

Girls on the Verge of Exploding?

***Voices on Sexual Abuse, Agency and Sexuality
at a Youth Detention Home***

Carolina Överlien

Linköping Studies in Arts and Science

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Girls on the Verge of Exploding? Voices on Sexual Abuse, Agency and Sexuality at a Youth Detention Home.

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In the early 1990s I had the privilege of studying at an American university – University of Oregon. I spent four fantastic years in that stimulating academic environment. Thinking back, those years were like a big box of the finest chocolate, and I was allowed to pick the best pieces! I met generous, knowledgeable teachers in psychology and sociology, with their doors always open for their students. I learned that research can be exciting and extremely rewarding. In this environment, I came into contact for the first time with a women’s shelter. As an assignment for a course, I decided to write a paper about domestic violence. In the winding corridors at the huge library at the university I stumbled over a book by a Swedish researcher named Margareta Hydén. A couple of years later we met in person at Alla Kvinnors Hus, the Stockholm women’s shelter. There somewhere, at the crossroads of the inspiring environment at the University of Oregon, in Margareta’s intelligent writings about women and abuse, and in the engaging environment at Alla Kvinnors Hus, this work had its starting point.

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I dedicate this book to my mother, Ulla Ehn, for her endless support and belief in me. To quote one of my informants: "*Du vet hur man tar hand om livet!*"

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Katrin In the men's world (.) in front of men (.) I guess a woman has to work have a career for them to for the men to get it (.) wow she can do it too she's just as good as we are then they respect her (.) but in front of us girls if you say

Carolina Yes

Katrin just think how good she is

Carolina Yes

Katrin that means we respect her for knowing so much and being so good

Carolina Yes

Katrin for being good at taking care of (.) life and that stuff

PREFACE

My overall ambition with this study is to open up a field not very well known to the general public, as well as to the research community, namely Swedish youth detention homes.¹ With the exception of an occasional sensational TV documentary, often reporting on injustices and unsatisfactory conditions at the detention homes, the general public knows little about the fact that every year a number of young people are placed against their and/or their parents' consent, in closed institutions. Within the research community too, knowledge about Swedish youth detention homes is limited. Until recently, only a small amount of research concerning detention homes had been conducted.² The majority of research is quantitative and not based on interviews and ethnography, such as is the present one. Generally, research about treatment of delinquent youth has been neglected, both of national and international levels. This is particularly true when it comes to girls and young women.

Boys and young men outnumber girls and young women at youth detention homes in Sweden. Young women placed at these institutions have to survive in a boys' world where treatment, facilities and staff are focused on and trained to treat boys. The institutions are not adapted to the special needs of young women (Robinson, 1994, Andersson, 2000). In response to the growing number of young women taken into compulsory care today, there are now five youth detention homes in Sweden for girls and young women only. Since the number of women taken into compulsory care is increasing there is an increasing need for knowledge about how to treat them. We know little about the young women's own thoughts and feelings, since research studies where the young women's own voices are expressed are rare. We also have limited knowledge of the problems and dilemmas the staff have to face in their capacity as caretakers. This research study can play a part in building up such a knowledge base. Hopefully this increased knowledge base will give young women at youth detention homes a better chance for a life free from crime, drugs and violence.

¹ After extensive discussion with native English speakers and experts in the field, I have translated the term 'särskilda ungdomshem' into 'youth detention homes'. The National Board of Institutional Care (Statens Institutionsstyrelse) uses the translation 'special approved homes', a translation which in my opinion does not do justice to the fact that the homes in question are closed institutions and not family homes exclusively picked out to care for troubled adolescents. Although 'youth detention homes' is not a perfect translation of 'särskilda ungdomshem', especially not with regards to the word 'youth', which generally is thought of to include primarily boys, and 'home' which may not be thought of as including institutions, I have still come to the conclusion that the term 'youth detention home' is the term most suitable for describing the institution for young women in focus of this study.

² However, since 1994 there is a research board associated with The National Board of Institutional Care, which finances research conducted in the field. Since then, the amount of research conducted on youth detention home has increased dramatically. The present study has been financed by this board.

Another issue that has been neglected too long, concealed by closed doors, and surrounded by silence and taboos is the issue of sexual abuse. Few societal problems generate such strong emotional feelings and responses as sexual abuse, and in particular childhood sexual abuse and incest. Since the staff members at youth detention homes for girls meet victims of abuse, they are forced to confront the issue of sexual abuse. Meeting victims of childhood sexual abuse and listening to their stories forces the listeners to confront their own childhoods and perhaps feelings of vulnerability. If the listener has children of her/his own, the feelings and responses might be even stronger. This could be one reason why only 75 percent of the 233 subjects in Lindblom & Carlsson's (1997) study defined the picture they were confronted with of an adult man with his hands inside the trousers of a child as sexual abuse. Stories of sexual abuse are very demanding for the listener, both in terms of emotions and action. If the listener does not feel she/he can *act* in response to the story, or feels incapable of containing the story, the issue may be surrounded by silence. For the staff members in focus of this study, this issue becomes even more complicated as they are, according to the guidelines of the detention home, employed to talk about difficult issues such as sexual abuse. They may or may not have personal experience of abuse, and may feel they lack the knowledge and methods to handle the issue. To listen to their voices, to break the silence, to open up the issue of talking or not talking about sexual abuse is another ambition of this study.

More precisely, when listening to these voices, the *interaction* between human beings is in focus. The center of attention is what is construed in everyday discourse, in the ongoing interaction between human beings. The everyday discourse of interest in this study is the discourse of the staff working at one of the youth detention homes for young women, "The Garden"³, as well as the discourse of the young women who live there. The focus is on the dilemmas and difficulties the staff encounter and struggle with when working with young women who have been victims of sexual abuse. In the original project plan, the focus was exclusively on the staff. However, during the preliminary preparations for this project, we came to the conclusion that we needed to find a platform not only for the voices of the staff, but also for the young women's voices to be heard. When we visited the institution, the young women were curious, contact-seeking, and expressed concern that they would not be listened to. "Ask me", one young woman said. "I can tell you!" Part of this dissertation, as an outcome of this request, focuses on the young women in compulsory care at The Garden. What looked from the outset like two projects, really turned out to be one.

³ All names of persons and places have been changed to assure anonymity.

It simply would not have been possible to conduct a study of the staff, without listening to the voices of the young women. To reach a deeper understanding of the difficulties and dilemmas, both the voices of the helper and the people being helped were needed.

In the process of listening to the voices of the staff members and the young women in compulsory care, my research has been informed by several different theoretical perspectives. Feminist theory was used to reach a deeper understanding of the issues in focus. One of the pillars of feminist practice and theory is listening to the victim unconditionally. Discourse theory, a wide perspective with many branches, represented in this study mainly by narrative theory, understands language as producing meaning. Narrative theory was used as a context for establishing the interviews and as a theoretical tool in the analysis. Another discipline used as point of departure for understanding is social work, with its underlying aim to listen to the actors involved, in particular the ones whose job is to help. Finally, for the social constructionist perspectives words and the definitions thereof are of central importance. For this study, this perspective was used to understand how meaning can be constructed and reconstructed in a specific time and context. At the crossroad of these traditions, which all share the privilege of voices, this study has its starting point.

In the first chapter, I focus on the phenomenon of institutional care of young people in Sweden. The purpose is to give the reader a background to the phenomenon and an understanding of the context in which the institution and informants of this study are situated. Chapter two is a theoretical chapter aimed at describing, in greater detail, the theoretical perspectives of this dissertation. The chapter ends with the aims of the study. My choice is to keep the theoretical frame as close to the data as possible. For example, rather than describing the theory of social constructionism, a task which is several dissertations in itself, I chose to focus on how one might understand a social problem, such as sexual abuse, using a social constructionist approach.

Chapter three is devoted to the question of method. The method section of this dissertation is, on comparison with other similar work, quite extensive and thorough. In addition to commonly included information such as setting and participants, a section called methodological considerations, is included. Here I try to position myself and discuss what it means to be a researcher at a closed institution, both from the viewpoint of the informants, the research project and the researcher herself. The inclusion of this section is justified by the fact that qualitative research on youth detention homes is rare and there is a need for a more comprehensive

discussion of the implications, both concerning researcher and informants, of conducting research at closed institutions.

Chapter four consists of a summary of the five studies. Chapter five is a conclusion where I tie my findings together and briefly discuss their implications. Part I of the dissertation ends with a list of references and an appendix with the article excerpts in Swedish. Part II consists of the five articles that form the basis of my dissertation.

I

INSTITUTIONAL CARE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Youth care – past and present

Institutional care of young people in Sweden is not a new phenomenon, but has existed for hundreds of years. The process of shifting the responsibility for young people from the family to society began during the early nineteenth century. However, the process has been gradual and different actors such as the family, the state, philanthropic organizations and communities have each played a part in the process. The Swedish parliament had long discussions in the mid nineteenth century of whether the public care of delinquent children should be a matter for the State or for philanthropic organizations. In the late nineteenth century, the debate on juvenile crime was intense, and the general view was that crime among the young was spreading like wildfire. A form of moral panic spread and there was a belief that juvenile delinquency was a threat to society as a whole. The 1902 laws for the care of the young (Sw: Lagen om fosterbarns vård, Lagen om unga brottslingar and Lagen om uppfostran av vanartade och i sedligt hänseende försummade barn) are the result of this intense debate and can be seen as a starting point for the State's interventions for children and adolescents in Sweden (Qvarsell, 1996). These laws, Lundström (1996) argues, were permeated by an aim to socially control the deviant incorrectly raised children from the urban working class. With these new laws, the Swedish state was given a new possibility – to take compulsory care of children against their and/or their parents' consent.

Today, about 900 young people in Sweden between the ages of 10 and 21 years are placed against their and/or their parents consent at a youth detention home each year.⁴ In 1997, 27 percent of all young people placed at youth detention homes according to The Care of Young Persons Act in Sweden were women and girls (ADAD, 1997).⁵ Since the 1990s, the number of Swedish young people placed involuntarily has risen (Lundström & Vinnerljung, 2001). It is important to note, however, that the majority of young people are placed voluntarily rather than involuntarily. The young people at youth detention homes represent one third of the total number of young people who are taken into custody each year under the Care of Young Persons Act (LVU). The other two thirds are placed in other alternative homes such as foster homes or care homes (Sw: HVB hem).

⁴ Young people can also be admitted to youth detention homes with their parents' consent under SOL – Voluntary Admission under the Social Service Act.

⁵ In Swedish: Lagen om Vård av Unga (LVU).

Andreassen (2003) argues that the tendency is to place young people in more family-like homes, rather than at institutions. However, he also claims that Sweden place young people at large State run institutions more often than the other Nordic countries. The institutions differ in size, level of surveillance, theoretic understanding, day to day management, and use of force, but all have in common that they are to provide the care otherwise provided by the young person's biological parents.⁶

Although it is difficult to make international comparisons, Swedish youth detention homes, according to Andreassen (2003), can be compared to British youth treatment centres, in that they both have a high level of surveillance *and* some form of treatment plan. The various juvenile prisons used in the United States and the United Kingdom do not exist in Sweden. They differ from Swedish youth detention homes since their main goal is punishment. The main goal of Swedish youth detention homes is to improve the behavior of the young person. However, how the question of punishment vs. improving behavior is understood by the young people taken into care is an important question to explore further.

Young people obtain placements at institutions to have their life situation assessed and investigated or to receive treatment and care. This may also be a temporary solution because no other alternatives are available, i.e. there is no one else available to care for the young person. According to the law (LVU), placing young people at institutions should be the last choice and restricted only to young people with serious problems and in need of a high level of surveillance (Andreassen, 2003). Berg (2002) has studied young women at youth detention homes and has identified six different problem profiles. One group of young people identified have psychiatric problems and turn these problems inwards against themselves, but have no problems adjusting to society. Berg strongly recommends that this group of young women not to be put in youth detention homes.

Gender and the child welfare system

There are three main criteria for the Swedish State to take young people into compulsory care. The first criterion is "alcohol and drug abuse", the second is "crime" and the last criterion is "socially destructive behavior", which among other things includes 'spending time in socially inappropriate environments' and 'promiscuity'. In a study of 293 young men and young women between the ages of 13 and 17 placed in custody according to LVU, the criterion "socially destructive behavior" was the only criterion used as

⁶ For an overview of children in the Swedish care system, see Hesse & Vinnerjung (1999).

the grounds for placement for 21 young persons, 20 of whom were females (Schlytter, 2000). Young men were more often categorized as delinquent and/or as drug abusers.

The sexual (non-illegal) behavior of young women, such as 'promiscuity' and 'spending time in inappropriate environments', has thus been found to play a role in taking young women into compulsory care in Sweden today. Is it not plausible that young men placed according to the LVU law do engage in 'promiscuity', if 'promiscuity' can be defined as sexually active? In fact, 84 percent of the young men youth detention homes state that they are sexually active (ADAD 1997). The fact that the courts pay more attention to the sexual activity of young women than young men can be seen as an indication that the courts have different sets of norms for young women and young men.

The finding that different criteria for compulsory care are used for young men and for young women is neither unique to Sweden, nor is it new in a historical perspective (cf. Lundström & Sallnäs, 2003, Odem, 1995, Sundkvist, 1994). International studies have all found that even though background factors such as dysfunctional homes and insufficient schooling are similar for boys and girls, the decision of compulsory care may have different grounds depending on the sex of the young person. Criteria such as number of sexual partners are almost exclusively used only for girls (Hudson, 1989, Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992, Shoemaker, 1984).

Several researchers have argued that the Swedish social welfare system lacks a gender perspective and uses stereotypical images of women and men. (cf. Hydén 2002, Andersson, 1995, 2001, Schlytter 2004). The National Board of Health and Welfare (Sw: Socialstyrelsen) was asked in 2002 by the Swedish government to follow up and report on gender inequalities in the Swedish social welfare system. The report argues that inequalities and a lack of gender awareness in the Swedish child welfare system is to the disadvantage of both girls and boys. Bangura Arvidsson's (2003) study of images of fathers to socially vulnerable children shows that a fixation with motherhood and a generally traditional image of gender roles permeates the Swedish child welfare system. When studying the medical records of young men and young women in contact with a clinic for substance abusing adolescents, Andersson (1993) found that in the medical records the young women's sexuality was talked about as a symptom of deviant behavior, while the sexuality of the young men was seldom mentioned. Andersson (1996) further argues that the sexuality of young women plays a part in placing young women at institutions. She discusses two aspects of the different views of the sexuality of young men

and young women. One is the protective aspect: young women are taken into compulsory care to prevent them from being exposed to destructive male sexuality. The other aspect of inequality of sexuality norms concerns the fact that the sexuality of young men is little discussed or researched, and that this might be to the disadvantage of young men. Sjöblom's (2002) study of social workers and young people who run away from home shows that there is a lack of understanding of the specific problems that the young women on the run may have been subjugated to at home. In spite of claims about incest, the goal of the social workers was to convince the young woman to return home. Eriksson (2003) studied social workers' understanding of fatherhood and motherhood in the light of domestic abuse. She found that social workers used different norms for fathers and mothers. Having been abused was considered to be a liability in relation to motherhood, while being an abuser had little or no impact on the men's capacities for being fathers.

The dilemma of care vs. control

Youth detention homes are to provide the young people with care and treatment, as well as to control them, i.e. to prevent them from being involved in criminal activities, drug abuse or other kinds of destructive behavior. This dichotomy, care vs. control, is an inherent institutional dilemma for Swedish youth detention homes. Contemporary institutions are frequently marked by these contradictory goals. Andreassen (2003) argues that "although the goal of the stay is a positive development for the young person, these placements are the result of the criminal justice system. That makes it hard to distinguish clearly between punishment, protection by society and treatment" (p. 47, my translation). In his discussion of British children's clinics, Davis (1982) discusses how these clinics are oriented toward treatment and care on the one hand and control and surveillance, on the other. In her research on maternity clinics and early child care clinics, Olin Lauritzen (1990) has formulated related arguments, demonstrating how the organization of family health care often involves a basic dilemma in that the institution harbours the conflicting goals of care and control. Because of the control aspect, information from the patients may, for instance, be used against them. On a day to day basis, this is generally not a problem, but when confronted with the patients, who need care the most, the built-in conflict is, at times, quite evident. In a British context, Armstrong (1983) has also written about this basic conflict, drawing on Foucault (1977) and his reasoning on the Panopticon, where private life is constantly monitored by those who are responsible for the custody/care of the inmates/patients.

Obviously, the tension between care and control is present in an institution such as the one in focus in this study. In purely legal terms, the biological parents of the young women at the institution are often still their official guardians. Yet the staff at the detention home are responsible for their care on a day to day basis. Some of the young women have been on drugs, others have boyfriends who are involved in serious crime. Several have been subjected to sexual abuse or other painful experiences. However, it is important to note is that the staff often do not know *if* the young women have experiences they would define as sexual abuse and still they are expected to care for them. Furthermore, the staff members are, at times, quite young themselves (the youngest ones are in their early twenties). Yet they have very serious responsibilities for the safety and well being of young women who need protection. Control is thus necessarily an inherent feature of the daily life at the youth detention home.

One example of the conflict between care and control is the solitary confinement practice (Sw: avskiljning). The staff have the right to place a young woman in solitary confinement as a result of her being violent or affected by alcohol or drugs to the extent that she can not behave according to the rules (Bergman, 1997). A staff member meant to care for the young woman also has the possibility to use force to put her in an isolated room for a maximum of 24 hours. This conflict is a subject of concern among staff at youth detention homes (Colnerud, 1999).⁷

LVU - The Care of Young Persons Act

As discussed above, the first real protective laws for children were introduced in 1902. For children under the age of seven, a law was implemented concerning foster children's care. For children under the age of 15, a law of compulsory care was implemented making it possible to place children against their parents consent if they were thought to be delinquent or seriously neglected (Fahlberg & Magnusson, 1994). In 1924 the first "barnvårdslag" was introduced. The law meant that the foster care was extended to include children under the age of 16 and that the responsibility for society's child care was given to independent boards. These boards were now responsible for supervising the foster homes and placement for protective care (Holgersson, 1996).

