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Constructive work with male sex offenders: male forms of life, language games and change

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Chapter 9

Constructive work with male sex offenders: male forms of life, language games and change

Malcolm Cowburn

This chapter problematises the ‘scientific’ standpoint from which cognitive-behavioural treatment (CBT) programmes for sex offenders are developed. The objective of cognitive-behavioural (CB) programmes is to deconstruct the offender’s initial account of his offences and replace it with one that fully recognises offender responsibility and victim harm. This is generally accomplished in either individual work or, more commonly, groupwork. The therapeutic process is monological insofar as there is no dialogue between the worker(s) and the offender(s). Within the cognitive paradigm the worker(s) is/are unaffected and unchanged by the therapeutic process; the offender (hopefully) is transformed. The worker helps the offender identify his cognitive distortions and thereafter change them. This chapter raises questions about CB approaches; offers a dialogical perspective on the processes of working with offenders; considers how masculinities are constructed through language; discusses the use of power in programmes; and concludes by suggesting a constructive approach to work with male sex offenders that moves beyond the current CB model. However, I begin with a problem that may be familiar to readers who have worked with sex offenders.

Talking the talk or walking the walk?

A few years ago I evaluated a sex offender treatment programme. Apart from administering psychometric tests, I home visited all men who had completed the programme. The psychometric data in relation to James (pseudonym) was positive; it indicated that his attitudes (concerning responsibility for his offences, victim harm and his attitude to women) had shifted significantly. I asked James if the programme had changed him in any way. He said that it had, indeed, changed him. Prior to the programme he was an 'MCP' (male chauvinist pig), but his attitudes had changed. As he told me this, he repeatedly interrupted our conversation to instruct his wife to make me tea, iron his clothes and obtain money for their night out which was to begin after I had left the house. This presented me with a problem in interpreting the data: the psychometric questionnaires and James' answer to my question indicated that treatment had had a desired effect, but his behaviour towards his wife contradicted this.

Workers operating within the CB paradigm are sceptical about the effectiveness of their work. The opinion of the offender is treated with suspicion (Salter 1989, p.85). Briggs *et al* (1998, p.56) note:

Many workers become concerned when assessing sexual abusers that what their clients say might be different to what their clients think, feel and do. Indeed the phrases 'talk the talk' and 'walk the walk' have entered the vernacular to capture this dilemma.

The response of forensic psychology to this dilemma is to increase methods of evaluation. Beech, Fisher and Beckett (1999, pp.44-51) employed twenty-five psychometric tests in evaluating the English Prison Service's Sex Offender Treatment Programme. By using a large number of tests, researchers expect to identify, more clearly, patterns of change (Beech *et al* 1999, p.45) and thus the objective 'truth' concerning the effectiveness of treatment can be discovered.

However, there is a sceptical standpoint in CBT in relation to sex offenders – they deny responsibility for planning and executing their offences; they minimise the harm that their actions cause to victims; they lack empathy towards their victims and their accounts of their lives and offending behaviours are riddled with 'cognitive distortions' (see Briggs et al., 1998; Leberg 1997; Salter 1988). It may be that because of this orientation, doubts about treatment effectiveness remain. Thus, although the use of psychometric tests has increased, doubts remain about what they reveal (Kendall 2004).

Problematising cognitive-behavioural programmes

Crowle (1990) raises questions about working with offenders from a perspective that (a) believes that offenders know why they committed offences on every occasion and that they (b) deliberately conceal this information from clinicians and researchers. He (Crowle 1990) uses statistical models, focusing on deviance-inhibiting and deviance-promoting factors (both of which he considers to be in 'our culture') to show the absurdity of positivist attempts to monitor the truth of what offenders say about their offending. Faraday and Plummer (1979, pp.776-777) also highlight this problem:

Most social science in its quest for generalizability imposes order and rationality upon experiences and worlds that are more ambiguous, more problematic and more chaotic in reality. If we check our own experiences we know that our lives are flooded with moments of indecision, turning points, confusions, contradictions and ironies. Most social science glosses over this interstitial but central region of our lives. Questionnaires, experiments, attitudes scales, and even the perusal of existing social science literature and historical documents, give form and order to the world that it does not have. Researchers seek for consistency in subjects' responses when subjects' lives are often inconsistent.

