study approach. Nonetheless an amalgamated analysis is useful in that it enables some kind of attention to the general picture of the data. The data set within this study is very small (primarily because my focus is upon detailed cases studies) and therefore makes no pretence at any kind of 'generalising' statements. The point is that this thesis aims to study selves in action in the interests of theorising change and non-change and the relationship between selves, organisations and discourses. The structure of this analysis chapter will unfold around the above two key questions.

#### **8.2. Analysis**

##### **8.2.1 Has RC made a difference to selves?**

Before even beginning an analytic discussion around this question I signal that the answer is a clear 'yes'. The changes and differences that RC has made in the lives of these women are complex and unique to each case. For some the differences are more marked and significant than for others but each woman does have to negotiate the place of RC within their lives. The

key differences that RC is narrated as “making” cohere around the following themes (many of which were displayed already within the previous case studies):

1. Relations with women
2. Increased awareness and fear of violence
3. Development of the self and empowerment
4. Relations with men
5. Negotiating sexual identity

- *Relations with women*

This difference was the most marked across all of the narratives. Many of the women spoke of the difficulties that they had experienced in forming positive relationships with women prior to their involvement with RC and the change(s) that being involved with the organisation wrought in this area:

*Carin: “It was weird, before I could never see my-self being just friends with a woman, you know, I liked being friends with guys more cause I could relate to them ... whereas since I’ve been at RC I’ve realised the joy of just being in the company of women, being around women... it’s just the idea of being around women in a women-safe space where I can walk the way I want, I can dress the way I want to and I know I’m safe on every level.”*

*Janet: “I think I experienced for the first time how a culture of women can be positive and supportive rather than all those other things that I suppose have just been a big part of my history, you know negative relationships and kind of women pulling each other down or seeing each other as competition...”*

*Katie: “Working at RC has made me experience positive relationships with women that aren’t competitive, possibly because there aren’t men in the situation (Rachelle and Katie laugh) um, maybe that is why I don’t know...”*

Facilitating positive connections and relationships between women is a huge difference that RC makes within the lives of the volunteers. Many of the women had struggled (and failed) to attain these kinds of relationships in the past. An acknowledgment of a heterosexist societal structure is cited by some of the women (i.e. Janet and Katie above) as a possible reason for

these difficulties. All of the women that spoke about the women-only nature of the organisation prized this and were not keen on the organisation changing to accommodate men within its profile or material space:

*Janet: "Here are women who are really able to support each other, I just, and just an incredible sense of a sisterhood – it sounds so cliché, but it almost is what is there, even down to the basic principle of the organisation that I don't necessarily agree with, that a man walking into the building is like this incredible thing but you begin to feel it, the other day I left, there was a man sitting in the waiting-room, it was quite late in the afternoon so it's doubtful that he was a client but I was aware of the fact that there was a man sitting in the waiting-room and not a woman sitting in the waiting-room and that's because we're so used to the fact that it's a woman's only organisation and at some level I guess I do think that that's positive and it's okay."*

*Mary: "I mean I choose it, I actually really choose it, I wouldn't want to work um, I wouldn't want to work on sexual abuse um in an organisation which also included men, I don't feel that an organisation, a feminist organisation...within the context of a feminist organisation that is the space where I want to work with women and I sort of you know am quite jealous of it in a sense because you know just in the sense of protecting it because there are so few spaces actually and it's because it also offers the opportunity to work on all those other things that come up between us as women and whether that's about age or generation, you know whether it's about sexuality, I want space for that, I want space for that and I think it's something that can only be done within a women's context."*

*Sue: "I'd love RC to remain a woman's organisation because you know it's just a space where a woman can be, um safe."*

*Carin: "It's just the idea of being around women in a women-safe space...so it's about being in that space where there's a woman-only organisation...there's a safeness in that, and a liberating thing about that, why I would never want RC, for me, ever to be a space where men are allowed into you know and I always want to be involved on some level in a space where there's only women...when we are involved in other organisations where we integrate the sexes the whole other level of competition comes out...I like that space where there are only women, I enjoy that."*

The women talk about RC as a materially safe space wherein they feel able to experience a kind of 'sisterhood'. This is a space wherein they have the opportunity to forge special connections with other women and to work on some of the issues and differences that come up between them as women. Safety is a theme that comes up repeatedly when the participants described the women-only character of the organisation. Within an organisational discourse and

practice that is preoccupied with talking about and countering sexual violence against women it is no wonder that the women experience a kind of haven-like quality to its structure as ‘woman-only’. This is experienced as positive for all of the women spoken to. There are possible dangers to this policy however – Janet remarks above that, *“A man walking into the building is like this incredible thing but you begin to feel it, the other day there was a man sitting in the waiting-room...I was aware of the fact that there was a man sitting in the waiting-room and not a woman sitting in the waiting-room...”* The danger signalled within this quote is the tendency and proclivity of an organisation, comprised only of women, to reinforce gender difference and highlight the binary quality of the male-female dichotomy instead of finding ways in which to overcome and challenge the neat dualistic construction of sex and gender within society.

Organisations are spaces within which new relationships are built and established. Relationships are one area within which subjective change can be fostered and engendered primarily because selves are largely inter-subjective and inter-relational constructions. Organisations serve as triggers for change partly because they are comprised of a network of relationships that ‘incoming’ selves have to negotiate and locate them-selves within and against. Relational changes are significant because they often instigate other subjective changes. In the cases of both Carin and Katie we saw that being involved within a culture of women and forging new kinds of relationships with these women functioned as a trigger for changes in sexual identity and a turn from men towards women. Within a society structured mostly along heterosexist lines relationships between women are often terse and competitive. It is the heterosexuality of women – their intimate, sexual and relational ties and bonds with men that often serve to confound feminism and struggles against hegemonic gender ideology. Coming to RC offers women the opportunity to re-experience relationships with other women outside of an explicitly heterosexual world. Bonds between women become strengthened and a feeling of true “sisterhood” is invoked. Participants also spoke of the ways in which this culture enabled them to come to a greater acceptance of diversity between women whilst still remaining connected and bonded. Speaking of sexual violence as a bonding issue between women:

*Janet: “I don’t think that it allows all women to bond, but the women within the organisation are bonded around the issue, it’s very clear to see if you work there,*

*but then we're women who are more accepting of difference and diversity both within our personal lives and in the professional roles that we fulfill at RC, that is very clear to see and it's about race and culture and language...around the other issues which so fragment our whole society, I won't say it's not evident cause I think it's spoken about, um, you know in our offices, people are not scared to say "I'm white" or "I'm black" or "I'm bisexual" or whatever, we engage with it openly...I think often it's quite liberating."*

*Sue: "I actually said no to counselling white women, um but that's changed and that's definitely to do with RC and I feel comfortable connecting to all women now, um, yes, there are different colours and different classes but it just doesn't matter anymore...the common ground would probably be being female and the vulnerability that we all you know...the connection would be that we all, well not all exactly, not the same level of vulnerability but you know they are a woman and you are a woman..."*

*Carin: "There's a culture of acceptance whether that always translates into practice, but it is there in theory and I think it's up to you whether you want to take that on for your-self and make that part of you or not take it on and sort of stay who you are."*

RC is described as a "culture of acceptance" - a space wherein difference and diversity is spoken about, grappled with and possibly overcome. Struggling against sexual violence together as a community of women strengthens the connections between the women despite and in spite of their many differences across age, race, class, language and ethnic boundaries. What is linking these women together is their collective 'vulnerability' as women to the sexual aggression of men. Despite differences within the levels of this vulnerability (dependent upon other identity markers) women are joined as sexed female bodies that are highly vulnerable to rape and sexual abuse. This highlights the theoretical importance of the body as a site grounding similarities and directing political struggle (Moore, 1994). It is crucial to note however that 'the body' is not a surface prior to interpretation or discursive inscription but comes into sight and into being through discursive understandings. Seeing bodies as very neatly divided into two central (sexed) categories of male and female is not necessarily natural or inevitable but is as constructed as are gender differences (see Butler, 1993).

Speaking about issues and differences and identities is a strong norm within RC – Janet says: *"I think it's spoken about, um, you know in our offices, people are not scared to say, "I'm white" or "I'm black" or "I'm bisexual" or whatever, we engage with it openly..."* Openness,

acceptance, tolerance and the articulation of issues are all very much a part of the ethos of RC as organisation. Speaking and voicing are significant also because a key premise of the organisation is that rape survivors begin the process of self-healing by talking through their experience and voicing it. This carries over to the communal interaction of the women working within the organisation. Being forced to work with a wide variety of women (both as fellow volunteers and clients) around the issue of sexual violence serves to bridge the boundaries of markers such as race, class etcetera (i.e. see Sue's quote on p. 118). A space such as RC that offers the habitat within which to experience new kinds of (mostly positive) relationships with women across all kinds of boundary-lines triggers changes in acceptance, an increased positive evaluation of the identity 'woman' (and a claiming of this identity), as well as a reinforced commitment to maintaining positive connections with women in the future:

*Janet: "I think any kind of positive experience, it's like a re-parenting you know, now I have this positive experience with women that can reinforce later experiences...its allowed me to see more of what women can are or can be, more of the diversity..."*

*Mary talking about feminism: "It means being a woman (Rachelle and Mary laugh)...you know it's just about being a woman for god's sake, it's about being able to enjoy being a woman and being able to make your own choices as a woman and you know, and being able to have a real sense of your-self which, as a woman you're developing all of the time."*

*Janet: "For me it's the contact with the women really that's been a difference, the women in the organisation and the survivors that come through the organisation – that's what's impacted upon my life."*

RC is an unusual organisation because of its women-only policy and it is not at all surprising that it facilitates the growth and establishment of different kinds of relations between its members. That it makes such a huge difference to relationships between women speaks of the great difficulties involved in female relationships outside of women-only contexts. Men find their own solace from female company within sports-clubs, old-boys clubs and the like. These kind of separately defined male-only sites have been analysed as responsible for the reproduction of hegemonic kinds of masculinity (Morrell, 1996). Within a site such as RC however it is not hegemonic femininity or heterosexuality that is re-produced; instead the organisation stands as a challenge to conventional ways of being a woman within patriarchy. It

is thus not a site engendering the maintenance of identities but rather the transformation of identities. It is extremely important that sites triggering change within gendered, sexual selves exist and continue to effect change and resistance. However I have already raised a few cautionary signals regarding such sites – that is I have mentioned the tendency or potential for any site (whether conducive to the re-production of, or resistance to conventional ideologies) to become hegemonic and constraining within its own parameters. I have also noted that organisations running along gender-specific lines carry the danger (albeit unintentionally) of reproducing the structural binary of gender divisions. Within the lives of the participants, an involvement with RC has meant that negative relational histories with women have been transformed and ‘re-parented’. A space facilitating and enabling the meeting of women in positive, enriching ways is massively significant for personal futures and evaluations of what it means to be a woman.

- *Increased awareness and fear of violence*

An increased awareness and (sometimes) fear of violence is reported by most of the women within the study. This effect or impact is hardly surprising. Being a volunteer at RC means hearing about, discussing and thinking about sexual violence frequently and intensely. The women say:

*Sue: “I’ve definitely become more aware, you know about abuse and things like that...but just um I don’t have a negative attitude towards men, I don’t think ‘oh you’re a rapist’ or anything, um, but ja I’m aware...like the child sex-play like I’m not always sure like the age gaps between the guy and the girl and when it’s sex-play and when you know it’s slightly abusive um, like I’ve got younger cousins, like I’ve got boy cousins, um, and I just like wonder about child sex-play, like I’ve got two cousins and an older boy cousins you know, the two girls are always with the boys and I always wonder, ja, but the girls are fine you know being tomboys whatever but I wonder what happens you know, I wonder.”*

*Janet: “I think I’ve been able to carry on with my personal life and separate in a sense the work that I’m doing but incorporate it in a way that’s healthy around being aware of what, of the threat that my society and the city in which I live poses to me on a daily basis...”*

*Janet: “And then got a new client that had been raped at a public place which I had just discussed possibly going to, and she lives quite near to me as well, those*

*are, I felt quite, I wouldn't call it upset but I just felt a bit distressed after that...it just hit so much closer to home than anything else, when you realise how vulnerable you are and how many people that you see in your daily life could be survivors, it is hard to just dismiss that as a statistic...it's much more real..."*

Carin on being asked whether she is more cautious now:

*"A hell of a lot more, I was just thinking you know I used to flirt on the train with the guys you think is cute, give a little flirting eyes without even talking to this person...but now I wouldn't do it, I'm like thinking you never know what kind of psycho you were trying to flirt with or what that person might think you might mean and then you get to a station and this person tries to grab you, I just don't do it anymore you know, so it makes you more cautious I think about approaching men."*

*Carin: "You've got rape so much on your mind, you think about it constantly, you almost, a fear of thinking about it too much, you're going to draw it to your-self you know..."*

*Katie: "One is more aware and I want to do, I think it's very important to do self-defense, I'm going to do self-defense in January, I think it's one of the few things you can do to help your-self and I think it is important to do that."*

*Vicky: "It also made me like a lot more wary, um just about who people can trust...it opened my eyes to sexual violence..."*

It is clear from the above quotes and snippets that an involvement with RC has meant a far greater awareness of rape and sexual violence as well as in some cases an admitted heightened fear of sexual violence within the narratives of the participants as a whole. This difference 'made' by working and interacting within RC is not wholly positive. The threat of sexual violence and the concomitant restrictions and measures taken by women (and their male husbands, fathers, boyfriends) to ensure their safety form a key means by which women are oppressed and un-free within patriarchal societies. Fear of violence translates into curtailed movement, experiences, travel and opportunities and is a central mechanism denying women full citizenship as free agents.

Working within a context of sexual violence obviously means a heightened awareness of one's own vulnerability to rape. Awareness and fear of rape is already high within the general female population (Stanko, 1985; Kelly, 1988) and has been described by Brownmiller (1975) as the primary mechanism through which male dominance over women is perpetuated. Thus it is not

only acts of rape and sexual violence that serve to disempower and oppress women but also the threat, fear and stark possibility of being victim to such acts. Female sexuality has been described as a complex interplay between notions of pleasure and danger (Vance, 1984; Tolman and Szalacha, 1999) with women being warned and cautioned from an early age concerning the possible dangers posed to their female bodies. Although the realities of female abuse and rape are significant, discourses of sexual violence that restrict and limit the freedom and agency of women might be seen as oppressive in themselves. This is a danger of sexual violence feminism in particular which tends to over-stress the vulnerabilities of women at the expense of their power and agency (Roiphe, 1994; Hollway, 1990; 1995).

RC is an organisation operating along the lines of sexual violence feminism and as a result the women working here are confronted with such discourses. Positively however there is an adjacent focus within RC upon empowerment and activism. This focus is mostly surrounding issues of self-growth, independence and struggles against patriarchy (and hegemonic forms of heterosexuality). Women becoming involved with RC have to negotiate the place of these discourses within their lives. Most of the women do report increased awareness (and resulting cautionary behaviours) stemming from this involvement. Carin (see quote on p. 121) describes feeling “a hell of a lot more” cautious about approaching and initiating interactions with men. Some of the women also report differences in the amount and type of things which they now ‘see’ as being abusive or borderline abusive (i.e. see Sue’s quote on p. 120). The self is seen as increasingly vulnerable to violence and rape – at the hands of men. Heterosexual women entering the organisation are thrown into a quandary in making sense of and struggling with discourses which ‘trouble’ and confound their position within a heterosexual identity. This difficulty is negotiated differently for the women that participated within this study. Two (originally) heterosexual women decided to reject heterosexuality (to different degrees) and opted for alternative sexual positions. The other two heterosexual women used different techniques to solve their ‘dilemma’. Katie (as I have shown in detail in the previous chapter) used various arguments to bolster and justify her heterosexual positioning. Janet (the remaining heterosexual woman) dealt with the dilemma by creating a space between ‘hegemonic’ versions of heterosexuality and her own particular ‘brand’ of struggle heterosexuality, which she proceeded to label “heterosexuality on the margins”.

- *Development of the self and empowerment*

RC is a space wherein volunteers are provided with the discursive tools to re-make themselves. Discourses lauding feminism, self-empowerment, sexual diversity and resistance against the mainstream provide women with a variety of new possible subject positions. One of the great themes used to talk about changes to the self in connection with the organisation refer to empowerment and self-growth:

*Janet: "I've learnt a lot, I've seen a lot and what's more empowering than being able to empower other people and I've had that opportunity, I've had the opportunity to meet with some, some incredible women..."*

*Sue: "The training course um, it was definitely challenging um I really like learnt a lot you know in a short space of time um, it was good and it was about me being comfortable with me and being comfortable with others um, I enjoyed it...I definitely learnt a lot about my-self, like exactly what and what I'm not cool with and different ideas..."*

*Vicky: "The course and the organisation didn't only provide me with the skills to render a service but the skills or the space to develop my-self as well."*

*Janet: "I do feel more empowered, on one level I think it's about personal growth but maybe I do feel empowered by being around women who are, who are strong, wanting to empower other women, who see it as a possibility if not a right and I think it is a right, um, maybe on some level they do make me say I don't need to put up with anyone's crap just because they're a man and just because I'm a woman, I have a right to take what I want or to be who I want to without apologizing for it, without compromising on my principles."*

*Sue: "It's definitely been a place for me to just be whoever I am and um it is a safe space, there are lots of politics and um but as a volunteer it's been a great place to just be who you are, just to absorb you know new ideas, it's definitely contributed to my personal growth um you know my personal development um ja."*

*Carin: "I think it's been an amazing experience for me in terms of personal growth you know, I look back at my-self when I started on the course to the way I am now and um, RC has helped me in fulfilling a lot of personal goals for my-self that I might not always have been aware of before I even started here...and it has just helped me to grow personally..."*

*Vicky: "I think it's been very, very positive for me but also for the women that I've seen and I feel like I've developed and grown a lot over time, you know what I mean?"*

In response to being asked whether the experience has been empowering:

*Sharon: "Oh certainly, I'm really very pleased that I'm doing the work and I'm often astounded that I can sometimes when I hear certain things and that I'm able to just...and in fact its affected me in my relationships with others too in terms of listening."*

A particular theme evident within the above quotes relates to a kind of 'coming into one's self' through an involvement with RC. The women refer to 'personal growth', 'development', learning about them-selves and coming to a greater understanding of them-selves as well as their own rights and goals. RC is a space within which the women speak about being allowed to just "be who they are". This creates a kind of false impression that RC is a place wherein selves do not change but instead are allowed to just 'be' as they 'are'. From the above quotes it is clear that selves undergo major revision and re-making through involvement with RC. This reproduction is presented underneath the guise of 'growth' and development that construct selves as static entities unfolding and expanding along a 'natural' path of actualisation and progression. A great deal of the sense of empowerment engendered by the work is due to its image within society as 'difficult' and challenging work (i.e. working with rape survivors is often seen as strenuous and 'hard'). Janet says:

*"Either someone in the organisation praises me or a friend or a family member finds out about it and compliments me on being able to work there then I do feel changed in some level I realise, well kind of forced to acknowledge for my-self what I've been able to do and that it is an achievement, it's not something to just be taken for granted and I do feel enriched for having done it..."*

The empowerment of these selves is linked to the narrative theme identified earlier – that is increased positive relationships with women. It is through these relationships, characterised by a degree of tolerance and openness that new conceptions of 'being a woman' are effected. The strength and resilience of the women of the organisation - both as clients and fellow-workers – as well as the "joys" of being women together is connected to greater self-empowerment as well as a greater sense of self-ownership. 'Owning the self' comes through as a theme within the quotes on page 123. Expressions such as "*it was about me being comfortable with me*", "*I have a right to take what I want or to be who I want to*", "*its been a great place to just be who you are*" speak of selves 'coming into them-selves' so to speak and developing a greater sense

of ownership over who they are and want to be. The journey is one 'into the self' wherein the resources of history (past experiences and life of the self) in tandem with a reflexive process triggered by an involvement with RC allow these selves to 'become them-selves' so to speak. The previous life of the self is the main resource against which particular selves read the discursive matrix constituting RC. They 'have' past experiences, difficulties, dilemmas and observations (making up their history) with which to negotiate present positions and transformations. RC functions as a trigger for change because it offers new ways to interpret both the past and the future of particular selves. Although participants speak as though the process has simply involved 'coming into' the truth of them-selves – as if this truth always existed and was merely awaiting 'discovery' – the likelihood is that selves become new and altered through grappling with alternative images and possibilities of being them-selves. Fraser (1999) notes that intelligible selfhood is comprised of the following three elements: individuality, responsibility and continuity. Within narratives it is palpably clear that selves construct each of these three elements in the probable interests of re-producing them-selves in line with a western idea of selfhood. Thus change – a potential disruption to notions of continuous, bounded, rational selfhood – is re-presented as 'development', 'growth' and narrated as a process of coming to the truth at the core of the self.

RC as an organisation has been cited by many of the participants as triggering growth and development of them-selves. I propose that such a trigger is due to the outsider-like position of the organisation with respect to dominant discourses. The talk and 'speak' of the organisation is different and contradictory to that heard within 'mainstream' society and institutions. The organisation celebrates survival, strength, empowerment and struggle and offers women images of womanhood at odds with convention. The organisation fosters attention to personal issues and strives to interlink the political with the personal. Such a climate encourages 'attending' to the self via a series of techniques and strategies. These include specific emphases upon the self as gendered and sexed, encouraging a new 'gaze' upon these elements. Knowledge is 'given' to the women of RC – knowledge pertaining to feminism, sexism, violence, abuse and the interconnection of these issues with personal, everyday lives and decisions. Knowledge and power are inseparable according to a Foucault (1980). The knowledge disseminated within the organisation is linked to discourses which are necessarily imbued with the power to re-fashion subjectivity. Power is of course not equally attached to discourses – some discourses are more

hegemonic and entrenched than others. Within RC discourses of feminism and resistance to patriarchy are dominant within the space of the organization (but marginal within wider society). Power is interwoven with the production and re-production of subjectivities and is realised through discourses. Part of the power of RC to change and transform identities and selves is connected to its ethos as a space of talking, speaking, confessing and inciting to discourse various aspects of sexuality and subjectivity. Foucault (1990:32) writes of sex in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as follows:

“Sex became something to say, and to say exhaustively in accordance with deployments that were varied, but all, in their own way, compelling. Whether in the form of a subtle confession in confidence or an authoritarian interrogation, sex – be it refined or rustic – had to be put into words... And these discourses on sex did not multiply apart from or against power, but in the very space and as the means of its exercise. Incitements to speak were orchestrated from all quarters, apparatuses everywhere for listening and recording, procedures for observing, questioning and formulating. Sex was driven out of hiding and constrained to lead a discursive existence.”

