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AN AGE OF CONSENT

Press representations of endemic sexual abuse of
young girls by Pitcairn Island men

A thesis presented in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of

Master of Arts
in
Women's Studies

at Massey University, Palmerston North,
New Zealand.

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2004

Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of press representations of Pitcairn Island women's complaints of child sexual abuse by the island's men. Press constructions of the case provide an opportunity to analyse how western society represents the alleged endemic sexual abuse of young Pitcairn girls by family and family friends. A database of 93 press reports draws on British, New Zealand and Australian newspapers and includes reports from the first mention of criminal charges in March 2001 until most of the charges had been laid against offenders in July 2003.

A dual research method combines a chronological content analysis of the whole database with a detailed discourse analysis of two reports to examine how discursive strategies categorised, minimised and normalised the Pitcairn crimes. Representations of familial/familiar sexual abuse in the Pitcairn case do not fit with stereotypical constructions of child sexual abuse as 'psychopathic' violence and 'paedophilic' stranger-danger.

This thesis shows that the press diffused the issue as one of cultural, rather than sexual, consent in order not to have to explain the contradiction-in-terms that is endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls in a respectable community. Cultural relativism undermines the credibility of the women complainants. The thesis argument is that the press finds the issue of familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls younger than 12 years of age, which is the most prevalent category of sexual abuse in society, difficult to represent.

Acknowledgements

The completion of any goal is a function of complex intersecting factors. Many people and groups have contributed to this thesis.

I thank my supervisors, Avril Bell and Lesley Patterson, for their knowledge, skills and insights that were delivered thoughtfully and with patience during the conceptualisation, development and the fruition of this work. I am also grateful for the financial support and encouragement extended to me by Massey University in the form of a Masterate Scholarship and a School Research Grant. This thesis builds upon the hard-won discipline that is academic Women's Studies at Massey University. Thank you Cathy Bray and Jenny Coleman, in particular.

Motivation came from my children in countless ways. Thank you Kester and Shelley for what you have taught me, and for demonstrating what could be accomplished through academic channels.

I thank some special friends including: Averil Duff who went more than the extra mile; Lesley Findlay in Massey University's Extramural library; Gordon Hitch for his technical support; and Lindsay Olney for empathy, proofreading skills and longer-term perspectives.

However, this thesis would have been much more laborious without my partner of 34 years who proved to be an able amanuensis during this project.

To all of you, and especially Kit, please accept my gratitude and appreciation.

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Chapter One: Representing the Pitcairn Case

There are still particular crimes committed against women that are reflective of a gender-power imbalance. As long as these imbalances exist there is every justification for being a feminist and doing something about it.

The Hon. Helen Clark, Prime Minister of New Zealand (Young, 2003)

Stories in tabloid and broadsheet newspapers may, through the language chosen, redefine child sexual abuse as a less serious, almost consensual relationship between adults ... [P]henomena, which we have termed 'gender neglect' and lexical redescription or 'textual abuse', may serve to reduce the impact of the abuse to the reader.

Goddard and Saunders (2000, pp. 44-45)

Almost 100 child sexual abuse charges have been laid against men from remote Pitcairn Island since April 2003. Imprisonment of these men could threaten the continued existence of this small community - Britain's last remaining colony in the South Pacific. In this thesis I study western newspapers' representations of the Pitcairn case of child sexual abuse. Various press reports have claimed that police investigations have uncovered a society in which girls are considered to be sexually mature at 12 years of age. However, a girls' sexual maturity is not the issue when some of the charges of sexual abuse involve crimes against toddlers and infant girls as young as three years old.

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is about the sexual abuse of girls under 16 years of age by family and family friends. I refer to both forms of abuse as 'endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls'¹. This thesis focuses on the press constructions of the Pitcairn women's allegations of child sexual abuse by Pitcairn Island men.

¹ This concept of familial/familiar sexual abuse is discussed in more detail later in this chapter (see Section 1.3).

My research question is:

How do press representations construct the issue of familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls, using the Pitcairn case, in terms of blame and consent?

In this thesis I argue that it is the ‘textual abuse’ (Goddard & Saunders, 2000) of the term *consent* that is central to an understanding of the press constructions of the Pitcairn case. I analyse how the press often constructs the whole issue of Pitcairn familial/familiar sexual abuse as a matter of collective *cultural*, rather than individual *sexual*, consent.

Three themes drawn from the press reports are relevant in this thesis. Unlike the usual media furore of unmitigated offender blame in cases of paedophilia, in the Pitcairn case, the offender blame is surprisingly mitigated and the offences are often *categorised* as rather ‘soft’ crimes. I ask what the crime is and how it is categorised. Secondly, the blame is widely *minimised* and I ask who is blamed and how the blame is spread around to minimise offender blame. Thirdly, many press reports insisted on a local Pitcairn age of consent of 12 years, despite British law and presumably Pitcairn local laws legislating an age of consent of 16 years. This claim for a local age of consent acts to *normalise* the child sexual abuse as little more than under-age sex that is ‘normal’ in Pitcairn society. To understand such normalisation, I look closely at press discourse constructing cultural, rather than sexual, consent. These three discursive strategies - categorisation, minimisation and normalisation of the Pitcairn familial/familiar sexual abuse case in terms of blame and consent - leave much unsaid, and all act to undermine the complainant women’s credibility.

In this thesis I position myself as a feminist standpoint researcher, which Ramazanoglu (2002, p.171) considers to be ‘an area of debate’ on how to produce the best understandings of the ‘relationship of feminist knowledge to women’s experiences and the realities of *gender*’ (original emphasis). Research from a feminist standpoint is concerned to identify, describe and analyse whether crimes against girls indicate and reinforce a marginalisation of female agency and rights. Bolen (2001)

says of child sexual abuse: ‘Our failure as a society ... has resulted in programs, however well-meaning, that fail to identify most victims, substantiate most identified abuse, identify most offenders, treat or punish most identified offenders, and prevent the approach of offenders’ (p. 3). A premise of this thesis is that public understandings of most child sexual abuse, as represented in the press, are often inappropriate because they are not grounded in well-researched empirical knowledge that reveals the scope of the problem. Too often newspaper reports reproduce traditional cultural, and sometimes myth-bound, perceptions of this abuse.

This chapter contextualises the Pitcairn case. Section 1.2 looks at Pitcairn society and Section 1.3 defines the Pitcairn case as crimes of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls. The conclusion to the chapter previews how the following chapters develop and contribute to the overall thesis argument and its conclusions.

1.2 The Pitcairners

The Christianity which can be credited for bringing some daily harmony to the island is also to blame for generations of hushed and hypocritical embarrassment when it was forbidden to talk about the Tahitian women. Even my grandparents’ generation was reluctant to talk about their Tahitian blood.

Christian (1999, p. 421)

On a voyage from Tahiti to the West Indies in 1789 with a cargo of breadfruit saplings, some of the crew of HMS *Bounty*, led by Fletcher Christian, mutinied and set Captain Bligh and the other crew adrift in a longboat. Nine British mutineers, with 19 Polynesians, eventually reached uninhabited Pitcairn Island, midway between New Zealand and South America, where they burned the ship to avoid discovery. Within a few years, only the mutineer John Adams, several Polynesian women and numerous children remained alive. As a ‘revered patriarch’, Adams led a ‘model society’ based on Christian principles and the Pitcairners later became a religious and romantic inspiration for the British public (Williams, 2001, p. 19). The survivors were eventually found by American whalers in 1808, and almost all today’s Pitcairners are descendants of these survivors.

Over the past two centuries, many press reports, books and movies have been produced about the swashbuckling British mutineers and their abducted Tahitian consorts who founded the Pitcairn colony in total isolation in 1789. This has created a utopian representation of a Christian society built on a famous historical bid for freedom from restrictive authority that has assumed all of the power of a romantic myth.

Britain made Pitcairn a British colony, subject to British law in 1838. The colony had an extremely liberal constitution that included votes for the women - probably the first women in the world to all gain the vote - and compulsory schooling for the children (Williams, 2001). In 1856, the Pitcairners were moved to Norfolk Island - a gift from Queen Victoria - but several families returned to Pitcairn Island after a few years. The community rejected the Church of England in favour of the Seventh Day Adventist faith in the 1880s. The Seventh Day Adventist church remains the only church on Pitcairn Island today, and, as well as having a pastor on the island, has close associations through the Pitcairn Study Centre in California that is directed by the locally influential Herbert Ford.

Although the Pitcairn population peaked at 233 during the pre-World War II era of great passenger liners bringing prosperity to the islanders, the population and economy have steadily declined ever since. With fewer and fewer visitors, and with better schooling (teenagers go to high school in New Zealand) and employment opportunities available in other places (such as New Zealand and Australia), the population was only 43 early in 2003.² The growing Auckland and Wellington community of Pitcairn Islanders that was established during the 1960s - many of whom are absentee landowners on the island - remains closely involved in island politics (Williams, 2001, p. 7). The islanders subsist on fishing, garden produce, and sub-tropical crops, and have only basic amenities. There is no tourist industry or airport. Visitors' permits are very difficult to obtain and the tiny islands are very

² In 2002, Pitcairn had a population of 46 people, of which 17 were men, 19 were women, and 10 (6 boys and 4 girls) were children under 16 years of age (United Nations, 2002). *The New Zealand Herald* (2003, September 17) reports that the 'First baby in 17 years' (a girl) was born on Pitcairn Island on 3 September 2003.

remote and inaccessible. The islanders use longboats to trade with and collect supplies from the occasional passing ships. There are few strong men to operate the longboats in the stormy Southern Ocean seas. Most of the men and women who have remained on Pitcairn and maintain the strenuous semi-subsistence lifestyle are now elderly.

1.3 Defining the issue

A significant number of the women from the small British island community in the Pacific have created an international media furore by laying official complaints, with the British and New Zealand police, of *endemic*³ *child sexual abuse*⁴ in their closely *familial*⁵ island community over many years. By June 2003, 13 Pitcairn men were being charged with almost 100 sexual crimes against children - all girls aged from three years old (*The Australian*, 2003, April 12 - report 82).⁶

The case of sexual abuse of Pitcairn girls by the men of Pitcairn Island has arisen in a community with a very isolated population of less than 50 people. Under such

³ The term 'endemic' was first used by the press to describe the child sexual abuse in this case in *The New Zealand Herald* (2001, June 30-July 1 - report 15). Bolen (2001, p. 249) says: 'Child sexual abuse is endemic within society and may be a result of the unequal power of males over females.' Most significantly, the press report of an interview with the Crown Solicitor for the Pitcairn case described the alleged crimes as 'endemic sexual abuse' (*The New Zealand Herald*, 2002, May 4 - report 26).