It is commonplace within CBT that offenders are asked to consider an offence using a 'before', 'during' and 'after' structure (Briggs *et al.* 1998, pp.43-51). This imposes a 'form and order to the world'. Although CBT does not directly ask the offender 'why' he committed an offence (Briggs *et al.* 1998, p.50), it asks him to explain 'how' he committed it; this requires him to select factors that are congruent with the story the worker wishes to hear and discount the many variables that are considered to be irrelevant from a cognitive standpoint. The role and task of the worker is to extract 'the truth' (about offending behaviour) from the offender. The part played by the worker in the interview or group process is rarely subject to scrutiny. However, from a constructionist perspective, consideration of the circumstances in which a story is told and the 'dialogical' nature of the 'therapeutic' process (individual/groupwork) is of key importance and it suggests that what emerges from such work is not objective 'truth' but rather the product of a 'joint action'.

A dialogical perspective

The dominant model of probation practice with sex offenders is located within a 'natural science' paradigm. The worker is considered to be the 'expert' who through the exercise of professional skills extracts from the offender information pertinent to formulating a treatment strategy. Franklin (1997, pp.100-101) has described this approach to interviewing as 'information extraction'. The interviewer is not personally involved in the interview/group processes. S/he remains detached and merely responds (within the prescribed cognitive paradigm) to what is said. In this model, the interviewer is a catalyst for the emergence of 'truth' from the person being interviewed. This approach to interviewing (and groupwork) is 'monological' in both its epistemological perspective and in its practical orientation (Shotter 1993, 1995). The offender and the worker do not engage in any form of reciprocal exchange, that is to say they do not engage in dialogue.

By recognising two or more people are engaged in an interview or group process, dialogical approaches incorporate the necessity to theorise the role of the interviewer in the creation of knowledge (Gergen and Gergen 1986; Shotter 1993). The dominant psychological approach wherein the worker seeks to discover what is inside the head of the offender is rejected; the focus is instead on the process of creation that occurs within, for example, interviews or groupwork sessions (Harré 1995; Harré, Clarke and De Carlo 1985; Shotter 1993, 1995).

Central to this shift is the way in which language use is understood. In 'dialogical' approaches language is seen as constructive: the conversation of the parties *creates* what

is being discussed. Shotter (1993, p.8) terms this understanding of language in action 'rhetorical-responsive'. Language no longer represents something outside of the speakers (for example the 'true story of what the offender 'did'); the dialogic exchange is creative rather than 'representational-referential'. And, of course, this process occurs within and as part of social and cultural influences. Here the later work of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein is helpful in identifying and reflecting on the constructive processes that occur in work with sex offenders.

For Wittgenstein (1953), language is not a system of symbols representing an outer world; it is an active and changing system in use. Within dialogical interaction participants are inevitably engaged in a variety of 'language games', which emanate from a variety of 'forms of life' (Wittgenstein 1953). Dialogue in all contexts follows a number of unexpressed but implicitly followed rules/conventions ('language games'). These conventions are specific to the context of the conversation. Gergen (2000, pp.34-35) describes a language game:

To say "good morning" gains its meaning from a game-like relationship called a greeting. There are implicit rules for carrying out greetings: each participant takes a turn, typically there is an exchange of mutual glances, and there are only a limited number of moves that one can legitimately make after the other has said "good morning." You may respond identically, or ask "how are you," for example, but you would be considered "out of the game," if you responded by screaming or cuffing the other on the head. Further, the words "good morning" are generally meaningless outside the game of greeting. If we are in the midst of

a heated argument on unemployment, and I suddenly say, “good morning”, you would be puzzled. Have I lost my mind? Wittgenstein termed the “language and the actions into which it is woven, the ‘language game’”. Or for Wittgenstein, “the meaning of a word is in its use in the language.”

However, ‘language games’ are not free-floating ‘rules for the conduct of conversation’. They are rooted in various contexts within cultures. Wittgenstein called these contexts ‘forms of life’. Language games are embodiments of various ‘forms of life’. McGinn (1997, p.51) clarifies this:

... our human life is fundamentally cultural (rather than biological) in nature. Coming to share, or understand the form of life of a group of human beings means mastering, or coming to understand, the intricate language games that are essential to its characteristic practices. It is this vital connection between language and the complex system of practices and activities binding a community together that Wittgenstein intends to emphasize in the concept ‘form of life’.