An involvement with RC means that the sexuality of selves gains attention and is explored via talk and conversation. Selves are incited to ‘speak’ them-selves into discourse and to construct their own unique stances on issues such as sexuality and feminism<sup>32</sup>. The space within which to ‘speak’ them-selves is against, between and within discourses of sexual violence and feminism proliferating within RC and more hegemonic discourses regarding gender, sexuality and relations between women and men. Heterosexuality is one issue that is forced into discursive existence at RC – it has to be “put into words” (to use Foucault’s phrase from the above quote) and is driven from a state of invisibility and normalcy within patriarchy to a state of discursive questioning, interrogation and negotiations within RC. Empowerment and development of selves is described as an effect of an involvement with RC. Within a climate of struggle and negotiation around identities, selves are incited to change (although this is not always the word used by participants). ‘Growth’, ‘development’ and change are stimulated within conditions of discursive contradiction and negotiation. Within RC many selves are changing and shifting and ‘growing’ – along with the women who come for counselling – and it is within such an environment that change is invoked.

- *Relations with men*

Coming to RC means having to negotiate relationships with both women and men. I have already discussed the changes made to female relationships engendered by an involvement with RC. Relationships with men are also described within the narratives as changing and shifting due to work within RC:

*Rachelle: "Does your work in the area of sexual violence affect your relationships with men?"*

*Mary: It has done, yeah, definitely it did very early on, that was one of the things that happened between my-self and my husband ...and it did yes very much and we had a very tough time with it and it was round about that time as well that I had to, I had to redefine a lot of prior sexual experiences and basically I had to redefine them as abuse and in a sense nothing has ever been the same since then and that's hard..."*

*Carin: "Being involved with RC it's like the norm that you see are men being violent to women, are men disrespecting women, are men like totally violating women and not thinking anything about it..."*

*Carin: "...there's just so many issues that come up with working with women and the abuse that women experience at the hands of men that just...it scares me on a physical level of being with a man and really freaking me out that on a sexual level that you are extremely vulnerable..."*

An increase in negative feelings towards men is linked to the greater awareness and fear of sexual violence that I have already discussed (and is clear from Carin's words above). It was not something spoken of as an effect across the sample of narratives but was confined to the narratives of the women who identified as bisexual or lesbian. The two heterosexual women claimed not to have developed any kind of change in their feelings toward men. This is possibly a discursive strategy whereby heterosexuality is protected and maintained. Carin, Vicky and Mary (who all turned away from heterosexuality) voiced a great deal of disillusionment, fear and negativity regarding relationships with men. Within all three of these cases RC (and sexual violence feminism more generally in the life of Mary) functions to provide new discursive tools with which to read and interpret past heterosexual relationships and experiences (see Mary above). It is largely dependent upon a particular collision between past experiences and the new reflexive tools and knowledge offered by RC speak that histories

are re-interpreted as abusive. For women who have greater investments within heterosexuality (i.e. Katie) and who have experienced mostly positive relationships with men (i.e. Janet) the discursive tools of RC will be taken up in different ways.

### **8.2.2. How is change / non-change negotiated within the narratives?**

- *Negotiating sexual identity*

I have already presented two detailed case studies (i.e. Vicky and Carin) narrating a connection between sexual identity change(s) and an involvement with RC. Changes within sexual identity are intertwined with the other differences that RC is described as 'making' within the lives of volunteers. Thus I see such sexual identity changes as linked to changes in female relationships, an increased awareness and fear of sexual violence, empowerment, development of self and a greater sense of self-ownership as well as changes in male relationships. All of the differences that RC 'makes' revolve around negotiating heterosexuality and gender identity. Each of the women chose to negotiate these issues in different ways resulting in various degrees of change and non-change. It is within this section that I introduce the second question signaled within the beginning of this chapter, namely: How is change / non-change negotiated within the narratives? In what follows I outline the various ways in which coming to RC triggers a negotiation in sexual identity (referring only to the cases of Vicky, Carin and Katie to illuminate general points and consolidate my arguments).

Coming to RC means coming into a space wherein sexuality is visible and spoken about. Heterosexuality in particular becomes much more 'seen' in comparison with its status within broader society as the natural, invisible and unquestioned sexual identity (Jackson, 1996). Being confronted by alternative sexualities, feminist discourses as well as discourses pertaining to sexual violence means that heterosexuality and conventional gender identity is likely to fall into a quandary and dilemma. Vicky and Carin deal with this dilemma by opting out of a heterosexual identity and re-position them-selves as lesbian and bisexual respectively. It is not clear that heterosexuality has been completely or forever rejected by these two women - and the suggestions within the narratives indicate that heterosexuality has not been completely given up:

*Vicky: "Right now, I mean after two very short relationships, S. and I have only been seeing one another for a year and the previous woman that I kissed at the party- that only lasted for like three weeks or so, so it's not like I feel like look I am absolutely gay, I know that right now I am more easily attracted to women."*

*Carin: "I can't say what the future holds, I still think that I'll probably end up being with a man in terms of long-term..."*

It is through the concepts of recognition, investment and reputation<sup>33</sup> that the sexual identity changes of Carin and Vicky can be potentially understood. Through identifying increasingly with the organisation and its ways of being and talking both women increasingly 'recognise' them-selves within the space of RC. They recognise them-selves as feminists, activists and resisters to dominant and hegemonic gender ideologies. As they increasingly recognise their own selves within subject positions offered by RC their investment within the organization becomes more weighted. Each becomes more invested within RC and less invested within the 'outside world' (to use Vicky's metaphor). An increasing investment also adds importance and significance to the reputation of the self within the organization. The reputation of the self as completely aligned with and part of the struggle of the organisation becomes very important. Vicky talks about this process as a "choice" between RC and the outside world wherein her sexual identity change can be read as evidence or proof of her allegiance and commitment to the organisation.

Other selves participating within this research did not narrate the same degree of recognition and identification with the organisation. Often these selves were merely involved with RC in the interests of acquiring certain skills (i.e. counselling experience). Although these women did not report great changes in sexual identity they were nonetheless also engaged in negotiating change, non-change and sexuality. In what follows I will briefly be presenting the negotiations around change and non-change narrated within the stories of the remaining four women – Mary Knowles, Janet Sims, Sue Potgieter and Sharon Ben.

Mary Knowles, a 44 year-old white woman self-identified as lesbian had been involved in the women's movement and activism against sexual violence for many years before her entry into RC. Her case is thus slightly different to the others in that her entry into RC does not signify her first working experience within the area of violence against women. Mary does talk about

her initial entry into sexual violence feminism as changing her substantially (and leading to her change in identity from heterosexual to lesbian):

*Rachelle: "Has this work affected your personal life? – I suppose that would be going back to your earlier activism..."*

*Mary: Hugely, hugely, hugely...the sexual abuse of women and children has been an issue that has come into my professional life and into my personal life that has consumed me for at least that long, um, and I was coming to terms with a lot of those issues I guess...I do feel quite strange in RC because most of the women could be, I'm old enough to be their mother (laughs) and it's quite strange, um, so I feel like I'm a generation on and lots has changed...I just, for me it's like getting in touch with um something quite central to my own identity, I need to..."*

Mary describes her-self as having struggled with her sexuality for years and she relates this to child sexual abuse. Coming into sexual violence activism is talked about as significant in terms of these struggles and in making sense of her past experiences. Mary is still technically married (but in the process of separating); she does describe sexual violence work as impacting negatively upon her marriage:

*Mary: I've been struggling with my sexuality for years and it has been difficult, I know what that's about, it's basically about child sexual abuse and so we're actually in the process of separating..."*

Talking about whether sexual violence work impacted upon her marriage:

*"It has done, yeah, definitely it did early on, that was one of the things that happened between my-self and my husband...we had a very tough time with it and it was around about that time as well that I had to, I had to redefine a lot of prior sexual experiences and basically I had to redefine them as abuse and in a sense I guess nothing has ever been the same and that's hard, um, ja and I'm still doing that right now in a very different kind of way, I mean it's not like, it's just like that's where it started and whatever the story is it carries on the whole of the rest of the time you're alive, it doesn't just stop...but as far as, as far as having any kind of sexual relationship goes it's just, there's no way, I mean it hasn't been happening for ages and it's not going to happen..."*

Within Mary's story there is evidence of subjective and relational changes engendered by involvement with sexual violence work. What is significant and noteworthy regarding this

particular case is that change is narrated as being sustained across many years with sexual violence work described as integral and necessary to Mary's identity. She says:

*"The sexual abuse of women and children has been an issue that has come into my professional and into my personal life that has consumed me...for me it's like getting in touch with um something quite central to my identity, I need to...I mean I need to do it, I'm not happy if I'm not..."*

Within this narrative sexual violence work is constructed as making a huge difference and impact to the life of the self. It provides Mary with the tools to re-define and re-interpret her past experiences and provides her with a series of material practices that enable her to feel as if she is making a difference to the plight of women and children. She describes her-self as 'needing' to do this work and says that seeing violence just *"fuels my determination to kind of stick in there and hold out."* Within this narrative the changes wrought by sexual violence work are constructed as continuous and sustained, she says, *"it's just like that's where it started and whatever the story is it carries on the whole of the rest of the time you're alive, it doesn't just stop..."*

Janet Sims, a 23 year-old white woman self-identified as heterosexual, negotiates her heterosexuality in very interesting ways. Her constructions of her heterosexuality and its relationship to her work at RC and in her life stand out as different to the argumentative devices used by Katie to justify her position(s). The key strategy used by Janet is to position her-self as outside of hegemonic heterosexuality and to reluctantly identify her-self as 'heterosexual'. In talking about heterosexuality and her negotiations with this identity she says:

*"Um, it's probably more about definitely knowing that I don't want to have a sexual relationship with a woman or with men and women, so I definitely know that I'm never going to be bisexual or a lesbian and as for whether that makes me heterosexual, I suppose in many ways I am, many people would define me narrowly and happily within those terms but they don't know how I negotiate my daily life, can't assume to know everything about what that means to me."*

*"It's how you negotiate your experience of it, that's what I have to do all the time rather than think about how I'm going to name it or make sense of it and I suppose I am, particularly because feminism is important to me as a personal principle or"*

*part of my identity, I am thinking all the time what my heterosexuality means for me."*

*"You're okay with being in relationships with men only and therefore being heterosexual but there's diversity within that you know, some people are happy like with any other label to accept it, to accept all the conventional ideas attached to it but for some of us it's kind of a little bit more blurry and there's more questioning and negotiating and a higher level of awareness I suppose...I certainly don't think that my heterosexuality has to be at odds with who I am as a feminist, I don't believe I have to give up my heterosexual identity to be a true feminist, however on earth a true feminist might be..."*

*Rachelle: Hegemonic heterosexuality is the only one that is acknowledged in society but then there is that other subtle form that doesn't really have its own word – you know what I mean?*

*Janet: It's heterosexuality on the margins (Rachelle laughs)*

Janet calls her particular 'brand' of heterosexuality, "heterosexuality on the margins" constructing her-self as separate from and not a part of hegemonic versions of heterosexuality. Her heterosexuality is different from seamless unquestioned 'types' - it is negotiated everyday and "all the time". Janet introduces an attention to the diversity and multiplicity contained within the term 'heterosexuality' and indeed within all terms and labels. Within the quotes on page 131 it is evident that Janet resists the label of 'heterosexual' to some degree ("*as for whether that makes me heterosexual, I suppose I am in some ways...It's how you negotiate your experience of it, that's what I have to do all the time rather than think about how I'm going to name it or make sense of it...*"). Janet is resistant to being categorically labelled and fixed in a heterosexual identity – an identity associated with a semantic content that is in many aspects antithetical to the feminist identity that she embraces. Jackson (1996) questions the tendencies of some heterosexual feminists to resist the label 'heterosexual'. She writes:

*"It is women's subordination within institutionalized heterosexuality which is the starting point for feminist analysis. It is resistance to this subordination which is the foundation of feminist politics. It is hardly surprising, then, that heterosexual feminists preferred to be defined in terms of their feminism – their resistance – rather than their heterosexuality, their relation to men. Resisting the label 'heterosexual', though, has its problems. It can imply a refusal to question and challenge both the institution and one's own practice; it can serve to invalidate lesbianism as a form of resistance to patriarchy and to deny the specific forms of oppression that lesbians face" (Jackson, 1996:31).*

Janet's resistance to the label 'heterosexual' is a discursive technique used to reconcile her particular 'kind' of heavily negotiated version of heterosexuality and her feminist identity. A feminist identity places women on the borderlines of acceptability as good gendered products of hegemonic discourses. Heterosexuality on the other hand is part and parcel of this self-same hegemony positioning women as less powerful, passive and second-class citizens of patriarchal societies. Janet wants to maintain a position on the borderlines and on the margins rather than a staid and conventional position in the middle of hetero-patriarchy. Thus she identifies her version of heterosexuality as "heterosexuality on the margins" and resists being positioned within the centre. She says:

*Rachelle: "Do you like being on the margins?" (laughs)*

*Janet: "I don't know sometimes, I think people that don't know me very well think I just sit squarely in the middle of everything but those that do realise that if I do sit there I don't sit all that comfortably."*

Janet does recognize that a hegemonic kind of heterosexuality is incompatible with working at RC and 'being' a feminist. When asked whether she experienced any conflict between sexual violence work and her heterosexuality:

*"I think it depends on how you view your heterosexuality and I suppose how you view sexual violence work as well, if you're prepared to think a little bit laterally on one or both of them then they needn't come into conflict, they don't for me, but if kind of hegemonic heterosexuality, if you embrace that on all levels of your personal life and you come into an organisation in which you're forced to think about how, how that conventional heterosexuality, how that gets interlaced with violence and how its got to do with how society's structured, then I think, I imagine it could be quite threatening."*

Change does not feature as an important aspect of Janet's narrative. She does talk about differences made to her-self, differences which I have already outlined earlier in this chapter. Despite these 'differences' the self is not constructed as changing in any fundamental subjective way. Janet says:

*"I just wonder sometimes whether the fact that it hasn't made a huge impact is simply about the fact that um I had quite a high level of awareness about gender dynamics before, perhaps people who come into the organisation without a lot of*

*that stuff, then it is this incredibly transforming experience for them but I can't really say that it has been for me..."*

Janet says that her involvement with RC "hasn't made a huge impact" and was not a transforming experience. However Janet did narrate several changes or differences 'made' to her-self – that is she reported a great change in her relationships with women, feelings of empowerment and self-growth and a greater awareness of sexual violence. These 'differences' are obviously not seen as changing what the self 'is' in any massive way. Changes in sexual identity however were narrated as huge and complete changes to other selves (i.e. Vicky and Carin) – this once again suggests the interwoven relationship between selfhood and sexuality. Janet talks about her sexuality and her-self as un-changed, she says:

*"It hasn't made me question my sexual preference, I still know who I am."*

*"I'm still happy to be heterosexual, I may think about things more, I may question things more, I may feel empowered to negotiate more things but it doesn't mean I would choose not to be heterosexual, although I'm not even thinking about not being, I am sure of it."*

The above quotes testify to the inseparable relation between knowing the self and being possessed of, and 'sure of' a sexuality. McWhorter (1999:11) writes:

*"In the western world today, we understand sexuality to be the name of who we are. Simultaneously, we understand it to be the name of what most threatens us and what we most urgently need to know."*

Sexuality is threatening because it functions as a cornerstone to our very identities as selves. It is also inseparable from gender identity. Thus being heterosexual is tied up with particular ways of 'being' a woman in society and in relation to both men and women. Changes in sexuality and in the way(s) in which sexuality is talked about and constructed are "threatening" because they threaten our very status as selves - selves that remain gendered and defined relationally. In Janet's case her-self is not constructed as changing fundamentally through an involvement with RC – she narrates various 'differences' made but presents her-self as un-changing. It is largely through her negotiations around being heterosexual that the her-self is

constructed as 'known' to her and as unchanging in form and content - she says, *"It hasn't made me question my sexual preference, I still know who I am."*

Within the narratives of the last two participants, Sue Potgieter and Sharon Ben, there is not a high level of talk concerning changes to the self. Once again there are descriptions of 'differences' being made to their lives but their selves are constructed as un-changed. Sue Potgieter is a 22 year-old 'coloured' woman who identifies her-self as gay. Sue related a history wherein she felt 'different' sexually from quite a young age. She does talk about 'starting off straight' but is involved in relationships with women from adolescence onwards. Sue describes her-self as positioned ambivalently prior to her involvement with RC. She says:

*"Um, I went to RC you know thinking maybe I'm bisexual, maybe I'll end up straight you know for my family's sake, to be safe I suppose, and then I got to RC and there were all these dykes who were okay with it, was this environment for dykes just to come out and just to be and everyone was accepted um, ja, ja, so like RC was the first place where I sort of you know came out and said well look actually 'I'm gay' to a few people or 'I'm struggling' ...and um like RC and just like that network, like all these women in the gay community...definitely contributed to me becoming more comfortable and being able to you know - look I'm not alone...ja and it's also one of the few places where I feel very comfortable, you know what I'm saying? - there are no secrets...and I think like RC has definitely um you know to accept many things and to respect many things um ja..."*

Being involved within the space and culture of RC enables Sue to accept and own her gayness. Coming into contact with other gay women and a community that is open to alternative sexualities allows Sue to become comfortable with her own difference. It provides her with the tools to become 'sure' of exactly who she is as a sexual being - RC does not trigger an actual sexual identity 'change' but does facilitate Sue's 'coming out' as a gay woman. RC thus does not just facilitate changes in sexual identity but is also a space wherein selves are allowed to fully recognise them-selves within alternative sexual positions. It is within RC that Sue is able to say "I'm gay" and is recognised by others within the organization as such. This gives Sue the boldness to 'come out' to her family at a later stage and allow her-self to be seen (and potentially recognised) as a self identified as gay. Being at RC also allows her to recognise other women who are "okay" with being dykes and therefore enables her to visualise and recognise her-self within such a discursive (and material) subject position. RC 'gives' selves

new alternative discourses within which to 'see' them-selves and thereby facilitates change to, as well as acceptance of, alternative identities.

Sharon Ben is a 31 year-old white woman self-identified as bisexual. Sharon had been self-identified as lesbian for many years before experiencing a relationship with a man and thereafter choosing to see her-self as bisexual. Sharon narrates no sense of change as a result of an involvement with RC. She had been involved in lesbian relationships from the age of 12 and describes her sexual history as "back-to-front" in the sense that she explored relationships with women before experiencing any kind of heterosexual relationship. She says:

*"So I kinda almost did it back-to-front, if I think of most people I know and like relationships I had with women later where they um tend to only discover their sexualities sometimes in their forties or after they've been married...but I didn't really explore my heterosexuality..."*

Invested within the idea of a early and exclusive lesbian trajectory as "back-to-front" is the notion that heterosexuality is the 'real' and the legitimate sexual identity and must therefore be given the primary place at the 'front' of things. Sharon goes on to narrate in detail the particulars of her various relationships (including one with a man). When talking about RC Sharon does not narrate any relationship between her work there and her personal life or sexuality. She says:

*"If I'd gone to RC when I was about eighteen / nineteen and was needing a sort of a haven you know I might have found it that way, but for me its been my sexuality is completely separate from the work that I do there, I don't, it's not an issue..."*

Sharon is comfortable within her identity as bisexual – it is an identity that she struggled with prior to and apart from RC. Her sexuality is 'sorted out' and relatively fixed. As an organisation the ethos of RC is compatible with her current identity and positioning and Sharon is therefore not incited to any kind of change. There are no contradictions or challenges posed by her collision with the discourses and practices of the organisation and concomitantly no change is triggered.

I have presented the above short synopses of the particular negotiations described by the participants in relation to their sexual identity in the interests of providing some kind of answers to the second question I began this chapter with – namely, ‘How is change / non-change negotiated within the narratives?’ Change to the self is largely described in relation to change in sexuality and when this was missing participants tended not to see them-selves as fundamentally changed. Instead they talked about the ‘differences’ that RC had ‘made’ to their lives in terms of relations with women and men, increased awareness of sexual violence and the empowerment and ‘growth’ of their selves. I have already argued that this reflects the inseparable relation between selfhood and sexuality – the self is seen as most radically ‘changed’ when it changes in relation to sexuality. Thus I have framed the question of change largely around the negotiations of sexuality because it is largely here that selves position themselves as changed or as un-changed.

It is clear after presenting and discussing each particular narrative (either in detail as a case study or more generally as a summary) that each self negotiated their sexuality and associated change or non-change in specific and differing ways. Both of the heterosexual women used different discursive techniques to reconcile or to justify their continued identification as heterosexual. Katie made use of a wide variety of arguments to justify her position and non-change. Janet chose to position her-self as outside of hegemonic versions of heterosexuality and re-labelled her version of heterosexuality, “heterosexuality on the margins”. In so doing she tried to construct a non-contradictory identification between feminism (and RC) and heterosexuality. Within the narratives of Vicky, Carin and Mary (although Mary’s change is not triggered by RC specifically but earlier work within sexual violence) the self is constructed as changed in terms of its sexuality. It is within the narratives of Vicky and Carin that change is most evident within the space of the self. Within these narratives the subjective and the structural become blurred and fused and the self embraces a new sexuality. Within the narratives of Sue and Sharon alternative sexual identities were present before an entry into RC. For Sue RC is a space wherein she is able to ‘come out’ as gay and to own this identity. For Sharon there is no need for change – she is comfortably positioned within a bisexual identity from the beginning of her involvement with RC and therefore experiences no ‘incitement’ to change.

## CHAPTER 9

### RE-TRACING, REFLECTING AND RE-VIEWING

#### 9.1 Introduction

I am almost at the end of this dissertation and this piece of writing. This impending 'end' stirs up anxiety and consternation within me. This thesis has been a part of me for over two years - at times a millstone around my neck, at other times a burning obsession. Letting it go, 'concluding' and walking away from it is not going to be easy. Within this space however I hope to gain some sense of closure for my-self and for you, the reader. This is of course necessarily an artificial closure – arguments, words, writing and the 'making' of meaning are endless and un-ending processes and I hope that what I have written here will be carried over to others and to other places. Within this chapter I therefore aim to reflect upon the processes of 'doing' this research, to reflect upon and locate my own story in relation to those of the participants, as well as comment and elaborate upon the implications, contributions and limitations of the study.