The first LVU law was implemented in 1982. However, it was strongly criticised, among other things for being too vague, and it was replaced in 1990 by the new LVU law in use today. LVU is a protective law, the

⁷ For a more thorough discussion about the solitary confinement practice, cf Hydén & Överlien (2004).

purpose of which is to provide care to the young person because of risks to his or her health and development when consent cannot be obtained. The needs of the young person are given precedence over the needs of the parents. It is important to note that the purpose of the law is not to protect society from the young person but to protect the young person from his or her own destructive behavior and/or from society. 'Society' can include parents or friends with antisocial lifestyles.

After further criticism concerning the alleged focus on the parents instead of on the child, a committee was formed in 2000 to review LVU with the aim of strengthening the rights of the child and suggesting necessary changes. A central starting point for the committee was the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The suggestion of the committee was to make the child more visible in applications for LVU. An application should include thorough report of the situation of the child and a specific plan for treatment. The committee further reports that it is known that children who are placed prior to adolescence often stay in the system for more than five years. They therefore suggest that a special assessment of the arrangements for the future of the child be made after three years in care.

Teachers, social workers and laypeople, are advised to report to the Social Service Department (Sw. socialnämnden) if they believe that a minor is being abused or treated in such a way that his/her health and/or development is jeopardized.⁸ An investigation should then be started immediately to find out whether or not the report should lead to measures being taken. If the information in the report is such that some measure should be taken by the Social Service Department, an investigation should be initiated. The investigation is expected to be complete, correct, objective and non-biased. The investigation should, as far as possible, be conducted in agreement with the young person in question. If the Social Service Department, after its investigation, reaches the conclusion that the necessary care is not being provided, and that voluntary care offered, such as foster care or some kind of treatment is not sufficient, or not agreed to by the young person and/or parents, the board must decide whether or not an application for compulsory care should be sent to the county administrative court. The court then decides, according to the statutory provisions, whether or not the young person should be taken into custody under LVU.

⁸ However, there is an important difference between a layperson and a teacher. A layperson is encouraged to report if a young person's health or development is in danger, while any profession and institution working with children and young people including health care and social services are obligated to report any suspicion of treatment of a young person which may result in harm to the persons' health and/or development. A minor is a person under the age of 15.

At the youth detention homes, priority is given to young people committed under LVU, but there are also young people committed under SoL - voluntary admission under the Social Services Act and LSU - Closed Institutional Youth Care Act.⁹ Most of the young women at The Garden have been committed without their consent under LVU since they are, according to the National Board of Institutional Care (SiS)¹⁰, in danger of harming their lives and/or in some way injuring themselves. Very few cases are voluntary admissions under SoL and LSU.

The National Board of Institutional Care (SiS)

The Garden is one of the youth detention homes run and supervised by The National Board of Institutional Care (SiS). The six main areas of responsibility are as follows:

- To provide care and treatment at youth detention homes and LVM homes (treating adult substance abusers under the Care of Alcoholics, Drug Abusers and Abusers of Volatile Solvents Act).
- To arrange admission to the institution most appropriate to the needs of the individual.
- To have responsibility for the new custodial sentence known as “closed institutional youth care”.
- To develop treatment methods and staff competence.
- To initiate and observe research in the field and evaluate the results and effects of care.
- To supervise the institutions.

According to the SiS brochure “Providing care where it is needed most”, the purpose of the treatment at a youth detention home is “to help the young person concerned to achieve development and maturity and to equip him or her for a life without violence, drugs and crime”. The staff at The Garden say that if they “get them to function in society” without them having to “be inferior and allowing themselves to get abused”, their treatment will have been successful.

The board was set up in 1993 when the responsibility for LVM homes and youth detention homes was taken away from the municipal and county councils. The Social Services apply to the court for a “care order”. The court then decides according to the statutory provisions whether or not the

⁹ As of January 1st 1999, young people between the ages of 15 and 17 can be committed to a youth detention home instead of being sent to prison after committing a crime. This new Act is called Closed Institutional Youth Care Act. In Swedish, SoL – Socialtjänst Lagen, LSU – Lagen om sluten ungdomsvård

¹⁰ In Swedish – Statens Institutions Styrelse (SiS)

young person should be taken into custody under LVU. The SiS board in its turn, works for the municipal social services, and is responsible for placing the young person at the institution most appropriate for his/her needs.

Overview of research on youth detention homes

To get a picture of the ideology and overall structure of care provided for these young persons, Sallnäs (2000) conducted a large study of all HVB homes and youth detention homes in Sweden at the end of 1995. In total, 379 questionnaires were returned from the 419 homes. Results show that most of the homes are small scale institutions, admitting ten young people or fewer. The educational levels of the staff members vary, but is generally low. Twenty-five percent of the staff are qualified social workers or psychologists but one third of all the institutions in the study have no staff with higher education. Sallnäs found that 50 percent of the institutions were able to specify a known theory or model used at their institution. Among the most frequently mentioned were 'environmental therapy' and 'psychodynamics'. The study also found a correlation between level of education and use of therapy. The institutions with more highly educated staff used theories and models to a greater extent. However, there is a lack of a common terminology in the world of institutional care, and models such as 'environmental therapy' have different meanings in different contexts, and no commonly accepted theoretical framework. Consequently, according to Sallnäs (2000), there is no way of knowing what meaning the institutions give the concept and thereby how the institutions treat its' clients, when for example 'environmental therapy' is mentioned as the therapeutic model used. Similar findings were found by Bangura Arvidsson & Åkerström (2000). Although institutions claimed to have the same theory or model, the ways the institution worked and understood these models varied greatly.

In line with the increasing expectations to provide treatment, professionalization is increasing at institutions for young people. Special groups of professionals, such as social workers and counsellors, are now taking over the care of young people. Along with the professionalizing, the educational level, which has traditionally been low, is increasing (Sallnäs, 2000). Also, the size and number of institutions have changed over time. Colton & Hellinckx (1994) argue that as a consequence of criticism levelled against large institutions, large size institutions have disappeared or been reorganized into smaller institutions, and the capacity and number of institutions have decreased. Another trend, according to Andreassen (2003) is to take the children's background, family network and cultural

environment into consideration, and involve the family as a whole in the treatment process, i.e. to use a more holistic perspective when treating these young people.

In a historical perspective, institutions for compulsory care were built to house young men. Even today, youth detention homes are designed and structured with young men in mind (Andersson, 2000, Robinson, 1994). Young women are viewed as problematic, since they do not fit into the system. In her analysis of this structure, Andersson found that the system of control and disciplinary actions in a total institution (Goffman, 1983) becomes problematic when the institution also admits women who are primarily defined as victims rather than as criminals. As a consequence, in Andersson's study young women are perceived by the staff members as more difficult to treat than young men. The young women were described as victims by the staff and in need of security, and moreover their problems were seen as "deep" and therefore more demanding (Andersson, 1998).

The focus on young men and youth detention homes can also be seen in the limited amount of Swedish research conducted on young women placed against their consent at youth detention homes. In the literature, qualitative studies where the young women's voices are expressed are rare. Osvaldsson's (2002) study of young women's ways of making their voices heard at "network" conferences at a youth detention home, stands out as an exception. In order to study how young women make their voices heard, Osvaldsson chose a detailed sequential analysis of talk in multiparty settings, i.e. "network conferences". Osvaldsson found that during the conferences, the voices heard were primarily the representatives of the Social Services and staff at the detention home. The voices of the young women were heard less often. When they were heard, they often expressed a view contrary to the other participants at the conference. The young women were seldom directly addressed and had problems finding space to talk in the large group of people gathered to talk about their situation and their future. In conclusion, Osvaldsson argues that although it was difficult for the young women to make their voices heard, it was important for them to participate in the network conferences, since it gave them insight into how the representatives at the conference thought about their future and what they considered to be *the problem*. Being present gave the young women a chance to understand issues very important to their present and future lives.

Studies focused on the effects of youth institutional care in Sweden are rare. Levin (1997) conducted research in order to find out the situation for 208 young people with placement at the youth detention home "Råby"

during the year of 1994. "Råby Ungdomshem" is a classical youth detention home as established in Europe during the nineteenth-twentieth centuries in order to treat and raise deviant and delinquent young people. Levin's study includes placements at Råby during the period of January 1st 1983 - June 30th 1993. In total, 143 boys and 65 girls were placed at Råby for between one month and 52 months. The main reason for placement was criminal behavior and/or drug abuse. The study shows that almost 80 percent of the young people Råby during that particular time period reverted to some kind of criminal activity after being discharged from Råby. Among them, 25 percent went back to criminal activities immediately after being discharged. After six months, another 20 percent had relapsed into criminal behavior and after one to four years another 30 percent had taken up their old criminal activities. According to Levin, only 13 percent had completely left their criminal paths. When it comes to drug abuse, 70 percent continued abusing drugs after being discharged. 57 percent of the young people spent further time at different institution such as youth detention homes, prisons or psychiatric clinics. In fact, 25 percent of the young people were at such an institution at the time of the interview.

To get a more comprehensive picture of how the young people fare and what kind of lives they live after being discharged from Råby, Levin combined a number of factors and differentiated between groups ranging from "doing well" to "doing poorly". To be placed in the "doing well" group, the young people had to be free from drugs, engage in no criminal activities, not be placed against their will at an institution, to have a socially accepted occupation, an income of at least SEK 70 000 (1994), and have good or normal physical and mental health. His findings show that 30 percent of the young people in the study were "doing well" or fairly well and 70 percent were "doing poorly".

However, the relative numbers vary between young people and young men. Half of the girls in the study were doing well, and the other half were doing fairly well. Among the boys in the study, 20 percent were doing well. One striking example is the number of girls who had obtained placements at other institution after being discharged from Råby. Only 20 percent of the girls had further placement after Råby, in contrast to 71 percent of the boys. Similar findings concerning sex differences are found in Sarnecki's study. Sarnecki (1996) conducted a study to evaluate placements at youth detention homes. He studied the profile for young people placed for more than a week at a youth detention home in the Stockholm area during the period 1990-1994. The profiles are constructed taking into account several sources such as statements from the Social Services, the written assessment at the youth detention home, and interviews with the residents themselves.

The total number of placements was 814. The number of girls admitted during these years varied between 20 and 35 percent. Using the 18 variables used in the study, Sarnecki constructed five major profiles:

<i>The criminal profile</i>	Based on four variables including theft, robbery, destruction of property, and physical abuse.
<i>The alcohol and drug abuse profile</i>	Based on four variable including alcohol abuse, drug abuse, prescription drug abuse, and sniffing.
<i>The psychiatric profile</i>	Based on three variables including psychosis, brain damage, and emotional dysfunction.
<i>The sexual profile</i>	Based on two variables including prostitution/promiscuity and sexual abuse.
<i>The profile 0</i>	All individuals not belonging to any of the groups above.

The criminal profile group is undoubtedly the largest with a total of 40 percent, whereas 28 percent belong to the alcohol and drug abuse profile group, 16 percent to the psychiatric and 10 percent to the sexual profile group. As many as 33 percent, that is, a third belong to the profile zero group which shows that many of the persons admitted to youth detention homes had such complex profiles with a wide range of problems, that it was difficult to find a single distinct profile in which to place them.

Significant differences associated with sex were found in three of the five groups, the crime profile, the alcohol and drug abuse profile and the sexual profile group. As many as 84 percent of the young people in the sexual profile group were girls, while only 16 percent were boys. In the criminal profile group, 87 percent were boys and only 13 percent were girls. In the alcohol and drug abuse profile group, 59 percent were boys and 41 percent were girls. When looking at the relationship between different profile groups, Sarnecki found that 75 percent of the young people in the sexual profile group had also used or abused drugs and alcohol. 60 percent of the same group struggled with psychiatric problems.

In line with Levin, Sarnecki found somewhat discouraging results when looking into the situation of the young persons after discharge from the youth detention home. Two years after discharge, 75 percent were still struggling with problems such as drug abuse and psychiatric problems, and 57 percent were still under treatment. The situation had apparently

approved for some young people. But as discussed by Sarnecki, the reason for this improvement could not automatically be linked to the detention home placement, but could be explained by a number of different factors.

The group of young people from the sexual profile group was not faring well psychologically two years after discharge. A significantly higher number of these young people (nine percent) had tried to commit suicide than the group as a whole (one percent). Seventeen percent of them had been admitted to a psychiatric clinic after being discharged compared to the 7 percent of all young people in the study. This number is notably higher than for the psychiatric problem profile group (15 percent). When a young person obtain placement at a youth detention home a comprehensive interview is conducted called the ADAD-interview.¹¹ The interview involves questions concerning health, school, work, spare time and friends, psychological health, crime, and alcohol and drugs as well as the interviewer's estimate of the level of need of help for the young people. At the time of discharge, certain questions from the ADAD-interview are asked again in order to compare the responses with those at the time of admittance.

The 1997 ADAD report shows that 620 young people admitted into a youth detention home in 1997 were interviewed with ADAD, which is 68 percent of the total.¹² The interviews with the 620 young people reveal a grim picture. One fourth, that is, 25 percent of the girls have had abortions or miscarriages. A similar number of girls and 11 percent of the boys report that they have often been physically abused. As many as 44 percent of the girls reported that they often had headaches and 36 percent that they often had stomach-aches. The corresponding figures for boys were 21 percent and 10 percent. Almost 50 percent of the girls and 25 percent of the boys said that they had poor self esteem and 34 percent of the girls and 16 percent of the boys reported feeling lonely. More than one third of all the girls in the study believed it would be better if they were dead, as compared with 27 percent of the boys. One third of the girls said they had suicidal thoughts, while only 14 percent of the boys reported the same. These numbers show that a large number of young people admitted to youth detention homes struggle both physically and mentally.

Had the young women at the youth detention homes been victims of sexual abuse? The research in this area is scarce. Calhoun et al. (1993) found that

¹¹ ADAD - Adolescent Drug Abuse Diagnosis. Uses by SiS institutions since 1994.

¹² The reasons for not conducting an ADAD-interview with the young people can be several, including neglect on the part of the staff, that the young people did not wish to be interviewed, and that the condition of the young people were not good enough for them to be interviewed.

75 percent of all young women identified as juvenile delinquents by a court of law in the US had been victims of sexual abuse. In a random study of 30 girls receiving care from the Social Services in Massachusetts, US, Robinson (1994) found that 23 reported that they were victims of sexual abuse. In the ADAD-interviews 22 percent of the young women reported that they have been sexually abused by a person they depend upon. The corresponding number for boys was 2 percent. A large Swedish study of 70 percent of all 13-16 year old placed in care in Sweden during 1991 found that 26 percent of the girls said they had been victims of sexual abuse (Vinnerlång et al. 2001).

Gunnarsson & Månsson's (1986) research on young people, sexuality and treatment methods at youth detention homes show that young persons committed to youth detention homes had experienced different destructive sexual experiences such as sexual harassment, abuse within or outside the family and prostitution and that these experiences were contributory cause for placement. The girls, and to some extent also the boys, had been abused by men who let them stay in their home for exchange of sexual favors. The knowledge of the staff concerning these patterns of abuse was limited and fragmented. They had little or no knowledge about the girls' environments when outside of the institution. As a consequence, the subject of abuse was often avoided, in hopes that someone else such as the psychologist would handle it, or that the girl herself would introduce the topic. This, however, seldom happened.

The staff also reported being aware of occurrences of incest. Gunnarsson & Månsson asked how they dealt with the problem. Again, awareness was not related to social action. The researchers argued that limited knowledge about a phenomenon together with strong emotional reactions led to non-constructive treatment, which the findings also suggest.

Knowledge about sexuality and sexual abuse varied, Gunnarsson & Månsson concludes, in the sense that some staff members were educated and knowledgeable, while others knew little. Some said they thought about these issues for the first time during the interviews. Compared with issues such as drug abuse and crime, issues of sexuality and sexual abuse are in general not much talked about and there was no common attitude and way of handling these issues.

The studies presented above show that young people living at youth detention homes struggle with a number of issues other than drug and alcohol abuse and criminal behavior, such as their physical and mental health. However, their problem profiles vary depending on sex. The

profiles of young women at youth detention homes include problems with alcohol and drugs, psychiatric problems and prostitution/promiscuity and sexual abuse, while the young men are overrepresented in the crime profile and their rate of relapse after discharge is also higher. When looking at additional aspects such as income and physical and mental health, the young people do poorly after being discharged. Although young women significantly better than young men. The studies also tell us that girls at youth detention homes have been victims of sexual abuse to a large extent and that the staff working at youth detention homes may have difficulties knowing how to handle issues of sexual abuse. The knowledge about the phenomenon and how to approach it is limited and fragmented, as it is in society at large.

II

TALKING ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE

The social problem of sexual abuse

The research community is divided about how to understand the phenomenon of sexual abuse. Research findings are difficult to interpret and compare, giving us no clear picture of the phenomenon. As Hacking (1995) argues, “it is obvious to everyone that sexual abuse must have bad consequences for the development of a child – yet once again, the search for scientific proof is not doing very well” (p. 62). Despite the large amount of studies conducted and aimed at explaining the reasons for, prevalence of, and consequences of sexual abuse, the results are not satisfactory. This is important as background knowledge when understanding the work of one group of informants in focus of this study – resident assistants at youth detention homes working with young women who have reportedly been victims of sexual abuse.

Why is it that sexual abuse is such a difficult social problem to grasp? One possible answer to that question is connected to the process of defining the problem. Although we are rarely asked to account for the definition of a social problem, such as sexual abuse, we seldom question our ability to recognize it when we encounter it. Loseke (1999) argues that social problems are phenomena that “few people can define the meaning of ... but most folks say they know it when they see it” (p.5). This is especially true with regards to social problems of indisputable morality. Social problems where the underlying morality is unquestionable and where there are no conflicting standpoints are what Loseke calls “successful social problems”. The social problem of sexual abuse, is by Loseke regarded as highly “successful” in that it is morally indisputable. To question the morally wrongness of sexual abuse is simply unthinkable.

However, when asked to *define* sexual abuse, the answer is less obvious. A majority of researchers in the field are struggling to define objective conditions of sexual abuse, i.e. the measurable, tangible aspects of the phenomenon. In reviewing the literature, one finds that defining the objective conditions of sexual abuse is indeed a difficult task, complicated by the controversies surrounding the phenomenon. The attempts at objective measurements have simply not been very successful.