Dialogical approaches highlight a ‘constructive’ approach to understanding what is happening in an interview; Wittgensteinian perspectives have narrowed the focus onto ‘language games’ and emphasised the cultural context of any interview by highlighting that all dialogue embodies various ‘forms of life’. In work with male sex offenders, the

two 'forms of life' that seem to be important are related to being a man and being a participant in a CBT programme.

Men, masculinity and masculinities

The vast majority of sex offenders are men and yet CB programmes appear to give little recognition to issues of gender and particularly the enactment of masculinities. In writing of men, masculinity and masculinities one could consider the study of the individual, a social grouping, or aspects of a particular culture. Defining terms and justifying usages has pre-occupied many authors (Clatterbaugh 1998; Coleman 1990; Connell 1995; Hearn 1998). Early discussions about men focused on the notion of masculinity (Pleck 1976), however, this was challenged because it carried an assumption that there was only one form of masculinity and Carrigan et al (1985) suggest that 'masculinities' is a more appropriate term reflecting diversity amongst men. As a part of this notion there is recognition that not all masculinities are equally powerful. It is within this context that the concept of hegemonic masculinity appeared. Connell (1995, p.77) describes hegemonic masculinity as:

... the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.

Although this term has recently been criticised as vague (Hearn 2004), it is a useful concept in that it suggests there are dominant ways of *being* a man and these ways are linked to the subordination of women and some men.

However, the abstracting of masculinity and masculinities from men and what men do has caused problems for some commentators (Hearn 2004; Whitehead 2002).

Clatterbaugh (1998, p.42) suggests that the terms have, at times, been used in an unclear and often tautological fashion: for instance, masculinity/ies is/are what men do and is recognizable because men do it/them. He suggests that, in the short term at least, the words masculinity and masculinities should be avoided and focus should be, more simply, on what men do (Clatterbaugh 1998, p.43).

Whilst focusing attention on the behaviour of men is a positive way forward, there are many ways in which that behaviour is interpreted (Connell 1995; Edley and Wetherell, 1995). Perspectives range from essentialist approaches that assume there is something fixed (essential) that can be identified, defined and studied (see, for example, Thornhill and Palmer 2001), to social constructionist perspectives that focus on the fluid and varied identities that men enact (see, for example, Connell 2000). It is the social constructionist perspective(s) that I am concerned with in this chapter; particularly focussing on various 'forms of life' and 'language games' that pertain to being a man.

Mac an Ghail (1994) suggests that masculinities are enacted in three discursive situations: fear of same sex attraction (homophobia), compulsory heterosexuality, and fear or hatred of women (misogyny). Fielding (1994, p.47) has noted similar aspects in

the way men behave in the police force. Scully (1990, pp.81-92) also identified the presence of these attitudes and ways of talking and behaving in her study of rapists and non-rapists in prison. Although prison culture is not homogeneous (Genders and Player, 1995 p.154; Sim 1994, pp.110-112), it is this (hegemonic) masculinity that appears to dominate male prisons. However, Sim (1994) comments that this masculinity is not ‘...a pathological manifestation of abnormal otherness, but ... part of the normal routine which is sustained and legitimated by the wider culture of masculinity...’ [p.105]. It is enacted as a form of (male) life both inside and outside prisons through the use of common language games.

The language games of CBT

Roger: I couldn't hurt anybody now. I mean, you know, like, my stepdaughters, all I wanted to do was apologise and to say ... one day tell them why I did it, but I know that they wouldn't really want to hear that now. I just feel for them. What I did, what happened to me, gave me the biggest CD in my offending. Because I wasn't hurting them, I didn't think I was ... because I wasn't hurting them physically, and they was getting this and getting that ... erm, I mean they used to get this and that anyway, before I ... before I'd abused. I was all ... I never chastised them or anything. Even my little ones, I never hit them, you know.

MC: When you said CD do you mean cognitive distortion?