⁴ Throughout this study, child sexual abuse is discussed in terms of female experience, both because this particular case involves only girls as victims, and also because, as Bolen (2001, p. 249) points out, 'more generally, females are at much greater risk of such abuse by men'.

⁵ Pitcairn Islanders describe their society as 'familial' in a United Nations submission in 2003 (e.g., *The Dominion Post*, 2003, May 30 - report 89) and as 'one big family' (*Weekend Herald*, 2002, August 24-25 - report 38). I use the term *familial/familiar* child sexual abuse (MacMartin, 2002) to describe the Pitcairn crimes throughout this thesis. The Pitcairn case of familial/familiar sexual abuse contrasts with the usual media representation of child sexual abuse as stranger-danger paedophilia.

⁶ In March 2002, the Pitcairn Mayor Steve Christian spoke to a United Nations conference on decolonisation in Fiji, indicating that the islanders intended to challenge the entire legal process which was going to result in Pitcairn being tried in New Zealand under British law. By December 2002, the New Zealand Government had passed the Pitcairn Trials Bill to allow Pitcairn courts to sit on New Zealand soil, with British legal authority. This was due to the impracticalities of a Pitcairn Island trial venue when 'the overwhelming majority' of alleged victims have moved to New Zealand (Goff, 2002). The United Nations special committee paper on Pitcairn (2002) states clearly that this 'Non-Self-Governing Territory administered by the United Kingdom' is subject to British law, and considers all residents up to the age of 16 to be classed as children, according to the constitution of Pitcairn (Pitcairn Order 1970).

conditions, it is possible to consider that most residents on Pitcairn Island are related and all are very well known to each other. For this reason, I have discarded any notion of this case of sexual abuse of young girls as a crime of 'stranger danger' from an unfamiliar paedophile. Instead, I conceptualise the crimes as either 'familial' incest (where the perpetrator is quite closely related to the child) or 'familiar' child sexual abuse (where the perpetrator is very well known to the family). Either way, the abuse has been perpetuated within an environment of trust. Smith (1993, p. 21) defines 'incest' as *'sexual contact with a person considered an ineligible partner because of his blood and/or social ties (i.e., kin) to the subject and her family'* (citing Schechter & Roberge) and *'all those people from whom "the female child should expect warmth or protection and sexual distance"'* (citing Cortois) (original emphases). I use the term endemic familial/familiar child sexual abuse, or endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls,⁷ to describe the Pitcairn crimes of such 'incest', throughout the rest of this thesis.

Segal (1999, p. 131) says that 'one thing which any society never wants to acknowledge is the regular occurrence of institutionalised forms of violence and abuse by the powerful against the vulnerable, most especially when it involves the sexual abuse of men's ideologically sanctioned power over women and children inside the family'. The Pitcairn case provides an unusual opportunity to analyse how the press represents familial/familiar child sexual abuse. In this thesis, familial/familiar sexual abuse is contrasted with the stereotypical construction of violent sexual crimes against children as rare and terrifying cases of 'psychopathic' and 'paedophilic' stranger-danger.

The Pitcairn case of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls is relatively clear-cut as a gendered issue. All of the complainants are females, and all of the alleged offenders are males. Shapiro (1968) points out that there are no obvious intersections of race and class in this intimately interrelated community.

⁷ In British law, a 'young girl' is under 13 years of age (Goodyear-Smith, 1993, p. 55). The sexual abuse of young girls is of particular concern in this thesis. In New Zealand, convictions for various sex offences against girls under 12 years of age are more frequent

Pengelly (1991, p. 187) notes that defining incest as child sexual abuse places it alongside other forms of child abuse (e.g., physical and emotional abuse of children). This creates an indifference to gender because, while sexual abusers are mostly male and their victims mostly female, other child abuse research shows more equal gender ratios even when the greater female contact with children is allowed for. Because I consider the label 'incest' to be no more gender specific in its broader definition that includes all familial/familiar sexual abuse of children, I prefer to clearly specify the 'familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls' (or young girls). Such distinction is important for understanding how the press constructs the Pitcairn case in terms of what Goddard and Saunders (2000) call 'gender neglect' and 'textual abuse'. I regularly use these full descriptions of the Pitcairn crimes, to give explicit voice to women's experience in societies such as the Pitcairns and New Zealand. Western societies often prefer to use euphemisms and inadequate definitions to marginalise the problem of such familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls. In this thesis I consider how such gender neglect and textual abuse acts to perpetuate crimes of familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls by undermining the girls'/women's credibility and by silencing very explicit complaints of gendered violence.

In analysing how press representations construct endemic familial/familiar child sexual abuse, I studied a large database of press reports related to the Pitcairn case. Although the child sexual abuse is represented as consensual acts in some reports, I consider child sexual abuse always to be criminal (as it is according to British law) if the victim is a child (under 16 years of age according to British, New Zealand and Pitcairn law).

In this thesis my focus is on how the press constructs the issue in terms of offender and other blame, and sexual and cultural consent. As Bolen (2001) notes 'child sexual abuse cannot survive without an aura of denial that continues to permeate society' (p. 182). The press plays a role that can act to deny or reduce offender blame and minimise the criminality of the offences. It does this by clouding the issues of

than convictions concerning males or females of any other age group, according to government statistics (New Zealand, Ministry of Justice, 2002).

sexual consent and by reinforcing patriarchal and other hetero-normative values and gender stereotypes. While this thesis is not a study of the Pitcairners' sexual practices, it is relevant to our understanding of our own sexual culture and how our culture justifies and perpetuates familial/familiar sexual abuse. I ask how the press constructs the 'facts' of the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls in the Pitcairn case and identify discursive strategies (Potter, 1996) and interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, 1996) that attribute blame and consent. However, I am particularly interested in whether such press representations act to silence the whole issue of familial/familiar child sexual abuse in 'respectable communities' such as New Zealand society.

I began thinking about the Pitcairn case in August 2002 when I read one of the lengthy feature articles which forms part of my database of 93 press reports. This press report gave some insight into the press representation of the facts of the Pitcairn Island women's complaints of sexual violation as children, particularly through a press interview with a man under suspicion as one of the sexual offenders, who admitted that he had had sexual relations with girls as an adult. What interested me as a woman was that, while this man was likely to be charged, he also freely admitted having adult sex with young girls. Of further interest was how the press report sustained a sense of balanced neutrality. The press both defended and proscribed the alleged⁸ offenders, not by asking them to deny the charges, but by representing all sorts of circumstances to mitigate and spread the blame for the endemic familial/familiar child sexual abuse.

Who, in the press, was representing the sexually abused women and girls? I could find little support for the sort of prosecution case which would have been expected when there is such a wide empirical knowledge about familial abuse after more than three decades of feminist and other research into gendered violence against women and girls. On the contrary, I found a wealth of arguments that mitigated the blame for

⁸ Under Westminster legal systems which operates in the United Kingdom (and Pitcairn Island), Australia and New Zealand, 'alleged crimes' refers to pre-trial status. The press *has* to use the term 'alleged'. I seldom use the term because the Pitcairn men apparently acknowledge their crimes, and only challenge the relevance of British law in this case.

the alleged perpetrators. If the press reports were thought of as a 'trial-by-media', first appearances were that it was a travesty of justice.

Does the press shift the blame away from individual offenders in any direction possible, including onto the victims, other women and the authorities? Edwards and Potter (1992, p. 159) argue that the press 'spreads accountability by dissolving agency into social actions' between the offenders and others. Such 'deletion of male agency' is common practice in social scientific accounts of child sexual abuse (Pengelly, 1991, p. 196). It undermines the girls'/women's complaints. Does this process diffuse the 'familial' aspect of endemic child sexual abuse? Does the press find it easier to redefine and reconstruct the issue of widespread endemic familial/familiar child sexual abuse according to stereotypes of abuse as rare and abnormal psychopathic paedophiles?

1.4 Thesis overview

In this chapter I have identified the Pitcairn case as a representation of widespread, endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls (often young girls) by the adult males of a widely respected community with a strong British heritage. The Pitcairn case certainly challenges popular stereotypes of child sexual abuse as rare stranger-danger attacks from deviant paedophiles. Central to this thesis is the argument that the press finds the issue of familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls under 12 or 13 years of age (and before puberty) problematic and difficult to represent. I analyse how and why the Pitcairn child sexual abuse is categorised, minimised and normalised as consensual, in order to better understand how western society and its press respond to the issue of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls.

In Chapter Two, I contextualise the thesis in the empirical knowledge base about familial/familiar child sexual abuse. I outline some of the myth-bound theories that have been used by the law, the media and social sciences to explain child sexual abuse, particularly the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls. The most prevalent sexual abuse – that of young girls under 12 years of age – is usually

categorised, minimised and normalised in terms of acceptable family heterosexuality rather than as paedophilic violence.

Chapter Three looks at the database of 93 press reports that represented the Pitcairn case between March 2001 and July 2003. I identify these three important discursive strategies of categorisation, minimisation and normalisation of familial sexual abuse in the representations of the Pitcairn crimes and select a combination of two suitable methods of analysis.

Chapters Four and Five describe the chronological content analysis and detailed discourse analysis respectively, tabulate the results and present the research findings. The three discursive strategies are used for two different discursive processes: distinct categorisation of cultural consent in the early reports, and diffusion by vague formulations of the issue in later reports.

Chapter Six concludes the thesis with a feminist standpoint discussion of the findings, and answers the research question. I then and suggest further research around the ongoing Pitcairn case, in terms of the overall thesis argument that the press has difficulty representing the issue of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls in an otherwise respectable community.

Chapter Two: Representations of Familial Sexual Abuse:

A Literature Review

What has become obvious during the last 100 years is that the development of the knowledge and theoretical base of child sexual abuse is inimitably tied to society's willingness to know the truth about itself. While many researchers may wish to consider their research apolitical, it is also obvious that in an area of research so laden with societal values and societal self-perception, all research is political. Although few researchers probably enjoy the current fiery atmosphere surrounding the development of the knowledge base of child sexual abuse, it is part of the inherited legacy and will probably remain so for some time to come. Each new advance in the knowledge base of child sexual abuse places a greater burden of truth upon society.