During the 1990s, the most discussed issues concerning sexual abuse and the issues causing the greatest controversies have concerned prevalence

rates, truthfulness in the stories of abuse told by children, and how the judicial system should handle the issue. Today, research focuses on health issues, resilience and the surrounding factors such as social support, rather than on the victim and the action itself.¹³ While some researchers use a broad definition of sexual abuse including every act with sexual connotations that is unwanted by the recipient (cf. Edgardh, 1999, Tambs, 1994), others are stricter in their definitions (cf. Rönström, 1983/84, 1986). Research about the subjective definitions of sexual abuse is scarce. To try to understand how people perceive the phenomenon, how they understand it discursively and how this understanding can vary depending on context and time, i.e. how sexual abuse is constructed discursively in an everyday context, has been less investigated by the research community.

Issues regarding sexual abuse of children have been debated during the last 20 years and the debate has intensified during the last decade. The bulk of research has been conducted in North America, primarily in disciplines such as medicine, sociology, and psychology, and only a minor number of contributions have come from Scandinavia. Prior to 1980, phenomena involving violence and power in close relations were surrounded by taboos and thus also with silence both from the research community and society at large. However, sexual abuse should not be seen as a new phenomenon discovered during the last 20 years, but it has rather been understood and constructed differently during this period. New areas of knowledge and new groups of professionals have developed new theories and practises that have resulted in new ways of perceiving sexual abuse. This process of professionalization has also resulted in numerous controversies about how to understand the phenomenon (Hallberg & Rigné, 1999).

During the last few years, the majority of Swedish publications have focused on applied issues relating to sexual abuse. A large number of books deal with the applied issues in the form of treatment guidelines and policy documents aimed at different groups of professionals working with children, such as pre-school teachers and social workers (cf. Kjellgren, 1995, Teurnell, 1995, Sundelin, 1996). A less significant number of publications concerning sexual abuse involve academic research with a theoretical focus aimed at understanding the phenomenon from a variety of perspectives.

In spite of the increase in studies conducted, our knowledge about aspects such as prevalence rates is still scarce. A large Nordic study of four kinds of abuse found that 16.6% of 1000 Swedish women reported being victims

¹³ I thank Lotta Samelius, Linköping university, for this valuable point.

of sexual abuse during their lifetimes. The definition of sexual abuse included “mild”, such as watching pornographic movies against ones will, to “severe”, such as penetration against ones will (Swahnberg 2004). A Swedish study conducted by Rönström (1983/84, 1986) estimate that 7-8 percent of women and 1-3 percent of men have been victims of childhood sexual abuse. Another Swedish prevalence study by Edgardh (1999) among Swedish seventeen-year-olds shows dramatically higher numbers, using background variables such as school attendance. Of the group of young people who attended school, 11.2 percent of the girls and 3.1 percent of the boys had been victims of sexual abuse, while as many as 4 percent of the boys and 28 percent of the girls of the school dropouts had been victims of sexual abuse. In Norway, Saetre (1997) found that 19 percent of the women in the study had experienced sexual abuse, and 14 percent of the men had experienced sexual abuse. Also in Norway, Tambs (1994) found that 31 percent of all women in the study had been victims of sexual abuse, while 16 percent of the men in the study reported the same.

However, prevalence studies of sensitive issues are known to have various methodological problems. Factors influencing the results include type of sample, response rates, definitions, age difference between victim and perpetrator, and method of data collection (Svedin, 1999). If flashing is not included in the definition of sexual abuse, the prevalence rates in Edgardhs study decrease from 12 percent to 7 percent for women and 4 percent to 3 percent for men. If the definition of sexual abuse exclude situations where the victim did not report feelings of great uneasiness, the prevalence rates in Saetre’s study decreases from 19 percent to 14 percent for women and 14 percent to 9 percent for men. If the definition excludes non-touching of genitalia, the prevalence rates in Tambs’ study decrease from 31 percent to 13 percent for women and 16 percent to 7 percent for men. Some studies use the words ‘incest’ and ‘sexual abuse of children’ interchangeably, and some studies define them separately. Other researchers do not define their concepts at all. Feminist researchers, represented by, among others, Kelly (1988), leave it up to the victims to define sexual abuse. The definition, she argues, should be based on what women and girls *experience as abuse*. The various definitions of the phenomenon give rise to great confusion and unreliable research results. The studies cannot be compared and controversies regarding prevalence rates thereby become fruitless.

This great variation in research findings concerning the prevalence of sexual abuse is not unique to Scandinavia. Gorey & Leslie (2001) conclude that research reviews from North America reveal that during the past generation estimates of childhood sexual abuse have ranged from 2 percent to 62 percent, depending on the definition. Roosa et. al. (1998) found that

when using different measurements in a prevalence study, the reports on incidence rates of childhood sexual abuse varied up to 300 percent. The researchers conclude that the broad variations in definitions of childhood sexual abuse make it almost impossible to compare one study with another. In similar terms, Goldman & Padayachi (2000) argue that research about childhood sexual abuse is fraught with methodological problems, owing to definitional variations with regard to both the term 'sexual abuse' and 'child'. When reviewing the literature, Goldman and Padayachi (2000) found that disparate definitions are used, especially with regards to the definition of sexual contact, "whether noncontact sexual events such as exhibitionism, pornography, or sexual invitation are included; whether all wanted and unwanted sexual experiences or just unwanted sexual experiences are included; and whether an age differential is employed between the victim and the perpetrator" (p.307). The broader the definition of these factors, the higher the prevalence rate.

Can we talk?

The focus in the present study is talk about the problems of talking about sexual abuse and other difficult experiences. At the detention homes, the staff saw sexual abuse as a major causal factor of destructive behavior, and talking about this experience was seen as a central issue for the young women's physical and psychological well being. Talk, in this case daily conversations, was the primary means for providing both treatment and assessment. The staff were to "fix the world with their voices" (Weick & Browning, 1991). Eliciting talk about trouble was thereby of central importance in the everyday work of the staff.

However, do we - the population at large - talk about sexual abuse? The answer to this question is complex. Although the population at large knows that sexual abuse is a crime that may cause suffering and pain to the victim, people may be hesitant about talking about and acknowledging the existence of sexual abuse. Carlsson (2004) argues that although sexual abuse has been officially accepted as a societal problem, there is an unofficial exclusion of the victims themselves and their talk about sexual abuse. When Carlsson (2004) offered 60 schools in Gothenburg, Sweden, information about sexual abuse and how to work with children who have been victims, 24 schools accepted. One reason why many schools declined was that they claimed that none of their enrolled students had been victims of sexual abuse.

Do victims of sexual abuse talk about the abuse? Finkelhor (1986) argues that most children who are victims of sexual abuse do not talk about it.

Along the same lines, Svedin & Back (2003) found that none of the children in their study who were victims of sexual abuse had talked about the abuse. The researchers' understanding of this finding is that the children cannot or will not remember the feelings and consequences associated with the abuse. This may only be part of the explanation of why victims of sexual abuse may not disclose what they have experienced. Petronio et al. (1997) argue that children who are victims of sexual abuse do talk about the abuse, and when they do, they are strategic and logical in the way they disclose information. The researchers argue that these children chose their confidants carefully and based their selection on the credibility of the confidant, how supportive he/she was, if the person has the ability to end the abuse (advocacy), if the confidant is strong enough to deal with the information, and if he/she could protect the child. When studying the disclosure discourse, the researchers found that the children depended on their inner logic, and used voice to rebuild a sense of agency and control.

Not long ago, Plummer (1995) argues, sexual stories, such as a story of rape, were not possible to tell, and if told, they were often not believed. The power of the political flow stopped any such attempt. However, sexual stories about young women in compulsory care have always been told, since they have been found to play a role in placing young women in compulsory care (cf. Sundkvist, 1994). Hence, sexual stories have always played an important role in the world of compulsory care.

Storytelling, and in particular sexual storytelling, has "gained unusual power and prominence", argues Plummer (1995, p.6). His quest is to develop a 'sociology of stories' that aims at "inspecting the social role of stories: the ways they are produced, the ways they are read, the work they perform in the wider social order, how they change, and their role in the political process", rather than to focus primarily on narrative structures. Plummer's aim is to look at the social work stories perform in society, the power they contain, and the complex social processes involved in people's telling of stories.

In 'telling it all', Plummer argues, society becomes a "textured but seamless web of stories emerging everywhere through interaction" (p.5). Plummer, greatly inspired by Foucault (1980), argues that stories are "found in a stream of power" (p. 16) and the meanings of the stories are never fixed but change depending on the contexts in which they emerge. Storytelling itself can be seen as a power relation between teller and listener. People have the power to tell a story, or not to tell it, and as such it is all part of a political process. Since power is everywhere in sexual

stories, it is also strongly connected to emotion. Whether or not a sexual story is told depends on the strength of the feelings involved. Feelings of shame, for example, can prevent a person from telling a story. These are what O'Connor (2002) calls *cannot be told stories*. She argues that there are three kind of stories: (i) *stories one likes to tell*, such as a story about graduating from college, (ii) *stories that must be told*, such as stories about practical issues, and (iii) *stories that cannot be told*, such as stories about sexual abuse. O'Connor argues that over time a "taboo" story can become a story that can be told. A "taboo" story, such as a story of sexual abuse, can become a story that must be told. Furthermore, stories overlap in interesting ways, for instance they can be a *must be told story* simultaneously with a *story that cannot be told*.

Problems as constructed through talk

Hacking (1995) makes a convincing case when arguing that the definition and understanding of sexual abuse is historically and context dependent. However, Hacking (1995) claims that he is not deconstructing the concept, but analyzing it, and argues that the social construction of the concept is simply uninteresting.

It can hardly be of interest that the concept of child abuse is a social construct (if "social construct" means anything at all). What will be of interest is the successive stages in which this concept has been made and modelled, and how it has interacted with children, with adults, with moral sensibilities, and with a larger sense of what it is to be a human being (p. 65).

His ambition is consequently to analyze how the concept has been "made and modelled" historically and in other contexts. He does so by showing how the historically used concept "cruelty to children" has successively become "child abuse" and how the meaning of the concept, the moral aspects, its judicial consequences, and the common understanding has changed over time. The theoretical understanding has shifted from individual to structural, from particular to general. The phenomenon is no longer understood as the repulsive act of a twisted stranger, but as an act possibly taking place within the family, with long term consequences, causing lifelong suffering.

However intriguing, Hacking's analysis of 'constructions' of sexual abuse, does not include the important aspect of how such constructions occur through *talk*. The present study acknowledges the role of language in the construction of social and psychological life. 'Talking' can be referred to as

verbal interaction or communication, and can be analyzed and understood in numerous ways and from different perspectives. The theoretical standpoint of this study is that ‘talking’ is a form of ‘doing’, and that ‘meaning’ is something we construct in dialogue with others, and not an objective given (Potter, 1996). Language is not understood as a passive tool to convey some inner ‘truth’, but as a dynamic process in which we construct ourselves and the world around us. However, I do not take the stand that an event has not happened if it is not talked about as such. Rather, my understanding, in this study, of ‘talking’ as ‘doing’ is as follows:

1. Something has happened.
2. The staff talk about what has happened and through talking they construct a definition of what has happened. There is no objective given regarding this definition.
3. The staff act according to the constructed definition.

Meaning, i.e. how we interpret what is said, is dependent on a specific time and context. The social problems talked about in an institutional setting are *created* or *constructed* as the participants justify, describe and negotiate their versions of reality. The process where this reality is constructed is described by Silverman (1997):

While social settings may be analyzed as providing their members with institutional discourses, the discourses only become available to setting members when they enter into and use the discourses to construct and sustain social settings. Setting members do so by using the vocabularies, orienting to the practical concerns, and interacting in ways provided by particular institutional discourses (p. 189).

When participants enter into and use the vocabulary available in that particular setting, the participants can collaboratively create a dilemma or problem. Hence, a dilemma emerges when it is talked about as such. It can be seen as constructed though a verbal process involving the use of a specific vocabulary embedded in its specific time and context.

To see a problem as socially constructed does not in anyway deny or diminish the fact that it may have the power to cause serious harm and destruction to those involved. However, using the social constructionist perspective, it is not the physical world which is of interest *per se*, but rather how human beings *understand* this physical world (Loseke, 1999),

i.e. the interest is focused on the subjective definitions of the physical world. Using a social constructionist perspective when trying to understand a phenomenon such as sexual abuse implies studying how the phenomenon is created and re-created discursively within a specific context. By using a social constructionist perspective this way we can study how a phenomenon becomes a social problem *when it is defined and discussed as such*, and how an action is understood and interpreted is depends on the specific situation within its specific context. The process leading up to the phenomenon being defined as a social problem, rather than the definition itself, becomes the focus of attention. The standpoint taken is therefore that there is no objective given regarding whether or not the phenomenon becomes defined as a social problem, but that the definition emerges from a time and context dependent process where the problem is constantly renegotiated and reconstructed (Hydén, 1992). I would consequently argue for a more contextual constructionism where objective conditions are assumed but where, what Spector & Kitsuse (1977) call the “claim making processes”, are seen as socially constructed and dependent on time and context.

The social constructionist perspective can be seen as a reaction to the structuralist functionalist perspective where social conditions are understood as separate from people’s interpretations of them (Miller & Holstein, 1993). In contrast to this perspective, social constructionists argue that it is the mundane interaction when people interpret and reinterpret social problems, often without noticing it, that creates the social conditions, and that the two are therefore inseparable. “ Instances of social problems are constantly in the making – under construction, but provisional, so to speak”, argue Holstein and Miller (1993) and “consequently, analysis of social problems work centers on the interactional dynamics of practical interpretation” (p. 155).

Talking as a narrative form

If the problem of sexual abuse is constructed through talk, in what forms does talk occur? In the present interviews and in the ethnographic data, the respondents, both the staff and the young women, frequently expressed themselves in narrative forms, often neatly following the well-known Labovian (1972) structure that divides the narrative into categories (abstract, orientation, complicating action and resolution/coda). Several of these stories were “atrocious” stories (Dingwall 1977), that is, horror stories of importance for the making of a professional relationship. One story told on several occasions was about how a young woman’s boyfriend, a well known criminal incarcerated at a high security prison in Sweden, had

escaped and, armed with a knife, came to The Garden to set his girlfriend free. At The Garden I was bombarded with stories of violence, suffering, and drama. Only in exceptional cases were my questions and other utterances met with straightforward answers, that could have been used, for example, for the listing of thematically codable categories. In response to my questions I got lengthy, complex stories, often introduced by suggestive utterances like “I once knew of a girl.....”

The choice to answer a question using a narrative form is not unique to the informants in this study. Human beings are “narrative animals” or “homo fabulans” argues, as Currie (1998) and others argue. A part of being human is presenting narratives about ourselves and the world around us. The importance of narratives in language is also stressed by linguists such as Linde (1993) who argue that narratives are perhaps the most basic of all discourse units. Aronsson (2001) discusses the *narrative turn* of social theory during the last decades and argues that narratives are the very basic building blocks of our communities. We are narrators and interpreters of narratives and our selection of this mode of expression is as inescapable as language in general. Our impulse to narrate is natural and apparently universal, Riessman (1993) argues. As a result, questions such as “what happened then?” will inevitably stimulate a narrative response, as long as the interviewer allows them to be asked.

The definitions of narratives vary from broad in the sense of being life stories that can be added together to create a whole, to narrower perceiving narratives as distinct entities within the framework of linguistic representation (Hydén 1997). Linde (1993) bases her definition of narratives on Labov’s analysis of the oral narrative of personal experience as described in Labov and Waletzky’s now classic article “Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience” from 1967. In this article, Labov and Waletzky simply define a narrative as two clauses separated by at least one temporal juncture. Defining narratives in the Labovian sense, that is, seeing the use of past tense as the backbone of the narrative, the narrative cannot be seen as a perspective applicable to all discourse but rather as a distinguished entity of human discourse. Without this temporal ordering, a narrative is not a narrative but instead a report, a description or an explanation.

Narratives have structures that hold them together, Riessman (1993) argues. It is the placement of the event in the narrative structure that makes the event meaningful. Labov’s structural model is paradigmatic in how it gives the narrative a frame. However, this frame is quite technical in its structure, Riessman (1993) argues, leaving out the relational as well as

contextual aspects of the narrative. The text is not autonomous from its context she argues, and the interpretation of narratives must therefore include, among other things, issues of class and gender. Basing my theoretical understanding of narratives on Riessman's reasoning, it is not the structure of the narratives *per se* which becomes the primary focus, but the narratives in relation to the institutional and relational context in which they emerge and the stories of sexual abuse presented in the narratives.

Narratives are relational in the sense that they are situated in time and place, and in the relations between two or more people. A narrative does not have its own existence, but can primarily be seen as a product of the interviewer and the informant in a specific time and place. A narrative, argues Riessman (1993), "is the product of a particular interview context, a dialogue between a particular narrator and listener in a relation of power, at a particular historical moment" (p.31). Life stories, in which narratives play the greatest role, are also structurally and interpretively open, argues Linde (1993). The story constantly changes, new stories are added to the old, old stories or part of old stories are lost. We reshape our stories depending on our addressee, according to new events that occur and as a result of new values and attitudes acquired.

Parallel to seeing narratives as relational, I believe it is fruitful to use Mishler's (1999) concept of 'narratives as praxis' when understanding the narratives of the present study. The implications of viewing narratives as praxis are mediated through claiming that narratives are socially situated actions, identity performances, and fusions of form and content. In seeing the narratives as socially situated actions, the narratives become a dialogical process and the interview itself a speech event. We cannot, argues Mishler (1999, 1986), only attend to the responses of the informant, but must look at the text as a whole, including the utterances of the interviewer and the sequential order of exchanges. The narratives can also be seen as identity performances. Through the narratives, we express and make claims about who we are as human beings. Lastly, narratives are fusions of form and content. They should fuse content and structure in a way that provides the reader with an understanding of how the researcher has interpreted the narrative.