Roger: Yes. I mean, I've used ... when I was abusing ... it was love and affection, it was our love and affection, our special type of love, and I thought they was responding to it, but obviously they were as frightened and scared as what I was. I can see that now.

The other form of life and associated language games that require consideration are associated with CBT – whether delivered in individual work or in a groupwork programme. The dialogue that introduces this section is taken from recent research I undertook with male sex offenders in prison (Cowburn 2002). There are a number of

language games Roger is inviting me to play – for example men as caring fathers who love too much – but the one of interest here is the CBT game. In introducing myself as researcher, I mentioned my past experience as a probation officer working with sex offenders. In this section Roger uses technical jargon to which I could respond in kind; ('CD'). This language game is characterised by clinical jargon regularly used in CBT¹ but that otherwise do not have common usage. Potentially, it (re)constructs the offender as someone who has changed through the course of therapy. However, participation by offenders in this game leads workers to become suspicious of offenders using such language – potentially this takes us back to the positivist paradox of how do we distinguish between those offenders who 'talk the talk' and those who 'walk the walk'.

Power, forms of life and language games

The concepts of forms of life and language games focus on the constructive nature of human interaction but Wittgenstein's work does not in any depth consider issues of power within forms of life and language games (O'Connor 2002, p.441-442). Much of the early part of CBT with sex offenders focuses on how they have used power to commit their offences. However, in this section I am more concerned to examine the presence of power within the CB programme.

Foucault (1976, p.63) notes that, in western societies, discussion about sexual behaviour has generally taken the form of 'confession'. Initially this form of discourse was directed and controlled by the church but, from the mid-nineteenth century onward, it came to be dominated by 'scientific' investigators and particularly by the medical profession. The

notion of confession has implicit within it the relationship of confessor and confessee: an unequal relationship in which the person confessing is judged within the terms of the value-framework of the person receiving the confession. Speaking of medical science, Foucault (1976, p.54) describes how it provided an intellectual structure that justified the attitudes and values of the dominant class in a society. The 'scientific' method gave power to one group to categorise and 'treat' other groups within a society. The CBT discourse concerning the offender assumes prior knowledge of the individual (embodied in diagnostic manuals and classification systems). By claiming prior knowledge, this can lead to the construction of a therapeutic method that is potentially oppressive in its original conception and in the manner in which it is subsequently delivered.

As early as 1990, Sheath raised concerns about the methods employed by some cognitive programmes run by the Probation Service. He suggested sex offenders were verbally coerced into admitting to and agreeing with probation workers' version of how the offence occurred. Sheath's paper is a rare example of critiquing the operation of power within a therapeutic programme, and specifically within the dialogical context of direct work with offenders. Overall, however, the use of power in the process of CBT has not concerned theorists or programme developers. In three relatively recent publications (Morrison et al. 1994; Briggs et al. 1998; Marshall et al. 1998), power is only considered in the context of the offender committing his offences. There is no consideration of how the power of the worker affects the process and outcome of the therapy.

The nature of the relationship between sex offender and probation worker is very different to that found in psychodynamic therapy, and the presence and operation of power seem to be obvious. The person (offender) no longer has a choice to engage in therapy, they are mandated to do so (Salter 1988, pp.85-87). The right to consent to treatment (with the exceptions of medical treatment and Drug Treatment and Testing Orders) whilst on probation in England and Wales was withdrawn in the 1991 Criminal Justice Act. The worker no longer views her/his client with 'unconditional positive regard', as stipulated by Carl Rogers for example (Rogers 1959), but with suspicion and mistrust (Salter 1988, pp.84-95). Along with the assumption that the offender frequently lies is the suspicion that he may lie about how the programme has affected his attitudes and behaviours.

Workers have mandated power that can significantly alter the future lifestyle and life chances of offenders. How a man performs on a programme or in individual work may affect whether he is allowed to rejoin his family. Inevitably, with such serious consequences, men learn to 'talk the talk' – they learn the language game of the treatment programme. This inevitably leaves doubt, despite the most rigorous positivistic evaluation as to whether anything other than a script in a specific setting has changed. A way forward from this position of sceptical pessimism is to identify the range of forms of life and the diversity of language games associated with being a man and then to critically examine whether workers participate in or seek to change language games that are supportive of male sexual coercion. Additionally, consciously addressing how masculinities are performed within and beyond programmes may strengthen parts of the established cognitive programme – particularly relapse prevention.