Bolen (2001, p. 38)

2.1 Introduction

This thesis examines the press representations of the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of Pitcairn girls by the men of Pitcairn Island. Chapter One outlined the context of the Pitcairn case. In this chapter I identify legal, media and sociological theories that contextualise this thesis about the familial/familiar abuse of girls, and discuss the empirical evidence of abuse in contemporary societies. A goal of this chapter is to contrast this empirical knowledge with the often myth-bound theories of child sexual abuse. The chapter concludes with a discussion about feminist research into crimes of gendered violence, particularly research concerning press representations of such crimes.

In this thesis I argue that the press constructs the issue of familial abuse by drawing upon stereotypes and myths about child sexual abuse. In this chapter I identify theories of child sexual abuse that perpetuate these myths. Firstly, I look at legal and psychological categorisation of the familial child sexual abuse as 'situational' and 'non-paedophilic' (e.g., an approach taken by Cossins, 1999), and discuss official

statistics for the sexual abuse of young girls in New Zealand. Secondly, I turn to the dichotomisation of child sexual abuse as sex or violence (Atmore, 1991) and how that may minimise recognition of crimes of endemic familial/familiar child sexual abuse. Finally, I explore gendered issues of blame and consent for sexual abuse in terms of hetero-normative discourses and discursive strategies, particularly of coercive heterosexuality (Gavey, 1989), meaningful sexual consent (MacMartin, 2002) and women's credibility concerning complaints of sexual abuse (Gavey & Gow, 2001).

2.2 Myths and theories of child sexual abuse

In all the storm of words about child sexual abuse ... [why] is there evident in political, professional and journalistic writings, such a curious absence of discussion on why abuse occurs? The answer should come as no surprise to feminists; it enables an avoidance of the most glaring feature of child sexual abuse: it is something that, overwhelmingly, men do to children. The men come from every social class, and from all kinds of families and cultures; they are brothers, uncles, babysitters, friends, strangers, grandfathers, stepfathers and fathers.

MacLeod and Saraga (1988, pp. 16-17)

Bolen (2001, pp. 23-24) argues that, after a revival of interest in the issue of child sexual abuse in the 1960s and 1970s, the late 1980s and 1990s have seen a backlash against unequivocally recognising and explicitly naming the familial/familiar abuse of young girls (Bolen, 2001, pp. 23-24). Influential explanations of child sexual abuse include psychoanalytic theory, family dysfunction theory and libertarian theory, along with a feminist approach to understanding child sexual abuse as a social issue. However, some of these theories of child sexual abuse are powerfully influenced by deeply inculcated Biblical and classical (e.g., Oedipal) traditions, reproducing mythical constructions of abuse that cannot adequately explain the empirical evidence of familial/familiar abuse (Scott et al., 1991).

Freud developed the *psychoanalytic* theory of child sexual abuse, originally suggesting that widespread hysteria amongst adult women was usually due to childhood sexual abuse. However, under professional pressure, he repudiated this theory for his 'Oedipal complex' theory, in which young girls' penis envy meant that

they merely fantasised incestuous relations with father-figures (Bolen, 2001, pp. 13-20). For many years, it was believed that child sexual abuse did not exist except in women's hysterical fantasies. When provable cases were eventually indisputably identified, the blame was then placed on the naturally seductive nature of young girls. This would appear to be early evidence of a social resistance to, or inability to accept, familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls. Still in circulation today, this psychoanalytic interpretation, combining Oedipal and seduction theories, remained the dominant conceptualisation of child sexual abuse until the 1970s (Bolen, 2001, p. 246).

Currently, the most widely accepted theory to explain child sexual abuse is *family dysfunction* (or functional) theory (Bolen, 2001, pp. 31-32, 153-154). This approach that locates

child sexual abuse in 'problem families', dominated lay and professional discourse and achieved the status of common sense. Its main attribute, certainly not logic, is the comfort it affords to the establishment and the great general public. It calms the collective anxiety about the 'family' which erupts ... when the reality of sexual abuse of children within families emerges.

MacLeod and Saraga (1998, p. 17)

Family dysfunction theory became popular in the 1970s, drawing on general systems theory to implicate all family members in the ongoing abuse, including the victims and their mothers. Victims were seen to receive secondary gratification or benefits from the sexual relationship, and mothers were considered pivotal to allowing and perpetuating such family power dynamics. Like psychoanalytic theory, early family theory retained a strong women-blaming element, distancing the male offender from individual moral responsibility for such child sexual abuse. The result was that daughters and mothers seldom reported crimes if they involved family, friends and acquaintances. While there have been a number of changes to this theory, it remains popular among professionals.

The *libertarian* perspective represents an approach that attempted to completely eliminate any attributions of blame from child-adult sexuality.

The libertarian view is that there is nothing inherently harmful or problematic about child-adult sexual relations; it is the way childhood is constructed within a society that sets up a problem/panic where none need

exist. If knowledge was available and guilt about sex abolished, children would not be traumatised by 'consensual sexual activity', would be empowered to say no to 'unwanted sexual contacts', and presumably, since this is not explicit, sexual liberation would have stopped adults from wanting to have sex with unwilling children.

MacLeod and Saraga (1988, p. 26)

MacLeod and Saraga (1988) consider that two aspects of such a libertarian discourse underpin problems in finding strategies for the prevention of child sexual abuse. Firstly, that 'it is intervention rather than abuse which causes trauma'; and secondly, that 'children can participate willingly in sexual activity with adults - indeed they desire it' (ibid., p. 25). These ideas that underpin utopian libertarianism are important for understanding press representations of the Pitcairn case.

Another significant theory of child sexual abuse introduced prior to the 1980s was provided by feminists who considered the problem of child sexual abuse to be societal and widespread (Bolen, 2001, p. 247; Brownmiller, 1976). Sexual abuse was considered characteristic of a patriarchal society that legitimised a wide variety of gendered abuses because males were socialised to feel entitled to sexual access to females, especially dependent females. Feminist theory vigorously rejected any idea that the victim or mother were in any way morally responsible in such a patriarchal power structure, and considered that the blame had to remain entirely with the offending men. Feminist theory contributed towards raising awareness of the effects of patriarchal social norms, and of the implicit need for legal and political change. While this position received considerable support in most of the literature that I reviewed, because society is implicated in the widespread familial sexual abuse as a patriarchally gendered and familial problem, public opposition to the identification of abuse as a social issue is often vehement (Nava, 1988; Atmore, 1996). Political and professional acceptance of this feminist theory has been steady but very slow (Bolen, 2001).

The prevailing popular conceptualisation of familial child sexual abuse comes primarily from family dysfunction theory, with support from psychoanalytic theory, often with a strong anti-feminist backlash that means that many popular misconceptions about abuse remain widespread (Bolen, 2001, p. 247). Empirical

research provides a very different account of child abuse as a social problem of immense proportions. Bolen (2001, p. 249) summarises the empirical research findings to show that child sexual abuse is endemic within society. This is the result of the unequal power of males over females, so that females are at much greater risk of abuse than males, and males are at much greater risk to offend than females. Bolen argues that children are at high risk of abuse by both intrafamilial and extrafamilial males and that child sexual abuse is primarily heterosexual, almost all of which is perpetrated by males against females. Bolen provides an important American literature review of the current empirical knowledge base of interdisciplinary research into child sexual abuse. She explores how popular conceptualisations influence decision-making in government, law enforcement, medicine, mental health and social policy.

2.3 Legal categorisation and the prevalence of familial abuse

Psychological theories of child sex offenders and ‘good’ and ‘bad’ ‘paedosexuality’ ... have typically distinguished between two types ... The most widely accepted terminology is that of Groth and his associates which paints a picture of child sex offenders as having either deviant sexual proclivities or lifestyle problems: ‘fixated’ offenders are said to exhibit a primary or exclusive sexual attraction to male children (usually from adolescence), while ‘regressed’ offenders exhibit a sexual attraction to both women and children, but do not exhibit a sexual attraction to children until stressful situations arise in adulthood.

Cossins (1999, p. 46)

British law applies for all serious offences¹ on Pitcairn Island. The age of sexual consent is 16 years and girls can never give meaningful legal consent for sex with any adult male regardless of any mitigating circumstances. ‘British law defines the crime of indecent assault of a child under sixteen as an act “either inherently indecent or one that is hostile or threatening or one which the child is demonstrably reluctant to accept” ’ (Goodyear-Smith, 1993, p. 56). However, in legal classifications (see epigram) familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls is widely considered merely to be a situational problem, such as a dysfunctional family or local community, and quite unlike ‘bad’ paedophilia.

¹ United Nations General Assembly (2002). A working paper on Pitcairn, 13 March 2002: ‘II Constitutional structure and legal system’, paragraphs 4-20.

A commonly used definition of child sexual abuse in the British professional literature is, the 'involvement of developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual actions which they cannot fully comprehend, to which they cannot give informed consent, and which violate the taboos of social roles' (MacLeod & Saraga, 1988, p. 19; see also Smith, 1993, pp. 20-21). Macleod and Saraga (1988, p. 20) say that child sexual abuse is defined in terms of three key elements: the abuse of adult power; the betrayal of trust and responsibility; and the inability of children to give meaningful sexual consent.

In 1997, the Sex Offender Act 'with potentially far-reaching benefits for the protection of women and children' became British law (Kelly & Humphreys, 2000, p. 10). Kelly and Humphreys argue that those who had most to gain from such a law - the majority who are subject to familial/familiar sexual abuse from men known to them - were rarely mentioned in the press or in government consultation papers that led to the reforms. Prior to the passage of the Act, the term 'paedophilia' had become a ubiquitous name for all child sex offences and replaced specific, more descriptive terms like 'father-daughter incest', 'child sexual abuse', 'child molestation' and 'child rape'. Paedophilia, a seldom-used clinical term, was suddenly revitalised as a particularly abstract construct to name all crimes of child sexual abuse.

Kelly and Humphreys (2000, p. 16) argue that, while the word 'paedophilia' is widely used in the press to position child sexual abuse as a serious crime, it categorises abusers as other than ordinary men who are typically respected family and friends. Instead, the use of the term 'paedophile' emphasises the stereotype of child sexual abusers as a deviant, dysfunctional, uncivilised, or mentally deficient minority. This stereotype of the deviant is far removed from most men and from the ideal of the safety of home and family. Linking child sexual abuse with the term 'paedophilia' provides a discourse that sensationalises child sex offenders as easily recognisable as violent psychopathic paedophiles, and retains a strong sense of security in family and home.