#### 9.2 Reflecting upon process

**“We have really understood when we become part of what has been said to us” (Heidegger quoted in Mannoni, 1970).**

As I suggested within Chapter 1 the process of 'doing' this research has not been linear, neat or logical in movement. Although the written thesis is presented as an unfolding, consecutive argument (in accord with thesis writing requirements) the actual process has been quite dissimilar. The journey has involved many dead-ends, climates of fog and invisibility, mistaken paths and detours. For long periods I felt as though I was lost and adrift within a wild, thorny, uninhabitable landscape without moons or stars or suns to guide me or provide any glimmerings of light and clarity. The only way out of this wilderness was through listening and attending to the voices of the women participants. The keys to the final shape and form of the thesis were found within their words, descriptions, narratives and accounts. I served as a kind of sculptor, a fashioner of kinds – admittedly imbued (as researcher) with the power to decide

what words to highlight and how to use them in the interests of molding and sculpting a thesis argument. But as the researcher I was also an intimate part of the words and the stories within this thesis – all were produced within an inter-relational, inter-subjective space between myself and the selves of Vicky, Carin, Katie, Janet, Mary, Sue and Sharon. During the phases of data analysis and the process of writing case studies and analysis chapters these voices reverberated within my head daily as well as nightly within my dreams. These selves became a part of my-self, their voices intermingled with my own. This thesis is filled with many voices – my own, the participants, various theorists as well as the voices amongst and between us – voices of histories, voices of past and present relationships, voices of RC, voices of self - all of these echo and haunt and linger amongst the stories and tellings contained within this dissertation. I hope that my own authorial voice has not been too dominant or imposing and that the unique aspects of others' voices are recognisable within the work. The poem constructed from Vicky's narrative (as well as the detailed case studies) served as my attempts to keep alive the particularity of specific voices. Working with the interview transcripts and listening (many times) to the stories of the women has led me to questioning where 'I' fit in within this picture. What is my own story in relation to RC? This is not an easy question to tackle and parts of me are very resistant to thinking about it or attempting a telling around it. However I think that it is a story that needs to be heard and told here within this thesis – reflecting upon my own story is important in fulfilling my commitment to research that is accountable and reflexive.

### **9.3 Reflecting upon my story**

I entered RC at the beginning of 1999, the year in which I began my Masters degree. I was motivated to join the organisation because of my interests in feminism and the research area of sexual violence. Although aware of gender issues broadly I only truly 'came into' feminism in 1998 – the year in which I completed my Honours degree and became completely captured and enthralled by feminist theory. Working at RC was one way in which to extend this interest on a more material and practical level. Alongside the training course I had embarked upon the reading for my thesis – which at this stage was interested in the connections between masculinity and violence against women. The combination of reading within the area of violence against women and being involved with RC was hair-raising. I became much more

aware of my physical vulnerability to rape and attack (something that I was rather blithe to previously) and can recall instances wherein I made rather a fool of my-self (in response to my new-found paranoia). I was over-aware and looking back I regard this as oppressive and unnecessary. I am no longer heavily involved with RC and in some ways cannot really 'see' myself fitting in there anymore. In the beginning I was 'fired-up', angry and emotive about the issue of sexual violence and delivered my talks and workshops with (I hope) energy and passion. I remain angry about the existence of sexual violence against women and laud the work done by RC to counter and address this problem. However I find my-self more comfortable within the world of books, theory and research and admit that this functions as my own personal strategy serving to separate my-self from RC. This is in some senses painful to disclose – I do not enjoy thinking of my-self as 'using' discourse in the interests of constructing a non-contradictory and 'easier' position for my-self. But if I have 'used' and analysed the narratives of the participants in such a manner I cannot disguise my own story and pretend that I am somehow 'above' or separate from what I am writing about.

Being heterosexual also means that I had to negotiate this identity in relation to my feminism and my work at RC. I was involved in a semi-relationship during my first year of involvement with the organisation and do feel that engaging in active feminist work empowered me and caused me to be more assertive within this relationship. However I was not as strong or assertive as I wish I had been and was at times dismayed by the difficulties I faced in trying to reconcile my heterosexuality and my feminism. I do not feel negatively towards men – and never have in any real or abiding sense. I grew up very un-abused in a household that included a caring father and three older brothers. My relationships with men have never been violent or abusive – in this I am very fortunate. My incitement to feminism was not as a result of a history of abuse but rather a history of feeling constrained and curtailed by the requirements of a female gender identity.

Women are very important to me – and I have a history of (mostly) positive connections and relationships with women. I have seen some of these women hurt and abused by men – something that does add fuel to my feminism and my resistance to gender ideology. I am proud and glad to 'be a woman' – whatever that is exactly and my real commitment is to a world wherein no restrictions or curtailments exist for women (and men). Heterosexuality does raise

difficulties for those of us committed to feminism. I cannot give up either of these identities but have to continue in trying to resist conventional forms of heterosexuality – attempts that are often unsuccessful. My own narrative lies closest to that of Janet – we are both heterosexual feminists trying to negotiate the meeting of these two (often contradictory and disparate) identities. Positioning as a heterosexual feminist is sometimes hard but also beneficial in the sense that it fosters within me a continual, un-ending negotiation. I remain committed to feminism within my academic work and to (trying) to implement it within the more personal and tricky terrain of heterosexual relationships.

#### **9.4 Re-viewing the study**

Key throughout this study has been the theorisation of self and change. In earlier chapters of the literature review I assessed various strands of theory and proposed that the self be seen as a dialectical process, neither completely fixed nor fluid but productive and itself a product. Within the thesis I wanted to stress the active agency of selves in opposition to many post-structuralist positions that tend to paint a picture of the self as a hapless puppet dancing to the powers of discourse. I proposed that selves be seen as discourse-users and likened the relationship between selves and discourses to one between consumers and consumer goods. The consumer chooses (on the basis of prior ‘buying’ and usage as well as advertising and appeal) which products to consume and ‘use’ and later becomes in many senses determined by these products. I also proposed that an emphasis upon the spatial concepts of place, space and position would be useful as part of a ‘grid’ for understanding selves and discourse and selves and change. In section 9.5 I will reflect upon the merits of these theoretical propositions in light of the analysis chapters.

#### *Broadly speaking*

Within the analysis chapters selves were shown to be active consumers of discourses in the interests of constructing and maintaining positions of investment. RC was narrating as ‘making a difference’ within all of the narratives - however positions of change were not always embraced or constructed. Vicky and Carin both shifted positions, opting out of a heterosexual identity and choosing to locate them-selves within alternative sexual identities. RC is narrated

as a trigger for this change. Within these narratives change is constructed as either a 'choice' between two positions (Vicky) or as part and parcel of personal development and growth (Carin). Change is thus constructed as logical and along with this the self is presented as coherent and continuous. Various discursive strategies were employed by the two heterosexual women (Katie and Janet) to re-produce and maintain their positions. Katie made use of arguments to justify her non-change and her position as a heterosexual woman. Her case illustrated the extent to which selves pick and choose among various threads of discourse in the interests of weaving together (constructing) a 'reality' to suit their own purposes. Janet re-constructed her own position by distancing her-self from hegemonic heterosexuality and seeing her-self as occupying a position upon the margins of heterosexuality ("heterosexuality on the margins"). Within the case of Mary sexual violence work is narrated as 'making' a huge difference to her sexuality and personal life – a change that is constructed as continuous over a long period of involvement with sexual violence activism. The remaining two participants had already (to differing degrees) embraced alternative sexual identities – Sue however had not 'come out' and narrates her involvement with RC as enabling her acceptance of and solid recognition of her-self within this position. Sharon reports no change as a result of participation in RC – her sexual identity is narrated as comfortably bisexual. The above cases indicate the degree to which selves uniquely 'use' discourse and employ different discursive strategies in the interests of constructing particular 'realities', positions and selves.

Making use of a detailed individual case study approach enabled recognition of the particularity of construction involved when selves collide with structures. It also enabled attention to and consideration of the processes whereby selves 'use' discourses to achieve "pay-offs" (Hollway, 1984:238) for them-selves and allowed me to ask 'why' they choose to locate them-selves within specific sites. Using a general amalgamated analysis only would have failed in both these respects. Each woman 'made sense of' and negotiated the experience of involvement with RC in different and unique ways. This indicates the extent to which theoretical claims generalising the relationship between selves and discourses as any one thing are over-simplistic and insensitive to the dynamic and complex transactions endlessly occurring between selves, discourses and structures. Within the analysis it is clear that selves refrain from constructing them-selves as fluid, dynamic, ever-changing structures. Instead selves work hard to present them-selves as continuous, rational and (relatively) fixed entities. Even when stories of change

were narrated change was constructed as a 'choice' or as 'growth' – the logical outcome of a development trajectory. In line with a western conception of selfhood selves are obliged to construct them-selves as bounded, coherent and consistent.

The general analysis proved to be an important and rich supplement to the individual case studies that I presented. This analysis enabled a broader understanding of the particular issues that did come up commonly across the narratives. These 'issues' revolved around the differences that RC was narrated as 'making' within the lives of participants. Differences 'made' included changes in relationships with women and with men, an increased awareness and fear of violence and development of the self and empowerment. Differences 'made' were not constructed within the accounts as indicative of profound change to the self. Changes to the self were linked to changes in sexual identity. Each particular woman was involved in a process of sexual identity negotiation – those that negotiated a position of maintenance in their sexual identities described non-change within the space of the self. I argued that this illustrated the inseparable connection between selfhood and sexuality.

Within the study I did not deal with questions of 'real' change but have explored and analysed discursive constructions of change and non-change. Discourse analytic studies have not explicitly documented change as a discursive achievement or looked at how non-change is produced discursively – change remains a largely unexplored concept within discursive research (although it is usually discernable as an unacknowledged presence and assumption). Questions of change (social, personal, discursive, material) are extremely important for any critically oriented psychology that seeks to struggle for transformation on any level. Change is also a difficult concept for any critical framework that stresses ideology and the discursive construction of selves, primarily because agency often becomes lost within such a grid. This thesis signals the importance of theorising change and non-change and declares that more work needs to be done theoretically and empirically within this area. My study suggests that personal change is not a natural or unfolding process within lives but is instead triggered by collisions with structures, discourses and relationships and is 'chosen' and constructed actively by selves. 'Change' does not just 'happen' but has to be discursively constructed.

### 9.5 Reflecting upon theory

A chief aim of this study was to think theoretically about selves and change and to find a framework able to accommodate a notion of selves as complexly veering between fluidity and fixity – neither finally one or the other. The analysis of the material suggests that selves work very hard to construct them-selves as (relatively) fixed. Neither fixity nor fluidity is present ‘naturally’ as a feature of what selves ‘are’. Post-structuralist theory stresses the multiplicity and mutability of selves and subjectivity and highlights that selves are not one thing but dynamic and constantly in flux. This remains a crucial and critical theoretical insight. However this study also demonstrates that selves are not formless, directionless embodiments dictated by discourse but are them-selves active in placing them-selves within particular sites and in constructing particular kinds of subjectivities for them-selves. There might indeed be (at an abstract theoretical level) no such ‘thing’ as ‘a’ self or ‘real’ selves but it is clear that at the level of everyday inter-relational and inter-subjective ‘realities’ selves exist – and they exist not as shapeless vapours but as apparently cohesive and constant configurations. Their constancy and cohesion (as well as change) is as a result of a complex process of discursive *construction*; selves do not exist prior to discourse (as discourse cannot exist without selves) but selves are no less ‘real’ as a result of their status as discursive constructions. There is no ‘real’ point in simply clinging to the lofty argument that selves are merely mirages or sets of contradictory discursive positions. This might be as ‘true’ at a purely theoretical level as anything but at the level of the everyday such an idea does not gel with the experience that people have of them-selves and of other selves.

Whilst located *within* a post-structuralist position I also maintain a relation of *without-ness* in that I see gaps, silences and inadequacies in the (admittedly complex and many) strands of post-structuralist theorisation directed towards the concept of self. I propose that a spirit of dialecticism – that is the simultaneous recognition of selves as active producers of meaning and subjectivity as well as them-selves textual products – should be more actively embraced within post-structuralist theory. Without a central acknowledgement regarding the agency of selves and concentrated theoretical direction towards mapping and understanding the relations, processes and dynamics at play between selves, discourse, change, stability and structures,

post-structuralism largely fails in taking forward the debate in any concrete and materially meaningful way.

Selves 'are' in conjunction with a dominant Cartesian conceptualisation defined by their fixity and 'know-ability' across time. To be a self (a requirement of so-called sanity and normalcy within western culture) there has to be evidence of intelligibility and cohesion. Narrative is one discursive means whereby selves are able to construct them-selves as fixed and changing over time only in response to logical events and experiences. Meanwhile the core of the self remains always re-presented as a kind of adhesive glue. This study shows however that selves are not as fixed as they would like to pretend they are – selves do change and shift in response to collisions with new structures, relationships and discourses. Change occurring at the meeting-place between self and structure is not guaranteed but is dependent upon various processes. The processes, relations and dynamics surrounding change have not been adequately theorised. This study has been explicitly concerned with (trying) to think about and explore what such a theory or theories would look like. Within the analysis it became apparent that there are certain key concepts able to facilitate and open the path(s) towards a theoretical framework geared towards understanding why subjective change does or does not occur – these include the concepts of recognition, investment and (tenuously) reputation.

### *Key theoretical concepts*

Working closely with the analytic material and re-constructing case studies of change and non-change enabled various processes implicated in the construction of positions of subjective change and stability to be identified. These processes could be seen as laying a foundation for the full development of a theory of change (and always by implication) non-change. Within the spatial confines of this thesis I am unable to develop this grid fully but hope to take this up in other places. Within this discussion section of the thesis I will be recalling these concepts and outlining their potential significance for understanding constructions of change.

The concept of investment is one borrowed from the work of Wendy Hollway (1984; 1989) surrounding discursive positioning and selves. This concept is invaluable as a tool for thinking about why selves 'choose' to remain fixed and stable within certain historical and current

positions and by implication also why other selves are more fluid and open to shifts of position. Investments within relationships and identities are to a large degree responsible for determining the elasticity of selves. Strong relational ties bind selves to positions (e.g. gendered and sexual). The stronger the ties (the adhesive glue) the less chance there is that there are gaps, spaces and absences within which other inter-relational and inter-discursive positions could be accommodated or assimilated. The more invested selves are within their current 'worlds' and 'realities', the less space there is for the infiltration of new discourses, subject positions and relational patterns. Selves change in response to a complex interplay between their past experiences (and positions within discourse), their locations within the social order (i.e. as gendered, sexed, raced, classed), their current investments within positions and the new discourses, ways of speaking and being that are presented to them as alternative subject positions. The concept of 'fit' is very useful here – selves choose to change or not, to move from one position to another on the basis of what they gain as selves (relationally and materially) from the respective locations. For a new configuration or 'fit' to occur there has to be the abovementioned gap(s), space(s) or absence(s) within the current positional situation of particular selves. Such gaps are present when investment is, in some particular location or 'spot', weak or tenuous. 'Fit' is unlikely when selves are already tightly 'glued' into other fits – that is other discursive and relational configurations.

It is important to extend the concept of 'fit' and link it to a process of recognition whereby the self 'sees' it-self as 'fitting' within a certain subject position. Recognition is an important theoretical concept that helped me to 'make sense of' and understand the processes whereby selves made a transition (or not) to a new position. It is a concept drawn largely from theories of inter-subjectivity – particularly the work of Jessica Benjamin (1988; 1998) and is usually restricted to meaning recognition between actual selves. I propose however that recognition happens both inter-subjectively as selves recognise other selves and are in turn recognised in return as well as inter-discursively as selves recognise them-selves within hypothetical discursive subject positions. Looking at one's own self, as well as looking at others and being looked at in return, is crucial in the engenderment of shifts and movement within subjective spaces. The concept of recognition thus instantaneously raises questions surrounding sight, visibility and the links between discourse and 'seeing'. As I flagged in Chapter 6 discourses make things visible and bring 'realities' into sight and into meaning. Fraser (1999:7) notes that

power incites selves both “to see and to speak.” The discourses circulating within RC encourage selves to reflect upon them-selves – to look at them-selves and ‘see’ them-selves against a new discursive context. One of the dominant themes across the narratives was the ‘development’ and ‘growth’ of selves, triggered by the climate of ‘self-care’ within RC. Reflexivity is an important part of the culture of RC – there is a great deal of looking and gazing at the self – as well as exposure to a myriad of potential surrounding reflections of other selves and alternative subject positions (both as other ‘real’ selves and hypothetical discursive selves). Based upon the complicated pattern of history and current investments and positions, selves might or might not recognise them-selves anew. If a process of recognition (incited by looking reflexively at the self via relationships and new discourses) is activated, change is probable. ‘Realities’ and ‘worlds’ are seen to be ‘true’ and ‘real’ and ‘right’ through a haze of discourse. What is ‘seen’ and what becomes ‘reality’ for selves is closely intertwined with the voices that speak, reflect and are heard as collective utterances around and next to these selves.

Coming into a new structure means being exposed to new re-presentations of self, new discursive images and relational recognitions. Owning and taking possession of new self-images and ‘identities’ (or recognitions) is dependent upon history, current investments as well as perceived benefits and rewards in the new prospective positions. The concept of reputation was not explored widely within the thesis but I flag it here as a potentially important additional conceptual tool in facilitating understanding concerning processes of change and non-change. As selves recognise them-selves anew and become more invested within alternative spaces, discursive ‘realities’ and ‘worlds’, their reputation within these alternative worlds become increasingly important (as opposed to their reputation within other sites). For example this dynamic was apparent within the case narrative of Vicky Schultz who became increasingly invested in the world of RC and decided that this necessitated some kind of ‘choice’ and decision to mark her positioning within this site and her reputation as an ‘insider’. As selves recognise them-selves within new reflections of them-selves and new self-images they strive to present them-selves in a manner compatible with these new recognitions. Reputation usually revolves around the presentation of an image that is in line with a particular ‘ideal’. In the transition from one position to another selves might initially play their new ‘role’ or subject location according to the ‘ideal’, both to cement their new position and place within an often new discursive matrix and to ease their own passage and shift. In the case studies of both Vicky

and Carin is was evident that both were still involved in a process of negotiating and familiarising them-selves with new ways of seeing, being and speaking and thus remained relatively un-fixed within their new positions.

Within RC reflections of women as activists, resisters to gender stereotypes and of women as strong independent survivors, prevail. Women come into this organisation and are exposed to a culture celebrating and insisting upon the agency of women. Each woman, depending upon her history and current investments has to negotiate this meeting. Within the analysis it was evident that selves are discourse-users, never entirely re-produced by entire discourses but creative assemblers of bits and pieces, here and there, to construct particular mosaics and patterns of discursive positioning. Selves pick and choose but are not completely free to roam free amongst the collective array of possible discourses. Depending upon other markers of identity (which have been ideologically constructed as relatively fixed) selves are not able at random to simply skip from one discursive spot to another. Gender, sex, race, class, ethnicity, nationality (etcetera) all co-determine where selves are able to potentially position them-selves. For example RC is a discursive site restricted to women - men are categorically excluded from the discursive positions made possible to the women within the organisation. Selves are constrained against changing or incited to changing by the positions they have held historically, their investments within relationships, and within social and structural locations. The nets of discourse comprising these positions function as the field of play within which selves pick and choose. Coming into a new structure (similarly to a new relationship) is potentially a disruption to the patterns of self-constitution that have been historically produced. New structures are especially powerful as triggers for change because coming into a new structure also means coming into a new set of relationships. As this study as shown, change is never guaranteed but is dependent upon complex relations between constraints and possible new discursive and relational recognitions.

Within this study I have continually referred to 'position', 'location' and 'positioning' to describe the way(s) in which selves move and shift and change. I proposed within chapter 3 that a spatial grid would be useful in theorising selves and change. An attention to spatial concepts has proven invaluable in thinking about the theoretical reasons why selves construct self-change or self-stasis. The investments and historical memories of selves serve to anchor

them within certain places - the strength of this anchoring is however dependent to a large degree upon ideological forces and power. Personal investments and histories are imbued with power and are read against current ideological streams. A change in reading or 'seeing' is dependent upon collisions with new discursive texts, within which selves can recognise, 'see' and re-position their histories and investments as well as re-direct their futures. Selves are agents within these processes, creatively assembling their own 'realities' and positions to suit their specific purposes. Through these continuous re-assemblages ideology, discourse and subjectivity are continually re-produced. RC is very important as a space transmitting alternative frequencies, reflections and stories – without such sites selves are not incited to move and shift and re-think them-selves to the same extent.

### **9.6 Implications, contributions and limitations**

This study has implications methodologically, theoretically and politically. I have already commented upon the theoretical implications of this study within section 9.5. My discussion of methodological and political issues will be structured as reflections upon narrative / discourse methods and feminism respectively.

- Narrative / discourse methods

It is clear to me that the study of the self in process is not amenable to methodologies which decontextualise selves, and which present them as disembodied aggregates, frequencies or even as qualitative quotes. Selves can only be re-presented in their (approximate) full complexities via a detailed case study approach. This technique is an old one within psychology and has been responsible for some of the greatest theoretical insights within the discipline (thinking for example of Freud's famous case studies). Focusing in detail upon one case renders rich insights into the processes whereby selves construct, position and negotiate them-selves and the worlds around them. Although a focus upon one person or sets of singular persons can be accused of being overly individualistic, a focus upon the uniqueness of selfhood is a key strength of psychological inquiry and should not be lost.

Within this study I presented various individuals and their stories but took care to question the narratives and discursive techniques employed within their accounts. Thus although my focus was largely upon the singular self, I have also questioned the construction and 'reality' of this self throughout the thesis. Mainly this was achieved through the fusion of a discourse perspective and narrative / case study approach. On reflection I consider this dual methodological interest to have been successful at transcending a focus upon either/or of the individual-social, agent-discourse, personal-political binaries.

This study demonstrates the strengths of 'using' methods, mixing and blurring methodologies in the interests of capturing the richest possible re-representation of material / data. Micro-analytic studies (such as case studies) are excellent vehicles for the study of processes and for (beginning) to answer 'why' type questions (a weakness of most other 'methods'). Narrative and discourse perspectives supplement and enrich one another and combining them smoothes over some of the weaknesses involved in using only one or the other. Narrative approaches usefully add a focus upon the self as agent, imbued with historical meaning and experiences whilst a discourse perspective adds recognition of ideology, power and a focus upon the self as product. Considering that one of my chief proposals within this research was the dialectical view of selves as both productive and products, this fusion of method / perspective proved to be very useful and important.