Women as situated beings or predetermined bodies

In 2003 The NBIC adopted a gender document.¹⁴ The overarching aim of this policy, according to SiS, is to increase efficiency and quality of

¹⁴ In Swedish: Gender policy för SiS

treatment. However, the gender policy is based on an essentialistic understanding of the body and sex. Male and female staff are assumed to have different assets and resources depending on sex rather than, for example, personalities. Clients are also thought to have different needs depending on sex, and are to be treated accordingly. The Garden has been an all women's institution since the start and has an essentialistic understanding of gender as their starting point for treatment. For instance, the staff believe that it is to the advantage for the young women to take a "rest" from men's dangerous sexuality. As discussed by Hydén & Månsson (forthcoming), there are both advantages and disadvantages with this mode of organizing the treatment. However, Moi's (1999) shows, with her model of women as de Beauvoirian situated beings, how an essentialistic understanding can be limiting to women.

De Beauvoir (1957) argues that the body is a situation. This means not only that a body is *in* different situations, that the body can only have meaning once it is placed in a specific cultural and historical context, as Moi (1999) argues. A human being both *is* a situation and is *in* a situation. A woman is not a stable reality, but is constantly in process of *becoming*. Only through death does the becoming end. The body is a situation since it is the basis for a woman's experience of herself and of the world around her. This lived experience is part of the situated woman. We are always situated, but our situations are constantly in progress, since our lived experience changes with each action, each movement. But our bodies are not only lived experience but are also objects, with objective aspects. We can study them and we can paint them. To argue that the body is a situation is to acknowledge that the meaning of body is connected to the way a person uses his or her freedom as a human being. Our lived experience affects our life projects and thereby the way we understand our bodies.

Having female bodies and living in a world dominated by males does not necessarily deny women their agency. With the body of a woman, there are numerous ways I can choose to live my life, and multiple projects I can take on. This is not to say that a woman's situatedness does not at the same time imply a number of limitations. Part of living in this world as a woman is being approached by societal norms. Women constantly encounter societal norms where males represent the norm. However, as situated women we have a number of possible ways of approaching these norms, not only limited to our gender or sex, but as a result of our situations, which include personality, age, nationality, and life experience. We have an infinite number of ways we can deal with these norms. We can internalize them or we can resist them. We can analyze them or we can ignore them.

Our choices and experience become part of our lived experience, and depend on our situations, that is, our personality, age, nationality and so on.

Moi's (1999) model of women as de Beauvoirian situated beings is different from nature and the situated body. We cannot take the objective and situated perspectives, add them together and find a whole woman, according to Moi. Beauvoir says that the woman defines herself through the way she uses what the world does to her, the way she lives her situated body. To see the body as situated is therefore to deny defining the body as the sum of sex and gender. "For Beauvoir a woman is a person with a female body from the beginning until the end, from the moment she is born until the moment she dies. But this woman is her situation, not her destiny." (p. 112, own translation). A woman is more than a body, more than her gender, she is a fully bodily human being and her existence can not be limited to either biology or culture.

By using the context of Moi's (1999) model of women as de Beauvoirian situated beings, it is possible to see the young women at The Garden as possible agents, constantly *in progress*, while at the same time limited by their female bodies in a male-biased society. De Beauvoir/Moi's theoretical understanding avoids biological determinism and aims at developing a historical and non-essential understanding of sex and body. By doing this, it acknowledges the constructive aspects of *becoming* while not being abstract and disconnected from concrete situated understandings of the body.

Aims of study

My overall aim in conducting this study was to open up an arena that has been neglected and little investigated - youth detention homes for girls and young women, by talking to staff and the young women at detention homes, and talking about sexual abuse. My aim has been to gain an understanding of the problems, difficulties, and dilemmas the staff at a youth detention home are faced with when working with young women who are understood to be victims of sexual abuse. At the center of attention is talk about the problems of talking about sexual abuse and other difficult experiences. With regard to the young women, my aim was to explore the young women's own thinking about the body and sexuality and to create a possible arena for communication. The young women's perspective was needed in order to understand the staff and their work.

The main aim of study I was to examine what discursive devices are employed when using the focus group method when talking to young

women in forced care. Another aim was to study in what ways the focus groups is a fruitful method for studying marginalized young women and their views and thoughts about being young women today. Study II addresses the issue of how the staff form narratives of sexual abuse. The aim of this article was to investigate the power aspect of sexual abuse stories in an institutional context. The aim of study III was to examine one aspect of the assessment process, namely the process leading up to the definition of sexual abuse. This study is concerned with the process in which the staff members define whether or not a girl has been a victim of sexual abuse. Study IV addresses the issue of how the staff and the young women at the detention home talk about sexuality. The article compares the different views and tries to answer the question of what implications they have for the young women. Finally, study V aims at showing how the young women talk about motherhood and childbearing.

III

METHOD

Setting

The youth detention home "The Garden"

The Garden, one of the few youth detention homes in Sweden for young women only, is located outside a medium sized town, far from the stress and temptations of a big city. After leaving the bus that takes you from the town, you walk along a solitary dirt road crossing fields and a small creek. The nature is breathtaking, and the serenity only disturbed by an occasional bird. At the end of this long dirt road, the institution appears. The Garden is comprised of several independent buildings with the old main building in the middle. The visitor is struck by the perfection of the lawns, the neatness of the flower beds and the impeccable condition of the buildings.

Thirty young women aged 13-20 years live at the five different departments, or "stugor" (cottages) as they are called. The five different houses all feature their own interiors and outside decorations, setting them apart but still forming a whole. Each house has its own kitchen, bathrooms, laundry room, living room and office for the staff. Every young woman has a room of her own which, within certain limits, she is allowed to decorate as she chooses. The houses are painted in light colors, with modern looking furniture, very much like any other home where young people live.

A number of apartments buildings are situated at the institution, used in training the young women to live on their own, taking care of cooking, cleaning and other domestic chores. The apartments are mainly used during the final period of the young women's stay at The Garden, when they are preparing themselves for a life outside of the institution.

The main building features the dining hall, and the main kitchen, where nutritious food is prepared for the young women. This is considered an important part of the treatment. This is also where the two psychologists have their offices. The functions of the psychologists are to counsel the young women and to supervise the staff when needed. The Garden also has a nurse and a part-time medical doctor.

Most of the young women spend their days at the compulsory school, situated in the middle of the institution. Some of the young women, depending on age, number of completed years in school, and behavior, attend a regular high school in the town. Others, for various reasons, cannot

attend school, and are therefore placed in the "outdoor group". This group, under the guidance of an instructor, attends to practical matters at the institution, such as mowing the lawn and tending the animals. After their daily activities, they spend their free time at their department or doing after school activities of their own choice, such as sports, concerts, etc. During one week each winter, the young women go with the staff to a skiing resort in the northern part of Sweden. As pointed out by the staff, this is often a great adventure for several of the young women who have never been able to try skiing or even play in the snow.

"The Lily" and "The Rose"

Two of the five departments of The Garden are included in this study, The Lily and The Rose. The Lily is a department accepting young women in the higher age group (17-20 years) often with complex psychosocial problems such as a mix of substance abuse, self destructive behavior, and crime. The department is partially closed, which means that it can be locked if needed. The method of treatment is environmental therapy, which is a broad term without an established definition. The staff members described environmental therapy as "the everyday things we do with the girls, such as learning to tend your own hygiene, table manners, and washing clothes. We try to be the role models for ordinary everyday life". The environmental therapy is combined with an environmental pedagogical project, aimed at creating an environment for learning. The young women are taught and practice environmental work such as tending sheep and fowl, gardening, and cultivating flowers and vegetables.

The Rose is a department mainly designed for girls and younger women in the age group 14-16 years with less complex psychosocial problems. As a therapy form, The Rose uses family therapy, which means that the aim is to use a family perspective and to actively involve family members in the treatment process.¹⁵ The staff arrange regular meetings with family members and occasionally even invite them to camps together with their daughters. The family members are seen as important parties in the treatment process. The staff are also careful not to downplay and criticise the parents, but rather to try to create a cooperative environment, where both staff and family members together work for what is best for the young woman.

¹⁵ Studies have shown that having the family involved in the treatment process is seen by the staff as an asset, a necessity and also a complicating factor (Bangura Arvidsson & Åkerström, 2000)

Participants

The Staff

At the time of the study, 75 persons were employed at The Garden. The number of resident assistants employed at each department varies between 6 and 11, depending on if the department is open, partially closed or closed. Each department also has a department supervisor and three of the departments have an assistant supervisor. The school employs 9 teachers, including one head teacher. Two halftime psychologists, one part time medical doctor, and one full time nurse are also employed. The administration includes three persons, including a director and an assistant vice director of the home. Other staff members include a janitor, cleaners, kitchen staff, and staff on call during nights and weekends in case of an emergency.

The education and experience of the resident assistants and the supervisors varies greatly. All have a minimum of 20 academic credits (equivalent to one semester of full time studies) in social work, a course especially targeted for resident assistants. Three of the thirteen assistants who are represented in this study have university or college degrees in behavioral sciences or social work. As a rule, the department supervisors are more highly educated than the resident assistants. Some resident assistants at The Lily and The Rose have worked at The Garden for more than twenty years, while others have only worked there for a few months.

The supervisors at The Garden have recently tried to improve the educational level of the employees by recruiting staff with more educational background¹⁶. However, the minimum requirement for employment is still the 20 credit course mentioned above and a minimum of two years' previous work at a youth detention home.

At the time of the study, 7 persons including the department supervisor were employed at The Rose and all of them took part in the study. At The Lily, 12 persons were employed including the department supervisor and the assistant supervisor. At The Lily, all staff members agreed to take part in the study.

The staff members were informed about the study and told that they could decide individually whether or not they wanted to participate. The staff who chose to participate were then asked to sign a letter of consent which

¹⁶ This is not true only of The Garden but is typical of staff working at youth detention homes (see Sallnäs 2000).

again explained the purpose of the study and that the participant could, at any time, choose to withdraw from the study.

Below follows a list of staff members appearing in the articles. It is important to note that this list is a short presentation of the staff members who are mentioned in the text, and not of all of the participants in the study. Since a selection of excerpts had to be made, 6/19 staff members, who agreed to participate in the study are not represented in the text.

Birgitta	Has worked longer than anyone else at The Garden and is in her late 50's.
Daniella	Is in her 30s with a university degree in social work. Has just been employed at The Garden.
Elisabet	Has worked for 30 years at The Garden and is in her late 50s.
Erika	Has just been employed at The Garden and is in her late 20s.
Frank	Has worked at The Garden for many years and is in his 50s.
Jill	Is in her late 20s and has a university degree in behavioral science. Has worked at The Garden for a couple of years.
Karin	Is in her 40s. Has worked at The Garden for a couple of years.
Mimmi	Is in her 40s and has worked for many years at The Garden..
Nils	Has a degree in social work, is in his 30s and has worked at The Garden for about five years.
Patrick	Has worked for a few years at The Garden. Is in his 30s.
Peter	Is in his 30s. Has worked at The Garden for about five years.
Tina	Is in her 40s and has also worked for many years at The Garden. Started studies in law but never graduated.
Thomas	Has only worked for a couple of years at the Garden. Is in his mid 20s.

The young women

At the time of the investigation, 30 young women, aged 14-19 years, lived at The Garden. The focus of the present research was not the prior experiences of these young women or the reasons why they were at The Garden. For this reason, I did not read their case reports. No information other than what emerged in the everyday discourse at the institution during the field study was known to the researcher. To know, for example, if the case report included suspicions of sexual abuse, was not part of the purpose of the present study.

Each department can house six young women. However, for reasons such as exceptional needs on behalf of one of the young women, the departments are not always full. During the time of the study , five young women were

admitted to The Rose and six young women were admitted to The Lily.¹⁷ All of these young women were committed under LVU, except one young woman at The Rose who was committed under SoL.

The staff were first asked whether or not they wanted all the young women to be asked if they were willing to participate in the study. The reason for this was to give the staff the possibility to judge whether or not a young woman was in such a condition that her participation in a study would have been unwise or even harmful. However, the staff decided that all the young women who were living at the departments should be asked if they were willing to participate. All the young women were then informed about the study and could decide themselves whether or not they wanted to participate. Consent was also obtained from their parents. They were also informed that they could decide to withdraw at any time, i.e. walk out from the focus group session, which did happen on several occasions. Only one young woman from The Lily decided not to participate.

Below follows a list of all the young women whose voices are represented in the texts of my five studies. The presentation reflects what I learned from and about the young women during my months at The Garden, and should not be seen as a complete list of problematic issues or reasons for admittance, but as part of my ethnographic observations.¹⁸

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| Anette | 15 years old. Is committed to The Garden under LVU. |
| Anna | 15 years old. Is committed to The Garden under LVU. She has a history of cutting herself and skipping school. |
| Camilla | 15 years old. Is committed to The Garden under LVU. Cut herself frequently. Claims she has been sexually abused. |
| Cecilia | 19 years old. Is committed to The Garden under LVU. Has a serious drug addiction and a history of being violent towards staff. |
| Charlotta | 16 years old. Is committed to The Garden under LVU. Has been involved in serious crime. |

¹⁷ At the time of this study, The Rose could only admit five young women. Since then, the department has been rebuilt and can now admit six young women.

¹⁸ The large number of young women presented is due to the fact that the first part of the field study took place during spring 1999, and the second period started in the winter of 2000. Some of the young women who had lived at The Garden during spring 1999, had moved by the time I returned, and new young women had moved in.

- Hanna 16 years old. Is committed to The Garden under LVU. Severe alcohol addiction and cuts herself frequently.
- Helen 16 years old. Is committed to The Garden under LVU. She has an immigrant background with serious conflicts with parents. Severe drug addiction.
- Kristin 17 years old. Is committed to The Garden under LVU. She has lived at The Garden for several years and has recently tried to move to her own apartment. She has repeatedly been brought back to The Garden since, when living on her own, she does not stay in school and “hangs out with the wrong crowd”.
- Lara 16 years old. Is committed to The Garden under LVU. Has accused her father of sexual abuse. Moved to her own apartment, during my time at The Garden, but returned after skipping school and “hanging out with the wrong crowd”.
- Lena 16 years old. Is committed to The Garden under LVU. Has a history of being involved in violent gangs.
- Lydia 15 years old. Is committed to The Garden under LVU. Disowned by her family. Has accused her father and brothers of physical and sexual abuse.
- Magdalena 16 years old. Is committed to The Garden under LVU. She has a immigrant background with conflicts with parents. Was transferred to a new institution during my time at The Garden.
- Malin 14 years old. Is committed to The Garden under SoL. Refused to live at home after her sister had been sexually abused by their father.
- Mimmi 16 years old. Is committed to The Garden under LVU. Moves to her own apartment, during my time at The Garden, and managed well.
- Sara 15 years old. Is committed to The Garden under LVU. Drug addiction and cuts herself frequently. Has lived most of her life at institutions.
- Stina 14 years old. Is committed to The Garden under LVU She has a history of cutting herself and skipping school.

According to the National Board of Institutional Care (SiS), young women obtaining placements at youth detention homes display a broad range of psychosocial problems, often with elements of substance abuse, criminal behavior and self destructive behavior such as prostitution. As discussed earlier, when the young women are admitted the *Adolescent Drug Abuse Diagnosis* (ADAD) is used as an interview guide. The findings of these interviews show that young women admitted to youth detention homes struggle on several different levels. We do not know to what extent the overall figures hold true for The Garden. As shown in the ethnographic data of this study however, many of the young women did have more or less troubled life histories.

Procedure

Fieldwork observations and interviews

The fieldwork at the youth detention home, The Garden, took place between April 12th and 23rd 1999 and January 10th and March 17th 2000. I spent two weeks at the institution, and then two weeks at Linköping university, before going back to the institution for another two weeks. This was repeated until a total of eight weeks had been spent at the institution.¹⁹ During each two-week period in the field, Margareta Hydén (MH), the main project director, came to The Garden for two days to supervise and support me. It was also during the days MH spent at The Garden that most of the interviews were conducted, by me alone or by us jointly.

During the total of eight weeks of being in the field, I took part in the regular activities at The Rose and The Lily as far as possible. I observed the staff's daily work, listening to discussions about the young women and observing the interaction between the staff and the young women. I gave special attention to discussions and situations concerning sexual abuse. I kept a diary about each day. The observations were primarily used as a way of detecting discussions and situations concerning sexual abuse *when the discussions and situations actually took place* and not through staff telling about them afterwards. Secondly, the observations were used as supplementary data.

To encourage free narratives, we chose an open interview style with few questions formulated in detail. In our form of interviewing, the questions are primarily aimed at constructing a framework within which the interviewees would feel free, and have opportunities to discuss their

¹⁹ For a discussion around the reasons for the procedure of the study, please see "Doing research at closed institutions" below.

thoughts and feeling. We wanted to access their understanding and inner logic – or possibly their lack of inner logic and understanding – of what had happened.

When a discussion or situation came up touching on sexual abuse in the young women's lives that seemed to create a dilemma or a problem for the staff, interviews with the staff were conducted, the very same day or one of the days immediately following. For each situation, a group interview with the staff members at the department was conducted as well as individual interviews with each of the staff member involved. The group interview was announced as a "45-minute gathering, aimed at reflection". The interview was constructed as a semi-structured conversation around issues like: 'How are we to understand this situation?' 'What has happened?' 'Why do you think about it as sexual abuse?' Individual interviews with all participants present at the group interview followed the group interview, varying in length from 20 minutes to 1.5 hours. In all, 5 group interviews and 29 individual interviews were conducted, 18 with me and MH jointly and sixteen with me alone. In following this procedure, the study profits from empirical data from a combination of sources.

In recent years, there has been much debate about the desirability of combining ethnography with conversation or discourse analysis (Nelson, 1996; West, 1996; Allen, 2001). Some researchers argue for the distinctive focus of conversation analysis on the organization of talk-in-interaction as a topic in its own right, while others have pointed out the limitations of field note transcripts as compared with tape recordings (West, 1996; Allen, 2001). On the basis of these arguments, I take the view that ethnographic data can make a valuable contribution to interview data.