Bolen (2001) argues that this shift in public discourse has revived the old stranger-danger stereotype from somewhat myth-bound social psychological and psychoanalytic discourse. This contradicts empirical evidence that most child sexual abuse occurs among trusted friends and acquaintances. Kelly and Humphreys say that: 'Rather than sexual abuse demanding that we look critically at the social construction of "normal" masculinity, male sexuality and the family, the safer terrain of "abnormality" beckons' (2000, p. 16). By constructing the familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls as atypical, a serious crime remains unnamed, the pressure for social change is reduced, and girls' complaints are seen to be less credible. Consequently, fewer sex criminals are convicted, and the culturally invisible familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls is categorised as 'soft', rather 'consensual', and harmless sexual misdemeanours among family and friends.

MacMartin (2002) draws on the findings of the 1984 Badgley Committee in Canada. She says of those people who sexually abuse children, familial members represent 25 per cent of offenders, familiar 'friends and acquaintances' represent 50 per cent, while only 'one in six perpetrators was a stranger' (MacMartin, 2002, pp. 9-10). New Zealand statistics also suggest that around 80 per cent of child sexual abuse is familial/familiar (Bingham & Masters, 2003).

New Zealand Ministry of Justice (2002) figures (see Table 2.1) report a total of 1722 victims of sexual abuse in cases that result in convictions in New Zealand in 2001. These figures show that most convictions in all categories were for violent sexual abuse (1498 cases or 87 per cent). Overall the figures show that: 1270 (74 per cent) were children (aged 0-16 years), of whom 83 per cent were girls; 758 (44 per cent) were children under 12 years old, of whom 87 per cent were young girls; and only 391 (23 per cent) were adult victims, of whom 92 per cent were women.

Table 2.1: Number of convictions for various sex offences, by age and gender of the victim, 2001 (abbreviated from New Zealand Ministry of Justice, 2002, Table 2.19)

Offence	Age and gender of victim ¹											
	Under 12 Years			12 - 16 Years			Over 16 Years			Unknown		
	M	F	U	M	F	U	M	F	U	M	F	U
'Violent' sexual abuse ²	86	553	0	109	321	0	27	355	3	0	7	37
'Other' sexual abuse ³	13	106	0	13	69	0	0	5	1	0	5	12
Total	99	659	0	122	390	0	27	360	4	0	12	49

¹ The gender of the victim is indicated in this table by the abbreviations M=Male, F=Female and U=Unknown.

² Most 'Violent' sexual abuse is 'rape', 'unlawful sexual connection' or 'indecent assault'.

³ Most 'Other' sexual abuse is 'indecent acts', but the category includes 'incest'.

By far the most convictions for sexual abuse in New Zealand are for the sexual abuse of young girls under 12 years old. Crimes like the alleged familial/familiar Pitcairn sex offences are clearly similar to the majority of child sexual abuse crimes in New Zealand.

Bolen (2001, p. 272) says present responses to child sexual abuse are doomed because they focus attention on stranger-danger paedophilia (especially against boys), and ignore the greatest problem of the familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls. The term 'paedophilia' suggests that all abusers are 'stranger-danger' paedophiles, and is therefore an inappropriate term in relation to familial/familiar child sexual abuse in New Zealand and in the Pitcairn case.

Bingham and Masters' (2003) three-page feature on child sexual abuse in New Zealand in the *Weekend Herald* claims that about 75 per cent of all convictions for violent sex offences are crimes against children. About 80 per cent of offenders are

already familiar to their victim, and one third of offenders are familial, or caregivers. Hundreds of victims are very young. Of 940 cases of sexual abuse of children under 10 years of age, 253 were aged between one and four years, eight were not even a year old according to New Zealand Child Youth and Family Services statistics, 1999-2000. Finally, it is also noted that only a very small proportion of child sexual abuse offences are ever detected by the authorities.

However, the article on paedophilia on the front page of the feature report did not highlight the fact that most of the victims of child sexual abuse were girls. This is despite an analysis later in the feature that showed that of 408 cases of child sexual abuse reported by the newspaper in recent years, 75 per cent of cases involved only girl victims.

In lieu of Pitcairn statistics, the New Zealand figures for child sexual abuse, particularly familial/familiar sexual abuse and the sexual abuse of young girls under 12 years of age, seem most relevant to this thesis. Pitcairners have strong educational and community ties in New Zealand and familiarity with its laws. Prevalence studies in 1987 and 1993 (Cossins, 1999, pp. 52-53) showed that of random samples of New Zealand women, 10 per cent experienced contact sexual abuse under 13 years of age, and 25 per cent under 16 years of age. This suggests that the 20 or so Pitcairn complainants may not represent an unexpectedly high prevalence rate for child sexual abuse in a western society, when the rapidly diminishing Pitcairn population over the last 40 years is taken into account.

Cossins (1999) provides a useful overview of how the law often classifies child sex offenders. Cossins responds to the NSW Royal Commission Inquiry into Paedophilia, by investigating the widely used legal classification schemes which focus on the activities of 'fixated' homosexual paedophiles and result in very little attention being paid to the regressive, 'situational' familial/familiar sexual abuser of girls. She describes how the law typically differentiates between serious paedophilia and less serious 'non-paedophilic' familial crimes:

First, those whose behaviour is considered to be 'a product of a deviant sexual preference for children' ... are known as 'sexual preference

mediated' offenders ..., 'paedophilic' types ... or 'fixated' offenders ... Secondly, those whose deviant behaviour is considered to be 'situationally induced' and to occur 'in the context of a normal sexual preference structure' ... are known as 'situational' offenders..., 'non-paedophilic' types ... or 'regressed' offenders.

Cossins (1999, p. 46)

'Situationally-induced' familial abuse echoes the family dysfunction view that it is not the man's fault but the situation in which he finds himself, such as girl's seductiveness and wives' frigidity. Cossins (1999, p. 46) argues that 'fixated' offenders 'neatly reflect essentialist assumptions' about male sexuality, as deviant, oversexed, homosexual, child predators preying on young boys, while 'regressed' offenders are merely 'alienated husbands who inadvertently turn to their daughters for sexual comfort'. She criticises the widely used distinction between homosexual paedophilia (conceptualised as abnormal and criminal, violent and coercive, abuses of power) and familial/familiar child sex offenders (seen as 'normal' sexual preferences). Cossins argues that this widely accepted definition in legal and psychological literature categorises the familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls without an appreciation of the extent and dangers of such abuse. This legal classification of 'bad' and 'good' paedosexuality, that dichotomises stranger-danger and familial/familiar child sex offenders as paedophilic or non-paedophilic may be reflected in a stronger police response to, and longer sentences for, 'paedophiles'.

Acceptance of such categorisations may explain the same emphasis in press representations which sensationalise homosexual paedophilia as 'real' child sexual abuse, and minimise and diffuse the issue of endemic heterosexual familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls. The more prevalent, familial/familiar, non-paedophilic offender of the legal classifications is represented as: merely sexually deprived; as engaged in prolonged 'affairs' with young girls intimately known to them; and as rather lawless but not dangerous in their behaviour. Cossins' research provides a strong foundation for my thesis, particularly for my content analysis in Chapter Four. Theories of the dichotomisation of violent and 'non-violent' child sexual abuse will be addressed further in the next section.

2.4 Media minimisation of familial abuse

The sex/violence dualism is a concealment of the material realities experienced by women. Such a dualism is central to dominant male definitions of both consensual sex and rape: in a denial that there is sex in violence and violence in sex, sex is recuperated as unproblematically good ... In contrast, radical feminism emphasises continuity and gradation through the concept of a continuum of male sexual violence from much 'normal' heterosexual sex though to 'unambiguous' rape situations.

Atmore (1991, pp. 40-41)

In the previous section I argued that legal categorisations differentiate between homosexual paedophilia and familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls as more serious and less serious crimes respectively. However, Atmore (1991, 1996) says that the press minimises familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls because child sexual abuse is dichotomised according to a sex/violence binary logic which only acknowledges stereotypes of familial/familiar hetero-normativity or of abnormal stranger-danger paedophilic violence. The sexual abuse of young girls in the family fits neither stereotype. This results in offender blame for endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls being minimised and diffused. Respectable men like trusted relatives and friends could not be child abusers.

Atmore (1991, 1996) analyses New Zealand media constructions of child sexual abuse controversies. Like Nava (1988), Atmore interprets press representations of the child sexual abuse cases as a hostile response to feminist-influenced analysis of the issue of familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls. However, for this thesis, I am most interested in Atmore's analysis of a sex-violence continuum that the press constructs as a sex/violence dichotomy.

Atmore (1991) points out how the media has reasserted a traditional binary framework (e.g., 'A/not-A', violence/non-violence) for interpreting child sexual abuse. These binary frameworks were deconstructed by feminists because such reductionist logic understates the extent and dangers of familial/familiar child sexual abuse as both sex and violence, and removes male relatives from any media spotlight (Atmore, 1996, pp. 341-342).

The daily news gives the impression that New Zealand is in the midst of a child sexual abuse epidemic. By sensationalising the social dysfunctionality of paedophilic child sexual abusers as a 'new epidemic' (Sonderling, 1993), the much more widespread problem of abuse of power in and around the family, as endemic child sexual abuse, is minimised. Atmore reflects on how the press sensationalises child sexual abuse in New Zealand 'as a response to pressure on a cultural nerve, producing a displaced form of moral panic' (1996, p. 344).

The sex/violence dualism is based on assumptions that sexual abuse is still either about unproblematically good hetero-normative sex or about deviant paedophilic violence. This minimises non-violent sexual crimes such as familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls. Atmore (1991) analyses New Zealand media accounts from a feminist poststructuralist perspective to challenge the media logic of a clearly defined sex/violence dualism. Like Gavey (1989), Atmore looks at coercion in heterosexual relationships. Kelly (1988) argues that everyday male-dominance and sexual aggression is popularly justified as 'normal' heterosexuality (Atmore, 1991, p. 42). Child sexual abuse by pathological strangers is maximised as a serious crime while the adult-child sex between relatives, family friends and acquaintances cannot be easily rationalised, and is therefore minimised as a crime. This suggests that the press is often implicated in the minimisation and perpetuation of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls.

2.5 The 'experience' versus the normative discourse of familial abuse

One view of sexual victimisation holds that it exists on a continuum of normative heterosexual practices which are socially constructed as involving an active initiating male and a passive, responsive female ... The majority of identified cases of rape and sexual abuse occur within what have been called 'legitimate heterosexual relationships' ... or 'potentially appropriate relationships' ... These more normative forms of coercion include situations where the [female] appears to *consent* to take part in an interaction despite not wanting to.