- Feminism

What are the implications of this study for feminism? I think that the most important implication for feminism that can be drawn from this study is the reiterated importance of struggling for sites within which alternative discourses, voices and positions can be heard and reflected. Selves will not *automatically* change as a result of a collision with feminist discourses - however it is also the case that many selves might change. Change was shown to be the product of a meeting between discourses wherein transformation either 'fits' within the history of the self or not. Even though not all of the women described positions of self-change most were incited to engage in a process of negotiation and struggle. Without spaces which challenge patriarchy and oppressive gender ideology women will not be incited to move out of their comfort zones and their patriarchal living-rooms to reflect upon and potentially re-direct

and re-interpret their histories and futures. Despite the potential of spaces such as RC to become hegemonic and conservative within their own parameters, the state of play within the current gender system is atrocious enough (thinking for example of violence against women as well as the hegemony of institutions such as heterosexuality and patriarchal notions of 'family') to necessitate the existence of such spaces. This study shows that radical subjective (and consequently political) change is possible and is triggered by 'coming into' feminist havens and nets of discourse. Each woman 'changed' or whose life was simply 'made' different because of her involvement with RC will affect and impact upon other social sets, relationships and patterns of communal discourse. Gender ideology is not set in stone but has to be constantly re-produced – it is individual subjects that are the routes whereby gender ideology is re-worked, re-constructed and possibly re-formed and therefore the space of the self remains an important site for potential social change.

Politically it is important that there is continued and visible structural struggle against oppressive gender systems and that there is space for individual selves to collide with and become part of these struggles. Contradictions between opposing discourses have their roots in struggles at the ideological level (Fairclough, 1992) - struggles that are played out at the inter-subjective and inter-discursive level between selves and discourses. Coming into structural spaces is one of the most important means whereby selves are re-fashioned and compelled to negotiate and struggle with and between these contradictions.

- Limitations of the study

The most obvious limitation of this study is its focus upon theory and process at the expense of notions of 'generalisability' and quantity. I have to be honest and admit that this is the one limitation that although 'obvious' and 'plain' for everyone to see and note, is no real limitation for me. Basically I never aimed to say anything regarding 'generalisability' at all – my aim was rather to focus upon questions of theory and process and to re-construct embodied, detailed narrative accounts. My research was primed along other interests – i.e. feminist goals for research and I thus tried to be accountable as a non-exploitative and reflexive writer and researcher (as far as possible). I hope my study will be judged against these grounds rather than around concepts of number and quantity.

The second limitation to my study is its conceptualisation of change purely from a discursive vantage point. Thus I make no appeal to any kind of 'real' change - something that might be better approached through a longitudinal research design. It would be interesting and insightful to explore concepts of change over time as a result of involvement with RC. Thus an important step-up from this study would be to document change at various points in time after initial entry into the organisation and to build this into the research design. My study deals only with narrative re-constructions of histories and the effects of initial collisions with the organisation. Time is therefore an important ingredient of my study (as it has to be in any research dealing with change) but it could have been extended to explore the more gradual and long-term subjective effects of involvement with RC.

One of the greatest regrets I have concerning this study is my failure to include textual material representative of RC more officially. I do think that the use of official organisational materials – training-course dossiers, policy guidelines and officially cited positions – would have added a great deal to the study. Such a sub-theme or sub-constituent would have been able to incorporate an invaluable thread of inter-textuality to the study and would have deepened and enriched our understanding of how RC is re-produced and re-presented discursively. However I am also aware that such an extension of the study would have been beyond the scope and limits allowed to this Masters dissertation and I therefore lay this regret to rest.

### **9.7 Finally....**

Finally I am at the end of this thesis – I am upon the very last page and within the very last paragraph. This feels all at once strange and un-real, both a relief and a loss. The experience of 'doing' this thesis has been both painful and pleasurable and has changed me in many ways. I feel more of a writer (and researcher) than ever before, I feel proud as well as anxious about letting this document depart from me, and I wonder at where I will go without it. Although an ending is invoked and this thesis will shortly fall silent - the story, the telling, the living and the voices - will continue beyond and apart from it ...

*I will tell you something about stories,  
They aren't just entertainment.*

*Don't be fooled.  
They are all we have, you see,  
all we have to fight off  
illness and death.*

*You don't have anything  
If you don't have the stories . . .*

(Leslie Marmon Silko quoted in Minh-ha, 1989:136).

University of Cape Town

## ENDNOTES

1. According to Weedon (1987) the distinguishing feature of humanist discourses is the assumption that each individual enjoys a unique essence.
2. The very fact of our embodiment within singular, separate, bodies is of huge significance for our experience of our-selves and other-selves as discrete, coherent and internally fixed.
3. The restoration and (re)theorisation of the concept of self is seen as crucial to such an enterprise.
4. The allusion to the death of the subject is tied to the parallel declaration citing the death of the author – and as remarked by Burke (1998:7), “Under the rubric of the death of the author, is at one and the same time a statement of the return of the author, a return that takes place in accordance with the guiding principle of this analysis – that the concept of the author is never more alive than when pronounced dead.”
5. The coherent, rational and bounded Cartesian self is usually cast as male and masculine.
6. Also described as “the simultaneous forming and regulating of the subject” (Butler, 1997:32).
7. The seminal work by Berger and Luckmann, “*The social construction of reality*” appeared in 1967 and is widely known as one of the first usages of the term “social constructionism.”
8. It is debated within social theory as to whether a period of postmodernity is actually in evidence. Some refer to the current situation as ‘high modernity’ rather than true postmodernity (Crossley, 2000).
9. The complexity of the work is perhaps a function of the rich and diverse set(s) of influences drawn upon – these include post-Saussurean linguistics, psychoanalysis, Marxism and feminism (Gavey, 1997).
10. Althusser theorised that the subject comes into being through the process of interpellation (or hailing) wherein “the authoritative voice” calls the subject into being via language (Butler, 1997:5). Precisely what it is that exists prior to the interpellation of the subject remains unclear and fuzzy (Butler, 1997).
11. The most powerful discourses within society are those that are institutionally based and affirmed (Weedon, 1987).
12. Subjectivity becomes within this frame, “the site of the consensual regulation of individuals” (Weedon, 1987:112).
13. See Grosz (1989) for an excellent clarification and discussion of the vicissitudes of ‘French feminism.’
14. As evident from my above discussion, this is perhaps somewhat of a mistaken generalisation.
15. Which also means that there is space for change – i.e. if something is not biologically fixed but constructed socially and relationally, there is the possibility of re-construction and re-definition.
16. Or perhaps not – certain post-structuralist feminists see potential and spaces for resistance in the redefinition of a feminist subject that is splintered, fragmented and incoherent (Flax, 1993; Butler, 1990; Braidotti, 1991). Butler (1990) argues that the very terms by which we understand politics and political action need to be reconstructed so as to make space for the decentred, discursive subject.
17. I refer to ‘rational change’ to distinguish meaningful, deliberate change from the random, ever-present notion of change rampant within postmodernism.
18. The same is true concerning forms of racism – Foster (1999) speaks of the emergence of ‘new racisms’ wherein racism is discursively produced in new and subtle configurations.
19. Weisstein (in Wilkinson, 1997:186) reflects (with humour) on the dangers of an exclusive focus upon personal experience and says, “Of course there is paralysis once knowledge is

reduced to insurmountable personal subjectivity, there is no place to go; we are in a swamp of self-referential passivity. Sometimes I think that, when the fashion passes, we will find many bodies, drowned in their own wordy worlds, like the Druids in the bogs. Meanwhile the patriarchy continues to prosper.”

20. Stanley and Wise (1990) discuss the difference between notions of ‘method’, ‘methodology’ and epistemology. In their view ‘methods’ refer to the actual practices used within research, ‘methodology’ to a “theoretically informed framework” and epistemology to the over-arching theory of knowledge within which the research is located (Stanley and Wise, 1990:26).
21. There are also many problems with standpoint epistemologies – see Gill (1998) for a clear and succinct discussion of these shortcomings.
22. For me *being* a ‘feminist’ means a dedication to the interests of women and to struggles for change within gender relations.
23. Polkinghore (1995) defines ‘paradigmatic cognition’ against a so-called ‘narrative cognition’. Paradigmatic cognition is defined as primarily concerned with the classification and generalisation of specific instances into categories and concepts. Narrative cognition however is focused upon the unique, special and particular dimensions of actions and is geared towards the “understanding of human action” (Polkinghore, 1995:11).
24. Finally it is my own construction, however it is also true that the stories and talk of the participants have jointly constructed and directed this research. It was a back and forth dialogue between their narratives and arguments and my own investments and goals.
25. It is of course true that escaping the re-presentation of ‘others’ and their voices is impossible within research and I acknowledge the formative role played by my-self in the construction of this poem.
26. It is unlikely that narratives would be elicited via structured, pre-planned interviewing.
27. It is acknowledged that transcription can never be completely accurate or mirror-like; within the process of transcription decisions are made to represent voices and talk in various structural ways that are often imposed upon the material (often in the interests of readability and coherence). Conversational talk is messy and chaotic and converting this type of discourse into written texts always involves some sense of artificial ordering and re-arrangement.
28. As highlighted by feminism, this is a problematic distinction aiding the naturalisation of oppressive discourses.
29. These include its ability to present the fuller complexities of individual lives and the struggles and negotiations lived out and made sense of at the level of narrative re-constructions of biography and significant life-events.
30. Unfortunately, this form of re-presentation, although reductive and problematic, will still form the dominant method of data presentation within this thesis.
31. I refer to heterosexual identity as approximating a ‘non-identity because of its invisible and assumed mass stance as the general, ‘normal’ sexual identification.
32. I acknowledge that this research, particularly the interviews that I conducted, are also part of a project to incite selves into speaking them-selves and their sexuality into ‘being’.
33. I am indebted to my supervisor, Professor Don Foster, for alerting me to the salience of the concept ‘reputation’ as a useful additional axis to my rough theoretical grid aiming to understand discursive constructions of subjective change.

### REFERENCES:

- Alcoff, L. and Potter, E. (1993) (Eds). Feminist epistemologies. New York: Routledge.
- Anderson, K. and Jack, D. (1991). Learning to listen: Interview techniques and analyses. In Gluck, S. and Patai, D. (Eds). The feminist practice of oral history. New York: Routledge. pp. 11-26.
- Anderson, W. (1995). What's going on here? In Anderson, W. (Ed) The fontana postmodernism reader. London: Fontana Press. pp.1-17.
- Awkward, M. (1995). Negotiating difference: Race, gender and the politics of positioning. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Barrett, M. (1987). The concept of 'difference.' Feminist Review, 26, 29-41.
- Barth, F. (1997). How is the self conceptualized? In Neisser, U. and Jopling, D. (Eds). The conceptual self in context: Culture, experience, self-understanding. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 75-91.
- Belsey, C. (1988). Critical practice. London: Routledge.
- Benjamin, J. (1988). The bonds of love: Psychoanalysis, feminism and the problem of domination. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Benjamin, J. (1998). Shadow of the other: Intersubjectivity and gender in psychoanalysis. New York: Routledge.
- Berger, P. and Luckmann, T. (1967). The social construction of reality. London: Allen Lane.
- Billig, M. (1987). Arguing and thinking. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Billig, M. (1991). Ideology and opinions. London: Sage.
- Blanchot, M. (1993). The infinite conversation. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bohan, J. (1997). Regarding gender: Essentialism, constructionism, and feminist psychology. In Gergen, M. and Davies, N. (Eds). Toward a new psychology of gender: A reader. New York: Routledge. pp. 31-48.
- Bourque, S. and Divine, D. (1985) (Eds). Women living change. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Breakwell, G. (1992). (Ed). Social psychology of identity and the self concept. London: Surrey University Press.
- Braidotti, R. (1991). Patterns of dissonance. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Braidotti, R. (1994). Nomadic subjects: Embodiment and sexual difference in contemporary feminist theory. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Brennan, T. (Ed). (1989). Between feminism and psychoanalysis. London: Routledge.
- Brownmiller, S. (1975). Against our will: Men, women and rape. London: Penguin Books.
- Burke, S. (1998). The death and return of the author: Criticism and subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Burkitt, I. (1991). Social selves: Theories of the social formation of personality. London: Sage.
- Burman, E. (1991). What discourse is not. Philosophical Psychology, 4 (3), 325-342.
- Burman, E. and Parker, I. (1993). (Eds). Discourse analytic research: Repertoires and readings of texts in action. London: Routledge.
- Burman, E. (1994). Feminist research. In Banister, P., Burman, E., Parker, I., Taylor, M. and Tindall, C. (Eds). Qualitative methods in psychology: A research guide. Buckingham: Open University Press. pp. 121-141.
- Burman, E. (1996). Introduction: Contexts, contests and interventions. In Burman, E., Alldred, P., Bewley, C., Goldberg, B., Heenan, C., Marks, D., Marshall, J., Taylor, K., Ulah, R. and Warner, S. (Eds). Challenging women: Psychology's exclusions, feminist possibilities. Buckingham: Open University Press. pp. 1-18.
- Burman, E., Kottler, A., Levett, A. and Parker, I. (1997). Power and discourse: Culture and change in South Africa. In Levett, A., Kottler, A., Burman, E. and Parker, I. (Eds). Culture, power and difference: Discourse analysis in South Africa. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press. pp. 1-14.
- Burman, E. (1999). Whose construction? Points from a feminist perspective. In Nightingale, D. and Cromby, J. (Eds). Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice. Buckingham: Open University Press. pp. 159-175.
- Burr, V. (1995). An introduction to social constructionism. London: Routledge.
- Burr, V. (1999). The extra-discursive in social constructionism. In Nightingale, D. and Cromby, J. (Eds) Social constructionist psychology. Buckingham: Open University Press. pp. 113-126.
- Butler, J. (1990). Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1993). Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of "sex". New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1997). The psychic life of power: Theories in subjection. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Card, C. (1995). Lesbian choices. New York: Columbia University Press.

Chase, S. (1995). Taking narrative seriously: Consequences for method and theory in interview studies. In Josselson, R. and Lieblich, A. (Eds). The narrative study of lives: Interpreting experience. Thousand Oaks: Sage. pp. 1-26.

Cixous, H. (1979). Vivre l'orange (To live the orange). Paris: Des Femmes.

Cixous, H. (1997). Rootprints: memory and life writing. London: Routledge.

Cromby, J. and Nightingale, D. (1999). What's wrong with social constructionism? In Nightingale, D. and Cromby, J. (Eds). Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice. Buckingham: Open University Press. pp. 1-20.

Cromby, J. and Standen, P. (1999). Taking our selves seriously. In Nightingale, D. and Cromby, J. (Eds) Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice. Buckingham: Open University Press. pp. 141-156.

Crossley, N. (1996). Intersubjectivity: The fabric of social becoming. London: Sage.

Crossley, M. (2000). Introducing narrative psychology: Self, trauma and the construction of meaning. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Cushman, P. (1990). Why the self is empty: Toward a historically situated psychology. American Psychologist, 45 (5), 599-611.

Davies, B. (1992). Women's subjectivity and feminist stories. In Ellis, C. and Flaherty, M. (Eds). Investigating subjectivity: Research on lived experience. Newbury Park: Sage. pp. 53-78.

De la Rey, C. (1999). Career narratives of women professors in South Africa. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Cape Town.

Durrheim, K. (1997). Social constructionism, discourse and psychology. South African Journal of Psychology, 27 (3), 175-182.

Dworkin, A. (1987). Intercourse. London: Arrow Books.

Eisenstein, H. and Jardine, A. (1985). The future of difference. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Elam, D. (1994). Feminism and deconstruction: Ms. en Abyme. London: Routledge.

- Emihovich, C. (1995). Distancing passion: Narratives in social science. In Hatch, J. and Wishiewski, R. (Eds). Life history and narrative. London: The Falmer Press. pp 37-48.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). Discourse and social change. London: Polity Press.
- Faith, K. (1994). Resistance: Lessons from Foucault and feminism. In Radtke, H. and Stam, H. (Eds). Power/Gender. London: Sage. pp.36-66.
- Farginis, S. (1994). Postmodernism and feminism. In Dickens, D. and Fontana, A. (Eds). Postmodernism and social inquiry. New York: The Guilford Press. pp. 101-126.
- Fraser, M. (1999). Identity without selfhood: Simone de Beauvoir and bisexuality. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Felski, R. (1997). The doxa of difference. Signs, 23, 1-23.
- Ferguson, M. and Wicke, J. (Eds). (1994). Feminism and postmodernism. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Fine, M. (1992). Passions, politics and power: Feminist research possibilities. In Fine, M. (Ed). Disruptive voices: The possibilities of feminist research. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press. pp. 205-231.
- Flax, J. (1993). Disputed subjects: Essays on psychoanalysis, politics and philosophy. New York: Routledge.
- Fontana, A. and Frey, J. (1994). Interviewing: The art of science. In Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (Eds). Handbook of qualitative research. London: Sage. pp. 361-376.
- Foster, D. (1999). Racism, Marxism, psychology. Theory and Psychology, 9 (3), 331-352.
- Foucault, M. (1980). Power / Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972 – 1977. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Foucault, M. (1988). The history of sexuality volume 3: The care of the self. New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1990). The history of sexuality volume 1: An introduction. New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1994a). The hermeneutic of the subject. In Rabinow, P. (Ed) Michel Foucault – Ethics: subjectivity and truth. New York: The New Press. pp. 93-108.
- Foucault, M. (1994b). Technologies of the self. In Rabinow, P. (Ed) Michel Foucault – Ethics: subjectivity and truth. New York: The New Press. pp. 207-222.

- Foucault, M. (1994c). Subjectivity and truth. In Rabinow, P. (Ed). Michel Foucault – Ethics: subjectivity and truth. New York: The New Press. pp. 81-86.
- Frith, H. and Kitzinger, C. (1997). Talk about miscommunication. Women's Studies International Forum, 20 (4), 517-528.
- Fuss, D. (1989). Essentially speaking: Feminism, nature and difference. New York: Routledge.
- Gallop, J. (1982). Feminism and psychoanalysis: The daughter's seduction. London: Macmillan.
- Gavey, N. (1997). Feminist poststructuralism and discourse analysis. In Gergen, M. and Davies, S. (Eds). Towards a new psychology of gender: A reader. New York: Routledge. pp. 49-64.
- Gergen, K. (1971). The concept of self. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.
- Gergen, K. (1985). The social constructionist movement in modern psychology. American Psychologist, 40 (3), 266-275.
- Gergen, K. (1991). The saturated self. New York: Basic Books.
- Gergen, K. (1994). Realites and relationships: Soundings in social construction. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Gergen, K. (1998). Constructionist dialogues and the vicissitudes of the political. In Velody, I. and Williams, R. (Eds). The politics of constructionism. London: Sage. pp. 33-48.
- Gergen, M. (1995). Postmodern, post-cartesian positionings on the subject of psychology. Theory and Psychology, 5 (3), 361-368.
- Gill, R. (1995). Relativism, reflexivity and politics: Interrogating discourse analysis from a feminist perspective. In Wilkinson, S. and Kitzinger, C. (Eds). Feminism and discourse: Psychological perspectives. London: Sage. pp. 165-186.
- Gill, R. (1998). Dialogues and differences: Writing, reflexivity and the crisis of representation. In Henwood, K., Griffin, C. and Phoenix, A. (Eds). Standpoints and differences: Essays in the practice of feminist psychology. London: Sage. pp.18-44.
- Ginsburg, F. (1989). Dissonance and harmony: The symbolic function of abortion in activists life stories. In The Personal Narratives Group (Ed). Interpreting women's lives: Feminist theory and personal narratives. Indiana: Indiana University Press. pp. 59-84.
- Gluck, S. and Patai, D. (Eds). (1991). Women's words: The feminist practice of oral history. New York: Routledge.
- Grosz, E. (1989). Sexual subversions: Three french feminists. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

- Gubruim, J. and Holstein, J. (1995). Biographical work and new ethnography. In Josselson, R. and Lieblich, A. (Eds). The narrative study of lives. Thousand Oaks: Sage. pp. 45-58.
- Haraway, D. (1991). Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature. London: Free Association Books.
- Harding, S. (1986). The science question in feminism. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Harré, R. (1983). Personal being: A theory for individual psychology. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Harré, R. (1987). The social construction of selves. In Yardley, K. and Honess, T. (Eds). Self and identity: Psychosocial perspectives. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons. pp.27-40.
- Harré, R. (1998). The singular self: An introduction to the psychology of personhood. London: Sage.
- Harré, R. and Van Langenhove, L. (1999) (Eds). Positioning theory: Moral contexts of intentional action. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Harré, R. and Van Langenhove, L. (1999). The dynamics of social episodes. In Harré, R. and Van Langenhove, L (Eds). Positioning theory: Moral contexts of intentional action. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. pp. 1-13.
- Harvey, D. (1996). Justice, nature and the geography of difference. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.
- Haug, F. (1998). Methods in feminist research. In Burman, E. (Ed). Deconstructing feminist psychology. London: Sage. pp. 115-139.
- Hekman, S. (1995). Moral voices, moral selves: Carol Gilligan and feminist moral theory. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Henriques, J., Hollway, W., Urwin, C., Venn, C. and Walderkine, V. (Eds). (1984). Changing the subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity. London: Methuen.
- Hollway, W. (1984). Gender difference and the production of subjectivity. In Henriques, J., Hollway, W., Urwin, C., Venn, C and Walkerdine, V. (Eds). Changing the subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity. London: Methuen. pp. 227-263.
- Hollway, W. (1989). Subjectivity and method in psychology: Gender, meaning and science. London: Sage.
- Hollway, W. (1990). Women's power in heterosexual sex. Women's Studies International Forum, 7 (1), 63-68.