Towards constructive work with male sex offenders

This chapter began by problematising the CB paradigm that underpins and dominates work with sex offenders in the penal system (Joint Prison/Probation Accreditation Panel 2000-2001 2001). However, it is not my intention to suggest that constructive work with sex offenders cannot occur within this framework. I suggest that a constructive approach to working with sex offenders can be developed alongside the dominant approach and I focus on three areas where this may be possible: (i) developing an explicit value-base; (ii) thinking about cognitive distortions; (iii) working with(in) male forms of life and language games.

(i) Developing an explicit value-base

In many ways this is not a new area of development. In the past I have outlined the values underpinning my work with sex offenders (Cowburn 1990; Cowburn 1993; Cowburn and Modi 1995; Cowburn, Wilson and Loewenstein 1992), however, this is essential for developing constructive work with sex offenders because it is a way of explicitly stating the standpoint from which practice is developed (for a fuller discussion of standpoint see Harding 1991). In making explicit the values that inform work with sex offenders, workers recognise that all work inevitably embodies values particularly in relation to masculinity/ies, sexualities, coercion and the operation of power. The commonplace encounters in work with sex offenders embody ways of performing, ways of doing masculinities. An explicit value-base may help workers to become more aware of the commonplace, and reflect on how their work performs (or not) the tasks of

hegemonic masculinity. I suggest an appropriate starting point for values in work with sex offenders is feminist and pro-feminist analysis of the operation of gendered power.

A profeminist standpoint is the male complement of feminist standpoint. Key features of it are: familiarity with feminist critiques of patriarchy and male power, reflexivity and a desire to change dominant forms of male behaviour. Both Hearn (1998) and Pease (2000) consider an essential element in a profeminist position being an awareness of and sympathy to feminist critique and theory.

Such value-bases do not construe male sexual coercion as a 'deviant' but rather as part of the continuum of male behaviour identified by Kelly (1988). Male power and the ways it is used to harm others is a key element. Further work could be done to identify aspects of hegemonic masculinity that underpin or support male sexual coercion (for example compulsory heterosexuality, homophobia and misogyny) and particularly in explicitly developing a critical standpoint to these, so called 'normal', male attitudes.

To develop this aspect of work with sex offenders is to move away from the 'scientific' standpoint that is implicit in the CB programmes. The 'scientific' standpoint aspires to objective practice; however, as Harding (1991) has clearly demonstrated this objectivity is the objectivity of the white heterosexual able-bodied middle class man. And, as Foucault (1977, 1984) suggests, the knowledge developed privileges this group by creating a 'deviant' group, thus maintaining the dominance of the hegemonic group (Connell 1995) and leaving the attitudes and practices of the majority of men

unquestioned. This is brought sharply into focus when considering the key concept of current cognitive work with sex offenders - the 'cognitive distortion'.

(ii) Thinking about cognitive distortions

Murphy (1990) identifies three approaches to understanding and working with cognitive distortions; the cognitive-behavioural, the feminist and the criminological. From a CB perspective

distortions refer to self-statements made by offenders that allow them to deny, minimise, justify and rationalize their behavior. (Abel, Becker *et al.* 1984; Wolf 1984; Rouleau, Abel *et al.* 1986). (Murphy 1990, p.332).

Understanding of cognitive distortions from a feminist perspective highlights attitudes supportive of rape, sex role stereotyping, adversarial sexual beliefs and acceptance of interpersonal violence against women (Burt 1980; Koss and Dinero 1987; Malamuth 1986; Murphy, Coleman and Haynes 1986; Rapaport and Burkhart 1984). This body of literature makes links with wider male attitudes and behaviours but still considers them to be distortions in need of individual remedy.

In what Murphy (1990, p.332) calls the 'criminological literature', cognitive distortions are construed as a wider feature of offenders' life rather than being closely linked to their offending behaviour. They are, however, viewed as a pathological problem, which is the principal focus of treatment.