Gavey (1989, pp. 467-468, emphasis in original)

This section is concerned with how the press categorises realities or constructions of the issue of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls in terms of normal heterosexuality and sexual coercion. Sexual abuse usually occurs in secrecy without

corroborating evidence, and successful conviction (unmitigated offender blame) relies on the complainants' evidence. MacMartin (2002) says that it is not surprising that girl'/women' credibility is challenged in the press and in court. MacMartin's (2002) article focuses on trial judgements that 'evidence that a child actively sought and/or enjoyed social contact with a known offender following alleged abuse' mitigates and spreads the offender blame with doubtful notions of consent. Such decisions ignore legislative reforms, and the findings of empirical social science research which show that abuse most child sexual abuse occurs within dependent, ongoing, familial/familiar relationships with adult men (ibid., p. 11). MacMartin argues that the representation of the young girl as an innocent passive victim of child sexual abuse 'simultaneously stigmatises the knowing child' as complicit in the crimes (MacMartin, 2002, p. 32). Such representations

resonate with justification for doubting adult sexual assault' because there is an 'inadequacy of current cultural resources for constructing the experience of assault by someone who occupies a membership category ... whose category-bound activities undermine the very description of such offences.

MacMartin (2002, pp. 33-34)

The Pitcairn case involves such ongoing, dependent, heterosexual coercion with widely respected, and presumably trusted, family and family acquaintances. MacMartin proposes 'alternative conceptions of child sexual abuse in which repeated contact with offenders is viewed as consonant with children's dependent relationships with familiar (and often familial) abusers' (MacMartin, 2002, p. 9). Her discourse analysis method for understanding how ambiguity and doubt are used to undermine offender blame with notions of consent is discussed further in Chapter Three.

Like MacMartin (2002), Gavey and Gow (2001) show how attributions of blame for sexual abuse offences are undermined with a notion of consensual sex. The creation of doubt concerning child sexual abuse allegations undermines the credibility of the women's complaints in the Pitcairn case. This in turn threatens to cast doubt on the women's experiences and as the empirical knowledge base concerning familial/familiar sexual abuses of young girls, and on years of feminist work towards legislative and social change. In this thesis, I ask what is missing from the press

representations of the Pitcairn case, and how that undermines the credibility of the women's complaints of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls. What is missing from the press constructions of the Pitcairn case is discussed from a feminist standpoint in the final chapter of this thesis.

Gavey and Gow's (2001) feminist discourse analysis reveals how apparently balanced and neutral press reporting constructs a textual representation that perpetuates contemporary rape myths, such as women's duplicity and propensity to lie about rape. Gavey and Gow (2001, pp. 345-346) show how the notion of balanced journalism is undermined by the ambiguity of the issue being debated. Despite telling both sides of the story, the discursive strategies can work to socially construct and embed dichotomised perspectives (e.g., a sex/violence dichotomy) according to popular sex and gender stereotypes. Gavey and Gow (2001) point out that there is an absence of any careful critical analysis of the historical and sociocultural forces that makes sense of the issue of false allegations of sexual abuse. Arguably, this allows popular, ill-informed ideas about sexual abuse, abuse victims, and women in general, to come into play (p. 356). To the extent that social meanings are shaped by the media, the press serves to support and perpetuate patriarchy. This means women are less likely to be believed concerning sexual abuse, are less likely to feel able to report this abuse, and are more likely to withdraw any complaints in the face of public doubt about their credibility.

Gavey's (1989) poststructuralist understanding of consent and credibility in terms of heterosexual coercion through discourses that are multiple, contradictory and unstable, identifies two patriarchal discourses that frame gender relations as 'consensual' sex rather than violence. The first is a 'male sexual needs' discourse, where a women 'is responsive and takes responsibility for male needs' (Gavey, 1989, p. 470) by acknowledging male dominance in coercive, even violent, interpersonal and familial/community relations. The second is a sexually 'liberated', contemporary, 'permissive sexuality' discourse of 'liberated' women for whom sexual coercion is 'no big deal'. These 'liberated' women prefer to deny their own patriarchal complicity, and prefer to see that satisfying male needs reinforces women's own

freedom of sexual expression. These two distinct categorisations of coercive heteronormativity in western society are important for understanding the press discourses and discursive strategies in press constructions of the Pitcairn case of child sexual abuse.

In heterosexual relations where women lack power, Gavey (1989, p. 470) argues that 'the whole notion of consent and the meaning of choice ... are rendered problematic'.

She presents sexual victimisation as a

continuum of normative heterosexual practices which are socially constructed as involving an active, initiating male and a passive, responsive female ... From this perspective it makes limited sense to arbitrarily separate 'rape' from not rape, and 'sexual coercion' from 'non-coercive heterosexual sex'.

Gavey (1989, p. 467)

Gavey says the more normative '*interpersonal coercion*' (sex to stop sexual harassment or even possible violence) and '*social coercion*' (having sex to avoid appearing old-fashioned or heterosexually frigid) appears to be consensual and natural (Gavey, 1989, p. 468 – emphasis in original). I show how cultural pressure to conform to the often coercive stereotypes of heteronormativity is constructed through press representations of the issues of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls in the Pitcairn case.

2.6 Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this chapter provided context for my thesis in terms of: myths and theories of child sexual abuse; the law and the prevalence of familial abuse; media representations of familial abuse; and the discursive construction of the issue of familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls. The literature argued that familial sexual abuse of girls is often ignored in favour of myth-bound psychoanalytic, family dysfunction and libertarian theories of child sexual abuse, despite a substantive empirical knowledge base and much feminist theory and research (Bolen, 2001). The abuse is categorised as 'non-paedophilic', non-violent 'soft' crimes in legal classifications of such crimes (Cossins, 1999). Familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls is the most prevalent category of sexual abuse in New Zealand society, with the sexual abuse of girls under 12 years being the most common age and gender category

according to official New Zealand government conviction statistics. Familial/familiar child sexual abuse is minimised and represented as acceptable family heterosexuality, rather than as paedophilic violence, in many media constructions of the issue (Atmore, 1991, 1996). Familial sexual abuse is widely normalised as consensual sex (MacMartin, 2002). Coercive 'male sexual needs' and 'permissive sexuality' discourses and coercive heterosexual norms (Gavey, 1989) undermine girls' and women's credibility concerning complaints of sexual abuse (MacMartin, 2002; Gavey & Gow, 2001).

In the next chapter I outline how I carried out the research. I describe the two methods used: a content analysis of the whole database and a discourse analysis of two particularly significant press reports.

Chapter Three: Thesis Materials and Methods

[T]here is no *method* to discourse analysis in the way we traditionally think of an experimental method or content analysis method. What we have is a broad theoretical framework concerning the notion of discourse and its role in social life, along with a set of suggestions about how discourses can best be studied and how others can be convinced findings are genuine.

Potter and Wetherell (1987, p. 175, emphasis in original)

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter Two I reviewed literature about the legal, media and social constructions of the issue of the familial sexual abuse of girls. Gavey's analyses (Gavey, 1989; Gavey & Gow, 2001) influenced the dual method I have used for my research. I undertook a content analysis to identify *what*, and a discourse analysis to describe *how*, three 'discursive strategies' (Potter, 1996) are used within press reports to construct the issue of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of Pitcairn girls.

There is controversy in feminism as to whether feminist empirical science and situated feminist standpoint perspectives advance the emancipation of women, or whether postmodern scepticism and an understanding of contingency better represent women's lived reality. Haraway (1991, pp. 184-185) contributes the metaphor of feminists climbing a greased pole while holding both ends at once, slipping and sliding because there are no absolute solutions in a world where so many 'truths' are socially constructed. Ramazanoglu (2002, p. 63) claims the slippery 'frustrations of this kind of pursuit of truth led some feminists into thinking about feminist knowledge through the notion of a feminist standpoint' and to refuse any particular intermediate position 'between absolute truth and absolute relativism on the "greased pole"'. A feminist standpoint emphasises the gendered contingent realities of women's lives as collectively different from men's lives. However, where feminist

empiricists offer different rules concerning what constitutes knowledge as valid and authoritative, feminist constructionists ask how facts are constructed as ‘truths’.

Feminist constructionists explore how a plurality of historically, culturally, and socially specific meanings in social texts reproduce hierarchal and unequal gender relations. Gavey (1989, p. 463) argues that constructionists are concerned with ‘disrupting and displacing dominant (oppressive) knowledges’ through understanding how they are constructed through particular discourses. ‘Discourse’ refers to a systematic, coherent set of meanings, metaphors and values that construct an object or issue, in a particular way, as a product of social rather than individual ideas and practices (Burr, 1995, p. 184; Gavey, 1989, pp. 463-464). Burr says that hierarchies of power depend on particular discourses which support particular ‘regimes of truth’, and marginalise others. By adopting a critical stance towards the truth claims of dominant discourses, constructionists endeavour to ‘increase the “voice” of marginalised discourses’ (Burr, 1995, p. 172).

However, Harding (1990, p. 100) suggests that both feminist empiricism and feminist constructionism, that is ‘feminist postmodernist critics [who] stand with one foot in modernity and the other in the lands beyond’, are required for different purposes at different times. As a feminist negotiating a position for justice for the Pitcairn women, between empiricism and constructionism, I focus on media representations that categorise, minimise and normalise girls’ experiences of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse. In this thesis, I use both an empirical content analysis (Chapter Four) and a constructionist discourse analysis (Chapter Five) to investigate these discursive strategies in the press representations of the Pitcairn case.

This chapter describes an inductive and reflexive research method, that combines both ‘a way of understanding the content of discourse (a content analysis) and how that content is organised’ (a discourse analysis) (Potter & Wetherell, 1996, p. 89). These two methods will be combined as a way of analysing the data in order to answer the research question: How do the press representations construct the issue of

endemic familial/familial sexual abuse of young girls, using the Pitcairn case, in terms of blame and consent?

3.2 Beginning the research

While it is accepted that it is difficult to give more than broad guidelines as to how, in general terms, discourse analysis is performed, it should be possible for analysts to give quite detailed information about how, in their particular cases, they proceeded with their analysis.