- Hollway, W. (1995). Feminist discourses and women's heterosexual desire. In Wilkinson, S. and Kitzinger, C. (Eds). Feminism and discourse. London: Sage. pp.85-105.
- Hollway, W. and Jefferson, T. (2000). Biography, anxiety and the experience of locality. In Chamberlayne, P., Bornat, J. and Wengraf, T. (Eds). The turn to biographical methods in social science : Comparative issues and examples. London: Routledge. pp. 167-180.
- hooks, b. (1984). Feminist theory from margin to center. Boston: South End.
- Irigaray, L. (1985). This sex which is not one. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Jackson, S. (1993). Feminist social theory. In Jackson, S., Atkinson, K., Beddoe, D., Brewer, T., Faulkner, S., Hucklesby, A., Pearson, R., Power, H., Prince, J., Ryan, M. and Young, P. (Eds). Women's studies: Essential readings. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf. pp. 1-7.
- Jackson, S. (1996). Heterosexuality and feminist theory. In Richardson, D. (Ed). Theorising heterosexuality: Telling it straight. Buckingham: Open University Press. pp.21-38.
- Jackson, S. (1998). Telling stories: Memory, narrative and experience in feminist research and theory. In Henwood, K., Griffin, C. and Phoenix, A. (Eds). Standpoints and differences: Essays in the practice of feminist psychology. London: Sage. pp.45-63.
- Jopling, D. (1997). A "self of selves?" In Neisser, U. and Jopling, D. (Eds). The conceptual self in context: Culture, experience, self-understanding. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 249-267.
- Josselson, R. (1995). Imagining the real: Empathy, narrative, and the dialogic self. In Josselson, R. and Lieblich, A. (Eds). Interpreting experience: The narrative study of lives. Thousand Oaks: Sage. pp. 27-44.
- Josselson, R. and Lieblich, A. (1995). (Eds). Interpreting experience: The narrative study of lives. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Kelly, L. (1988). Surviving sexual violence. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Kendall, G. and Wickham, G. (1999). Using Foucault's methods. London: Sage.
- Kirby, K. (1996a). Re: mapping subjectivity: Cartographic vision and the limits of politics. In Duncan, N. (Ed). Bodyspace: Destabilizing geographies of gender and sexuality. London: Routledge. pp. 45-55.
- Kirby, K. (1996b). Indifferent boundaries: Spatial concepts of human subjectivity. New York: The Guilford Press.

- Kitzinger, C. (1992). The individuated self-concept: A critical analysis of social-constructionist writing on individualism. In Breakwell, G. (Ed). Social psychology of identity and the self concept. Surrey: Surrey University Press. pp. 221-249.
- Klein, R. (1983). How to do what we want to do: thoughts about feminist methodology. In Bowles, G. and Klein, R. (Eds). Theories of women's studies. London: Routledge. pp. 88-101.
- Kvale, S. (1992a). Introduction: From the archaeology of the psyche to the architecture of cultural landscapes. In Kvale, S. (Ed). Psychology and postmodernism. London: Sage. pp. 1-16.
- Kvale, S. (1992b). Postmodern psychology: A contradiction in terms? In Kvale, S. (Ed) Psychology and postmodernism. London: Sage. pp. 31-57.
- Lapsley, D. and Power, F. (1988). Self, ego, and identity: Integrative approaches. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Lazreg, M. (1998). Women's experience and feminist epistemology: A critical neo-rationalist approach. In Lennon, K. and Whitford, M. (Eds). Knowing the difference: Feminist perspectives in epistemology. London: Routledge. pp. 45-62.
- Linde, C. (1993). Life stories: The creation of coherence. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lóvolie, L. (1992). Postmodernism and subjectivity. In Kvale, S. (Ed). Psychology and postmodernism. London: Sage. pp. 119-134.
- Maher, M. and Pusch, W. (1995). Speaking "out": The implications of negotiating lesbian identity. In Leap, W. (Ed). Beyond the lavender lexicon: Authenticity, imagination and appropriation in lesbian and gay languages. New York: Gordon and Breach Publishers. pp. 19-44.
- Mannoni, M. (1970). The child, his "illness" and the others. Great Britain: Penguin Books.
- Marks, S. (1989). The context of personal narrative: Reflections on "Not either an experimental doll" – The separate worlds of three South African women. In The Personal Narratives Group (Ed). Interpreting women's lives: Feminist theory and personal narratives. Indiana: Indiana University Press. pp. 39-58.
- McDowell, L. (1996). Spatializing feminism: Geographic perspectives. In Duncan, N. (Ed). Bodyspace: Destabilizing geographies of gender and sexuality. London: Routledge. pp. 28-44.
- McNay, L. (1992). Foucault and feminism: Power, gender and the self. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- McWhorter, L. (1999). Bodies and pleasures: Foucault and the politics of sexual normalization. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Michael, M. (1997). Individualistic humans: Social constructionism, identity and change. Theory and Psychology, 7 (3), 311-336.

- Mills, S. (1997). Discourse. London: Routledge.
- Minh-ha, T. (1989). Woman, native, other: Writing postcoloniality and feminism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Moore, H. (1994). 'Divided we stand': Sex, gender and sexual difference. Feminist Review, 47, 78-95.
- Morrell, R. (1996). Forming a ruling race: Rugby and white masculinity in colonial Natal, c.1870-1910. In Nauright, J. and Chandler, T. (Eds). Making men: Rugby and masculine identity. London: Frank Cass. Pp. 91-120.
- Neisser, U. and Jopling, D. (Eds). (1997). The conceptual self in context: Culture, experience, self-understanding. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nespor, J. and Barber, L. (1995). Audience and the politics of narrative. In Hatch, J. and Wishiewski, R. (Eds). Life history and narrative. London: The Falmer Press. pp. 49-62.
- Nicholson, L. (Ed). (1990). Feminism/Postmodernism. New York: Routledge.
- O' Neill, J. (1995). The poverty of postmodernism. London: Routledge.
- Opie, A. (1992). Qualitative research, appropriation of the 'other' and empowerment. Feminist Review, 40, 52-69.
- Parker, I. (1989). Discourse and power. In Shotter, J. and Gergen, K. (Eds). Texts of identity. London: Sage. pp. 56-69.
- Parker, I. (1992). Discourse dynamics: Critical analysis for social and individual psychology. London: Routledge.
- Parker, I. (1994). Discourse analysis. In Banister, P., Burman, E., Parker, I., Taylor, M. and Tindall, C. (Eds). Qualitative methods in psychology: A research guide. Buuckingham: Open University Press. pp. 92-107.
- Personal Narratives Group (1989). Interpreting women's Lives: Feminist theory and personal narratives. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Plummer, K. (1995). Telling sexual stories. London: Routledge.
- Polkinghore, D. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. In Hatch, J. and Wishiewski, R. (Eds). Life history and narrative. London: The Falmer Press. pp. 5-23.
- Potter, J. and Wetherell, M. (1987). Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour. London: Sage.

- Potter, J. (1997). Discourse and critical social psychology. In Ibanez, T. and Iniguez, L. (Eds). Critical social psychology. London: Sage. pp. 55-66.
- Ramazanoglu, C. (Ed). (1993). Up against Foucault: Explorations of some tensions between Foucault and feminism. London: Routledge.
- Jeannes, L. and Dey, K. (1999) (Eds). The counsellor's handbook. Unpublished handbook: Rape Crisis, Cape Town.
- Reinharz, S. (1983). Experiential analysis: a contribution to feminist research. In Bowles, G. and Klein, R. (Eds). Theories of women's studies. London: Routledge. pp 162-186.
- Reissman, C. (1993). Narrative analysis. Newbury Park, California: Sage.
- Rich, A. (1986). Blood, bread and poetry: Selected prose 1979-1985. London: Virago.
- Richardson, L. (1997). Fields of play: Constructing an academic life. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Roberts, H. (1981) (Ed). Doing feminist research. London: Routledge.
- Roiphe, K. (1994). The morning after: Sex, fear and feminism. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Rose, N. (1996). Inventing our selves. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ruether, R. (Ed). (1996). Women healing earth: Third world women on ecology, feminism and religion. New York: Orbis Books.
- Salleh, A. (1997). Ecofeminism as politics: Nature, Marx and the postmodern. London: Zed Books.
- Salvaggio, R. (1999). The sounds of feminist theory. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Sampson, E. (1989). The deconstruction of self. In Shotter, J. and Gergen, K. (Eds). Texts of Identity. London: Sage. pp.1-19.
- Sarup, M. (1993). An introductory guide to post-structuralism and postmodernism. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Sawicki, J. (1991). Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, power and the body. New York: Routledge.
- Schalkwyk, D. (1996). The authority of experience or the tyranny of discourse: An inescapable impasse? In Daymond, M. (Ed). South African feminisms: Writing, theory, and criticism, 1990-1994. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. pp. 57-76.

- Scott, J. (1991). The evidence of experience. In Chandler, J., Davidson, A and Harootunian, H. (Eds). Questions of evidence. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 363-387.
- Shotter, J. (1993). Cultural politics of everyday life. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Smith, M. (1994). Selfhood at risk: Postmodern perils and the perils of postmodernism. American Psychologist, 49 (5), 405-411.
- Snoek, (1985). "Mara: The construction of a professional identity". In Bourque, S. and Divine, D. (Eds). Women living change. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. pp. 183-216.
- Spivak, G. (1993). Outside in the teaching machine. New York: Routledge.
- Stanko, E. (1985). Intimate intrusions: Women's experience of male violence. London: Routledge.
- Stanley, L. and Wise, S. (1990). Method, methodology and epistemology in feminist research processes. In Stanley, L. (Ed). Feminist praxis: Research, theory and epistemology in feminist sociology. London: Routledge. pp.20-60.
- Stanley, L. (1997). Knowing feminisms and passing women: A conclusion. In Stanley, L. (Ed). Knowing feminisms: On academic borders, territories and tribes. London: Sage. pp. 197-204.
- Stenner, P. and Eccleson, C. (1994). On the textuality of being: Towards an invigorated social constructionism. Theory and Psychology, 4(1), 85-103.
- Tolman, D. and Szalacha, L. (1999). Dimensions of desire: Bridging qualitative and quantitative methods in a study of female adolescent sexuality. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 23, 7-39.
- Vance, C. (1984). Pleasure and danger: Explaining female sexuality. London: Pandora Press.
- Van Eemeren, F. Grootendorst, R., Jackson, S. and Jacobs, S. (1997). Argumentation. In Van Dijk, T. (Ed). Discourse as structure and process. London: Sage. pp. 208-229.
- Van Langenhove, L. and Harré, R. (1999). Introducing positioning theory. In Harré, R. and Van Langenhove, L. (Eds). Positioning theory: Moral contexts of intentional action. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. pp. 14-31.
- Velody, I. and Williams, R. (1998). The politics of constructionism. London: Sage.
- Venn, C. (1984). The subject of psychology. In Henriques et al (Eds). Changing the subject: psychology, social regulation and subjectivity. London: Methuen. pp. 119-152.
- Weedon, C. (1987). Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers.

Wengraf, T. (2000). Uncovering the general from the particular: From contingencies to typologies in the understanding of cases. In Chamberlayne, P., Bornat, J. and Wengraf, T. (Eds). The turn to biographical methods in social science: Comparative issues and examples. London: Routledge. pp. 140-164.

West, C. and Zimmerman, D. (1991). Doing gender. In Lorber, J. and Farrell, S. (Eds). The social construction of gender. California: Sage. pp. 13 – 37.

Whelehan, I. (1995). Modern feminist thought: From the second wave to 'post-feminism'. New York: New York University Press.

Widdicombe, S. (1992). Subjectivity, power and the practice of psychology. Theory and Psychology, 2 (4), 487 – 499.

Widdicombe, S. (1998). Identity as an analysts' and a participants' resource. In Antaki, C. and Widdicombe, S. (Eds). Identities in talk. London: Sage. pp. 191-206.

Wilkinson, S. (1997). Prioritizing the political. In Ibanez, T. and Iniguez, L. (Eds). Critical social psychology. London: Sage. pp.178-194.

Yardley, K. and Honess, T. (Eds). (1987). Self and identity: Psychosocial perspectives. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.

## APPENDIX 1

### Broad questions and areas of interest set for interview B (Reflecting upon sexual violence work):

1. How did you come to work at RC? (motivations).
2. Feelings about the work
3. Has this work affected your personal life?
4. Personal meanings of the work.
5. What does work mean for relationships with men?
6. Have your understandings of you-self changed since working at RC?
7. Has a heightened awareness of sexual violence impacted upon your life?
8. How would you explain sexual violence?
9. RC as an institution
10. Feelings about feminism
11. Understandings of sexuality and sex – different?
12. Feelings about men
13. Feelings about women

**APPENDIX 2**  
**Interview Transcripts of Katie Reed**

**Age: 30 years**  
**Race: White**  
**Sexual Orientation: Heterosexual**  
**Length of time active in Rape Crisis: 1 year**  
**Date: 13 December 1999**

**Interview A**

**Rachelle:** Okay, um the main focus of my research, what I'm really interested in is to kind of, I'm investigating the processes of how somebody becomes heterosexual, lesbian or bisexual and I mean that's the main thing but I mean that's a very difficult thing to get, it's a difficult thing to talk about, so I'm really interested in, in your case it would be heterosexual history, the kinds of things that impacted on your becoming heterosexual, but I mean I don't want to sort of label it in that way now because it's difficult to try and think back to childhood and think of a moment or something that contributed to that, so I think that the best way to like get at it is to just sort of a retelling of relationships, past relationships (Katie laughs) and through that maybe we can get at it. I'd like to cover like childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, adulthood but wherever you'd like to start.

**Katie:** Okay. Um, well I can go back to four

**Rachelle:** Four? Okay what happened then?

**Katie:** Um, I even as a very young child I um, I suppose partly because of my relationship with my father which was quite close at that time, I liked the company of men and and ja and my first um my first sort of male friend that I actually noted as being male um was a black guy called Lou

**Rachelle:** And this was when you were four?

**Katie:** Yeah, and we were going to get married, I mean this was going on for quite a long time cause we were always together and we were going to get married when we were about eight and things like this so we were you know it was something that was, ja, it was quite clear, I never um ja, I liked the company of male people um and ja, even when my relationship with my father went downhill um I still, it didn't affect the fact that I still like male company um ja I had girlfriends and spent a lot of time with girls but um I don't know I liked boys, I liked playing with boys, um ja, and then ja. I think the next significant thing would be when I was a teenager and I you know I went out with a couple of boys when I was well I guess I can actually list all of them. Um, then there was Lee and then there was Eric when I was seven, he was my boyfriend and then there was Jay, he was my boyfriend when I was eleven and twelve

**Rachelle:** Oh for quite a while

**Katie:** Ja, ja, we met in hospital, but I fancied his best friend initially so that ended that, um but ja, I was always attracted to boys and I liked, I sought out male company.

**Rachelle:** Ja, and how did those little relationships change, I mean when you were four what was the nature of that kind of relationship compared to

**Katie:** I think they were more all friendships, I mean it was more like you, so to get to know a boy at that age you were the girlfriend, so it was friendships and I guess I was an only child and I always felt I wanted a brother, and um cause the two girls that I grew up with both had older brothers and I really wanted to have a brother as well so it was my way of kind of having that connection with a male child of my age or thereabouts, and then there was Jason when I was thirteen. I went out with him for quite a while but he um he decided I wasn't cool after a while, so he became very nasty (Rachelle laughs) and I had a lot of trouble with him for about two years after we broke up cause he was really nasty, um but that was all just class – he was a boy in my class, then I stayed away from boys for quite a while till I was about fifteen, and um I was at a party and I got involved with a guy called Edward

**Rachelle:** Do you remember all these people very clearly?

**Katie:** Oh yes, I've got, I've got total recall (Rachelle laughs)

**Rachelle:** Good, that's good

**Katie:** No, I can my life is a cinema, I can replay it, at will (Rachelle laughs) I don't remember everything but you know the significant points I can remember, so um that that was the first time when I actually didn't like a masculine presence cause Eric, ag Edward was um he was the most good-looking guy in the school and he was two years older than me and he ... um was very strong, he was a karate black-belt um quite muscled and everything and um he decided he wanted to have sex (laughs) at the back of a red Ford Escort (Rachelle and Katie laugh) I wasn't ready to consider that, I thought I'm not - cause I was still a virgin - I thought I'm not losing my virginity in at the back of a red Ford Escort, it was just too awful so, so um I said I didn't want to and he was cool with that, that was okay, cause I said you know I didn't want to have sex and I was very lucky and then he said that um that was okay but I, it was very clear that if he, if he had not liked, if he'd 've wanted to carry on he could've, so that was my first really intimation of that kind of maleness um and my dad had just died so it was all a bit much, didn't want to sort of deal with all of that at that time, although obviously it was very nice to be taken notice of, um you know as we're all terribly - physically need to be noticed at that age (Katie and Rachelle laugh) um ja ... and then, and then I don't really go out with a guy until I was seventeen but that was because I thought I should, I wasn't actually, I was never oh actually that's not true, all of these other guys I've told you about I wasn't ever really sexually attracted to, they were all male friends, who I liked spending time with and that was mainly what we did I mean we would sort of snog and things like that and that was you know that was fun and it was nice and what have you but um it was more for the companionship, the first guy I was ever sexually attracted to, where I actually felt that there was something there, was when I came home when I was sixteen and um the plumber was there (Katie and Rachelle laugh) anyway so the plumber, this guy, he was a young guy, he was um about twenty or so, twenty-one and he was um ... can't remember what he was studying, something like anthropology or something like that, but he was making money so that could study and um I don't remember him being particularly good-looking, but he was somehow very sexually attractive and there was, I felt almost like I was tingling, it was definitely something going on, that was the first time I actually realized what, what being sexually attracted was. The difference also between companionship and being sexually attracted, cause I'd also had a sort of um, um, um I'd sort of fancied my friend's brother for quite a while, he'd also he'd \*\* sort of make sexual innuendos and that sort of thing and um, so we were seventeen, I started well I saw this other guy but I wasn't really sexually, but I thought I should go out with a guy and everybody else was sort of going out with guys so I thought I should so, which was a stupid idea so we went out for a couple of months but anyway, um, ja, and then I thought I'd see about this guy who I'd grown up with basically and he was basically my best friend's brother, which is also not particularly kosher, anyway so we started seeing each other, sort of like on Friday nights, once a week we'd go out for a drink or something and then I also wanted to see whether I actually was sexually attracted to him because I'd known him so long that he was just, so anyway we went out one night and um we drove, we drove to somewhere, and um we kissed and things like that and he wanted immediately to go back to his place, so but I realized as soon as I kissed him that there was nothing there, so that was that and I never went out with him again.

**Rachelle:** laughs. And the plumber?

**Katie:** Oh the plumber I saw one night and I never saw him again. I was too young for him, he was quite a bit older and I was a school-girl and he was studying and doing, I was just very young, but I mean I at least knew what it was when I saw it, sort of thing, and so that's why when I, I got off with Guy I knew there was nothing there, so. Um, and then actually straight after that virtually I actually went out with my first boy-friend, and I'm not really quite sure what went on there but I suppose I was attracted to him but I don't, I don't really think it was the same, I don't think it really was a sexual attraction, I was attracted to him probably for other reasons, but we began a sort of very tempestuous first love kind of relationship

**Rachelle:** And this was when you were eighteen?

**Katie:** Hmm, well end of seventeen, eighteen, um, and ja, and I lost my virginity with him and it was something I very much wanted to do cause I was actually sick of being a virgin (Rachelle laughs) because it was this big deal, um, it you know, I hadn't grown up in that environment, girls sort of explored themselves sexually but not many of them, cause I remember one girl in the class confessing to masturbating and everyone was wow, cause she was the only one and um you know this is quite wow, she was only fifteen or something, quite a few of my friends started having sexual relationships when they were fifteen, but um I didn't certainly know much about my own body at that stage, um, or even when I was eighteen (Katie and Rachelle laugh) ja, I don't know we just didn't, it wasn't, it wasn't something that one really talked about, in terms of you know I

certainly never talked with any of my girlfriends about masturbating ever, I've never ever ever done so, so um ja, not like guys where it's sort of \* group thing, so um, I found all of that sort of stuff out with my first boyfriend, which was his first time as well, we fumbled around a lot (Rachelle and Katie laugh) no we definitely enjoyed ourselves, we kissed a lot, we did a lot of that

**Rachelle:** That's always good ... So you don't think it was really a sexual attraction towards that

**Katie:** Well I don't know, I don't really think so, I don't really think so, um, I enjoyed his maleness and I enjoyed his body, but um, I think there were other reasons why I was attracted to him now, um, maybe I was I, I, but I just sort of think it's a bit different because there were also other things going on at the time, my mother had just, was involved in a serious relationship, was going to get remarried and my father was dead and I was changing schools and everything was changing and there was a lot of instability where there'd been permanent stability, for fourteen years I'd been at the same school with the same people and suddenly it was all gone, so I think also I was trying to hold onto the past a bit, um and also we weren't compatible really, we were only compatible in the sense of our circumstances made us both needy in different ways, he was needy and I was needy and we helped each other out in that way, but as soon as that situation started to change it became very difficult, and he had a lot of problems with his family and with himself so um ja, no and that's when, that's when I um, hmm, I had a, I had a um an experience at the end of my eighteenth year which was very traumatic for me at the time, um I got pregnant and that was quite a shock, um my mum didn't react very well to it, I was not supported in the slightest, so I was very much on my own and my boyfriend really didn't know what to do, he was sort of there but um it was not something we really talked about much so I had an abortion, it was in England so it was you know, not a problem, um and I was, just got on with it, well virtually about two months later left England for South Africa, so I was on my own so all I could really think about was being with him so that's what I focused on and I think from that time I was kind of switched off basically,

**Rachelle:** In what way?

**Katie:** Um, I think my whole sexuality was a bit switched off really, um, I liked the closeness but I didn't ever um, he, I never had a satisfying sexual relationship with him ever and I didn't what he was doing and he didn't know what he was doing so we were both pretty, but I um I was also quite passive about it, um, I don't know whether it was just a way of being partic(ularly) well I don't know but it was just sort of, it wasn't probably very (laughs) and then I um came to South Africa

**Rachelle:** What age were you when you came here?

**Katie:** Nineteen , just nineteen

**Rachelle:** Ooh, so you've been here a long time

**Katie:** Mhmm. So then I was in South Africa, the first six months were okay cause I was here and I was working and he was going to College but he already was having a lot of problems lying, he actually had a real pathological problem with lying, and lived in quite an unreal place and so that all became difficult, but I mean it was okay, I was living with his parents and him in their house and um, I decided to go to UCT, I had a place in varsity in the U.K. but I turned it down and then my mother was very horrified and that all got a bit of a problem so I went back to the U.K., got my study permit and came back, so I started varsity when I was twenty and by the end of that year um, by the end of that year it was over, and so

**Rachelle:** How did it end?

**Katie:** laughs. \* been for quite a long time, I mean there were lots of problems, he lied, tried, he made me jealous, he, he ... I mean I'd like to be able to say it was equal, but too be very honest I would feel that he treated me very badly and I tried to be a mediator between him and his family, I tried to understand and things like that, and he just was really dreadful, so I'm afraid I do blame him a bit (laughs) and um, ja, I'm not into this whole we were both in the relationship, we're both culpable, I think some people are just, you know he also um got off with other girls and lied to me about it, you know it was a whole, I believed him very stupidly, so you know it was a whole long saga, so the relationship was basically over by the time I started varsity and then that whole year was just a way of winding down, we were very, very unhealthy, so um, ja.