Focus group interviews

Five one hour focus group sessions were conducted with the young women at the departments The Lily and The Rose over a period of two weeks with a total of eleven young women taking part in the sessions. The number of participants in each group varied between two and five, with CÖ as the moderator. At the beginning of each session, I explained to the participants that we were interested in what they thought and felt about a number of issues related to their being young women today. I particularly emphasized that we were not there to evaluate them, to test them or to judge them, and that there were no right or wrong answers to our questions. All the participants also received a letter a few days before the focus group sessions, stating our intentions with the sessions and that their participation was voluntary. Informed consent was obtained from each participant and their parents. At the beginning of each session, the participants were told

about the procedure of the study, that they were allowed to discontinue their participation at any time during the group session, and that their participation was voluntary. They were also told that the data would be confidential and that it was important that the group participants did not reveal the content of the discussion to others outside of the group.

Articles from popular magazines for young women were presented as discussion material, or stimuli material as it is called in the focus group discourse. A semi-structured interview guide was used. The topics of the session included themes such as 'romantic relationships', 'femininity/masculinity', 'beauty ideals and body image', and 'sexuality'. The articles presented reflected these topics and could therefore be used as a starting point for discussion. To use the articles as a starting point for discussion meant that the focus group participants were not limited by the content of the articles but that the articles were used to encourage and structure the discussion. The topics of the sessions were presented starting with less sensitive topics such as "female role models" and for each session continuing with more sensitive topics such as "sexual relationships".

Recordings and transcriptions

The transcription procedure as an analytical process

All of the interviews with the staff and the young women were audio recorded. All of the audio recordings were then transcribed. The transcription procedure can be seen as an analytical process and therefore requires special attention.

According to Linell (1994), the transcription procedure can refer to both to the process of transcribing the recorded data, or to the product itself, the written notations. It is important to remember that the process itself is a form of analysis, and that the product, the written notations, must be seen as an interpretation (Riessman, 1997). There are endless variations and degrees of detail in the transcription process, but even the most detailed transcription cannot provide a mirror image of the talk itself. In what detail one transcribes the data depends on the purpose of the analysis and is therefore theory-driven (Ochs, 1979). The process must be seen as an action and the result as an artefact (Linell, 1986) The data is still the recordings and the transcription is a tool to enable analysis. It is therefore neither objective nor unproblematic (Linell, 1994).

As recommended by Linell (1994), all the data were first transcribed on a basic level, meaning that it was transcribed word for word, that is, each identifiable word, repetition and word error was included. However, no

details, such as overlapping speech, were included. The aim of this rough transcription was to get a general sense of the material, to achieve an understanding of the data as a whole. During this first transcription procedure, I took extensive notes outlining initial analytical ideas. When all interviews were transcribed, I read and reread the material numerous times. I used the notes taken during the fieldwork, the transcriptions and the notes taken while transcribing to find patterns or themes. These patterns or themes together with the research questions of the study guided me towards the next step in the analytical process – focusing on selected parts of the interviews. I then transcribed these selected parts, or excerpts, more carefully to a degree reflected in the transcription notations. This level of transcription requires numerous close listenings and was at times conducted together with my two academic supervisors to avoid discrepancies between the recorded and written material. When analyzing narratives, attention was first given to the *structure* of the narrative, as recommended by Riessman (1993). The way the narrative is organized, the way the informants choose to develop their stories can provide an important piece of the analytical puzzle. Secondly, the *content* of the narrative was given attention.

As recommended by Ochs (1979) the transcription level varies from study to study depending on the kind of analysis made. For example, the transcription level in study I is more detailed than in study II, owing to the analysis. However, the selected transcription level is quite simplistic in all studies, and is a reflection of the analysis which has a general focus on content rather than language. A more linguistic analysis, such as ‘conversation analysis’ (CA), would consequently demand a more detailed transcription. On the other hand, the transcription could have been much more simple, for example without overlapping speech and pauses or excluding words that filled no apparent meaning in the segment transcribed. Although I do not believe that a written transcription, however detailed, can perfectly mirror the interview itself, the reason I chose to present the data as I have, is that I believe it gives the reader insight into the interview situation and thus a chance to make other interpretations. My aim is to open the text to alternative readings. Another reason for the selected transcription level is that the analysis has developed in close relation with the data. In line with CA, our aim has been to analyse the excerpts from the informants’ own perspectives in the contexts in which they occurred, as shared in a dialogical interaction with their co-participants. Consequently, our aim has been not to analyze and give meaning to the excerpts in order to fit an existing theoretical framework beyond the meaning the informants themselves give.

Transcription notations

(.)	pause of less than one second
[]	encloses overlapping turns
◦ ◦	encloses comments in sotto voce
> <	encloses talk at rapid speed
< >	encloses talk at slow speed
* *	encloses speech in a laughing voice
bold	emphatic talk and/or loud voice
()	encloses transcriber's comments (e.g. on nonverbal communication, tone of voice, etc.)

Translations

The excerpts have been translated by a professional translator and native American English speaker. However, the analysis is based on the original Swedish version (see appendix).

Excerpts

The excerpts chosen should be seen as representative of the whole material. For every excerpt chosen, several similar examples can be found in the material. As the focus of the study is ethically sensitive, excerpts involving specific occurrences, places or people that could reveal the identity of the informants were not selected. Also, given the research subject, the material contains narratives of extreme suffering and pain on behalf of the informants and agents in the narratives. Such exceptional interview excerpts were not selected. In a few excerpts, dialectal expressions or words have been omitted to ensure the anonymity of the informants.

Methodological considerations

Emotional aspects of conducting research at a closed institution

There are important methodological issues one must take into consideration when conducting research at a closed institution, and in particular when conducting research at an institution for children and adolescents. The emotional aspects of living for a period of time with girls and young women who have been traumatized by their experiences in life, should not be hidden but discussed as an important aspect of the research process.

In discussions of the emotional aspect of conducting qualitative research, Gilbert (2001, b) argues that although the emphasis has been on how emotions can negatively affect the research process we must acknowledge the fact that research is experienced not only intellectually but also emotionally, and we should also discuss the constructive and enriching

aspects of these emotions. The traditional sociological view that emotions should be suppressed in order to prevent them from affecting the research process, i.e. to keep it objective, is not fruitful for the process itself. Rather, the awareness and openness to discussing issues concerning emotions in research can benefit the outcome. The research process depends on the researcher's personal positioning (Harris & Huntington, 2001), and therefore cannot be regarded as objective. According to Gilbert (2001, a)

we qualitative researchers no longer see ourselves as objective observers chronicling the stories of others. We do not simply observe a phenomenon and report on it. Rather, we recognize that what we observe and experience as reality is filtered through various lenses, with the emotional context being one of these filters (p. 148).

Used constructively, emotions do not have to be barriers to good research, but can enrich it (Wincup, 2001).

To conduct research at a closed institution means being in touch with people who are psychologically not doing well. At a youth detention home these people are adolescents. It can be difficult to be confronted as a researcher with serious situations, suffering and pain one may feel one cannot influence or change. During the field study at The Garden there were suicide attempts, self destructiveness in the form of the young women cutting themselves and of violence towards the staff. I found that in order to handle the emotionally challenging aspects of the research project, a proper balance between closeness and distance was vital. As described by Riessman (1997) in her articles about conducting research on infertility in India (cf. Riessman, 2001), being a white American woman with children of her own, I too struggled with aspects of closeness and distance. I was a (reasonably young) woman from a middle class, academic home, with a Stockholm dialect, who has not experienced serious psychosocial problems or what the LVU law calls "socially destructive behavior". My Stockholm upbringing, and university education set me apart from both the young women taken into compulsory care and the staff and created a distance that was difficult to bridge. My interest in social problems, my background as a crisis line volunteer and board member of the Stockholm women's shelter (Alla Kvinnors Hus) and my empathy and concern for the troubled young women created a personal closeness that for both professional and personal reasons had to be used fruitfully to avoid "blindness". To find the balance between distance and closeness and thereby to deal with the emotional aspect in a constructive way, was of great importance to me.

Entry to the field

To obtain the young women's acceptance, and thereby gain entry to the field, my strategy was to live at the institution and take part in the daily activities. To do this, not as an observer, but as a participant, means being present from early morning until late at night, to accept invitations to play volleyball, help the young women with their homework, look at pictures of boyfriends, do woodworking and much more. My presence however, entailed some problems. Several of the young women were disturbed by me being there, and it took some of them weeks to accept my presence. During one visit at the school, one young woman was so disturbed by my presence in the classroom that I could not stay without creating chaos. However, taking an active part in the daily life at the institution gave me the possibility to understand the institution as a whole, instead of only the parts in focus for the study. The everyday presence created closeness but took time. Without the acceptance of the young women, which was a result of this closeness, it would have been difficult to gain access to the staff, and I would not have obtained an understanding of the research field as a whole.

Furthermore, I was an 'outsider' allowed entrance to a traditionally closed arena, and this contributed to greater openness. For the young women, my presence offered an opportunity to talk about difficult issues at the focus group sessions, an opportunity they enjoyed. My presence gave the staff a researcher at their workplace (a fact that was often talked about in a positive tone of voice) and a possibility to reflect on and discuss matters of importance to them not often otherwise discussed.

In the field

As a researcher at a closed institution I had to have a clear idea about time, and the purpose of being there. The fact that my time at the institution was limited had to be clear to all involved parties. To be a researcher, and perhaps even more importantly, to be a human being among young women with psychosocial problems, matters. Impressions are not erased like footprints on a sandy beach but can leave permanent impressions on both the young people in taken into compulsory care and on the staff. As a researcher, my main priority was to not become yet another adult who became important and then disappeared out of their lives. This balance between distance and closeness is connected to the aspect of time. One solution was to have a well planned research plan of which the time aspect is an important part.

To leave The Garden for two weeks at a time during the field study and to have a temporary apartment outside of the institution during one time

period of the field study was important for me and for the study. There was a need for distance and the two weeks away from the institution and the living quarters outside of the institution played an important role. Being too emotionally involved would have resulted in a field study too emotionally difficult to conduct which, in turn, could have led to a "blindness" that might have affected the project in a negative way.

As a researcher, I had to find a balance between the structure of the field study and the flexibility towards it. The research field made great demands on structure and stability both concerning the research plan and on me as a researcher. Yet I had to be prepared to diverge from the plan. At a youth detention home, it is the daily activities, the young people in compulsory care and the staff who set the agenda, not the researcher. As a researcher at The Garden I had to follow the daily activities, the tasks of the staff, and the mind set and moods of the young women. On several occasions I was left on my own with the tape recorder, without the young women ever showing up. The explanations I was given was that they "were not up for it". All I could do was to hope for them to be "up for it" another day!

Numerous time schedules ended up not working out and many plans of the day were much too optimistic. It was then important to stick to the original research plan, but at the same time be prepared to be flexible in relation to it. Our ideas about the ideal frames of an interview were not always possible to carry through. Our wishes concerning the venue for the interview could often not be granted, the time of the interview sometimes had to be changed, the interviews were occasionally interrupted and the fact that the staff were constantly on call in case something happened had an impact on the interview situation.

The role of the researcher

Another aspect of the concept of structure during the field study was the role of the researcher. In addition to creating a sense of closeness between informants and researcher, there was a need for distance. I did not want to 'go native', or have blurry or unclear boundaries concerning my role and goal of being at The Garden. I was not to become a counsellor to the young women in compulsory care or to the staff or to become another member of the staff. In addition to being a researcher, I had to be a fellow human being.

I believe it is important to hold on to the boundaries of ones research role in spite of situations that may come up which could question and test the boundaries one has set for oneself. For instance, a situation occurred when a young woman made a practical joke at The Garden. I observed the

situation, but did not tell the staff about my knowledge of the joke. This led to the staff becoming somewhat upset and asking me for an explanation. I explained, as I had done before, that I was there as researchers and not as staff, and that telling on a young woman if her actions did not involve something that would be seriously harmful to her or to others, was not part of my role as a researcher. On similar terms, I could not help a young woman who wanted to get in touch with a journalist at a local newspaper.

Another important aspect concerning emotions involved when conducting research at a closed institution is that the researcher conducting the field study should not be left alone or feel as if he or she is left alone on the field. I believe it is to the advantage of the research project if the field study at a closed institution can be conducted as a *teamwork* with three positions: one person is in the field collecting the data, the second person acts as backup for the person in the field but also with access to the field and a third person, in the form of academic supervisor available outside of the field. For our project, this meant that I was in the field during the entire field study period. Margareta Hydén, academic supervisor and project director came to The Garden for two days every two weeks, and Karin Aronsson was available outside of the field as my second academic supervisor and co-researcher in the project. I believe the combination of the three people's different closeness and distance to the field was advantageous to the project.

To conduct research about sensitive issues demands reflection. There is a need for self-reflection to assure that the private thinking of us as researchers does not cloud the understanding of the informants (Gilbert, 2001 a). It was also important to us to think about how we as researchers could give something back to our informants. To be sensitive to the needs of the staff, was an important part of our research plan. At the encouragement of the staff, I wrote and handed out a special report to the young women who participated in the focus groups about my experience of the focus group sessions. After the period of the field study, Margareta Hydén and I have made sure to participate on important days such as the last day of school before the summer break and the last day of school before Christmas.²⁰ We have also conducted seminars with the staff involved in the project.

²⁰ These are important days for both the young women in compulsory care and the staff. Flowers and the grades for the semester are handed out, some of the young women perform (sing, dance, play theatre, etc.) and the staff and the young women eat a specially prepared meal together. This is also a day when scholarships are handed out to young women who have previously lived at The Garden who have done something which, according to the staff, is worthy of recognition.

Qualitative interviews

It is the research problem that must determine the most suitable method of investigation (Riessman, 1993). I was interested in studying how the staff and the young women construct meaning through language. A key objective in acquiring data was to gain some understanding of the problems, concerns and dilemmas encountered when working with young women who have been victims of sexual abuse. A qualitative approach to data collection and analysis was therefore selected. The analysis of the data collected was inductive in the sense that it developed out of the patterns and processes found in the interviews with the resident assistants and the young women in compulsory care. Consequently, there was no predetermined framework for analyzing the interviews prior to the first interview being conducted. Instead, the framework developed throughout the research process in response to the data generated.

The aim of the interviews was to understand what dilemmas, problems and concerns the resident assistants might face when working with young women who have been victims of sexual abuse. The interviews were semi-structured and reflexive in form, the aim of the interview was made clear in each new interview situation. The structure of the interviews was based on an interview form developed by Margareta Hydén (2000), to be used when talking about sensitive issues with informants in vulnerable situations. The structure of the interview is aimed at allowing the informants to speak freely and create a conversational environment that opens up for narratives. The responsibility of the researcher, the importance of an interview frame, and the interactive aspect of the interview are central to Hydén's interview form. Interviews are to be seen as a form of social interaction.

I understand the interviews as developing out of a dialogical process (Mishler, 1986), i.e. as emerging out of a negotiated co-produced situation, context dependent and located in a specific time and place (Mishler, 1999). A qualitative interview therefore cannot be taken out of its context, and must be analyzed both with regard to the interviewer and the interviewee. During a second interview with a young recently employed resident assistant, she suddenly burst out, "I have not thought about these issues before, but my God, they are crucial to us!" Our questions and the interview situation gave her further insight into her work as a resident assistant.

The role of the interviewers (Carolina Överlien and Margareta Hydén) was to be active without being intrusive. We were attentive as listeners, thereby deepening the interview situation (Hydén, 1992), but we did not share our own personal experiences and feelings. We did not talk of our own ideas of

right and wrong, not did we try to name the informants' feelings or experiences. Instead we tried to create an environment where a multitude of thoughts and feelings could be expressed freely. At the same time, our aim was to be clear about the purpose of the interview. To be clear about the aim of the interview and give explicit information about what we as researchers are interested in knowing, is crucial to the reliability of the answers of the informants (Haavind, 1987).

Riessman (1997) points out the importance of allowing time for the respondents to answer. In allowing them to elaborate on an issue important to them, the interviewer may have to be completely quiet. Furthermore, Riessman (1993) argues that the interviews should not be seen as false or true. They can not be regarded as mirroring the "real world" but "they are constructed, creatively authored, rhetorical, replete with assumption, and interpretive" (p.5). Along the same lines, Silverman (1993) argues that interviews should not be seen as reports on reality, but as displays.

Ethical considerations

When interviewing staff and young women at a youth detention home about sexual abuse and other difficult experiences, a great deal of attention must be given to issues regarding ethics.

The recommendations of The Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSFR), were applied. The HSFR recommendations include the importance of the participants' giving their consent to participate in the study without feeling pressured. All the participants, staff and young women alike were repeatedly informed that their participation was voluntary and could be terminated at any time. In the case of the young women, we obtained permission from their parents. We are aware that the staff may have felt that participation was expected of them, since the research project was approved by SiS, by the institution director, and by their immediate supervisors. However, staff members were informed that the questions were designed for the research project alone. Moreover, I tried not to ally myself with the local management, thereby avoiding the staff seeing the researchers as sent out by their superiors. The staff were informed about the study and could individually decide whether or not they wanted to participate. The staff who chose to participate were then asked to sign a letter of consent which again explained the purpose of the study and that the participant could, at any time, choose to withdraw.

The focus groups conducted call for special attention regarding ethical aspects. I argue this on two grounds. All the topics discussed could be

considered sensitive for these young women. Discussing beauty and body image may not seem sensitive, but for young women who engage in self destructive behavior and may have been involved in prostitution, this topic can certainly be sensitive. Another reason to be especially concerned about ethical aspects was that the young women several times expressed their sense of powerlessness in view of the fact that their lives had been and continued to be investigated and reported on in records and at meetings. They wanted to know if the researcher was a journalist, how and in what form the interview would be reported, who would listen to the tapes, and where the tapes would be kept. One young woman decided not to participate after the first focus group, since she felt she could not trust my guarantee that what was recorded would not be printed in the newspapers. This young woman had experience of journalists and newspapers which was very painful and upsetting to her.

Before each group the young women were told that:

- their participation in the group was optional and that they could choose to leave the room or choose not to comment on things they did not wish to speak about,
- what was said in the group would stay in the group,
- only myself and my two academic supervisors would listen to the tapes,
- the staff would not be informed about what the young women said during the group sessions, but that they, like everyone else who was interested, could choose to read the report once it was published,
- their real names would not be mentioned in the final report and all details that might reveal their identity would be removed.