Burr (1995, pp. 182-183)

In order to address the research question I needed to be able to identify and describe the most relevant themes and discursive strategies of the whole database of 93 press reports. The research process and analysis had five stages. The first stage of the research process was collecting and sorting the database of 93 press reports. The second stage was a 'long soak' in the database to identify and code the most relevant themes and discursive strategies used by the press to construct the issue of the Pitcairn familial abuse in terms of blame and consent. Thirdly, a chronological content analysis of the database described and named the discursive strategies and identified particular press reports for further analysis. The fourth stage of the research process was a discourse analysis of two influential press reports to analyse how the press used the discursive strategies to construct the issue of endemic familial/familial sexual abuse of Pitcairn girls. The fifth and final stage of the research process was a feminist standpoint perspective on the research findings. The processes carried out in completing the research are described in this chapter, while the research results and a discussion of the results follow in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

3.3 Collecting the database

For this study I attempted to locate all the articles about the Pitcairn case. This search resulted in a final sample of 93 press reports from eight newspapers. I decided to close the database after charges were laid both against Pitcairn men living on Pitcairn Island and against expatriate Pitcairn men living in New Zealand, as the Crown Prosecutor suggested that legal proceedings would be unlikely to be completed before the end of 2003 (*Weekend Herald*, 2003, April 19-20 - report 86). The men were committed for trial in July 2003 to appear in court in August 2003 (*The New*

Zealand Herald, 2003, July 8 - report 91). At this time it was clear that this would be a long and complex case and that justice for the abused women might be years away. With the publication of a sensationalised front-page press report concerning legal personalities rather than the sexual abuse of young girls (*The New Zealand Herald*, 2003, July 21 - report 92), I decided to focus on the material already collected, and closed the database. As I complete this thesis in February 2004, the trial of the offenders has yet to begin.

Four well-known British broadsheet newspapers with international as well as local British readership - *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Telegraph* and *The Times* - are included in the 93 press reports. They provide a relatively united front of Anglocentric international influence and power. Three New Zealand daily newspapers and one Australian newspaper provide a Pacific regional perspective. The four newspapers were: *The Dominion Post* (Wellington, incorporating both *The Dominion* and *The Evening Post* part-way through the data-collection period), *The New Zealand Herald* including the *Weekend Herald* (Auckland), *The Press* (Christchurch), and *The Australian* (national) respectively. New Zealand and Australian media are also relevant to the case, given that New Zealand has a significant number of visiting and expatriate Pitcairn Islanders, particularly living in Auckland, and a long-established ex-Pitcairn population lives in the Australian territory of Norfolk Island, many of whom work in mainland Australia. Pitcairn Island has no daily or weekly newspaper.

Effort was made to obtain copies of every report on the Pitcairn case from all of these newspapers since March 2001. Various electronic databases (e.g., *Stuff*), internet sites (e.g., *Knowledge Basket*), and Massey University Library electronic databases (e.g., *Expanded Academic Search Elite*) provided lists of past press reports and printed copies of reports missing from my database. Occasional radio and television broadcasts forewarned me of items of news or developments in the case which would later appear in published press reports. Television footage familiarised me with media representations of Pitcairn life. Microfiche were also searched for visual layouts of press reports together with relevant photographs. The press reports that

make up my database are listed in chronological order in Appendix One, together with brief descriptions of their content. A few extremely brief press reports containing no new information, or identical reports repeated in more than one newspaper together with reports of strictly legal, technical, or otherwise unrelated interest concerning Pitcairn Island, were culled from the database.

I have divided the press coverage into time periods that reflect changing press representations of the Pitcairn case. In the initial ‘speculative period’ of press interest (from 10 March 2001 until 27 November 2002), some reports sensationalised the women’s claims as something of a ‘sex scandal’ (e.g., *The Australian*, 2001, March 10 - report 1) in what had long been idealised as an especially moral and religious South Seas paradise. Speculation gradually turned to media cynicism concerning the political and legal agendas of the authorities, and possibly even of the Pitcairners (e.g., *Weekend Herald*, 2002, August 24-25 - report 38). The ‘speculative period’ of press representations ended on 27 November 2002, when the New Zealand government legislated to make a trial in New Zealand possible. Since that time, the press reports have been what I describe as more ‘legally-constrained’ and less speculative, both before and after the laying of the first definitive charges in April 2003. Table 3.1 summarises the changing tone in the press representations of the Pitcairn case over the past few years.

Table 3.1: Summarising the changing representations in press reporting of the Pitcairn case.

Period (dates)	No. of Reports (# ¹)	Predominant emphasis of the reporting of the case
Speculative Period ² (Stage 1) 10/3/01-3/5/01	8 (#1-#8)	<u>Hints of an impending 'sex scandal'</u> International media interest after report in <i>The Australian</i> (report #1) suggests <i>widespread</i> child sexual abuse. The Pitcairn investigations become extensive. Little official information.
Speculative Period (Stage 2) 9/5/01-18/6/01	6 (#9-#14)	<u>Child abuse, child rape or child prostitution?</u> British feature article in <i>The Times</i> (report #9) represents the Pitcairn case as a <i>dysfunctional</i> community with a <i>local age of consent</i> requiring legal action. Very speculative reports.
Speculative Period (Stage 3) 1/7/01-24/8/02	23 (#15-#37)	<u>Many cultural diversions</u> New Zealand feature article in the <i>Weekend Herald</i> (report #15) describes the child sexual abuse as <i>endemic</i> , and introduces many other cultural perspectives. One British article (report #25) challenges general press consensus. Most focus on cultural issues.
Speculative Period (Stage 4) 25/8/02-16/11/02	17 (#38-#54)	<u>Promoting Pitcairn legal autonomy</u> Pivotal New Zealand feature article in the <i>Weekend Herald</i> (report #38): is first to interview Pitcairners; represents support for trial on Pitcairn Island; refers to a local age of consent but also recognises abuse of young girls. Subsequent reports promote independence.
Legally-constrained Period ³ (Stage 1) 25/11/02-7/4/03	19 (#55-#73)	<u>Legislation changes and waiting for charges to be laid</u> Most of the speculation ends with clearer indications of the likely charges. The passing of New Zealand legislation to allow a trial refocusses the reports on legal technicalities.
Legally-constrained Period (Stage 2) 7/4/03-13/4/03	10 (#74-#83)	<u>Charges and arrests are announced</u> Nine Pitcairn men are charged amidst international media interest, and 64 sexual abuse charges are officially laid (which include rape, indecent assault, gross indecency).
Legally-constrained Period (Stage 3) 14/4/03-22/7/03	10 (#84-#93)	<u>Women withdraw complaints and the long road to trial</u> Several women withdraw their complaints. Most press interest is in New Zealand where the local interests of the expatriate Pitcairn community are promoted. More charges. Trial is months away.

¹ Press reports are numbered with brief details in Appendix One

² In the speculative period - most reports are concerned with whether sex charges could be laid, or a trial go ahead, on cultural and political grounds. Are the women's complaints credible?

³ In the legally-constrained period - most reports are concerned with whether international law might make a trial impossible on legal grounds. Are Pitcairners' sexual practices subject to British law?

3.4 The 'long soak'

As a preliminary to the analysis proper, and as a way of making the sheer bulk of materials we had collected more manageable, we performed a series of codings. This involved searching through the material for a number of themes. Some of these arose from the concerns which had stimulated the study in the first place - but others emerged ... In [discourse analysis], coding of this kind is distinct from the analysis itself; it is merely designed to make the analytic task simpler by focusing on relevant materials.

Potter and Wetherell (1996, p. 87)

Interpretation of the press representations of the Pitcairn case began with a long preliminary 'soak'¹ in the large database, to sort and code the material for quantitative and qualitative content analysis. Steeves (1997, p. 24) points out that the 'soak' is required to patiently 'develop valid coding categories' for quantitative analysis, and to 'identify valid themes and illuminating examples consistent with a conceptual argument or question' for qualitative analysis. As my research question is to identify aspects of blame and consent in press representations of the Pitcairn case of familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls, I used a series of data collection sheets, or 'protocols' (Altheide, 1996), to interrogate the database with questions concerning the notions of 'child sexual abuse', 'blame' and 'consent'.

By building a chronological database, I could 'track' the changing representations of the Pitcairn case over 28 months. I was able to identify that discursive strategies were being used to 'soften' (mitigate) and spread the blame for the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls. 'Consent' was being represented both as cultural consent and sexual consent. I interrogated the database for themes of mitigation of blame and cultural/sexual consent, from which emerged dichotomisations of sex and violence, typical and atypical abuse, and so on. The key words and concepts that emerged from the 'long soak' provided the justification for a rigorous content analysis of the database. The 'long soak' began with re-reading the

¹ The 'long soak' is a term recommended by Stuart Hall to describe the coding of categories and themes for content analysis (Steeves, 1997, p. 24). It is a reflexive process of reading, sorting and coding the database of texts many times until the key themes and discursive strategies are very clear. This process took several months with a database of 93 press reports.

3750-word *Weekend Herald* press report (number 38). As a feminist researcher, I was aware that there were gaps and silences in this press representation, despite a rich array of well-warranted and authorised perspectives on the Pitcairn case. What was not being said also became a focus for interrogating the database, and suggested the need for more detailed discourse analysis.

During the 'long soak', I identified discursive strategies that acted to undermine the credibility of the Pitcairn women's complaints, and the whole issue of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls. They were the softening (mitigating) and spreading (dispersing) of the offender blame, and the construction of questionable notions of consent. Using the analytical concepts of interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), discursive (epistemological) devices (Edwards & Potter, 1992), and discursive (action-oriented) strategies (Potter, 1996), I focused on how the press reports were constructing 'fact' and particularly doubt in the Pitcairn case. Potter's (1996) three 'action orientations' provided the following terms: categorisation (of unmitigated and mitigated blame, and consent); minimisation (spreading the blame); and normalisation (constructing notions of consent).

A lot of the business of a description is done through its categorization; different categories imply different stories of motive and responsibility and have different implications for what should come next. At the same time categorizations can work to exclude potentially relevant considerations; they can gerrymander what it taken into account in a way that contributes to business at hand. A second theme is extrematization and minimization. This involves building some description to present bigness or smallness, violence or passivity, goodness or badness and so on. The third and final theme is normalization. How can some event or conduct be made out as normal and commonplace, or how can it be undermined as strange or deviant?

Potter (1996, pp. 15-16)

I have used these three terms (categorisation, minimisation and normalisation) throughout my thesis to describe the three discursive strategies used by the press that most undermine the women's complaints of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse as young girls. By the time I had completed the 'long soak' I had a clear idea of my research objectives. The content analysis needed to investigate the role and extent of categorisation (for mitigating or softening the blame), minimisation (for spreading

the blame) and normalisation (of the issue of consent). An understanding of how these processes were constructed would require a fine-grain discourse analysis.