**Rachelle:** And as a heterosexual relationship, how do you think it worked, were there certain rules for you as the woman and he as the man?

**Katie:** I think there was from his Afrikaans upbringing, when we went to his grandmother's house, I mean the woman was 76 or 77 years old, but she would get up and run around after her four or three huge sons, with their wives, their wives would sit there and do nothing as well, it was unbelievable, I thought this was very outrageous

**Rachelle:** So did you find it different, being from England, to South Africa?

**Katie:** Yeah, well I found it different from the English-speaking side of the family, cause his mother was English-speaking and her new husband was English-speaking, and his father came from a very Afrikaans background, so there was a lot of difference in what was expected there but when we broke up, it had a lot to do his parents' relationship and how his father had been very unfaithful to his mother, and treated her very badly and we were kind of repeating that, a lot of what he did to me was what his father did to his mother, um, a lot of the sort of games and manipulation and stuff, and it was always about jealousy and things like that, sexual jealousy and um violence in the end, um so ja, but um I suppose I was a bit immune to cues of gender specifying if you like because I grew up so differently, I mean I hadn't had a father for many, many years and certainly didn't need one and looked after myself, I was in the country on my own dealing with my own things, I'd been working since I left school so I'd been supporting myself, and I could do what I liked, and I you know no man had any say over my life at all, and my stepfather tried to basically blackmail me, not to go and study in South Africa, by offering me a flat and a car, well no, it was a flat and it was oh ja, it was holidays, once a year, for four weeks paid, every year I wanted to go and see John, and um, he was trying to take control of me, so I had rejected that and that's what had led to the break with me and my family, so I had to pay very severely for actually being my own person, um, so I, I, you know the question of a man having any kind of dominance over me apart from physical, was really not on, I just, it just wasn't an issue

**Rachelle:** So in your relationship as well, it wasn't an issue?

**Katie:** I think that, that, that my emotional involvement meant that I was vulnerable but I never connected my emotional reactions to what was going on to any kind of reduction in my power to control my life, I obviously was not acting in a way that was necessarily best for my for my benefit but also I realized that whatever I did I was doing because of what had gone on before, so I didn't blame myself either, I haven't, I wasn't very into that ... blaming myself (laughs) Cause you are a product of your environment and, and of who you are and um I did what I had to do and I, whatever I did was justified as far as I was concerned, it was also people who, who I had also relied on and who I thought acted in my best interests, did not and actually just wanted to control me and manipulate me and actually do things that would that would make my life actively a lot harder and you know that was a real shock, so

**Rachelle:** So how did you come to realize that, I mean what was your environment like then?

**Katie:** Well, I don't know, I suppose I, the way I reacted with it initially was to reject that kind of control, um

**Rachelle:** Was that your mom and your step-dad?

**Katie:** Ja, and my whole family, I mean my aunt and my uncle who were like my second parents were also very involved, I mean they really did everything they could to try and prevent me from coming to South Africa, and then of course that meant that I was pushed into John's family a lot more, because they were more understanding, you know and I was also not getting any kind of um, recognition of the way I'd grown up, they all wanted to pretend I'd had a really marvelous childhood, when I'd had a really shit childhood, and they knew it, so I also felt they were also trying to play happy families and to pretend that everything was wonderful, and it's like my mother also lied to my step-father about me, she actually undermined my relationship with him before it even began, because she told him that it was my fault that my relationship with my father had been so dreadful, and that I was a 'trouble-maker', was the impression he got, that's what he told me anyway, and she hadn't told him actually how her marriage to my father had been really dreadful, that's also why I'm, I don't go for authority figures, I don't like, unless I don't know something, that's different, but to give somebody authority just cause they're older or a man or something like that it just doesn't cut it with me, only if somebody knows something that I want to know, do they have authority over me and do I look to them for, as an authority figure, cause it's authority of knowledge not cause it's authority of power, and in fact if somebody tries to do that to me (laughs) I totally reject it, I walk away, so I, I'm not, I don't have those sort of female buttons to push, they just don't work

**Rachelle:** Sort of feminine type of longing for ... dominance (laughs)

**Katie:** No.

**Rachelle:** And from a little child

**Katie:** No, I've never had it ,never ... Do you want to know about the next one, the next guy (laughs)

**Rachelle:** laughs. Okay.

**Katie:** The next guy was, I broke up with John, and that was really great cause I had my own car, cause I hadn't had a car which was really a problem, um so I had my own car and I and I, when I started varsity I 'd

moved out of living with him and I had my own flat and that was also a bit of a problem cause John couldn't control me, so um, um, I had my own life and I had my own friends and I really started to enjoy myself cause he'd very much curtailed um what I did, you know cause I was with him all the time, so I started to have a good time, I was on my own and that was a real shock cause everybody, all of his friends dumped me, um so that was really good, I was on my own, I was in South Africa on my own and I was, I didn't really have that much contact with my family, my mom and John had come out, my mum and step-dad had come out but it was still not very good, um, but everything was sort of okay and I could pay for my second year, that was a bit of a problem, money was a very big problem, didn't know how I was going to live and study and that sort of thing, so um, then I'd met Kurt while I was still going out with John, I was sexually attracted to him um and he to me, he sort of tried calling me and I was still going out with John and it was very complicated so then he just stopped, then when I broke up with John, he somehow heard about it and then, but he was now living in Joburg and when he came down to Cape Town he wanted to see me, so we went out and basically started a relationship from that night, um we didn't have a sexual relationship immediately, I, I told him I didn't want to, cause I was in.. very, very involved with still with the relationship I had with John and um what I wanted and what I didn't want, which was what I exactly knew now, so I spent a lot of time telling the poor guy what I wanted and what I didn't want so maybe it wasn't such fun for him (laughs) ja but I was still very emotionally and sort of psychologically I suppose involved with what had happened, and also wanting to control the future relationships I had, so that I got what I wanted and what I needed more, um, but even with Kurt um, he, I was sexually attracted to him, but my relationship with him also weren't, he, he was more experienced than me, he was more experienced than John but he, he didn't know how to um make a woman come (Katie and Rachelle laugh)

**Rachelle:** Was he older than you?

**Katie:** He was a bit older than me ja, but not much, not much, um and so and I was passive about it, I didn't really sort of tell him, cause I didn't really actually know myself, it was only, I went out with him for about a year and that also went, was not very successful cause he got another girl pregnant while he was going out with me

**Rachelle:** shit (laughs) lovely

**Katie:** It coincided with him being very much in love with me, um, so that I found very hard to understand, you see I told him, but it was okay if he wanted to break up, he'd found somebody else and all that sort of stuff, I said to him he must just say because I will not share somebody, I only want a monogamous relationship, and it's fine, if he has a change of heart -cool, but he must tell me, but he didn't. So that was also, I was quite angry about that but I was very involved with him emotionally, um so I couldn't let go initially, I knew I had to but I sort of wasn't ready yet, and I also was damned if this woman was going to get him, that was also a big part of it, cause she, she came round and she was, she you know, she was in the English Department so it was very difficult to avoid her, she was in third year with me, so that was rather unpleasant, but she kind of had a thing about me, she came round to tell me that she was obsessed with me

**Rachelle:** She told you this

**Katie:** Ja, she, she came round, particularly phoned and asked if she could come round to tell me she was obsessed with me, and that I'm in the way of her relationship with Kurt, and that, she was still pregnant at this time and that she was very angry with me, not with him but with me, um and that sort of stuff

**Rachelle:** So were you still kind of involved with him?

**Katie:** I was yeah well he, he had, well I don't know how many times he had sex with her, at least once, um, and then but he said he loved me, um, and so it was very difficult cause he basically came down on the spur of the moment from Joburg to see me, ostensibly to see me and he told me, after we'd made love in bed that actually you know he had a relationship with this other girl and so I wasn't really in a very good position to be able to evaluate my situation (both laugh) so um I was also quite shocked, because it was not you know he was behaving one way to me and then behaving in another way, what his problems were, well I don't know, but um ja, he was acting very, very in love with me, so I found that quite hard to understand, um, but it was also very clear what was going on, um but anyway so he stayed with me and saw her to talk bout the pregnancy and how they were going to deal with it, she wanted an abortion, and of course because I had had one myself, I knew what was going on and it bought up a lot of things for me, and I didn't feel able to break off my relationship with him at that point, so a couple of months later she had her abortion and the whole family knew, the father fixed it all up because it was illegal at that time, so um then we went on holiday

**Rachelle:** The two of you

**Katie:** Hmm, which was a really bad idea cause he was going away to India, he'd got this bursary to go and discover himself in India, cause he was a yoga teacher, so he was also very Buddhist and sort of very, all that sort of stuff, um um ja so it was really over for me, but I was sort of, I was quite aware that that I was quite attached I suppose, but I was aware that I needed time to, to absorb it and to let him go but also I wanted to let him go when I wanted to let him go not when it was convenient for her or when it was convenient for him, I had my own issues to deal with and I also needed to prove to myself that I wasn't missing out on anything (both laugh) but obviously it was clear but I mean, so anyway I broke up with him eventually and, and ja another thing I was actually harassed for many years by my first boyfriend John

**Rachelle:** Oh really

**Katie:** Yeah, he a this sort of nervous breakdown when I broke up with him and um he would write letters outlining how he'd lied and things like that, so I only really found out about really what was going on after I'd broken up with him, cause I never really knew and he would pitch up and disappear, he would literally walk through the door, put a hat on my head so he could see what I looked like in it and then walk out the door again, he was really, and I was going out with Kurt at the time and these letters would arrive and they were very upsetting, so he, he harassed me for many years, kept on phoning me, told him I didn't want to hear from him and he would leave, um, he would go and visit my friends or he would go and leave flowers at my parent's hotel when they came to visit or he would leave flowers at the garage where my car was and sort of you know not quite well there, um, ja

**Rachelle:** So that just eventually stopped?

**Katie:** Um, it only stopped when he met another girlfriend rather like me

**Rachelle:** Like you – meaning?

**Katie:** I've been told that she's very like me, she's now married to him

**Rachelle:** Really

**Katie:** Ja

**Rachelle:** So if you kind of look at those two relationships, do you think you were similar in both of them, I mean the way you were in the relationship

**Katie:** Um, no, I think when I went out with John I didn't know anything about anything, I had never had sex before, I had never had a relationship like that before with a guy, and I suppose in a way they were, there was almost like, it was the companionship again more, it was more the companionship, with Kurt I was sexually attracted to him but actually turned out not to be a very nice person, so I couldn't really have a relationship with him

**Rachelle:** So it wasn't the companionship so much?

**Katie:** No, the companionship actually was not very good but I was sexually attracted to him, so ja, that's also why I broke it off I suppose in the end

**Rachelle:** And so Kurt and the other guy John were they, how were they in the relationship, were they very different people?

**Katie:** Well I think John was a child (both laugh) and Kurt was just immature, so um they were phenomenally different people, I mean John was, was a very screwed up person who'd been neglected by his mother and neglected by his father, he was emotionally retarded basically, um, in many ways, whereas Kurt was the adored son of his mother, you know the indulged, adored child, um who had no problems ever, but somehow wanted to create his own, he was bored

**Rachelle:** Create his own problems (laughs)

**Katie:** He did, he actively caused shit for himself, and then when he had shit to deal with, he suddenly went all flaky and got M.E. (Rachelle laughs) I mean it was quite pathetic, and that's why, that's why he said he was attracted to me, because I never spoke about theory, I always spoke about experience, if we'd talk about something then I'd say well this happened to me and so I think that, whereas he only had theories, he had theories about how relationships should be conducted, he had theories about everything and he had no experience, cause he'd never had any problems to deal with and yet he wanted to sort of pretend that his father was this bastard, unfeeling bastard, and his mother was, was this subjugated little woman and it was all utter bullshit, he was just spoilt, and bored, I mean that was in the end what I had to conclude, cause his mother was no shrinking violet, she maybe didn't want to leave her husband because she liked the money because she

didn't have enough balls, but it wasn't because his father was such an asshole, the father was just maybe not very demonstrative but I mean that's who he is, if she doesn't like it she can leave, so you know

Rachelle: And do you think you were very emotionally attached to either of them, in love with either of them?

Katie: I was, definitely, no I was, I was in love with both of them but I think there were reasons why, I don't think it was, I think it was in love in the sense of, of you're in love with an image of that person that you have rather really who they are, I don't think that they knew who I was, I don't think, well John certainly couldn't ever, I was a, I was a status symbol basically for both of them in the end, I made them look good, and that's what they liked, they liked this image, of this tall, blonde woman

Rachelle: And what did you want out of those relationships

Katie: I wanted a husband; I always wanted a husband

Rachelle: Really (laughs)

Katie: Well not a husband, I wanted a permanent relationship, and that's what I didn't know when I went out with John, but that's obviously what I was wanting there, um and it's what I told Kurt I wanted, because I wanted to replace the, the family I didn't have, I wanted to make my own, I wanted that, I wanted some emotional stability basically

Rachelle: But didn't find it with either of them

Katie: No, no and in the end it was okay you know I was, I was enjoying myself on my own when I, when I broke up with Kurt I had a fantastic year, and really enjoyed myself

Rachelle: The year after

Katie: Well as soon as I stopped going out with him, I was going out, I was seeing people, I was working in a restaurant, I was always out and doing stuff and I had lots of friends and I was having a great time

Rachelle: So when you were in both these relationships that kind of stopped

Katie: What stopped?

Rachelle: The going out and the lots of friends

Katie: Um, um, I suppose so, with John he was around so I didn't go out a lot without him, And with Kurt as well, he was in Joburg so I did go out with people more but um he was always not there so I wanted to be with him, um, but I think it was only when I got rid of Kurt that I was becoming an adult and I didn't need a man, before that I think I wanted to have a partner, cause I wanted somebody for myself but when I stopped going out with Kurt, and that whole year cause he wasn't really around, he was always in Joburg, so um I learned to enjoy myself on my own and I think that that's really when I started becoming an adult and when I didn't need a man, I was having a great time without a guy, and I had never really done that on my own, I had my own flat, was living on my own and I was, I was really enjoying myself, and I didn't need anybody, you know I had my friends, I didn't need a guy at all, um, I didn't need that, I didn't crave that companionship, anymore, which was good, um, and then ... at the end of that year I saw Simon for the first time, and then I immediately knew there was something there

Rachelle: Really

Katie: Really, immediately

Rachelle: You knew there was something different or

Katie: There was something there, I was attracted to him, there was something, I knew there was something, and we didn't talk for about, months, for about three or four months, we'd see each other around and but we'd never been introduced and stuff, until one day I was in the library and he, cause we went to the same poetry meetings but we'd never sort of got to talk to each other, so he saw me in the library one day and pretended he was looking for a book (both laugh) and that's we got chatting and from then on we we've been together

Rachelle: So you went out for quite a while before you got married?

Katie: Oh ja, ja, we started going out, it was very touch and go, it wasn't like the previous relationships cause I, I didn't need a guy and he was like a cherry on top and maybe I couldn't be bothered (both laugh) you know and we, we, we, I was very, I didn't sort of jump in feet first as I usually did, where I well as I had done before, so um and he also was going through a lot of things and wasn't sure whether he should start a relationship, but you know I was able to say to him very straight, this is what I want, is it what you want and if so well are we going to do something about it, and we had sort of conversations like this, and then I could be very frank about what I needed, and also know that I could walk away immediately, that was what I was learning with Kurt, was that I could walk away immediately, I wouldn't have to wait again. If it happened again, I would never have to wait again to be ready, so that was quite, that felt really good, that felt quite

powerful that I could do that, and that I didn't need a guy and that I could live very happily without one, and all of that sort of thing, also that I didn't need anybody to help me, to look after me in any way, that if I was going to have a relationship then it was only because it was the cherry on top, not because I needed anything, and that was quite a different place to come from cause that hadn't really been the case before, so um, so we took quite a while really to, to, I was also maybe, I knew there was something there with Simon, but I didn't fall in love with him like that, it took, it took months, probably even a year

Rachelle: To really be in love

Katie: Yeah, and um I ja, and it was funny cause I, I, um, I taught him about sexuality and about his sexuality and maleness and things like that

Rachelle: That's empowering for you as well

Katie: Ja, it was really, but it was also quite responsible, I felt very responsible, and also very wary that if we did stay together then I would be his only really relationship, so I wasn't, you know I wanted to be very sure that that was okay and things like that, cause I didn't want to assume that it would be, cause it's important for many guys that they go and sow their wild oats (Rachelle laughs) which is okay as long as they're honest about it and what they want, so um, ja.

Rachelle: And kind of a steady kind of relationship?

Katie: Ja, hmm, we argued a lot, we argued a lot in the first um the first, quite a while, there were lots of things you know he'd just come from a very different background, and we debated and we argued and we were quite but it was okay, it was never more important than, it was never emotional sort of wrangling, it was only sort of, I don't think you're right sort of stuff, or I don't like it when you do this sort of thing but it was okay to say, so it was very much learning about the other person and learning what, who they were and what they needed and stuff like that, it was also a bit maybe dysfunctional, I don't think it's necessary to have to do that, but I we were so young and we'd both had experiences which were negative that we were quite defensive maybe, and that's why we argued, I think it's not very necessary and we certainly don't argue anymore like that, but um it's taken time

Rachelle: So you've been together for how long?

Katie: Since October 1992, so it's eight years, ja, no seven

Rachelle: And do you feel like it's changed since you've been married?

Katie: Oh yeah

Rachelle: And how

Katie: Well you can't just walk away (both laugh) um I mean to be very honest we lived together um we started living together um, after about a year and a half of going out, for six months and then we were apart for four months went I went back to the U.K. and then he came out and then we didn't live together for a while so um, and then we lived together for two years and then we got, got married, so we really, nothing really changed in our relationship particularly, I mean we have the same bank accounts but that was about it, there was actually no major difference and I, I find it quite odd actually sometimes thinking that he's my husband and I'm his wife, it sounds very grown-up. (Rachelle laughs) Um, but he's just him and I'm just me and um we've found a way to, to live together which suits both of us, ja and I, I suppose one thing that's changed is I, I care about him quite a bit more now, I mean I cared about him when I married him but I definitely care about him more now cause we've gone through, you know life carries on and you have more experiences and they either undermine or strengthen your relationship, and we had a really difficult time in our first year of marriage, we immigrated back here and we didn't have anywhere to love for many months, it was really, really difficult and in the first year I thought many times, maybe I've made a big mistake, but somehow ja, it was still wait and see, it was like I'm going to think this and it's okay and if it's true then okay, but lets just see and at the end of the day it was you know a function of the situation really, but also I've always known that I'd leave if I didn't like it

Rachelle: Even the marriage

Katie: Oh yeah, I'd leave if I had twenty children and I had no money, I'd leave

Rachelle: If you weren't happy

Katie: Yeah, and that, that means when I knew emotionally that I could do that, that's when I think I probably started having proper relationships

Rachelle: Hmm, so do you think it was because you were able to make that decision that you had grown up?

**Katie:** Um, in a way, there are several things, one is, is your context where you are, if I hadn't had experiences that I'd had with John when I met Simon, I hadn't had experiences that I'd before I met Kurt so I was obviously a lot younger but I also I was growing up at the same time, I was living on my own, looking after myself for the first time, and in quite difficult circumstances which made me a lot more needy than I ever would have been, I think if my family environment had been different, I never would have had relationships with either of them, whereas Simon I probably would always probably have had relationship with cause I am, you know we are very compatible in many, many ways so I think that's the main difference, but um it was also about personalities and you know compatibility like that, my first boyfriend John was not particularly intelligent, so he couldn't, I couldn't really talk to him properly, not like I like to talk, so he wasn't an ideas person like that, um that was, would've been very limiting and Kurt was just very selfish really, he wasn't a very giving person, so that ja, but Kurt looked like me as well, it was very much connected to – and John, we all, when I was going out with John we both looked like brother and sister, when I was going out with Kurt we looked like brother and sister so it was also connected with, with um companionship of a brother, I think my relationship with John was more a brother/sister relationship, I mean we would literally almost play together, um, and when we were younger we were more compatible because I also was still developing as an adult, so um but obviously the older I got, the more stark the differences are, I mean now if you saw me and you saw him you would never think we would ever go out with each other because we are just completely different, and physically different, everything's different now, which is quite weird you know, it's quite weird

**Rachelle:** The way you change

**Katie:** Ja, you do, and but I definitely feel that I, I because of what happened when I was eighteen I got cut off from sort of who I really was, so that was also a problem in that relationship that I wasn't, maybe I was giving mixed messages out I don't know, I certainly didn't feel very in control maybe, um, I felt very dependent, but I, I became totally sort of anti-intellectual, not in the way that I thought but I didn't read which is for me was just not on, I just read voraciously so I did things which were not characteristic of my self, um and as I became more who I really was my relationship with John broke down, the more I was, I suppressed sort of who I really was the easier it was

**Rachelle:** And who do you think you really were becoming, or are (laughs)

**Katie:** Well, um when I was going out with John I very much wanted to be very female, I wanted to wear pink I wanted to be sexy, I wanted to be fancied by all the guys I wanted to, to be acknowledged as a sexual person, as a woman that other men find attractive and that was very much connected with my class and the role that I had in my class when I was growing up because they thought I was going to be the next Margaret Thatcher, because I had a mouth and I wasn't afraid to say what I thought, um but I also wasn't stupid, and that was very much unacceptable really, I went to a very progressive school

**Rachelle:** Unacceptable why?

**Katie:** Um, because men didn't like it, my teachers didn't like it and the boys didn't like it, and they didn't, they showed that they didn't like it by not fancying me, they weren't challenged by it, they were threatened by it, and that's why I sort of had a bit of a peripheral role in the class and, but it was a funny role because on the one hand I was, you know they would always come and talk to me, you know the guys had problems with their girlfriends they'd come and talk to me I was seen as a sort of responsible person and a person that you could trust I suppose and depend on, and who would take charge but it was for those very things that, that, that those things were not connected to being female and to being fancied and to being one of the 'in' girls, so when I went out with John I very much wanted to be one of the 'in' girls, and I was, I achieved my aim, I became, I neglected my school work I suppose to an extent, and I became totally, the relationship with him became everything, and we were, we were quite crazy with it, we were quite crazy with it, we did crazy things

**Rachelle:** laughs – Like what?

**Katie:** We talked all the time and we would do stupid things at night, and go to \*Beacon and look at the moon and run down the hills like mad people and just mad really... but I was also having fun you know I'd, I was also, I'd had a lot of responsibility because of my mother and my father's relationship and then my father dying and I was getting to be a child cause I had grown up when I was about ten, so that was also just something that I needed to do, and to be totally irresponsible, I'd always been so bloody responsible, but it also meant at the same time I couldn't be clever

**Rachelle:** So that part of you was a bit

**Katie:** Yeah, all of that, I wanted to totally cut that off, totally get rid of it, it was like I couldn't, it was also the intellect was also connected to my father cause my father was very intelligent and it was like the one thing that everybody noticed about him, that he was very intelligent, and that was connected to being unlovable, in my family, and they connected that to being my will, my, my, my desire to control my, what happens to me and what I want, they called my will and my will was connected with my father and my father was connected to being intelligent and so if I wanted to be lovable then I had to get rid of all of that, I had to get rid of everything that was like him and he was domineering and very intelligent, so I couldn't be domineering or, or, or I couldn't even, you know I was supposed to be dependent, that's what my family always wanted, they wanted me to be 'unhenge' – it's a German word, 'unhenge' which is um, unhengen is literally 'to hang up' and literally it means to hang on people, they want me to hang on them, they want me to be dependent

**Rachelle:** To change who you were

**Katie:** Well just to be dependent on them, to hang around their neck like a little kid you know like clinging to the skirts, that's what they wanted but I wasn't like that ever

**Rachelle:** But you tried for a while

**Katie:** I did, well, I tried but I wasn't, I didn't, I wasn't dependent on them I was dependent on John you see and they didn't like that, they wanted me to be only dependent on them and that's a lot of what the conflict was about, it's that my mum saw that John was more important to me now than she was, cause she'd gone off anyway, she put me second to her life, so I found someone for myself and she didn't like that, she wanted me to, to you know be totally dependent on her, you know when she had never really been there for me as an adult or as a mother like that, she'd been my friend she hadn't been my mother who takes charge, I made all my own decisions always and then suddenly she wanted me to be this dependent wimp (Rachelle laughs) and the problem was as well that my stepsisters were exactly like that, my stepfather was just as domineering as my father except he wasn't nasty, so my mum married exactly the same thing which I also found quite odd but and they decided not to talk about their past so the whole thing with my father didn't come out which means that I couldn't be justified, and that was also why, why he believed that I was the problem-causer, and because she'd said that our relationship was difficult and because she hadn't told how difficult my father was he believed it was because of me, so that was also, well then that was also connected with my will you see, my stubbornness, my wanting to control my own life –heaven forbid, whereas my stepsisters were totally, ja if my stepsister couldn't unpark her car somewhere my stepfather would have to come and unpark her car and this to me was just totally anathema and I, I didn't want to be like that, but I suppose maybe I was with John, I don't know, I wasn't dependent on him like that but I was emotionally dependent on him, I did everything for myself, he didn't control my life in any way, he didn't sort things out for me in any way, but I was very emotionally dependent on him, but yeah.