The moderator has great responsibility in keeping a focus group ethical. I had to control the group, set limits, and know when to back off to avoid over-disclosure, personal insults and aggressive behavior. When talking about sensitive topics, there is a risk of over-disclosure. The staff were also concerned about over-disclosure and feared that the young women would be upset afterwards, and that this would have a negative impact on their work. However, the young women only talked a few times about personal experiences that were painful and upsetting for them. At all other times, they spoke in more general terms still keeping up a lively and active discussion. With a “stimuli material”, the moderator can keep the discussions as close to the material as possible, thereby reducing the risk of over-disclosure.

IV

SUMMARIES OF STUDIES

Study I: The Focus Group Method as an In-depth Method? – Young Women Talking About Sexuality

Carolina Överlien, Karin Aronsson and Margareta Hydén

The aim of the present investigation was to discuss the use of the focus group method when talking to troubled young women about high-involvement issues. Historically, the focus group method has often been employed for market research and for what can be called low-involvement topics (e.g. preferred cigarette brand) in contrast to high-involvement topics (e.g. promotion of safe sex). The present focus group study is concerned with something that would be seen *a priori* as a high involvement topic, that is, the explicit views of young people on the body and on sexual politics.

Although other researchers have conducted focus groups about high-involvement issues, using the method in the context of a youth detention home makes our study unique, to our knowledge, and adds new information about the use of focus groups. The material we gathered was rich and allowed for discursive micro-analyses and not only a general analysis of themes. Few studies have examined conversation in great detail, analysing the type of discursive devices employed or the moderator's role as gatekeeper in relation to pre-disclosures or disclosures by the participants. Our detailed analysis of discursive devices using the focus group method will hopefully increase our understanding of how it is methodologically possible to conduct research with marginalized and traditionally un-heard groups.

Our data analysis shows that in the present setting the focus group method was *non-intrusive* in several ways. First, the young women who had chosen to take part in the discussions could choose whether or not to participate actively. Secondly, the present method was also non-intrusive in that the participants could choose to talk about quite impersonal topics. Thirdly, the participants had the option of employing linguistically impersonal constructions and other devices to distance themselves from what was said by speaking from a third person perspective.

Traditionally, interviews have been seen as ways of eliciting information from informants, and the interviewer's role has been seen as relatively

passive. Increasingly, researchers have realized the dialogical nature of interviewing. Interview narratives are basically dialogical rather than monologic affairs (Kvale, 1995; Mishler, 1986; Potter, 1996). Responses can partly be seen as the collaborative product of two participants, the interviewee and the interviewer. In the present interviews, such co-construction was obviously not only a possible building block between the interviewee and the interviewer, but also among the different interviewees themselves. *Co-construction of meaning* is not only one potential aspect of the focus method but indeed an integral part of it.

The focus group method can be seen to invite disagreement in that it evokes competing ideas about the phenomena at issue. *Arguments as co-construction of meaning* is a rich arena for exploring the local construction of meaning (Antaki, 1994). In disputes, focus group participants may explore areas where they disagree. By the same token, two or more participants may align in seeing matters in a way that opposes the opinions of one or more other coparticipant(s). This offers the researcher a unique possibility of understanding how views are expressed, constructed and defended in the focus groups (Wilkinson, 1998).

Another finding was that in the group discussions the participants themselves seemed to be aware of potentially threatening aspects of saying too much in a group context. At times, group members positioned themselves as co-moderators, assisting the moderator in keeping overly sensitive issues at bay. Thus, a form of *group self-censorship* could be observed.

While we are not claiming that the present descriptions are ‘deeper’ or more accurate than other descriptions of the everyday life of the troubled young women at a detention home, we do not think we would have achieved ‘deeper’ insights by conducting individual interviews. If anything, we would therefore paradoxically claim that the focus group probably provided us with a more natural and less intrusive format than individual interviews, and they yielded a rich and varied set of data, in which individual opinions were formed in dialogue with others.

However, one of the drawbacks of the present method is that it puts great demands on the moderator. The discussion may generate highly sensitive issues and s/he has to be qualified to handle the situations. It is therefore not a “quick and easy” research method. If misused, the present types of interviews with high-involvement topics could, at worst, lead to intimidating questions from the co-participants during and after the interviews. It is therefore important that the moderator monitors the discussion closely.

One remaining question is what implications our focus group findings have for the young women in compulsory care at the detention home. We were initially invited by the staff members in order to assist them in rethinking the situation of the young women, and it is now our hope that our analyses may perhaps, at least to some extent, help the young women become heard and seen in a somewhat new way, and the staff to discuss therapeutic goals from a slightly different perspective. It is our belief that a continuous dialogue on communication and treatment is badly needed in a situation where troubled young women are held in detention for unspecified lengths of time, and where daily conversations are the primary means of providing both treatment and assessment.

Study II: Work Identity at Stake – The Power of Sexual Abuse Stories in the World of Youth Compulsory Care

Carolina Överlien and Margareta Hydén

This article deals with the issues of narrative power in the highly controversial area of sexual abuse stories. At the same time as the narratives can be read as “power stories”, they are “work identity stories”. By focusing on the power aspects, we analyze how the particular work identities of the narrators – the resident assistants at the institution – are enacted and lived through in a narrative form and as accountable patterns of meaning. Specifically, we analyze the performative, destabilized struggle related to the work identity of the staff at the detention home, as they tell about their encounters with young women victims of sexual abuse. The respondents frequently expressed themselves in narrative forms often neatly following the well-known Labovian (1972) structure. Only in exceptional cases were our questions met with straightforward answers, that could have been used, for example, for the listing of thematic codable categories. In response to our questions we got lengthy, complex stories, often introduced by suggestive utterances like “I once knew of a girl....”

For this article, four stories were selected and analyzed. These stories are only samples of the numerous stories the staff members at The Garden told us during our stay. The narratives we were told can be divided into two categories – narratives of ‘must be told stories’ and ‘cannot be told stories’, and narratives of ‘cannot be told stories’ (cf. O’Connor, 2002). The first category could be accompanied by a positive power flow (Plummer, 1995), but also by a negative and oppressive power flow and could then be very dangerous. Moreover, if the young woman was not “ready to carry her own story”, it was viewed as one that could seriously

harm her. The stories in this category consequently have a dual function in the sense that they are ascribed an important role in the development of the young woman while at the same time it is clear that they can be dangerous and destructive to her. Once it has been told, the young woman or the resident assistants no longer have control over the story or the consequences of letting it out into the open. In this kind of story, the teller has the position of reteller. The staff are supposed to be able to sense whether or not a story is a 'must be told story' or a 'cannot be told story' on the basis of their instincts and experience. The resident assistants are responsible for the story coming out, but a certain amount of responsibility is also put on the young woman who "is sending out signals" and "wanting to be asked". The young woman is also expected to be the one who initiates talk of abuse if she feels the need.

In the second kind of narratives, the teller has the position of agent or counter-agent. These are what Plummer (1995) calls "personal experience stories". The stories are harmful to both the young woman and the staff member who is cast in the role of perpetrator as she re-lives her experience of sexual abuse. In their potential to harm the young woman and to threaten the work identity of the resident assistant, these can be thought of as 'cannot be told stories'. The fact that they were told caused both the young woman and the resident assistants harm. The resident assistants are not in control of the story, but in their role as resident assistants they are still responsible for the young women. Some responsibility for the harmful story is also given to the previous abusive experiences of the young woman.

Because of the potentially dangerous aspect of sexual abuse stories, resident assistants avoid talking about sexual abuse with the young women. The responsibility of knowing whether or not to elicit a story and the uncertainty of being able to "make everything all right" makes talking about sexual abuse one of the great dilemmas of working as a resident assistant at The Garden.

For the staff members to tell narratives of sexual abuse stories can be seen as a way of coping with this difficult situation and spreading the responsibility for a task so large it is difficult to handle. The staff members' narratives about sexual abuse stories play a key role in the everyday work of the resident assistants and are ascribed a high status. The narratives are all recognized from the past, and therefore they serve as bridges from staff member to staff member, from past to present. They serve as important components of the collective work identity for the resident assistants at The Garden and can therefore be thought of as 'must be told stories'.

Furthermore, the narrative has the function of self-aggrandizement (Oliviera 1999) in that it presents the teller as competent in skills such as reading signs of sexual abuse, interpreting destructive behavior, and dealing with difficult and disturbed young women.

With their central role in the discourse of the resident assistants at The Garden, the staff members' narratives emerge in different situations and on various occasions such as at meetings, in lunchrooms and in interviews with researchers. Once told, the narrative has the power to live its own life, it 'floats around' in the everyday discourse at the detention home. Details are excluded, included and altered, but the narratives are still easily recognized by the staff members. They are not analyzed, discussed, or used for learning purposes. Neither the teller nor the listener is expected to question the narrative.

When analyzing the power aspect of the numerous narratives told in the interviews with the staff, a series of related questions emerged about the power-related aspects of the telling of the sexual abuse stories, socially situated in the institutional context of compulsory care. The first set of questions concerns the *status of the stories*, the second set of questions concerns the *control of the stories*, and the last set of questions concerns the *responsibility for the stories*. In this article we have argued that stories of sexual abuse are seen by the resident assistants at The Garden as both stories that 'must be told' and that 'cannot be told' and that knowing how to handle this is a dilemma for the staff members. The *status* of the stories is therefore ambiguous. Once the story is out, neither listener nor teller is in charge of it, and *control* is lost. Because they are responsible for the well being of the young women, the staff members are expected to be able to control whether a story will cause harm or heal. Because of the ambiguous status of stories and the absence of control, the responsibility is a burden too heavy to carry. *Responsibility* for the story is therefore also placed with the young women and their abusive background. Consequently, the power of sexual abuse stories puts the work identity of the resident assistants at stake.

Study III: Applying Narrative Analysis to the Process of Confirming or Disregarding Cases of Suspected Sexual Abuse

Margareta Hydén and Carolina Överlien

This article deals with the problem of confirming or disregarding cases of suspected sexual abuse- a form of spoken interaction of a considerable degree of difficulty. To confirm or disregard a case of suspected sexual

abuse is a demanding task for any helping professional, to a large extent owing to the victim's difficulties talking about what happened. Establishing the criteria for the category "sexual abuse" is a complex and extensive process. The disclosure is surrounded by shame and taboos, fears and confusion.

In this article, we use narrative analysis to understand the ways in which the vulnerability of girls and young women, ages 13-21, at the detention home The Garden, is conceived and articulated into specific sets of ideas and rhetorical domains, attitudes and practices, which combine to provide a definition of the "sexually abused girl or young woman". Our focus of attention is the process leading up to the definition of sexual abuse.

Victims of sexual abuse are not ideal tellers. In the words of Harvey and Herman (1994), *they seem to have lost authority over their memories*. On the one hand, traumatized people remember too much; on the other hand they remember too little. They suffer from flashbacks and other kinds of intrusive memories (Herman 1992; Hydén 1992; Walker 1994). They are depressed and self-blaming (Finkelhor 1979), fragments of the story maybe missing, or sometimes whole selections (Briere 1992). As in all telling, in the telling of sexual abuse, a teller's basic line of activity is to *compose an impression* of herself. She projects a definition of who she is and makes claims about herself and the world that she tests and negotiates in social interaction. In order to manage, the teller must be successful in convincing the listener that what she says has happened has really happened - and in the way she says. How she succeeds is of great importance for whether she and her problems will be understood. Her ability to present a convincing narrative could be decisive to her being understood as a sexually abused girl - or not at all.

At The Garden, the girl's dilemma also becomes the staff member's dilemma. If the ideal situation for a staff member had been to meet a girl who has a coherent story to tell and to have a well-defined category of "sexual abused girl or young woman" to use for forming an opinion of whether or not each girl belongs to that category, the task would have been reasonably easy. Victims of sexual abuse, however, rarely have coherent stories to tell. Correspondingly, there is no such thing as a coherent story of sexual abuse on the part of the listener.

The prevailing dramaturgical discipline at The Garden called for facts in the girls' accounts of what they had been exposed to. Many of the girls could not satisfy these demands. The dramaturgical contingencies in question concerned the ability to present a coherent account and the ability

to act calmly and firmly. Most of the girls did the opposite. They produced incongruent narratives and presented them with a considerable degree of emotionality. Thus framed, it was difficult to form an opinion of the reasonableness of what the girls had to tell. Considerable efforts were made to determine “whether or not we have a case”, but the efforts yielded poor return. To let the answer to the question of whether or not they had a case rests on the given facts proved unsuccessful. All the same, the staff members never gave up their efforts to find out facts about any alleged sexual abuse. However, what we found to be the underlying determining factor for establishing an act as sexual abuse was whether or not the act involved a person *who was defined as a victim*. By using the “victim” in the sense of setting or background, and the “act” in the sense of “action”, one could say that in the staff members’ accounts, the victim was the determiner of the act. First the victimization had to be established, and then the abusive act followed.

A core issue in the process was an evaluation of *the credibility of the alleged abused girl*. The highest degree of credibility was attributed to girls displaying a vulnerability in their life-styles in general, i.e. drug abuse. The next degree of credibility was associated with negotiations and joint constructions of what had happened, and was therefore dependent on the alleged victim’s dramaturgical discipline and skills. The lowest degree of credibility was associated with the alleged victim’s lack of dramaturgical discipline and the absence of signs of victimization.

It was important to evaluate the credibility of the victim as a teller as was the evaluation of *the degree of consent* to the sexual act that was reflected in the telling. Different degrees of consent also formed a hierarchical order. No consent, that is forced sex -including the man’s violence - had the highest degree of credibility. The second degree of credibility was associated with some acceptance or consent, that is “negotiated sex”, such as prostitution or when the man takes advantage of a girl’s weak position. The third degree of consent, full consent, which is sexual desire, is a tentative category.

The unintended result of this process was that many of the girls’ narratives were never confirmed. One way out of this dilemma, we would argue, is to confirm the girls’ narratives – as narratives. This means not primarily focusing on the facts, but treating the narrative as a narrative – and confirming the narrative as a narrative. It means trying to identify the story line and the protagonists. It should also include an awareness and understanding of the teller’s position by learning more about how vulnerability can be expressed and also masked and handled in a power

relation such as the one between a member of the staff and a girl or young woman in compulsory care.

Adopting a narrative approach to the issues of confirming or disregarding incidents of suspected sexual abuse means adopting an understanding of the process of disclosure. A narrative approach to the assessment processes in social work in general, and to the assessment of the victims of sexual abuse in particular, does not necessarily make this demanding task easier, but different. A narrative approach means displacement of the focus in our efforts to assess children's and young people's needs from developing well-defined categories of social problems and then work on the basis of them to developing ways of listening to children and young people and allowing their narratives to provide a point of departure for the social work. Because many children and teenagers in trouble are not ideal tellers in that they are not able to deliver coherent stories, one central task for the social worker would be to try to help with the healing of the broken connection between the personal and the social aspects of life caused by traumatic experiences or other disadvantageous circumstances .

Study IV: Innocent Girls or Active Young Women? Negotiating Sexual Agency at a Detention Home

Carolina Överlien

This article examines how staff members at a Swedish detention home and the young women placed there talk about sexuality, and what implications this talk has for the young women's sexual agency. The analysis shows that staff members at the detention home construct the young women as sexually innocent, while the young women construct themselves as sexual agents. By comparing and contrasting how the staff and the young women living at The Garden talk about sexuality, I show in this paper how by talking about the young women as children, the staff neglect to acknowledge their situatedness and sexual agency in spite of the fact that the young women see themselves as sexual agents.

The period of detention at The Garden was construed by the staff as a "time out" from sexuality *per se*. The young women living at The Garden were not, for instance, allowed to have romantic/sexual relations with each other, and romantic/sexual relations with people outside of the institution were not encouraged. Boyfriends/girlfriends were not, for instance, allowed to

stay overnight, a practice not uncommon in Swedish families with teenagers. There was, to borrow Fine's phrase (1988), a *missing discourse of desire*. Male sexuality was seen as having negative or even harmful implication for the young women. In discussions among female staff members, male sexuality was often described as volcanic, on the verge of eruption. Because of this view of male sexuality as dangerous, female staff members at times assumed a self ascribed role as controllers of male staff and their conduct. In fact, they were actually cast as controllers by the male staff themselves.

The institutional context and the staff members' pictures of the sexuality of the young women situate the young women. However, a woman's situation is not just outside of her but within her, as Moi (1999) argues. When a young woman is sent to The Garden, she has her previous experience, a personality, an ethnicity, a nationality, and many other things that situate her, i.e. make her the person she is. This situatedness gives her an infinite number of choices, an infinite number of ways living her life as well as posing a number of limitations. The young women are clearly telling us that having a female body means being restricted, for example by having to "put up with too much" and taking responsibility for any abuse inflicted upon them. However, when the young women are defined as children, their number of choices and ways of living their lives are denied, *as well as* their possibilities for exploring the limitations surrounding living with a female body. The staff do not use the situatedness of the young women as their point of departure, but believe that the young women will be able to start over again through regression or a period of "rest". Kristin, Cecilia and Magdalena show us that living with a female body can mean being in control and having sexual agency. But the staff's denial of the young women's situatedness effectively also denies them their sexual agency. Their female bodies become their destiny rather than their situation, and by seeing the female body as destiny, sexual agency is made impossible.

Why do the staff members redefine young women as four-to-five-year-old children and what are the implications of this? The analysis in this paper presents two possible answers to the first question. By talking about the young women as children, the staff can be seen as constructing a zone free from sexuality. Sex becomes a non-issue. In fact, The Garden was built only for young women, and has always been an all female institution, precisely with the intention of avoiding the problematic issue of sexuality. Male staff, often only a few years older than the young women, are seen as a potential threats to the young women. They are asked to keep all bodily contact to a minimum and female staff take on the role of controllers of

male staff and their conduct. In a zone free from sexuality, male staff can also become non-sexual beings. The young women are protected from what is seen as harmful male sexuality, and the male staff members are protected from the dysfunctional sexuality of the young women. In a work environment where male staff live together with young women in compulsory care 24 hours a day, the construction of young women into asexual children can be seen as a way of coping with the dilemma of physical contact in an institutional context.