The types of thinking which are generally identified by all models as being 'distorted' relate to how women and children are construed by male sex offenders: for example, Briggs and his colleagues (1998, p.105) cite as distorted thinking when offenders construe women who wear short skirts as being sexually available to any man. Other examples relate to how offenders describe their responsibility for offending and for the harm that their offences have caused.

Although these models differ in their emphasis, they share the view that the types of thinking identified as 'distorted' are aberrant thought processes. By this it is meant that they are not typical of the usual thought processes of the non-convicted population (of men). However, an alternative, and more productive, way of construing some of the thinking identified as distorted is to see it as ordinary and typical of many men. For example, in some of the language games around misogyny and compulsory heterosexuality, women are commonly construed as both sexually provocative and 'asking for it'. To construe such thinking as aberrant or distorted is to miss the point completely. Within certain male forms of life and language games, this thinking is commonplace. Scully (1990) was unable to distinguish rapists from non(convicted)-rapists when she examined their attitudes to women and their views of responsibility and harm in relation to rape. A more productive way forward may be to identify the wider language game and begin to challenge the misogynistic attitudes more widely prevalent in society. Many years ago, colleagues and I discussed the difficulties in running cognitive programmes (for individual offenders or groups) in which men learned to 'talk the talk' and yet still bought newspapers that objectified women and portrayed them solely as sexual objects. Our discussions ended in pessimistic resignation, however, if

consideration is given to engaging critically with hegemonic forms of male behaviour and associated language games perhaps there is a way of naming, challenging and changing some hegemonic practices.

(iii) Working with(in) male forms of life and language games

Forms of life are ways of being located in and part of various cultures and sub cultures.

The forms of life that I am interested in here relate to being a man. There are many ways to begin to identify the diversity of male forms of life. In this chapter I have already used Mac an Ghail's (1994) three sites for the development of male identities. Additionally, Connell (1995) studied three diverse groups of men and identified three areas of male praxis: power relations within families, employment and intimate desire. These areas are also sites for diverse male forms of life, each with their own language games.

The challenge for workers is two fold: to identify how they are participating in various language games (or not); and to consider how alternative language games may be developed. I address the latter area in the final section of this chapter.

Participation in language games is, typically, unreflexive and automatic. This was highlighted to me, when working with a man convicted of rape. I was co-working with a female colleague. At one point in the interview, when the man was discussing his personal relationships, he turned to me and said 'You know what women are like ...' the words were phrased not as a question, but as a statement. He did not require an answer; he assumed that we shared a common understanding – that we were playing the same language game. On that occasion, I was not required to respond to him, I very consciously did not nod my head in affirmation of his point but I did not disturb his

subsequent misogynistic discourse. More recently in my research with male sex offenders (Cowburn 2002), I was aware that my physical presence (as a man) appeared to facilitate the men in expressing themselves in a wide range of ways including using some of the problematic language games identified above. However, when I was invited to participate in these language games I either remained silent, or asked naïve questions about the taken-for-granted element of the language game (for example women or gay men). The challenge for workers varies according to their different identities, however the initial problem is to recognise language games and how they are linked to certain ways of being a man. Then, they need to reflect on how and if they are participating in language games. Finally consideration needs to be given as to whether language games can be changed.

Alternative language games alternative forms of life: towards a new relapse prevention?

Within CBT helping the offender avoid re-offending is crucial. This process is termed 'relapse prevention' (Laws, Hudson and Ward 2000). Patterns of offending are deconstructed and thinking errors are identified, the offender is helped to identify how his offences occurred and how to avoid such situations in the future. Generally the emphasis is negative in that the offender learns what he must not do. However, to differing degrees, some approaches do consider what supports the offender needs to avoid relapsing into offending (Hudson, Wales and Ward 1998). This section identifies the potential of constructive work to develop new forms of life and language games that may consolidate and strengthen the more conventional cognitive approaches.

O'Connor (2002) considers the creative potential for self-consciously developing new language games that then create new forms of life. She (O'Connor 2002, p.432) highlights that; '... the language available to individuals limits the meanings they can make of their experiences, and thus limits their worlds.' However, she emphasises that developing new language games is not an internalised process, but a dialogical one. This necessarily raises issues for workers as to how they initiate and support the acquisition of new language games.