**Rachelle:** And then with Kurt

**Katie:** I knew what I wanted ja, he was connected with me wanting to embrace my Germaness,

**Rachelle:** Germaness?

**Katie:** Yeah and being you know something familiar, cause he was German and his family all spoke German, they had Weinaghten and I really was feeling maybe a bit homesick

**Rachelle:** So are you half-German?

**Katie:** Ja, ja, and that was really nice for me, the whole German thing was really nice for me, he looked very German, I mean he looked, he, he acted thought like a German, so ja, that was, I was homesick I suppose and he reminded me of home, he was also very sexy (both laugh) he was I mean all the girls and everything, all the women at varsity were wild for him

**Rachelle:** Do you think it was finally when you were able to walk away from that that you came back into being the person who took control

**Katie:** Well I started, I started when I, I became aware when I was going out with John that, that, just before I started Varsity actually that, that I, I started to read again, and then when I started varsity I had to read a lot, but um, I had quite a knock because I nearly failed first year, cause everything was going on and because it was just impossible, so that was also quite a knock for me in terms of self-confidence, um, but when I, I certainly knew what I wanted in terms of a relationship when I started going out with John, ag with Kurt

**Rachelle:** And that was marriage?

**Katie:** Um, it's not that I wanted to be married, cause I didn't want to marry him, cause I could've married John but I didn't want to marry him, but I wanted a stable relationship, and I told him that I mean I was also

too young you know, I was twenty-two so I didn't want to get married, I didn't think people got married at twenty-two but I wanted a stable relationship, I wanted a relationship that would, that would support me, um, and I told him that, but um, ja, I think it, when I, ja, I think, I think when that broke up I was also starting to enjoy myself at university more, and I was doing something that I enjoyed, and that also reminded me about what I liked about intellectual pursuits and my mind and you know, I just remembered how much I enjoyed that, and how much a part of that was of me, um and I was being more successful at it so, that was also really nice

**Rachelle:** And with Simon you feel you, that you can have the intellect

**Katie:** Oh ja

**Rachelle:** And you don't feel like a status symbol?

**Katie:** No, no, he's totally different, I mean it's just total luck actually, thought about it, it's nice to think well you know it was meant to be and it's not, I mean you can, it's, you know it's work but it's also just luck, it's just absolute luck, you might meet someone who's really compatible with you but you might not, and I was just amazingly lucky, we both were, um, so he's everything, I mean it's everything that I need and he supports me in every way and intellectually he's challenging and I challenge him and we, we complement each other like that, I mean we just talk for hours about ideas and I tell him what I'm doing, what I'm thinking about and he tells me what he's doing and what he's thinking about and we help each other and you know help each other to, to think about things, I mean we read books, like he'll read something and then tell me all about it or I'll read something and tell him all about it and it's very much part of, of our relationship, that, that sort of sharing of ideas and talking and things like that

**Rachelle:** Hmm, let me look and see what I haven't asked. Okay a general question is an understanding of sexuality, do you think you had any understanding of that when you were a child or do you think it only came about when you had your first

**Katie:** No, I think I definitely knew boys and girls were different cause we played kiss-chase when we were in Kindergarten, and that whole thrill of being chased by a boy was very exciting, so we were sort of learning, and we played doctor-doctor to see what each other's bits were like, and I remember conning my, this woman's two sons, to take their kit off, so we could have a look, you know we, I was quite open about that but I, I my when I went, I spent a lot of time in Germany, my uncle and aunt were very open, they'd walk around naked and stuff and that's what I knew as well, my parents weren't like that at all, my uncle and aunt were and that also meant that I was quite uninhibited like that, um, much more uninhibited than, than my South African friends, there's there was no big deal for me walking around in the nude, no big deal, or seeing people walking around in the nude, it was no, but I think that, I think, I think it was more a consciousness of difference, that this other child is different, the boys are different

**Rachelle:** And that was part of the attraction towards them?

**Katie:** Yeah, think so, I think so, and also I think I liked them because they, they were the doers, they were active, they were more active and I, I suppose I had quite masculine traits, so I felt more at home with them, I, I didn't feel at home with, I really hated the bitchiness of the girls, I mean the girls in my class were really bitchy and I didn't like that and they had this, you know they had this way of talking which was very, it was like baby-talk, it was like baby and I just couldn't understand it, I just, it didn't make sense and I was never part of those sort of really girly-girly things, it's like if there was a girly-clique I would be the one they didn't want in it (both laugh) I mean it was crazy but, but I didn't like that, that pseudo-girliness, I hated that, it was not, I didn't like it and it was very much that being stupid and that, cause like I didn't care, I knew that that my teachers, I sensed that my teachers and the guys in my class didn't like um, didn't like the fact that I argued, they didn't stop me (Rachelle laughs) And I thought, you know, I just, why should I shut up, why, why should you pretend to be stupid so that they, so that they feel better? I didn't like that. Um, and there was also \* which was very patronizing, you know they would pooh-pooh me when I, we used to have classes at school that just, where all we would do was just debate and it would often up with me and the teacher debating and everybody else was just silent and the damn guy would patronize me by not wanting to argue, you know he couldn't come back so he would patronize me by pooh-poohing what I was saying or you know making some sort of evasive comment and that really pissed me off, it, unbelievably, it made me so furious cause I also felt very isolated, like they were all thick and couldn't argue and just (Rachelle laughs) No, I really did, I didn't go to a school which was streamlined where everybody was academic, I went to a school where most of the people weren't so I ended up having to teach them and I was bored, I was abso(lutely), I mean that was also why I was such a

nuisance in class cause I was bored and you know I wasn't, I wasn't challenged in any way intellectually you know, and they, because I was one of the clever ones um they didn't teach me, I just taught(t), I just did my own thing, cause they focused on the people who weren't very clever, people who needed help, I needed help to be much better but then they, they didn't, I didn't get any of that, and I didn't get any of it obviously \* my father, my father I could argue with and that was good cause I could, it was the way I actually um gained equality with him, cause he was very nasty and said really horrible things, he was very manipulative but eventually I got to a point where I could argue the \* with him and he would never ever get the better of me

Rachelle: When you were small?

Katie: Ag, I was about 12, by the time I was twelve he couldn't, he couldn't better me in an argument (Rachelle laughs) Twelve, thirteen, but I had to conquer my emotions first, once I did that, once I didn't get angry then he couldn't get anywhere (Rachelle laughs)

Rachelle: And friendships with girls, were they not that significant?

Katie: No, I had, I grew up with two girls, one of them I got on with and one of them I didn't, but um I always had a female best friend, but they tended to be more problem people, they tended to be people who needed somebody

Rachelle: Help, advice

Katie: I don't know about that, but they, there was a problem, there was a problem usually somewhere, with their family or with their father or, there was a problem

Rachelle: Okay, um, and were you always comfortable with being a girl/ female, did you find there were any constraints on you?

Katie: Absolutely, but I, I didn't care for a long time and then when I, well I didn't care about that but when I tried to suppress it, I was very unhappy, so it was very nice for me to sort of rediscover that, um and but I know that you can't, there were sacrifices you've got to make, it's like I will not do well in certain jobs, that's become clear, and women attack you, women are not nice, I'm actually, I feel much safer with men than I do with women and that's why going to Rape Crisis was such a big deal for me, cause I was very weary of going to an organization full of women, I wasn't too sure that this was going to work, cause also I, I'd actually, my female, actually that's the point, my female relationships um, had been quite, in South Africa, not in the U.K., in South Africa had been quite disastrous often cause um, um, my first best friend I had in Cape Town um, when I started going out with Kurt she really fancied him and that became a really big problem and she phoned me up and told me I was all sorts of dreadful things, that I, I, I was um sexually sort of promiscuous, that I when I walked into a, I wanted every guy to look at me, that I was somehow courting, I was trying to sort of be noticed always, I was very sort of vain and I was really this horrible person, this horrible woman, and um that was very painful and then obviously my friendship with her ended, cause it was, I didn't believe this, it was very painful that she would think that but um, I, I sort of realized why and then, um, um, that ended and then I had another friend that was in an abusive relationship and I was very good, I didn't sort of give my advice, um, but she went on and on and on and on about it until eventually I said well maybe you should leave him, and then eventually she got the balls to do that, could she wants to be like me, she wanted to, to have strength like me, she wanted, well this is what she said anyway, that she sort of thought that I was independent and could sort of you know not, not have to, cause she came from a very sort of traditional family so I was quite exotic as well and I wasn't South African so that was also a bit different, I hadn't grown up with the whole father-figure thing, so, she broke up with him and then very soon afterwards got back and then didn't want to talk to me because she felt ashamed, so that ended and then when I stopped going out with Kurt, I, I um was spending quite a bit of time with this friend of mine who I'd met through my first boyfriend John but I'd never really known her then, but we really got on well and she was the first woman who was a bit like me, she had a bit more balls than any of the other women that I'd met and she was very intelligent and we had a really great laugh, she was as tall as me, with dark-hair and we had a great time and she, she had other interests, she was into economics and politics and stuff so we would talk for hours about that, we didn't have to talk about men and we didn't have to talk about clothes, we could talk about that too but it was more challenging that she would talk about other things and we really had a great time, unfortunately when I started going out with (John) it became a bit strained, then in my honours year I moved into a flat with a friend of hers and they increasingly became a problem, and they would talk about how I was behind my back and um it turned out they both fancied Simon, so um they just, and I don't know whether Linda really fancied Simon but she didn't like the relationship we had, she didn't like it that I had it and she didn't, cause she had problems with

relationships herself in the sense that she didn't, she'd been hurt once and didn't want to actually expose herself so she was in this very sort of funny relationship with this guy who adored her and who she constantly rejected, so it also wasn't very healthy but anyway, um, um, they became very nasty and sort of confronted me also again about how sexually promiscuous I was, how I flaunted my body and ag, all sorts of shit, so again that sort of ended, and then this also led to me being very wary of females um, and ja, so then, then when we went back to the U.K., before I left we phoned each other, cause I really liked Linda, she really was important to me cause she was the only woman I knew who, who had a bit of 'oomph' you know and I really missed that, I missed her, I missed her friendship I really did, and um I still miss it, but so anyway I wanted to try and believe that it hadn't been the way it really was so I gave her a ring and we talked and then I left and then we sort of kept, she wrote me a letter and you know she sort of apologized for the way that she'd behaved, but she felt that I was condescending of her doing third year when I was doing Honours, which is such bullshit cause I always told, I was always so interested in what they were doing, I was always so, I mean it was what we talked about, it was the sort, it was the one thing that I really admired, so it didn't make any sense so anyway, that's what she said that her problem was, so I just to believe that, then she came and visited us in the U.K. and I took, we went to Paris together and we had a really nice time and then when we came back to South Africa um, we saw them a lot, I mean we didn't have anywhere, we were staying with this granny in Lakeside and she was quite close-by and we spent a lot of time with her and her then boyfriend, um, the same one who she still had this odd relationship with, and um, um, everything was really great and she was very supportive and everything and then we had a really shit year, we had a really shit year, I couldn't find work and Simon had this job and then and then they wouldn't offer him an employment contract so eventually he had to walk out and we had no money and it was really, really tough and they, she really helped, she was a really good friend, we'd go round to their house and spend time there and you know she was really fantastic, when I took a job and I had to walk out after one day, she you know, she gave me work and took me with her to Arniston for five days and you know she was really fantastic, and then unfortunately um she had um a conversation with Simon about how um how I would never understand him, how we were always going to have problems in our relationship because I'm very German and I don't understand South African men like she does, you know and it was a whole conversation but it was basically it was about how our relationship was going to be a disaster and we should not have got married and how she understood Simon in a way that I never would, um, and ja, it was quite clear really after that, I never spoke to her ever again, cause she tried to, she was trying to undermine our relationship, cause we were having a very difficult time and um, I don't, I mean that was just the last straw, so um, I mean she was doing it again, she'd basically said similar things before but now she was doing it again when he was my husband, wasn't like just my boyfriend, even if she did think those things she should never have said it to him, um, so that was also, ja, end of story

**Rachelle:** And so why do you think women are like that in friendships with other women?

**Katie:** I think they're very competitive for men, I think women, a lot of the shit between women is because of men, and because of the fact that they want to control men, I sometimes feel that, I certainly felt it with Kurt, that it wasn't about who he fancied or who he really cared about, it was a fight, she this other girl was fighting me for him and in the end that's why I broke up with him because I thought Jesus Christ he's not worth it, I'm not, I'm not getting involved with this sort of stuff you know, she was, she came round to see how good-looking I was, I mean she did, cause she couldn't see very well but she was too vain to put glasses on, so she couldn't see very well, so she'd seen me but she couldn't see me very well so she wanted to come round to my house so she could look at me close-up, I mean, it's just, it's just too crazy, I think women, I think, I think women are, are, fight each other for men, I think men are almost just a toy, they're just the thing, I mean it's really not difficult to get a guy, I mean it really isn't, um, so, I think that they just fight about men most of the time, I've certainly found that, that I mean I know it's been my experience with, with my, with many of my closest female friends

**Rachelle:** I can hear that, most of them ended because of

**Katie:** Because of a guy, ja, or they didn't, I mean I don't even know whether, whether Linda really fancied Simon, but she wanted something, she didn't want me to have it, if I had it, she didn't want me to have it, and there was a lot of, she was, she'd very much have these conversations when I was, before I went to England and was living with her friend, Robin, she was also my friend but um, they would have conversations, sort of hate conversations about men, how you couldn't have a relationship with a man, that men were emotionally stunted, that men's brains were different, and um, you couldn't, you know they had a different need, which

meant they couldn't complement a woman's emotional needs, only other women could really, could you really have a close emotional relationship with, and that was her whole kluck, her whole thing, and they were both having unsuccessful relationships with men so they would get together and talk like this and because I didn't join in, I think that also irritated them, cause I couldn't, I don't think, I don't feel like that about men, I mean if, if a guy has treated me badly, from my father to, to, to my ex-boyfriends, I don't feel that it's because of men in general, whereas they felt it was cause of men in general and maybe that meant that I could have the type of relationship with a man that they actually wanted but weren't allowing themselves to have because they were trying to defend themselves, or something like that, but they certainly knew that I had something that they didn't have, and they wanted it, or they didn't want me to have it if they didn't have it

**Rachelle:** laughs, okay, and then what about alternative sexualities, when did you first realize they were there?

**Katie:** Um, well they were always there, I didn't know any gay people when I was at school, um and it was very schee-schee to be in a same sex relationship at varsity, especially for women, and (laughs) this girl that Kurt got pregnant, who wanted to come and size me up, she was recovering from a lesbian relationship that had gone wrong because she realized actually maybe she was heterosexual after all, but she'd had this whole um, lesbian relationship because, because, well I don't know why, but then she, she, it didn't go very well, so that's when she wanted to rediscover her heterosexuality, was with Kurt, and but also the female thing to compete with me, it was very much competing with me, she wanted to, to, to flex her feminine muscles in getting the man away (Rachelle laughs)

**Rachelle:** And you, did you always, you never really questioned your heterosexuality?

**Katie:** I didn't really think about it, but I think certainly the way that women are built, when I later sort of um you know learned more about my own body, and, and started having, um a, a much more working sexual relationships – which I only ever had with Simon, so in a way I was kind of a virgin for him too, um, so that's the only proper sexual relationship I've had where I've actually been satisfied, in all ways

**Rachelle:** And do you think it, do you think it would've been difficult if you'd had other feelings or decided that you were interested in women?

**Katie:** Not really, um, I think, I think my mum and aunt would've been very surprised, but it wouldn't have affected me, you know, by the time I was twenty-three I you know if they had a problem with who I was, the that was their problem and I was going to live my life anyway, but it was very funny because um, um, somebody who knew Linda, the friend of, he thought that Linda and I were having a relationship, but that was also because we were, we were similar in our personalities in a way, you know we were, we were, I don't know, I don't know what you'd call it, but we weren't afraid to say what we thought, and we obviously weren't maybe stupid, or wanting to pretend we were, so, but they thought we were having a sexual relationship, I think that, I did think about it in the sense of women's physiology, you know actually I could very well imagine that a, that a relationship with a woman, would be very sexually satisfying, but to be very honest there's nothing that you can do with a woman that you can't do with a man, I mean (both laugh) a guy can do it just as well as a woman, ja, I mean in terms of, of intercourse it's, it's not, it's, well I think many women don't find it very easy to climax just with intercourse, and I'm one of them so that's also why I've thought about it, but I mean that's not a problem when you sort out how you make love or what you do, that's okay, it's not a problem

**Rachelle:** And you don't believe in all that other stuff about the emotional thing, only two women

**Katie:** Well I can imagine that, I could imagine, I don't believe that that men and women are incompatible emotionally, or physically, I think people are incompatible, but um I don't think sex has much, I think we're different, I do think men and women are different and I do possibly think that they think differently in the sense that they have different focuses but um, I also tend to think that you know we are a species, um there's a reason why we are the way we are, I don't think it matters if you have same sex or not, but um ja.

**Rachelle:** Okay, um, just trying to see if there is anything we haven't covered. Do you think heterosexuality was a powerful marker of identity in your life, I mean do you see it as closely tied up with who you are?

**Katie:** No, I don't really have a concept of, sexuality isn't really particularly an issue, probably in the same way that existential questions aren't really an issue

**Rachelle:** It's just there

**Katie:** No, I think it was sorted out fairly early on you see, I sort of knew what I liked early on, I think from about the age of six I didn't really worry about God and the afterlife and dying and things like that, so it wasn't really an issue and I think that much in the way that, the fact that I enjoyed male company was not really an

issue, but I mean that was also supported by my experience, I found it, even though I had bad relationships with men, certainly unhealthy ones, um, it didn't, I didn't put it down to a masculinity, the way that I suppose I see women's relationships tied up with their needs as women

**Rachelle:** Okay, lastly and in anticipation of the next interview, how do you think your sexual, do you think your sexual violence work has impacted upon your understanding of your history and your feelings about being heterosexual

**Katie:** Um its certainly made me think about it, um and its made me, I suppose, um, when I came to South Africa, the whole feminine/female revolution thing was not such a big issue for me, cause I'd never felt constrained in any way by being female, other people might have a problem with it, but I didn't really care, so ja, I knew it was there but it didn't affect me in the sense, I wasn't gonna, well I suppose I did alter my behaviour but it was because I wanted other things, it wasn't about being a woman it was about wanting something for myself rather, that's why the change, it wasn't because, I didn't change to get that, it's, it's maybe a fine point but it wasn't, I didn't experience it as an issue until I got to South Africa, where the differences between men and women became much more stark, and um, um, ja, I think that working at Rape Crisis has done two things: it's made me experience positive relationships with women that aren't competitive, possibly because there aren't men in the situation (both laugh) um, maybe that is why I don't know, but I certainly think about feminist issues I suppose now more, as a result of working at Rape Crisis, the whole things of power and the reason why women attack rape survivors, I think that's something really dreadful that isn't really talked about that often, but every single client I've seen so far has told me about, about verbal cruelty and attack from women, and even physical attack, and it's this whole thing where the man is not blamed for sexually attacking the woman, the girlfriends or the women in the family attack the victim because she somehow sexually lured him, I mean this one, one client of mine told me today how she'd been blamed for being raped because she was wearing tracksuit pants, and tracksuit pants are easy to pull down, and women say this sort of thing all the time, I mean this one client, another client of mine she, she often tells me about what she wears and what she doesn't wear, every single session I've had with her she spontaneously mentioned about what she's wearing and when she was at home and her son saw that she was wearing this top and it was a bit see-through and he said oh no you're not going out like that and there's always a story about it, um, but it's this ja, that's made me think a lot about why women attack women and what makes them do that, I mean society and power-dynamics, why men, the whole act of power over somebody when you rape them, that's made me think about it a lot more, and the way it seems that, that girls in this country are set up as sort of victims from the word 'go' and they're taught to be passive and then in a situation where they need to protect themselves they don't have the ability to do that, I mean these girls are systematically ignored, they're systematically denied selfhood, and by the time they get into a situation where the guy is raping them, instead of fighting they just become paralysed, um, and I suppose I think a lot more about that sort of thing

**Rachelle:** And has it changed any of your reflection upon your past relationships

**Katie:** Not particularly because I don't really think about them much anymore, I did a lot at the time, but they're just sort of a long time ago for me now, so I don't really think about them

**Rachelle:** Okay, thank you that was great

## Interview B: 22 December 1999

Rachelle: Okay firstly is there anything you want to add from last time?