The analyses in this paper shows that a second possible explanation as to why staff members redefine young women four-to-five-year-old children is that they want to give them a chance to “start over again”. The staff members at the detention home see it as their responsibility to help overly sexualized young women regain control of their bodies. The innocence lost because of destructive sexuality has to be restored. By talking about the young women as asexual children and prescribing “a rest” from sexuality, the staff hope to give the young women the opportunity to ‘rebuild’ a healthy, ‘normal’ sexuality to replace their dysfunctional and inappropriate sexuality. By starting over, new norms can be learned and alternative behavior modelled.

Study V: “You want to have done your living if you know what I mean” – Young incarcerated Swedish women speak about motherhood

Carolina Överlien and Margareta Hydén

This paper focuses on how incarcerated young women at a youth detention home talk about motherhood and having children and the rift between themselves and the staff, who primarily think of the young women as abused children. As Phoenix (1991) argues, teenagers and pregnancies are often described from an ‘outsider’ perspective, when in fact young women have their own views about motherhood which often do not accord with this outside perspective. There is a need for studies that directly explore young women’s own thoughts about motherhood. This paper demonstrates how the young women position themselves as future mothers and how their thoughts about children are positioned in the meta-cultural discourse about when and under what circumstances to have children as a Swedish woman.

Thoughts about motherhood and having children were clearly of great importance to the young women at The Garden whereas in the interviews with the staff, the young women were talked about as asexual children and as victims of sexual abuse. Childbearing and motherhood were not

discussed in treatment. With regard to the young women who are on birth control pills, the staff help administrate the pills every day, and condoms are distributed when a young woman is allowed to leave the institution for holidays or weekends. The *risk* of pregnancy was talked about by the staff and treated as a problem from which the young women needed to be protected; in turn, this was a problem with a solution.

The meta-cultural discourse regarding childbearing in Sweden today instructs young women not to have children too early. As a young women, one is expected to get an education, have a stable income and a stable relationship (but not necessarily marriage) before thinking about having a child. There are correct times and conditions for having children and a certain order in which things should be experienced. However, part of this discourse is also to want children when the time is right. The study shows that the young women at The Garden express views consistent with this cultural meta-discourse. We argue that an arena needs to be created at the detention home where problematized young women can address non-problematic issues such as positive aspects of childbearing that allows for a sense of agency.

V

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Olga and Jean are both in their 20s and are participants in the Swedish Channel 5 reality show, *Big Brother*. In *Big Brother*, a number of young people are locked into a house for several days. Everything they say and do is recorded on camera and shown on TV every night. After a night of partying, Olga goes to bed drunk, and wakes up the next morning with butter all over her body and food in her underwear. She does not remember any of what has happened. However, the cameras have recorded the incident, and show it on TV the same night. A viewer reports the incident to the police, claiming that Olga has been sexually abused. In the media numerous articles are published naming the incident as sexual abuse. A major sponsor of Channel 5 withdraws its funding. Channel 5's control room claim they did not see the incident on their monitors (or may not have defined what they saw on their screens as sexual abuse).

A few days later, Olga and Jean are interviewed on the morning news. When Olga is asked to give her version of what has happened, she says that "it was just a bad joke", that she has "known Jean for years and knows he didn't mean it", and that "the media has blown this way out of proportion". She says she has been violated (sw. "kränkt") by the media, not by Jean. The media have made her into a victim, which she is certainly not, she claims forcefully. She defines the incident as a practical joke (sw. "bus") not as sexual abuse. Viewers chatting on the Channel 5's website agree. One person chatting claims that "the person who reported this to the police cannot have been to a bar in a very long time, or he would have to report everyone in the bar".

After the interview with Olga and Jean, a Swedish relationship counsellor, Helene Backman, is interviewed. She says that although one must respect Olga's opinion, she would still define the incident as a violation (sw. "kränkning"), and that it is completely unacceptable.

The example of Olga and Jean is an example of how highly controversial the area of sexual abuse is. On the one hand, I agree with Plummer (1995) who argues that there has been an outburst of sexual stories in society. Talking about difficult experiences such as sexual abuse has become considered a form of self cleansing, as if healing was a direct consequence of talking. Since women are in the majority as survivors of sexual abuse, the talking business has to a large extent been women's business. Telling stories about sexual abuse on television, "speak-outs", books and articles,

women's shelters and crisis lines have all played an important role in a shift from silence to a better understanding of women's suffering as a consequence of male exploitation. Such stories constituted the basis for the development of the women's liberation movement in the 1970s. The first step, acknowledging to oneself the abuse, was followed by a second step, sharing this with others. The sharing of these stories formed a sense of belonging, of solidarity, among women.

On the other hand, as this study shows, the issue of talking about sexual abuse and other difficult experiences is complex. The focus of the study was on the staff and young women in compulsory care at a youth detention home, The Garden, and on their talk about sexuality and sexual abuse, as well as their talk about how to talk about sexual abuse. A youth detention home can be seen as a secure environment with psychotherapists, medical doctors, and assistants employed to listen and handle difficult experiences. However, the different views of *how to talk* about sexual abuse, *whether to talk* about sexual abuse, *when to talk* and to *whom*, as well as questions about whether there is a *need to talk*, makes the issue of talking about sexual abuse multi-layered and contradictory. Views diverged from department to department, from individual to individual, and no common institutional policy or knowledgebase could be found. A number of assistants at the detention home argue that although it is important for the young women to talk, they should talk to someone else, preferably one of the psychologists or the nurse at the institution, who are better trained and who do not interact with the young women on a daily basis. Another group of staff members argue that talking should not be a priority at all, because of the staff members' limited knowledge of how to talk about complex issues, especially sexual abuse. "I am not one of those great talkers" as Pia, one of the most recently employed resident assistants, put it when she explained why she does not invite conversations about abuse. Birgitta, another assistant, explained that her reluctance to talk about sexual abuse has to do with her role as a resident assistant. As a resident assistant she is expected to give care. A caregiver is expected not only to receive talk, but to be able to "make everything all right", and to be able to "take on" painful stories. Since Birgitta feels she is unable to do this, she avoids eliciting sexual abuse stories. Assistant Mimi does not believe that those living with the young women on a daily basis should talk to them about sexual abuse. "If we lifted the lid off completely, I think the kid might explode", she said. According to her, talk about sexual abuse is more likely to harm than to heal. Another assistant does not see talk about sexual abuse as a problem, since, according to him, they seldom treat young women who are sexual abuse victims. "We have had one or two through the years",

Frank said. Others hold the contradictory view that every young woman at the institution has at one time or the other been a victim of sexual abuse.

The written guidelines of the institution encourage the staff to confront the young women with suspicions of sexual abuse, if the suspicions are well grounded. However, the staff members often avoid doing so. As I have shown in this dissertation, there are many explanations for this. The institution lacks a common policy and knowledge base. Numerous staff members feel they don't have sufficient education. To listen to stories about suffering and pain generates strong emotions. The staff member may not feel he/she can "take on" (Sw: "härbergera") painful stories, in particular if he/she does not feel he/she has anyone to talk to and "unload" on if necessary. Although the staff members align themselves with the modern discourse of storytelling as an important tool in the process of healing, in their everyday work, they are confronted with the fact that storytelling can result in harm and destruction. Their experience has proven to them that if they "let the lid off completely", the young women could actually "explode". Furthermore, the staff are focused on *acting*, as well as *listening*. If they listen to a story of sexual abuse but feel they do not have the tools to *act* in response to the story, they may wish they had chosen not to encourage the girl to tell it.

To be able to talk about difficult issues, to find words about perhaps devastating experiences is one of the goals of the treatment at The Garden. In order to reach this goal, it is important that the assessment of these experiences is correct. This study shows that the staff's assessments about of sexual abuse are not reliable enough for them to act in a correct way. The staff members therefore need knowledge about what it means to have the listeners' position *as well* as the tellers position. This knowledge must include confrontation with a person's own values and attitudes, provide a deeper understanding of the complex process of defining a social problem such as sexual abuse, and give insight into how vulnerability can be expressed in a power situation such as the one between the staff and the young women. Since many of the resident assistants find talking about sexual abuse difficult, they state that they leave it up to the young women to talk about it if they feel a need to do so. I argue that the responsibility of deciding whether or not to talk about sexual abuse should be shifted from the young women to the staff. Furthermore, the staff need to acknowledge the young women in their care not only as victimized children, but also as situated young women and as agents of their own lives.

In the excerpt used as an epigraph to this dissertation, 17-year-old Katrin expresses her admiration of women who can "take care of life". Those are

the women who gain Katrin's respect. My personal interpretation would be that someone who "takes care of life" care for others, respects and has concern for others as well as oneself, enjoys life to the fullest and has the ability to share this with others. What does it mean for Katrin to "take care of life"? This is an important question to answer for an institution that aims at helping the young women to a better life. Platforms need to be created where the young women's voices are listened to and where both problematic and less problematic issues that allow for a sense of agency can be talked about.

As the number of young women in LVU care is rising, more research focused on this group of marginalized women needs to be conducted. What are the implication of the fact that youth detention homes were built for young men, and now must provide care for young women as well? Methods developed for young men are not necessarily applicable to young women. These question must be further investigated. The young women's own voices need to be listened to and used to guide policymakers and social workers who come into contact with the young women. The research community needs to discuss the definition of sexual abuse. We must further explore the reasons why a child or an adult may or may not disclose. When and if they do disclose, to whom and in what way do they do so? In line with Spaccarelli (1994), I believe we need to assess the disclosure-related stress victims of sexual abuse experience. We must also deepen our understanding of what it means to be a listener. More research is also needed in the area of gender norms and the Swedish welfare system.

'Dare to ask!' is a popular slogan spread among social workers, teachers and health personnel today, as if the question itself and the answer to it would solve the problem. My hope is that this study shows that the issue of talking about sexual abuse and other difficult experiences is far more complex than 'daring to ask'.

VI

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VII

APPENDIX

Excerpt from epigraph in the original Swedish form

- Katrin I mansvärlden (.) inför männen (.) så måste nog en kvinna arbeta göra karriär för att dom ska för att männen ska fatta att (.) **wow** hon kan också hon är lika duktig som oss då får hon respekt (.) men om man säger inför oss tjejer
- Carolina Ja
- Katrin Så skulle man se va duktig hon är
- Carolina Ja
- Katrin Då har man respekten för att hon kan och är duktig
- Carolina Ja
- Katrin Att hon kan ta hand om (.) livet och så

Excerpts from study I in their original Swedish form

(1) Participants: Helen (H), Katrin (K), Cecilia (C), young women living at the detention home, and the moderator, Carolina Överlien (CÖ)

- 1 H Det finns ju också vissa som har det så svårt också (.) typ om det är en tjej (.) som har det så svårt (.) oche: (.) hon inte är accepterad liksom att göra (.) gre:jer (.)
- 2 CÖ Mm
- 3 H typ jag menar i Sverige (.) så: jag vet inte (.) så jag- man backar mycket för killar typ
- 4 CÖ Mm
- 5 H när man är utländsk tjej
- 6 CÖ Mm
- 7 H För man far (.) illa mycket

(2) Participants: Magdalena (M), Katrin (K), Cecilia (C), Anette (A), young women living at the detention home, and the moderator, Carolina Överlien (CÖ)

- 1 CÖ Men alkoholen var du inne lite på här (.) att den spelar roll=
- 2 C Jo det är klart (.) om man inte kan dricka sig måttligt berusad liksom (.) lite salongs berusad

- 3 CÖ Mm
- 4 C (.) utan måste bli så däre: äckligt full du vet det ser ju vidrigt ut tycker jag det ser ju vidrigt ut [tycker jag
- 5 K [Ja det ser ju inte snyggt ut om en tjej går och raglar in med en vinare
- 6 M Nä
- 7 K i handen ba ö:
- 8 C Ramlar in i någon rabatt
- 9 K Ja (.) mm
- 10 C och kjolen bara glider upp hit
- 11 K Ja: (skratt) (.) Banden glider ner ba o:
- 12 C Och så kanske hon inte vet var gränsen går och typ kanske börjar strula med någon därinne
- 13 CÖ Mm
- 14 C så vill hon säga nej sen så går det inte
- 15 CÖ Så om hon har druckit så är det liksom (.) lite mer hennes fel då får hon skylla sig lite mer själv
- 16 C [Ja jag tycker det
- 17 K [Ja

(3) Participants: Camilla (C), Mimmi (M), Lena (L), Anna (A), young women living at the detention home, and the moderator, Carolina Överlien (CÖ)

- 1 C Och jag menar (.) jag måste ju kunna lämna bort barnet barnet måste kunna lära sig och vara (.) själv också (.) för det är ju då dom blir starka (pause) det är ju då det finns chans för dom att klara sig
- 2 CÖ Mm
- 3 C [för
- 4 M [och man ska vara ärlig mot sina barn
- 5 L Men det gäller ju också att uppfostra
- 6 C Nä men (.) Lena kolla här ((irriterat)) jag är ingen dålig förälder om jag lämnar bort mitt barn [på dagis
- 7 L [men det är inte det jag säger men du säger ju=
- 8 C Det gör (.) alla nästan i dag=
- 9 L [Ja
- 10 M [Ja precis
- 11 L Mm och hur många är det inte elva åringar som går omkring och röker och tror att dom är så jävla coola

(4) Participants: Camilla (C), Mimmi (M), Lena (L), Anna (A), young women living at the detention home, and the moderator, Carolina Överlien (CÖ)

- 1 L Men många är emot mig för att jag inte tycker om (.) vissa invandrare (.) eller nästan alla (.) är jag emot (.) och då blir man kallad för rasist bara för det (.) men det tycker inte jag är något rasistiskt (.)
- 2 CÖ Nej
- 3 L utan det är yttrandefrihet
- 4 C Men du har ju varit det
- 5 L Ja jag har varit (.) aktiv
- 6 M >∞Ja men det behöver vi inte ta upp nu ∞ <

(5) Participants: Helen (H), Katrin (K), Cecilia (C), young women living at the detention home, and the moderator, Carolina Överlien (CÖ)

- 1 K Jag kan inte säga att jag är kvinnlig heller
- 2 C Jo jag tycker du är jätte kvinnlig
- 3 H Mm tycker jag med
- ... Three turns not included
- 5 K Hur kan ni tycka jag är kvinnlig
- 6 C Jag tycker du är kvinnlig
- 7 H Ja (.)
- 8 C Typ
- 9 H du pratar (.) moget och sånt oche:
- 10 C Men det har inte med saken att göra men liksom (.) jag vet inte (.) du är (.) kvinnlig (skratt)
- 11 K Det är ju kul att höra (ler) jag tycker liksom att (.) jag är pojk-flicka och går runt i hipp hopp kläder och o:
- 12 C Ja men det spelar ju ingen roll om du försöker dölja det på något sätt du verkar ändå va: (.) kvinnlig så på något sätt
- 13 K Det var nästan lite småkul att höra
- 14 CÖ Ja (.) känner du dig stolt då
- 15 K Ja (skratt)
- 16 CÖ Ja (.) det känns liksom positivt
- 17 K Ja (skratt)

Excerpts from study II in their original Swedish form

(1) Participants: Tina, a female resident assistant (T), and Carolina Överlien (CÖ)

- 1 T eller med en tjej som inte vill berätta det hade vi en tjej för flera år sen som heller absolut inte ville berätta och hon hade varit här ett och ett halvt år och vi visste (.) jag visste
- 2 CÖ Ja
- 3 T att hon hade varit utsatt (.) och då gick (.) Nina hette den som var kvinnlig kontaktman (.) då gick hon hos Sven (.) några gånger för handledning (.) för då vet man ju inte så här ska man gå på dom eller ej då
- 4 CÖ Men du jag måste bara få fråga hur visste du det stod det [någonstans
- 5 T [nej
- 6 CÖ [hade det varit rättegång
- 7 T [nej (.) hon (.) sov med kläderna på (.) träningsoverall (.) sov ovanpå täcket (.) skulle alltså snabbt ur sängen (.) möjligtvis överkastet hade hon på sig men inte täcket
- 8 CÖ Mm
- 9 T Eh (.) och det hade hon tusen förklaringar på varför hon gjorde så hon flagade så mycket i huden (.) så hon var rädd att huden skulle ramla av så det var bäst att ha träningsoveralls byxorna på
- 10 CÖ Jaha
- 11 T Ja alltså det var (paus) det var alltså massor av sånna där tecken med duschande och (.) ja massa sånna där
- 12 CÖ Så det var massa tecken som gjorde att du visste då
- 13 T Ja (.) och sen förstås att i hennes utredning så var det så där att (.) ja hon hade då hon lydde inte föräldrarna och hon hade gått hemifrån (.) hon tillsammans med några andra flickor fanns i en sån där lägenhet som (.) nån snuskgubbe hade nej men nån sån där (.) gubbe man kunde misstänka för nåt kanske göra nåt mot flickorna men man hade aldrig haft något belägg
- 14 CÖ Nej
- 15 T dom fanns alltid i hans lägenhet för det fick man kröka och där fick man (.) lite sprit och sånt va (.) och där var det liksom stans svåra eller så här va (.) så att man kan tänka sig när jag

- läser det så kan ju jag ha mina funderingar och tankar då va
kring det då va
- 16 CÖ Just det
- 17 T men henne frågade vi ju då (.) eller sa att vi förstod (.) så där
den kvinnliga kontakt personen hon kolsvart i två månader
efteråt och jag med då va
- 18 CÖ Jaha
- 19 T för jag var med då va
- 20 CÖ Ni sa till henne att ni misstänkte det
- 21 T Ja för oss ville hon ju (.) psykologiskt sätt så ville hon ju döda
oss då (.) när vi sa att vi visste
- 22 CÖ Mm
- 23 T Eh (.) men sen så småningom så kom det ju mer och mer och
hon berättade mer och mer
- 24 CÖ Mm
- 25 T och sen (.) men hon var aldrig så där direkt nästan va (.) men
hon blev väldigt trygg med oss sen när hon visste att vi visste så

(2) Participants: Tina, a female resident assistant (T), and Carolina
Överlien (CÖ)