3.5 The content and discourse analyses

Altheide (1996, pp. 68-69) suggests that one reason to study mass media documents is to understand both the nature and process by which a defining issue of society operates, and to try to assess its future consequences. The construction of the Pitcairn case in terms of blame and consent is an ongoing process of categorisation, minimisation and normalisation, with press reports building on each other's earlier representations. I conceptualised my dual research method around Altheide's (1996) method for content analysis and 'tracking discourses', and Potter's (1996) method for discourse analysis by identifying 'discursive strategies'. Together they provide a chronological overview of the multiple strategies used to represent the problematic issue of familial/familiar sexual abuse.

The understanding of context and process is important for a full analysis of any text. Both the content and meaning of any document are important. Meanings and patterns seldom emerge all at once, but become evident through an inductive and reflexive research process that is able to make repetitive comparisons and revisions through the investigation of documents over long periods of time. The focus on process is particularly relevant to understanding the gradual emergence of press constructions over time in relation to the Pitcairn case.

In the third stage of my research process (the content analysis) I began with Altheide's method of analysis based on 'tracking discourses' (ibid., pp. 39, 70) to follow certain issues and themes over a period of time, across various issues, and from different sources. The content analysis is a chronological survey of the whole database, built around tabulations of three significant discursive strategies of the categorisation, minimisation and normalisation constructions widely used in the press reports.

The fourth stage of the research process for this thesis was a discourse analysis. This method involves discerning meaning, contradictions and inconsistencies in selected texts to describe the language processes people use to construct their own and others' understanding of social issues (Gavey, 1989, p. 467). Processes that the content analyst sees as empirically fixed and categorically orderly are usually contingent, fragmented, inconsistent, and contradictory to the discourse analyst. The discourse analysis of two press reports from the database investigates how press constructions of the issue of the widespread familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls create ambiguity and doubts concerning the Pitcairn crimes.

Children cannot legally give consent to sexual activities with adults ... [T]he discourse analyses of child sexual abuse judgments ... demonstrate that the notion of consent can still be mobilised to raise doubt, albeit in an alternative form. In such cases, the implausibility of a complaint of sexual abuse is tied to a different aspect of a child's capacity to give consent – not to sexual abuse, but to ongoing and repeated social contact with a familiar, or even familial, accused.

MacMartin (2002, p. 14)

In her study of blame and consent in child sexual abuse cases, MacMartin (2002) uses a discourse analytic technique to analyse fact and doubt construction in descriptions and attributions to understand constructs that undermine the credibility of the complainants and the crimes. I use a similar analytic approach to identify the various strategies of 'fact' construction that are used in press reports which undermine girls'/women's experiences of abuse with ambiguity and doubt. My assessment of descriptions in the reporting of the Pitcairn case shows how the press constructs doubt concerning the issue of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls and mitigates offender blame with notions of consent.

The analysis method focuses on three discursive strategies in terms of blame and consent that were identified in the 'long soak' (described in Section 3.4) and that are described in the content analysis (Chapter Four). My discourse analysis looks at how discursive strategies bolster certain constructions and undermine or ignore alternative perspectives. I draw on an understanding of the methodology of Edwards and Potter's (1992) 'discourse as social action', and especially on Potter's (1996) 'action

orientation' of descriptions constructed using 'three partially overlapping themes' (ibid., pp. 176-177). The latter correspond closely to my three discursive strategies of categorisation, minimisation and normalisation.

Edwards and Potter (1993, p. 23) argue that 'language is by no means a transparent or neutral system for conveying information'. They explain the dynamics of minimisation through spreading offender blame.

[A report] deploys descriptive categories which establish an act ... as representing a group interest, and therefore promotes the [offender] as less *personally* culpable for it ... It spreads accountability by dissolving agency into the social interaction between [offender] and victim.

Edwards & Potter (1992, p. 159)

Potter (1996) argues that descriptions form an integral part in people's practices. He says: 'descriptions are not being worked up as factual just for the sake of it. Rather, descriptions are built in this way because of their role in activities' (p. 176). He discusses three 'themes' or discursive strategies: 'categorization and ontological gerrymandering'; 'extrematization and minimisation'; and 'normalisation' and 'problematization' which are partially overlapping in terms of how they construct the issues they describe. In the 'long soak' I identified the same strategies ('categorisation', 'minimisation' and 'normalisation') in press representations of the Pitcairn crimes. I investigate these discursive strategies in both the content and discourse analyses.

Potter's (1996, p. 176) first discursive strategy of 'categorization' represents an issue by focusing on one particular aspect of a situation (e.g., the categorisation of 'consent' in the Pitcairn case). Categorisation addresses a broad range of loosely related aspects (e.g., popular and cultural consent), or even omits specific aspects altogether (e.g., sexual consent). Convincing press categorisations of child sexual abuse reflect credibly on the level of neutrality of the journalist reporting (rather than their being seen to take sides). Potter (ibid., p. 184) refers to this aspect of the strategy of categorisation in constructing and undermining representations as an 'extended sense of ontological gerrymandering; [where] one realm of entities is constituted in the description while another is avoided (e.g., ignoring the lack of the

girls' sexual consent.' Failure to describe aspects of an issue which do not contribute to the distinctive character to be presented are seen as a way to avoid engagement with problematic areas. Potter (ibid., p. 186) maintains 'that one of the powers of descriptions often lies in what they fail to describe, what is ignored or left out' (original emphasis). However, it is not only 'particular argumentative arenas' that are overlooked in the use of descriptive categorisation, but also particular descriptive terms (ibid., p. 187). Speech and text use a selection of individual words and alternative discourses to both construct and undermine a description to create uncertainty. The 'factuality' of an 'ontologically gerrymandered' discourse is also underpinned or bolstered through the discursive strategies of minimisation and normalisation dealt with below.

Potter's (1996, p. 187) second discursive strategy is described as 'extrematization and minimization'. Its significance derives from the many situations where the 'business done by descriptions is a contrastive one: to show how large something is, or how good, how serious and so on' (ibid., p. 176). Minimisation is not only used to construct a clear perspective, but the degree of exaggeration can also be used to create doubt and uncertainty. The development of a particular descriptive category is justified by the identification of 'extreme points on relevant descriptive dimensions' (Potter, 1996, p. 187). Extreme descriptors either maximise the blame (e.g., not only abuse of girls, but abuse of *very young* girls), or minimise or spread the blame by creating scepticism and doubt (e.g., by *very respectable* men). Potter argues that a non-agentic abstraction of the choice of words to describe abuse without the mention of consequences of the abuse also serves to present the crime minimally and thereby spreads its impact. I will be looking to see if press constructions minimise the offender blame for familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls and spread accountability for the crimes throughout the Pitcairn community.

Potter (ibid., p. 177) describes a third discursive strategy that underpins descriptions as normalisation and problematisation. He argues that how people's practices are constructed will have implications for their accountability and that this 'can be displayed or undermined via descriptions' (ibid.). While representations of what

counts as 'normal' are implicit or 'indexical', constructions of events as other than 'normal' (problematic) must be explicitly worked up in descriptions (Potter, 1996, p. 194). Problematisation is accomplished by constructs that contrast the 'normal' with, for example, descriptions of extreme or compulsive behaviours. Issues and actions are normalised for a particular cultural location or behaviour (e.g., normal on Pitcairn). In this way it is not considered to be a breach of standard pattern and is not, therefore, considered to be problematic. I look at how the press normalises and problematises aspects of the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of Pitcairn girls by representing the abuse as local cultural, sexual practices.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have emphasised the importance of the 'long soak' prior to beginning any analysis, when reading and rereading the 93 press reports showed that the reporting of the Pitcairn case neglected to represent the women complainants' case. That inductive process identified discursive strategies that acted to undermine the women's credibility. These discursive strategies were named according to Potter's (1996) terms of categorisation, minimisation and normalisation. In this chapter, I have also operationalised these three discursive strategies to provide the basis of the content and discourse analyses of the press reports. The rest of the thesis analyses and discusses these three discursive strategies, and also discusses the possible effects of the press representations of the Pitcairn case on the public perceptions of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls from a feminist standpoint perspective.

Chapter Four: Identifying Discourses of Blame and Consent:

A Content Analysis

With a little practice, one can easily spot the glaring buzz words and stereotypes that make up entire plot outlines in formula news stories....

Even a few loaded symbols can undermine new learning while reinforcing old prejudice and ideology.

Bennett (2001, pp. 254, 260)

4.1 Introduction

Two methods for investigating how press representations of the Pitcairn case of familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls are constructed in terms of blame and consent are presented in this thesis. In this chapter, I present the results of my first method of investigation: a content analysis of the whole database of press representations of the Pitcairn case.

Three discursive strategies were identified in the 'long soak' as widely used by the press in the Pitcairn case. The categorisation of unmitigated and mitigated blame, and of consent, the minimisation of the crimes by spreading the blame, and the normalisation of the crimes by constructing a 'local age of consent', all featured in the longer press reports about the Pitcairn case. The content analysis in this chapter investigates these three discursive strategies to understand how the press constructs the issue of the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls in the Pitcairn case in terms of blame and consent. These discursive strategies act to categorise, minimise and normalise the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of Pitcairn girls by mitigating and spreading offender blame, and by constructing cultural rather than sexual consent.

To address the mitigation of blame according to the press categorisations of the Pitcairn case, I ask: What is the crime? The phrases used to describe the Pitcairn crimes of child sexual abuse in each of the press representations are tabled and analysed later in this chapter. To look at how the press minimised the crimes by spreading the blame, I ask: Who is blamed? This analysis of the minimisation of individual sexual blame and consent, with collective cultural blame and consent, is also tabled and analysed. Finally, I analyse the normalisation of cultural consent - a local age of consent - in the press reports, according to how the press represents the age of the victims in the context of child sexual abuse. I conclude this chapter with a summary of how the press reports used the three strategies to construct the issue of the Pitcairn familial abuse by using distinct categories of extrematised blame and 'gerrymandered' consent.

4.2 What is the crime? Categorising blame and consent

It was discovered that the words used to describe child sexual abuse may dramatically reduce the seriousness of the offences.

Goddard and Saunders (2000, p. 43)

Tabulations of my research results are informed by other researchers' methods. The mitigation of the blame for familial abuse in the press representations of the Pitcairn case is part of a discursive strategy of categorisation that uses a range of descriptions of the crimes from highly emotive to subtly obscurant choices of words and phrases. These bolster or undermine different press constructions of the issue of familial abuse. My tabulation of categorisations of unmitigated and mitigated blame, and of consent, in press descriptions of the Pitcairn crimes was informed by Steeves' analysis of media representations of a sex abuse case (Steeves, 1997). Steeves tabulated and analysed the phrases used for suspects and victims in press representations of a sexual abuse case (1997, pp. 78-83) which, she argued, represented the crimes 'with a strong media bias towards the offenders' by drawing on ungendering or equalising phrases and those that draw on rape-myths. I produced a similar tabulation of the phrases used by the press to describe the Pitcairn crimes, and coded them as unmitigated blame (categorised as serious crimes), mitigated blame (categorised as less serious crimes), or as consent (categorised as no

significant crimes). The results of the analysis of these phrases is reported in Tables 4.1(a) and 4.1(b).