Katie: Um, not really I don't think, think I told you all my little

Rachelle: laughs. Relationship stories. Um, this interview's a little bit more structured than the other one, more like solid questions and it's focusing on your work at Rape Crisis and how that's impacted upon your personal life, so firstly, how did you come to work at Rape Crisis – what were your motivations?

Katie: Um, I wanted to do something practical, to do some kind of volunteer work because I wanted to change my career to being a clinical psychologist, I didn't just want to do the university stuff I wanted to see whether I could handle it and I was doing statistics with somebody to prepare for the beginning of the academic year and she worked at Rape Crisis so when I mentioned wanting to do volunteer work she told me a bit about it and um, I contacted them and that's how I got in.

Rachelle: So no special reason for wanting to work in that area?

Katie: Um, not particularly but there had been a lot of um information about rape and a lot of cases in the press about rape and it obviously seemed like it was something that was going to be needed and also I, the only other place I'd really heard about was lifeline and I knew that I didn't want to go and do that, I was a bit weary of the issue of it all being women though, so I very much wanted to check that out first

Rachelle: So did you check it out – how did you check it out?

Katie: Well I, it was the interview really, um and then really then though the training programme showed me that they didn't, you didn't have to sort of buy the T-shirt, you um, you know if you, that every counsellor got to counsel in the way that they felt comfortable with and that was really important.

Rachelle: Okay. Has this work affected your personal life?

Katie: Um, depends what you mean by personal life, but if you mean me as a person in my life then um yes, it's made me a lot more aware and I'm also getting to meet people from a much broader spectrum of society than I would ordinarily be able to do and that actually makes me feel a bit more secure because um I'm not used, I suppose even though I've lived here a long time I'm not used to living somewhere where the contrast between very ordinarily off people and really abjectly poor people, is so extreme and it kind of creates a bit of a false environment, um so it makes me feel that I, I know a little bit more about what it's really like to live here, I almost don't think that as a white person in my sort of social set-up actually has an experience of living in South Africa which is shared by the majority – it's not, so um I'm definitely going to see another side of life and to meet some great people and also um, it is amazing how people can work through something as traumatic as rape, that's very kind of affirming if you like, and it also gives me a bit of a perspective for my own life, you know when you hear these people and they, you know the rape's just one form of violence in their lives and then you think about your own problems, it doesn't mean your own problems aren't important but it gives you a bit perspective on them. But the stories are often very horrifying

Rachelle: So emotionally I mean you're able to

Katie: Um, I get emotionally involved mainly when I'm with a client, I do, I do feel sometimes you really do get a situation where actually have to feel the emotion for the client, and that, but I don't have a problem with that, you know it's something that comes out and it's something that you're aware of but it's, but um I can't say that I'm really experiencing 'vicarious victimisation' or something like that, I don't know whether it's just cause I haven't done enough of it, but it's not, it's not undermining in any way it's just um positive really

Rachelle: So it's kind of reaffirming the strength of the survivors that you see instead of making you feel negative about it

Katie: Ja, ja but I suppose I also do go home and I tell my husband about it and he gets very angry, um, he gets really upset actually, he feels in a very different way to me, I don't know why I don't feel it like that but I don't, it doesn't somehow impact on me as a person, it goes in, in my head but it doesn't, it's like I'm not scared of being raped every minute of the day but I'm obviously much more aware of how vulnerable I am but I mean I'm also, um, I try and be careful, I am more aware but I don't

Rachelle: Than you were before?

Katie: Ja, though I also kind of know that if I was raped I could live with that

Rachelle: Through your work do you know or

Katie: Um, I think so yes, I mean I've also gone through other things that were difficult so I've um got strength from that but I ja I suppose having seen how other people deal with it you do, you come to understand

that it is a process, and that it's something that you have to go through and um you can and you can get out the other side

Rachelle: So you don't feel like you've got any anger or

Katie: No, no, I also, I try and understand, though this may be contentious, but I try and understand how such um events occur, I mean people often ask me why, why is rape so high in South Africa, so you do try and understand it, even though it's not excusable you try and understand it

Rachelle: And how do you understand it?

Katie: Um, the only way I can understand it is that rape in South Africa is a function of the past, the recent past, and a brutalized group of people is waging a war on itself if you like, and I think that this happens because the men, it's a very patriarchal society and the men in the, from the normally disadvantaged people before, under apartheid, I think the men had to live in such conflict with themselves and such physical violence that they were traumatized and it sort of gets perpetuated, it's like a whole generation's been traumatized and then the children get traumatized and the children and the children get traumatized and they're abandoned and all of those problems as well to do with poverty are exacerbated and I think that is why the violence is manifested very much against women and children against helpless people, or less-abled people to defend themselves, um, so I kind of see many rapists as, as, having been traumatized in some way and they have become very dysfunctional in their relationships, and frustrations to do with the dysfunctional relationships which they have manifest themselves in a need to exert power over somebody, to take control over somebody

Rachelle: And do you think there's anyway that it's ever going to be alleviated or

Katie: No, I think only after a long period of time, I think it's going to take generations, maybe education can help, that's the only kind of thing, I mean education possibly, but I think that blaming rapists as other is not going to get us anywhere, I really, I really don't think there's any point in doing that

Rachelle: How do you mean as other?

Katie: Well everybody likes to turn around and say 'god these rapists are terrible people you know they're', they're other people just as you say rape happens to other people, perpetrators are other people, they're sort of the devil, all the evil gets put onto them, they're the sort of carriers of evil and people then are, are blind to the people within their own environment who are rapists and they actually then don't believe that they're rapists and that's then why the rape victim, the woman who's been raped gets attacked again by the society, by the community in which they live, they get attacked by the rapist and then when they talk about it they get attacked by the community and I see it, I mean it happens again and again and again, cause the community doesn't want to think that evil is in it

Rachelle: That it's happening in that society

Katie: Yes

Rachelle: And last time it was you that spoke about the violence against the women,

Katie: Yeah

Rachelle: Do you want to mention anything?

Katie: Well just in terms of the community um attacking the victim, it's often done by women, men don't often, tend to say something, but it's the women who give the woman dirty looks, it's the woman who come up to them and beat them up cause it's their boyfriend who's in prison, um, it's the mother

Rachelle: They actually beat them up

Katie: Oh ja, oh ja

Rachelle: On more than one occasion

Katie: I, I got a telephone call while I was on cell phone duty, she was seeing P., a client of P. and um she's 14, she was gang-raped um by some guys, young guys in her neighbourhood, um she was out walking with a friend two days afterwards or a couple of days afterwards um, the guys had been picked up and put into prison and um they had just had a bail hearing and they were denied bail cause it was a very brutal rape and the girlfriends, well this girl was walking along with a friend of hers and the girlfriends of the guys beat her up to such an extent that they broke her nose, they dragged her by the hair across the road, they bashed her on the head with a brick, you know she had severe injuries from these girls who were angry because their boyfriends were going to be in prison for Christmas and New Year, and the mothers as well, the mothers then come round, the mothers of the perpetrators come round and try and bribe or blackmail or, or threaten, it happens very often

Rachelle: And how do you experience Rape Crisis as an institution?

Katie: Um, it's been a really, really positive experience, as I said before I was very sort of wary of all women together um, but it's, it's really okay, I mean there is quite a difference between the permanent staff and the counselling staff, there seems to be a very nice atmosphere amongst the counselling staff and I think that's probably partly due to Kathy and the way that she likes to run things, um I don't really know much about the permanent staff, I haven't had much to do with them which is a pity because we are also representatives of Rape Crisis so we don't get to know what's going on and then when something's going on we don't get to hear about it

Rachelle: And you don't know what the current thing is to relay back to

Katie: No, you know we're also not used as a resource of information for Rape Crisis but I mean that's just the way it's run I suppose but it's been a very positive experience

Rachelle: And do you feel quite bonded?

Katie: Yeah, yeah, yeah

Rachelle: Um, what are the meanings of this work for you?

Katie: It's been very rewarding, it's really nice to be able to work with people towards a positive goal as opposed to creating a product and that's a very different, a very different thing, I mean in my previous working life there was always, the goal was always some kind of product was going to be sold, so this is very, very different work for me and it's much more, I enjoy, the only thing is that obviously when, you know as a lay counselor you can't do much, I very much want to learn how to help severely disturbed people, cause you can as a lay counselor you can help most people but then there are people you really can't help, how to deal with deep-seated long-term maladaptive behaviours and thought-patterns and how to help people to also improve their lives and, and just be happier about things, I mean there will always be clients who completely and utterly floor you

Rachelle: You mean you just don't know what to do with them?

Katie: Ja, ja, I mean there's obviously something really wrong going on but it's very hard to put your finger on it

Rachelle: And then you will refer them I suppose?

Katie: If I get a chance

Rachelle: I suppose you never know what you're going to be confronted with

Katie: No, most of the time it's okay though it's very limited I mean the people who come to Rape Crisis, the rape is one form of violence in their lives and you can't do anything about that

Rachelle: That must be quite frustrating

Katie: I don't know actually, I don't find it frustrating, that's just the way it is but it's it won't help them if I tell them how dysfunctional it seems for somebody who lives differently and who knows a different reality, a much less violent reality all I can possibly do, um is try and help them, um help them to be stronger in themselves to be able to deal with it, but it's reality and you can't, you know I'm not a, I am fundamentally not a missionary, I really do not think one person can change the world cause I don't think one person can change human nature, I think one person can be very effective or very destructive but I don't think you're going to change anything fundamentally, I don't believe in, I don't believe in progress like that, I don't believe in progress

Rachelle: You don't believe in progress (laughs) and in terms of the training course, how did you experience that?

Katie: Ja, it was really good once you get into it, it's quite touchy-feely which is quite funny

Rachelle: Experiential

Katie: Yeah, the whole thing about drawing your body and all that sort of, that was, well at least you weren't asked to get out your little hand-mirrors (Rachelle laughs) but it was fine, it, once you get into it it was actually fine

Rachelle: And the whole like gender thing

Katie: Well I found Dot quite full on, um and that's great, I suppose in a way I've just grown up in a different environment and I never felt I had to bang my drum as a woman ever, so, but I know that that's very different here, so that's not something I identify with terribly much, but it was okay you know I know about feminism and that's okay

Rachelle: But you don't identify with it more now than you did before?

Katie: No, no, I understand it a bit better within South Africa but I don't feel differently as a woman because of it, it's not like I've had some sort of epiphany and you know, I just put the two pieces together and now I understand why I've been treated the way I've been treated all my life by people, it was always very clear to me

Rachelle: So you wouldn't define yourself as a feminist?

Katie: Um, I'm female, I think for example being female means that it's illogical to support doctrines and ways of thinking which by definition put women down, such as organized religion, to me religion doesn't make sense, why support something which puts you in an inferior position, um ja

Rachelle: But you feel like you don't need to subscribe to

Katie: I think, I think the problem I have with feminism is that, that at the end of the day we should not need it, you know to, to get beyond it and when we get beyond it maybe we can understand why women attack women so much, I have to say I've experienced quite a lot of that

Rachelle: Not physically though

Katie: No, no but trying to do harm, to do emotional and psychological harm so ja

Rachelle: And you don't feel it's something that's rammed down your throat at Rape Crisis?

Katie: No, I mean men are around, but that's only in the counseling section, I think perhaps the permanent staff are more full on about that

Rachelle: What do you mean men are around?

Katie: Well it's like Kath has a husband, a partner and people have boyfriends, you know they don't come to, they're not allowed into Rape Crisis virtually but I mean they can come in terms of picking you up, but they aren't invited to the party, you can't bring them to the party

Rachelle: And how do feel about the fact that

Katie: I think it's a bit of a pity but it was addressed at the meeting before that at the end of the year party it's actually nice just to thank or include your partner so that they also better understand what you do there, you know it is like you go off and you spend all this time there and they don't know anything about it, you get their support easier if they know a bit more about it

Rachelle: So you would have liked to have been able to bring

Katie: Yeah

Rachelle: And how does your husband feel about your work?

Katie: Um, I think he moans every now and again and he feels angry when I tell him about the stuff but I know that he thinks it's very good for me, so that's fine and he knows that it's something that I want to do and something that I get a lot out of so that's fine.

Rachelle: What does this work mean for your intimate relationships with men, if anything?

Katie: Um

Rachelle: Has it changed your views of men and understanding of men?

Katie: I do think, I do think that conflict is unnecessary

Rachelle: Conflict?

Katie: Ja, I think that, that you know like arguing, I don't think it's really necessary

Rachelle: Arguing between?

Katie: Between you know in a relationship, arguing as a form of communication to, to set up parameters if you like, I don't think that's, and I think, I think maybe its confirmed to me as well that rape is a symptom sometimes of the perpetrator's inability to communicate with anybody, maybe not just with women but with anybody, I think that, I don't know it's something I maybe speculate about but I don't think, I think that sort of thing is a symptom, I think it's to do with being traumatized, I think it's a way that men deal with trauma and um, it's, it's a behavioural thing sometimes, I think sometimes it's a behavioural thing you know if guys could try, you know if rehabilitation programmes could focus on effective communication skills, on, on being able to make themselves heard, I wonder whether that would not help.

Rachelle: So you don't see any like continuity between the men that you're friends with, surrounding you

Katie: No

Rachelle: And what, I mean about the argument thing, how was that

Katie: I just don't think it's necessary, you know I think, I, maybe it's on one extreme having an argument and the other extreme is murdering somebody, and a little bit in from murdering somebody, well one step from murdering somebody is raping somebody, it's something that two people do together, they are communicating

something but I think that both of them are dysfunctional, it's a dysfunctional means of communication, it could be symbolic in the sense that a rapist chooses an unknown woman to take out his aggression on but I think it's symbolic of a communication failure, of an expressing the self failure

Rachelle: Not being able to carry across your own meaning

Katie: Yeah, so you, the perpetrator kind of imprints himself

Rachelle: Bodily

Katie: Yeah, yeah, by ejaculating he kind of inserts himself into somebody else

Rachelle: That's interesting, ja and in terms, ja I was just thinking, in terms of the whole bodily thing is there any kind of, I mean when you deal with your clients is that like a big issue

Katie: Yes, they hate their body, their bodies are the site of conflict and pain, they don't like their bodies and they blame themselves, I haven't met one rape survivor that doesn't blame herself, but that's also to do with issues of control, it's very difficult to tell somebody that's been raped that they could be raped again, that they're equally as powerless now as they were then so they like to think that they could have done something so that they can learn from this experience and it's a very vicious cycle

Rachelle: And that's probably why other women get so violent towards

Katie: Yes, if I don't wear that dress, I mean it's ludicrous, the whole 'what I was wearing' issue for women is unbelievable, you know the women who, who get raped and the women who then talk to the women that have been raped, they always blame them for what they were wearing, I mean you could be wearing a space suit and they would still blame what you were wearing

Rachelle: That's bizarre

Katie: It really is, it gets actually totally ludicrous, so I try to do kind of cognitive examples with them you know but it's very difficult, it's very very difficult to penetrate that, to penetrate that

Rachelle: Because it has some kind of, it has a function, you know as you were saying it helps them to believe they have some kind of control, so

Katie: But also that entrenched belief that, that um, in loose women, the belief in loose women who are out to have sex with strange men is, I mean there is no male equivalent, there is no male equivalent, one does not look down on loose men (Both laugh) they don't exist

Rachelle: Do you think there are points of conflict between a heterosexual identity and sexual violence work?

Katie: Um, no, not for me anyway, simply because I, I like men and I always have, even when they've been really horrible to me, I've never sort of blamed the species, I'd like to blame the person rather, you know it may be more effective, it's just, I, I also recognize masculine sides of myself and I like them, you know, I think we are mixtures of the two, but it's very hard if you are heterosexual to reject that

Rachelle: To reject the

Katie: The masculine, or men, it's who you are and it's who you can, can physically relate to

Rachelle: Do you understand yourself differently since engaging in this work?

Katie: Um, not really, it has made me think about things again but I, I tend to think about things so it's not really something, it will remind me of what I've thought about before and maybe bring it into a higher level of memory, you know nearer the surface but

Rachelle: What kind of things?

Katie: Oh you remember your own experiences, where you felt powerless and um put down or um when people made assumptions about you because you were female um, having to deal with the whole tall blonde thing, it reminds you, you understand, obviously, why things are like that

Rachelle: So it does bring up some issues

Katie: Ja it reminds you

Rachelle: It doesn't create them

Katie: No, I haven't experienced a new realization.

Rachelle: How has a heightened awareness of sexual violence and rape impacted upon your life?

Katie: Um, I think it goes I suppose to what I said a little bit earlier, one is more aware and I want to do, I think it's very important to do self-defense, I'm going to do self-defense in January, I think it's one of the few things you can do to help yourself and I think it is important to do that

Rachelle: And you know the month of media attention that there was on rape, did that raise any issues for you, seeing rape even more in the spotlight when it was already quite spotlighted for you

Katie: I think it's one of things where people are trying to get something acknowledged, so they try and make out that it's much more black and white than it actually is, I do think obviously the most important thing is to get support for rape survivors, I don't know whether it's adverts telling many South African men that we know you're rapists, is actually going to do anything, it's going to create talking but it's going to be polemical talking and then men are going to be defensive and I don't really think that's actually going to help the women at all, um, I think that maybe Rape Crisis, I don't know, I don't think Rape Crisis wants to do everything on its own, I think it's really unbelievable that people at Rape Crisis get taxed for the work they do, when you're picking up the pieces of the government's mess, um, but I do think that rehabilitation programmes should be looked into, I think more research should go into 'why', you know we all know rape is really dreadful and we know a lot more about the impact it has upon people emotionally and physically but we need to try and look at why, but it's the looking at why that people don't want to do, because it means that you have to look at trauma and it means you have to look at the past and everybody wants to forget about the past and people, I think also the African and Coloured communities have a very big problem with actually acknowledging that they're that fucked up, to be very honest, I don't think, I mean it's like here, I was doing a scriptwriting course and I wanted to do a short video on um rape at UCT, um a sort of educational video that they could play in a medical center and student union and stuff, and I phoned up and I talked to these women that were doing, dealing with sexual harassment on campus and things like that and then this one woman told me how you know they can't actually really deal with the issue because most of the perpetrators are African men and they're not allowed to say so, they can't help people like that because they're not allowed to name it

Rachelle: Cause it makes it seem like a race issue

Katie: Yes, it was, um, just before the elections as well so they couldn't say it, but it also means that the perpetrators lose out as well, you know, they lose out, but it's the social problems to do with meeting of the Western and the African traditional cultures which is partly responsible I think.

Rachelle: And in that month did you find a lot of people were asking you

Katie: Ja

Rachelle: And was that, did you feel annoyed or were you happy to

Katie: I didn't mind, maybe I felt a bit uninformed but I don't mind.

Rachelle: Okay, then feelings about women, you said that going into Rape Crisis it was sort of something that you were skeptical about, so have you enjoyed the experience

Katie: Ja, I've had a very positive experience with a lot of women, ja, it's very nice, maybe it's cause I left my man at home though (Rachelle laughs) there's nothing to fight over

Rachelle: Where do you think sexual pleasure fits in within a context where the violence in sex is highlighted? Is it something that isn't an issue for you, I mean you are confronted with that aspect of it or do you see rape and sex as very different?

Katie: I don't, I think it's very difficult because sexual intercourse is a physical act and your body will respond whether you like it or not, for example as a woman if you are lucky you will have some sort of lubrication so it's not so painful and you will feel something, I mean if somebody touches you down there you won't feel nothing, even if it's someone who you don't want to be doing that, so I think when that comes up for women survivors that's very difficult to deal with but I don't, I don't think rape and sexual intercourse or sex between two people who want to have sex are really connected, it's a form of attack and it's a way a man can attack a woman, it's a way a man can attack someone that's weaker than them and they know that's it's going to be very devastating but I don't think that perpetrators are in any kind of um, illusion about what it does to somebody, I think it's also very important the, there's been a lot of publicity about it, so I don't think any guy can suggest that he doesn't know what the impact is when you do that to somebody but the fact that they know they know that they're doing it to somebody and they know what the impact is means that they're doing it for the impact, and often you hear about guys that don't even ejaculate, or who have trouble getting stiff

Rachelle: They're not really doing it for the pleasure

Katie: No, it's a way of attacking somebody, they attack somebody with their body basically, they don't have a knife, they have a penis

Rachelle: It's just interesting to wonder why, why a sexual act is used

Katie: Because it can be and it's easy and it's devastating, if you stab somebody the chances are it's going to heal and you're going to get sympathy cause you've got a stab wound, if you rape somebody you know that they're going to be suffering with that for a long time and that also people are going to attack them about it but

I think also men rape because they know that the conviction rate is so low and they don't fear any kind of consequences, they really don't fear consequences because they know that women don't get believed and that to get a conviction is really difficult and that's why the whole thing with disbanding the district surgeons is such a disaster, the district surgeons weren't great but they at least knew how to collect evidence whereas now nobody knows how to collect evidence

Rachelle: Okay, what place does sexual pleasure hold in your life and in your vision for the future of women?

Katie: Sexual pleasure, it's nice, I don't know it's just something you do really

Rachelle: And is it something you'd like all women to feel they have a right to and

Katie: Um, well they, I can't really understand right, I don't believe in rights, I think you have to take responsibility for your own sexual pleasure and women often don't, it's very normal for men, for young boys to masturbate but I don't know of many young girls that do that, certainly many young girls in my school class didn't, so I think you've also got to, I think women also are very ignorant about their bodies, I think many, many women, and the more patriarchal the society gets the more of them you will find, have actually never experienced orgasm and wouldn't know how and wouldn't know what it was, they'd know something had happened that was different but they wouldn't really know what it was.

Rachelle: And do you feel that that's an equal issue to fighting against sexual violence is fighting for sexual pleasure?

Katie: No, I think it's very different, I think you're responsible for your own sexual pleasure cause your body is your body and it's up to you to make sure you get what you want and what you need and that's very different to, to you know living in a safe society and protecting yourself from violence.

University of Cape Town