- 1 T Jättesvårt alltså (.) för jag vet en flicka (.) som så att säga
personalen gjorde ju det man trodde var rätt va (.) att hon
berättade
- 2 CÖ Mm
- 3 T För att hon la ju fram (.) tecken och sa halva saker när hon
kom tillbaka från (.) när hon hade varit hemma på besök va (.)
så hon hon ville ju att man skulle fråga
- 4 CÖ Mm
- 5 T Och det är ju jättesvårt när det väl kommer fram då
- 6 CÖ Mm
- 7 T Fast hon sa såna här grejer som att tillslut var det att hon
ville göra ett gravtest efter att hon varit hemma (.) och man
visste att hon bara varit hemma hos mamma och pappa och
inte varit ute på någonting (.) så att det var ju det var ju så att
(.) när hon kom hem (.) så skickade pappa ut mamma med
hunden (.) och så tog han ner henne i en jordkällare (.) och
utnyttjade henne sexuellt (.) så det var under ganska så
groteska former alltså (.) och det är klart att detta hade säkert
varit i hur många år som helst och (.) allt sånt där va (.)
därför att jag tror att (.) när hon berättade detta och det blev ju

rättegång och allt sånt där men alltså hon (.) hon blev ju helt (.) förkastad av sin familj förstås va syskonen avsa sig all (.) all kontakt och hamnade på mental sjukhus och jag tror att hon har tagit livet av sig idag (paus) så att (paus) det är jättesvårt (paus) det är jättesvårt

(3) Participants: Patrick, a male resident assistant (P), and Carolina Överlien (CÖ)

- 1 P vi hade ju en tjej som det blev rättegång på för hon hota så väldigt (.) hon hade varit utsatt något fruktansvärt det (.) är det mesta jag varit med om här hon hade varit (paus) jag hon är ju jag vet inte vad som hänt med henne nu men hon blev dömd till slutet psykiatrisk vård men hon hade varit (.) våldtagen av sina bröder och gubbar och alla möjliga sen hon var liten alltså
- 2 CÖ Mm
- 3 P och henne fick vi ju hålla på och avskilja och avskilja och avskilja
- 4 CÖ Mm
- 5 P det var som om hon återupprepade de här sakerna genom att vi män skulle enna (.) ligga på henne och
- 6 CÖ Mm
- 7 P hålla henne och (.) sådär
- 8 CÖ Mm
- 9 P det var lite otäckt
- 10 CÖ Ja
- 11 P Faktiskt
- 12 CÖ det förstår jag
- 13 P Ja (.) men det fattar man ju inte förrän det är (.) jag var rätt ny då och man fattade inte det förrän man fick distans till det att hon återupplevde de här sakerna

(4) Participants: Patrick, a male resident assistant (P), and Margareta Hydén (MH)

P Jag kan ta en annan situation för den är rätt så bra att ta här nu då just med henne då (.) när hon kommer tillbaka från en avvikning och det var jag och en till som jobbade (.) det var manlig personal (.) på kvällen (.) och så var det manlig jour så vi var tre i tjänst (.) och (.) hon var full och så vidare hon hade varit nere och (.) gått på gatan i staden och gått på gatan så dom hade massa pengar med sig (paus) och hon (.) fick ligga på sjukhemmet och spydde i sängkläderna flera gånger så här körde fingrarna i halsen då va (.) men till slut då (.) så klädde hon av sig kläderna och låg naken där inne då va och skrevade liksom och sa (.) kom igen här så ska ni få knulla (.) bara betala för er

MH Mm

P och då fick vi (.) vi fick (.) vi hade inga (skratt) vi fick alltså tvinga på henne kläderna sen fick vi bära in henne i avskiljningen då (.) och där höll hon på hela natten (.) men det var också en återupprepning

Excerpts from study III in their original Swedish form

(1) Participants: Margareta Hydén (MH), Carolina Överlien (CÖ), Tim (T), male resident assistant, Frank (F), male resident assistant, Jill (J), female resident assistant, Elisabeth (E), female resident assistant, Daniela (D), female resident assistant

1 F Jaja den är ju bred

2 T Det är allt från kränkningar (.) till fysiska övergrepp till psykiska övergrepp och

3 J Jag menar om hon inte kan känna sig trygg i sitt eget hem så är det ju nån form av övergrepp (.) både mamman och pappan kan jag tänka (.) om inte hon sett till att hon får det om det nu är så obehagligt med pappan

4 M Så du tänker det att det är för dig ett övergrepp ett starkt tecken på [att nån inte är trygg hemma

5 J [Det behöver ju inte vara ett sexuellt övergrepp men jag menar

6 T Nej precis

7 M Man ska kunna vara trygg

- 8 J Han äcklar ju henne (.) så jag tror nog han har ju berättat enna att han har (.) du vet kramat extra hårt och du vet när det har varit såna här normala (.) pappa dotter grejer så har det liksom känts obehagligt
- 9 F Hon berättar när dom pussar godnatt och såna grejer va (.) tungan
- 10 E Han pussar med tungan (.) som kärlek som kille och tjej gör=
- 11 J Ja=
- 12 E Det gör pappan med henne=
- 13 M Det har hon berättat=
- 14 F Ja det har hon berättat hon är **väldigt** öppen den här tjejen va
- 15 M Men när du säger att jag tror inte att det är något som har hänt vad är det för händelse som finns i
- 16 F Det är ingen händelse utan det är ju Malin

(2) Participants: Carolina Överlien (CÖ), Thomas (T), male resident assistant

- 1 T Och det här du sa att om man fyller dom med alkohol så är det ett övergrepp (.) alltså vad har du för syn på vad ett sexuellt övergrepp är
- 2 C Om tjejen inte vill vara med på det som görs och sen (.) som vipratade omtidigare idag en man som är 45 och har sex kanske då med nån som är 14 15 (.) då tycker jag är att det är ett övergrepp också (.) det tycker jag (.) men sen (.) erbjuder dom sig någonting att dom får knark för att ha sex så är det ändå ett övergrepp i sig (.) för då nyttjar man ett behov eller ett tillfälle i sig och då (.) då tycker jag nog det är ett övergrepp
- 3 T Mm
- 4 C När man tar tillfällena i akt (.) precis som med fulla tjejer (.) dom är inte medvetan om vad som händer och då då kan man inte säga att man (.) går med på det som händer heller (.) då är man inte medveten om det (.) jag menar det är så många saker som är sexuella övergrepp (.) tycker jag i alla fall (.) vi vet att tjejerna som är här måste betala på alla möjliga sätt där ute

(3) Participants: Carolina Överlien (CÖ), Tina (T), female resident assistant, Erika (E), female resident assistant, Mimmi (M), female resident

assistant, Birgitta (B), female resident assistant Thomas (T), male resident assistant, Patrick (P), male resident assistant.

- 1 T Vissa av flickorna kanske inte tycker det är övergrepp när de ligger med en karl
- 2 C Nej
- 3 T [om det är tre gubbar
- 4 P Men då är det ju inte det enligt lagen (.) fast det är ju det ändå för henne för hon blir ju sämre i psyket för varje gång så
- 5 M För våra töser hur de mår så är det ju ett övergrepp
- 6 E Om man tar Kristin exempelvis som ett exempel som (.) bara (.) vill ha någon som tycker om henne som (.) så när hon var ute sist då med den hära (.) vad hette han (.) killen Jonny eller vad hette han
- 7 To Mm
- 8 E då (.) hon säljer ju sin kropp på ett sätt för att hon ska få nån som tycker om henne det är också ett=
- 9 P Fast det är ändå [en skillnad där
- 10 T [övergrepp

(4) Participants: Carolina Överlien (CÖ), Tim (T), male resident assistant, Frank (F), male resident assistant, Jill (J), female resident assistant, Elisabeth (E), female resident assistant, Daniela (D), female resident assistant

- 1 C Och då tänker jag på en annan flicka Laura som bodde här (.) som jag kommer ihåg när jag kom hit så blev jag (.) informerad så att säga att hon hade varit utsatt för sexuella övergrepp
- 2 T Hon **anmälde** (.) sin pappa för övergrepp
- 3 J och pappan dog
- 4 C Ja just det
- 5 J Så det blev aldrig utrett
- 6 C Nej
- 7 J om det var övergrepp eller inte övergrepp
- 8 C och då tänker jag (.) jag fick den uppfattningen när jag kom att ni (.) rätt säkra på att det här hade hänt (.) vad det så
- 9 J Ja
- 10 E Ja (.) det har vi aldrig tvivlat på
- 11 C och vad var det som gjorde att ni inte tvivlade (.) när det gäller henne

- 12 E (Paus) det var en bra fråga (.) Laura i sig själv är ju en helt annan person (.) och det hon säger (.) det rör sig alltid runt fakta och (.) ärliga (.) ärlighet (.) hon framstår som en ärlig tjej helt enkelt

Excerpts from study IV in their original Swedish form

(1) Participants: Nils, a male resident assistant, and Carolina Överlien (CÖ)

- 1 N Många av flickorna kommer väldigt ofta och ställer sig väldigt nära mig och vill hålla om mig och så vidare och så vidare (.) Anna Andersson är ju en person som varit väldigt mycket sån (.) men utifrån dom telefonsamtal som hela tiden anspelar på sex (.) utifrån hennes situation i skolan som väldigt mycket handlar om sex (.) alla hennes för hon är ju någonstans i kiss och bajs åldern alltså (.) och hela tiden är det detta som är det centrala i hennes hjärna (.) hon någonstans fått mig att (.) ja (.) ta bort henne på ett fint sätt då va (.) när hon kommer=
- 2 CÖ När hon kommer nära dig
- 3 N Ja visst när hon kom i början så kunde jag låta henne stå och hänga så och hålla armen runt mig så va och hon skulle sitta väldigt nära och så och det har jag inte bekymmer med (.) men utifrån att jag idag har kunnat se att hon nästan blivit mer och mer (.) centralt i det det är liksom det som finns i hennes huvud hela tiden (.) så har jag tyckt att på något sätt så finns det kanske andra saker än bara detta och det blir ju barnsligt och larvigt till slut

(2) Participants: Thomas, a male resident assistant (T), and Carolina Överlien (CÖ)

- 1 CÖ För jag tänkte på en sån situation som just du var inblandad i när när den där dan när Charlotta var så ledsen och satt på kontoret och du satt bakom=
- 2 T Ja just det=
- 3 CÖ Och hon pratade om att hon inte ville (.) leva och tårarna rann
- 4 T Mm
- 5 CÖ Hon var ledsen och så (.) jag tänkte på i den situationen du valde att sitta kvar på andra sidan skrivbordet ni hade skrivbordet emellan er så att säga (.) var det någonting som du (.) en genomtänkt strategi från din sida att inte gå runt och ta i henne lägga armen runt henne och säga lilla gumman

- liksom så (.) det ska nog gå bra det här eller förstår då
- 6 T Ja jag förstår
- 7 CÖ Jag funderade lite på vad du tänkte i den situationen
- 8 T Jag tror det är enklare om man har diskussionen på den nivån som det ändå var (.) det är enklare om man sitter en bit ifrån annars blir det (.) lite (.) kanske pluttenttit (.) och det är enklare om man sitter och diskuterar för annars blir det mer (.) eh det är klart att det blir känsloladdat i alla fall
- 9 CÖ Mm
- 10 T För henne är det kanske (.) ja jag vet inte riktigt (.) men jag känner att det är (.) det var jag ville sitta så eller det blev så
- 11 CÖ Ja (.) ja
- 12 T Men nästa gång kanske man sätter sig jämte henne (.) mer (.) men då är det enklare hennes tankar kan skena iväg på något annat och hon kanske (.) känner att hon vill ha en kram som stöttning eller vad som helst men (.) det kan bli så fel också tror jag

(3) Participants: Tina, a female resident assistant (T), and Carolina Överlien (CÖ)

- 1 T Jag vet en annan flicka som vi hade (.) som var 17 eller 18 år (.) hon tog av sig (.) och då (.) precis i den stunden då var hon 4-5 år
- 2 CÖ Ja ja
- 3 T Hon var alltså manekänga för pappa
- 4 CÖ Mm
- 5 T Hon ville få bekräftelsen
- 6 CÖ Mm
- 7 T Hon ville vara lilla prinsessan
- 8 CÖ Så det var inget sexuellt utspel
- 9 T Nej (.) det var mer se hur söt jag är så

(4) Participants: Peter, a male resident assistant (P), and Carolina Överlien (CÖ)

- 1 P Vi har ju en av tjejerna där nere minstingen Stina som man la stora värderingar i det här att hon har varit utsatt för sexuella övergrepp
- 2 CÖ Mm

- 3 P Där jag anser att det är en väldigt låg primärfunktion i närkontakt (.) som dom små barnen gör
- 4 CÖ Jaja hon är mer jätteomogen som du ser det
- 5 P Jätte omogen ja
- 6 CÖ Ja
- 7 P Fyra fem sex sju åringar
- 8 CÖ och inte så mycket sexuellt överhuvudtaget
- 9 P Nej nej det påvisar ju hon i klädstil hur hon pratar hur hon agerar va
- 10 CÖ Jaja
- 11 P under tiden va (.) där hon kanske är i större behov av känslor känna kroppskontakt va
- 12 CÖ Mm
- 13 P som dom små ungarna gör

(5) Participants: Kristin (K), Ella (E), and Magdalena (M), young women living at The Garden, and Carolina Överlien (CÖ)

- 1 K Man kan påverka själv och liksom om man ska utmana ödet och gå och visa upp (.) halva bröstet och hela arslet för ett killgäng som man vet är intresserade av detta
- 2 E I alla fall vet man att man **kan** inte göra det nu för tiden utan att bli kallad slampa så **fast** alla feminister säger att man **ska** kunna det du vet (.) men man **kan** inte det
- 3 M Det är bullshit
- 4 E Man måste tänka lite på
- 5 K Att inte visa upp sig som en slampa
- 6 E Det måste man i alla fall **veta** innan man har uringat till knäna (.) att det händer säkert **lättare** någonting

(6) Participants: Kristin (K), Ella (E), and Magdalena (M), young women living at The Garden, and Carolina Överlien (CÖ)

- 1 M Nej brudar tar för mycket skit liksom (.) dom står ut med allt för mycket
- 2 E Ja vi har för bra för långt tålamod
- 3 CÖ Att vi borde säga nej lite snabbare
- 4 E Ja killar missuppfattar ju
- 5 M Inte bara med sex och sånt alla grejer
- 6 E Och att man skjuter det framför sig och (paus) killar är kanske mer rakare och säger direkt om det inte passar dom (.) vi är

lite sega vi vill inte vara taskiga

7 M Vi ska vara så snälla

(7) Participants: Kristin (K), Ella (E), and Magdalena (M), young women living at The Garden, and Carolina Överlien (CÖ)

1 E Men jag kan inte säga att det är direkt negativt att kanske ha varit med många killar det behöver inte vara direkt negativt för en tjej att ha varit med många killar heller (paus) det beror på vilka killar hon har **varit** med (.) vilka hon har **valt** (.) tjejen kanske vill ha mycket sex men vill inte ta betalt för det man hon vill ha mycket sex är en vanlig ungdom hon får ju välja sina killar rätt då för att inte bli kallad hora (.) hon får vara jävligt duktig på att välja

Excerpts from study V in their original Swedish form

(1) Participants: Mimmi (M), Sara (S), Nina (N) young women living at the detention home, and the moderator, Carolina Överlien (CÖ)

5 M Ja (.) jag skulle aldrig vilja ha barn nu (.) nu har jag helt andra tankar jag har så mycket jag **vet** att jag vill både vill och kommer att göra innan jag överhuvudtaget ska tänka på att skaffa barn så

6 C Så du tänker att barnet kan hindra dig att göra allt du vill

7 M Ja det gör det ju (.) jag tänker ju inte skaffa barn och sen bli en morsa som är ute och festar och drar runt på grejer och så där

8 C Nej hurdan mamma skulle du vilja bli då

9 M Det vet jag inte jag vill vara hemma och kunna ta hand om barnet (.) man vill ju vara klar med livet så att säga att ha gjort så mycket som möjligt så man inte känner att man vill ut och göra saker och så där

(2) Participants: Cecilia (Ce), Katrin (K), young women living at the detention home, and the moderator, Carolina Överlien (CÖ)

1 Ce Nej jag kan bara utgå ifrån nej jag vill inte skaffa barn sådär huxflux och fastna I nån jävla förort och bli ensamstående mamma och dra omkring med barnvagn och så där (.) jag vill liksom (.) jag vill ha pengar så jag kan resa första och främst (.) jag tänker inte fastna och sitta där och vänta på en (.) man

- som ska komma hem
- 2 C Nej
- 3 Ce Det vill inte jag vänta på
- 4 K Det vill inte jag heller jag vill också ut och resa och kunna känna att jag är fri
- 5 Ce Inte vara beroende av någon
- 6 K Nej (.) att kanske resa med en kompis eller resa själv eller (.) gå på museum och sånt själv och liksom utforska och ha roligt va
- 7 C Mm
- 8 K Och kunna se massa grejer och uppleva massa grejer (.) och inte ha en unge med sig bakom ryggen I en sån där ryggsäck (.) och gå runt och ge den välling medan man går på ett konstmuseum eller nåt

(3) Participants: Sara (S), Nina (N) young women living at the detention home, and the moderator, Carolina Överlien (CÖ)

- 13 S Ja det har nog fått mig att tänka så (pause) om vi säger så här att om jag skulle bli gravid nu
- 14 C Mm
- 15 S Så skulle jag absolut inte kunna göra abort nu för det skulle jag aldrig kunna göra (.) och då måste jag I så fall (.) det I så fall **jag** känner det är att okej jag får väl ha dagis tills jag har gått ut skolan eller någonting sånt där du vet (.) eller så får soc eller morsan betala så länge för man får ju alltid hjälp på nåt sätt (.) och sen också känner ju jag själv att då har jag någonting att **bry mig om** (.) då har jag ett barn att ta hand om
- 16 N Exakt
- 17 S Då har man ju nåt att bry sig om då då är det ju inte så att man springer ju inte lös och (.) driver runt liksom (.) för då kan man ju inte hålla på och leva det liv jag har levt