In O'Connor's work, the people (who were helped to develop new forms of life and new language games) recognised the destructive power of previous forms of life and sought less toxic ways of being. The issues with men convicted of sexual offences is how to help them to identify what they would like to change about themselves and how they behave. Without dialogical engagement that recognises power in the worker-offender relationship, it is likely that the relationship may slip back into a coercive therapeutic form of life where offenders merely 'talk the talk' in the individual sessions or the group programme sessions.

However, the following areas may produce new language games and ways of being a man: expressing feelings, and expressing love. In developing ways of speaking and being in these areas, other negative language games (misogyny, compulsory heterosexuality and homophobia) may be challenged and replaced.

I have observed sessions in cognitive programmes for sex offenders where they were expected to identify and non-verbally demonstrate a range of emotions. Initially, the

workers helped the men identify feelings such as 'sad', 'angry', 'happy', 'fed-up' and 'bored'. These words were written on cards and then each man, in turn, drew a card and tried to mime the emotion. The main objective of the exercise was to help the men recognise and show feelings. The process was essentially monological – the workers were the catalysts for the session and when the session was over the next component of the programme was addressed. Quite appropriately, within the constraints of CBT, no further attempts were made to address, or more specifically enact such issues. No language game was developed or rehearsed. To develop language games and new forms of life these (and other) feelings would need to be contextualised and repeatedly rehearsed and adapted with workers taking an active part in the process not merely being passive expert by-standers. The language game for anger would, for example, need to be developed in ways that did not easily fall back into using homophobic or sexist stereotypes, even if anger was felt towards a woman or a gay man or lesbian. This is all very complex and requires a lot more of workers than merely completing (successfully) a training course in CBT techniques. It requires much exploration and a commitment to change and to develop personally during the work with sex offenders. The expert role is rejected and replaced with one of co-participant in developing (new) language games and forms of life.

The focus of the above work is strongly linked with Connell's (1995) notion of cathexis in so far as emotional repertoires (or not) play a part in close relationships. More specifically, however, language games relating to love are problematic. In my recent study (Cowburn 2002) men conflated love with sex and spoke of showing parental love sexually. They also described having childhoods devoid of parental love and yet insisted

they had 'the best parents in the world'. It is a challenging area for academic research and probation/clinical practice to identify forms of life and associated language games in relation to love (parental, friendship and sexual) but it is an area that is overlooked by most relapse prevention programmes.

The nature of a dialogical approach in working with sex offenders brings into stark relief the problem of 'treatment integrity' (also called 'programme integrity'). The term is concerned with the application of treatment in rigorous and similar manner over many programmes. The role of the worker is to implement a prescribed programme in as replicable way as possible (Aubut *et al.* 1998, p.222; Gordon and Hover 1998, pp.11-12). This potentially reduces the worker to an automaton delivering similar, preferably identical, programme sessions to many and diverse sex offenders over a long period of time. The aspiration behind this notion is one of scientific objectivity. The worker is the catalyst unaffected by the programme. The programme is seen as a monological process and aspires to the standards of scientific practice and so it can be evaluated scientifically (see Smith 2004 for a systematic critique of this approach). Such a concept, as it is currently configured is both unrealistic and irrelevant to a constructive approach.

Constructive work with sex offenders reveals the world to be more complex than is assumed by those working within a natural science paradigm. Working self-consciously from a constructive perspective recognises that dialogical processes (interview/groupwork) cannot be delivered clinically in an identical way each time. They involve different workers, who have different ages, ethnic identities, sexualities, physical and mental abilities and, of course, different genders. The challenge of

constructive work is not to aspire to deliver increasingly sterile packages in an unchanging fashion, but rather to develop reflexive practice based on an awareness of values, difference and most particularly themselves. Delineating such training is beyond the scope of this chapter but it points (again) in the direction of anti-oppressive practice and an exploration of values in action, and this requires workers to develop a critical awareness of themselves and how they contribute to the construction of male forms of life and language games.

Note 1

Such examples of such 'jargon' would be (the list is not exhaustive) – CD, cognitive distortion, cognitive restructuring, cycle of behaviour, masturbation and fantasy cycle, motivation to offend, my victim(s), offending behaviour, relapse, relapse prevention, responsibility, victim, victim empathy.

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