The epigram highlights the significance of the choice of individual words as a place to begin my research into textual representations of the Pitcairn crimes. The wide range of phrases used to describe the Pitcairn crimes in the 93 press reports include: emotive terms (e.g., ‘sexual attack’¹, ‘child rape’, ‘sexual slavery’); legal terms for serious sexual crimes (e.g., ‘paedophilia’, ‘gross indecency’); more obscure, evasive or euphemistic descriptions (e.g., ‘unspecified sex crimes’, ‘not incest’, ‘sexual misconduct’); as well as the everyday expressions and abstractions (e.g., ‘child abuse’, ‘child sexual abuse’, ‘dysfunctional abuse’, ‘systematic abuse’). There are also the phrases that suggest a degree of consent. They do not acknowledge any significant crime or attribute offender blame for the crimes (e.g., ‘normal cultural practices’, ‘loose sexual practices’, ‘child prostitution’). Table 4.1(a) lists the 26 phrases and groups of phrases that were used, with their frequency of use. This frequency is shown for the speculative and legally-constrained periods, before and after New Zealand legislation was passed in November 2002 to make a trial possible and charges inevitable. The final column of the table notes when phrases were used in headlines. This table provides an overview of coding decisions to be used in the subsequent Table 4.1(b). However, it does show that, overall, for the three categories of unmitigated blame, mitigated blame, and indicating consent, the highest attribution of unmitigated blame occurred in the legally-constrained period after charges were laid, while the highest figures for both mitigated blame or indicating no blame (and some consent) occurred during the earlier speculative period.

¹ All of these descriptions are drawn from the database.

Table 4.1(a): Coding the phrases used to categorise the Pitcairn crimes.

1. Unmitigated blame: emphasising the serious nature of the child sexual abuse				
Phrase	Times phrase used	Speculative period	Legally-constrained	Comments
paedophilia	9	9	0	
sexual attack	4	3	1	headlines - 2 times
rape/child rape	70	40	30	headlines - 8 times
sexual assault	26	11	15	
indecent assault	30	7	23	
gross indecency	9	0	9	
sexual slavery	2	2	0	
Total	150/488	72/488	78/488	
Percentage of phrases emphasising unmitigated blame	31%	15%	16%	
2. Mitigating the blame: softening, obscuring or evading the issue of child sexual abuse				
Phrase	Times phrase used	Speculative period	Legally-constrained	Comments
incest	5	5	0	
familial abuse	3	1	2	
child abuse	33	26	7	headline - used once
child sexual abuse	80	56	24	headlines - nine times
unspecified sex crimes	46	15	31	headlines - frequently
misconduct/mistreatment	12	12	0	
sex scandal/ embarrassment	6	4	2	embarrassment headline
dysfunctional	5	4	1	
endemic abuse	2	2	0	
widespread/ systematic abuse	17	16	1	
'That's what girls are for' etc.	7	7	0	headline - used once
Total	213/488	147/488	66/488	
Percentage of phrases mitigating the blame	44%	30%	14%	
3. Indicating consent: Phrases suggesting no significant crime and no attribution of blame				
Phrase	Times phrase used	Speculative period	Legally-constrained	Comments
normal cultural practices, 'practicality'	12	11	1	
sexually active, mature, adult	21	20	1	
under-age sex (culturally tolerated)	29	22	7	headline - teenage sex
attributing 'local age of consent'	31	30	1	
'rite of passage' to adulthood	2	2	0	
loose sexual practices	5	5	0	
sexual precociousness/ promiscuity	8	8	0	
child sex, sexualised young girls	10	7	3	headlines - four times
child prostitution (cultural consent)	7	7	0	
Total	125/488	112/488	13/488	
Percentage of phrases suggesting little or no blame	26%	23%	3%	

The choice of words to describe child sexual abuse is generally ‘value-laden’ (MacLeod & Saraga, 1988, p. 19) in terms of the popular sexual norms and stereotypes our society uses to explain child sexual abuse. In Table 4.1(a), ‘Unmitigated blame’ (1) lists the most emotive phrases used by the press, as being representative of unmitigated offender blame for the Pitcairn crimes. ‘Mitigated blame’ (2) lists more obscurant and evasive phrases that act to mitigate the offender blame. ‘Indicating consent’ (3) lists phrases that either suggest no crime or attribute no blame and therefore imply a level of consent from the press for the crimes. The diversity of phrases shows how familial abuse has an uncertain status in our society because it does not fit with the popular stereotype of child sexual abuse as stranger-danger paedophilia, for which most people attribute unmitigated offender blame.

The use of the three discursive strategies of categorisation, minimisation and normalisation often overlapped in the selection of phrases used to describe the Pitcairn crimes. Categorising the blame as unmitigated, by using phrases like ‘child rape’, was often only used for dramatic effect (e.g., the headlines). Only on a few occasions were such phrases used because the press report overtly supported the women’s complaints with attributions of unmitigated blame for the alleged offenders (e.g., reports 25 and 32).

Many of the phrases categorised as unmitigated blame were legal terms (e.g., ‘rape’, ‘indecent assault’, ‘gross indecency’) used when listing the charges against the Pitcairn men. The most obscurant phrases were often only recognised by the context in which they were used. Some phrases like ‘child sexual abuse’ can be considered to categorise, minimise and normalise the crimes because they are so bland. One consequence of the most popular phrase ‘child sexual abuse’ is a ‘theoretical indifference’ because the phrase is only as a variant of ‘child abuse’ which is used to include anything from the mildest to the most severe emotional and physical abuse of children (Pengelly, 1991, p. 187).

Table 4.1(a) showed that, overall, more phrases mitigated the blame (44 per cent) than attributed unmitigated blame (31 per cent), or ‘indicated consent’ (26 per cent).

Mitigating and ‘consenting’ words were more often used to describe the crimes in the speculative period - 69 per cent of 213 mitigating phrases, and 90 per cent of 125 ‘consenting’ phrases respectively. The results indicate that the press representations responded to official press releases concerning the serious nature of the women’s complaints from around the commencement of the legally-constrained period (e.g., report 61). In the speculative period, the press most often gave the offenders the benefit of the doubt. With the charges being laid in the legally-constrained period, the official support for the women’s complaints appeared to more often be taken seriously by the press, as indicated by higher levels of unmitigated blame.

The high level of mitigated attributions of blame for the Pitcairn case categorised the Pitcairn offences as ‘soft’ crimes. ‘Mitigated blame’ categorisations also minimise the blame and make the crimes appear to be rather more like ‘normal’ heterosexuality when contrasted with press representations that categorise the Pitcairn crimes as more serious crimes like the paedophile violence by child rapists (the phrases of unmitigated category). Such mitigation of blame for familial/familiar child sexual abuse was particularly evident during the speculative period. ‘Child sexual abuse’ was the most widely used phrase, particularly in the larger reports, but the fact that ‘rape’ or ‘child rape’ were used almost as frequently was a reminder that a significant proportion of the reports (usually the shorter press releases) were uncompromising in their attributions of blame. Nevertheless, the degree of mitigated blame and even consent was high during the speculative period when press representations were less constrained by the certainty of charges and legal proceedings. These findings needed to be further investigated.

The next step in the content analysis of words used to categorise the crimes was to tabulate only the most frequently used phrase from each report. I listed these phrases in the same groups of ‘unmitigated blame’, ‘mitigated the blame’, and ‘indicating consent’ that were used in Table 4.1(a). These are reported in Table 4.1(b). I plotted the percentage of phrases in each category for all seven time periods (described in Chapter Three) rather than only the two speculative and legally-constrained periods.

Table 4.1(b): The phrase most frequently used in each report to describe child sexual abuse.

How are the Pitcairn crimes categorised? (percentages of reports in each period)				
Period	Total Categorisations (total reports)	1. Unmitigated Blame	2. Mitigated Blame	3. Indicating Consent
Speculative Period ¹ (Stage 1)	7 (8)	63% (5) ¹	25% (2)	0% (0)
Speculative Period (Stage 2)	6 (6)	67% (4)	17% (1)	17% (1)
Speculative Period (Stage 3)	21 (23)	9% (2)	83% (19)	0% (0)
Speculative Period (Stage 4)	16 (17)	29% (5)	59% (10)	6% (1)
Whole Speculative Period	50 (54)	30% (16)	59% (32)	4% (2)
Legally- constrained Period ² (Stage 1)	18 (19)	53% (10)	42% (8)	0% (0)
Legally- constrained Period (Stage 2)	10 (10)	60% (6)	10% (1)	30% (3)
Legally- constrained Period (Stage 3)	10 (10)	50% (5)	20% (2)	30% (3)
Whole Legally- constrained Period	38 (39)	54% (21)	28% (11)	15% (6)
Whole Database	88 (93)	40% (37)	46% (43)	9% (8)

¹ The number of reports for each of the three categories of blame and consent is given (in brackets) for each period of the press reporting (e.g. (5)).

In the speculative period - most reports are concerned with whether sex charges could be laid, or a trial go ahead, on cultural and political grounds. Are the women's complaints credible? The four periods began with influential reports 1, 9, 15 and 38. In the legally-constrained period - most reports are concerned with whether international law might make a trial impossible on legal grounds. Are Pitcairners' sexual practices subject to British law? Table 4.1(b) revealed patterns of blame and consent much more clearly than was evident in Table 4.1(a). It tracked trends in the press discourse as a chronological study of the whole database from March 2001 to July 2003. (This method is also used for Tables 4.3(b) and 4.4(b) to enable easy comparison of the variables selected for each table.

The Times report 9 marked the beginning of speculative period stage 2, and introduced a local age of consent to explain the crimes. The report was particularly critical of the whole Pitcairn community. It attributed mostly mitigated offender blame and strongly blamed the community for their immoral and uncivilised cultural practices. The less critical *Weekend Herald* report 15 was the first substantive report in the New Zealand press. It marked the beginning of speculative period stage 3. This report introduced a strong degree of cultural relativism by considering a variety of cultural factors as explanations for the Pitcairn crimes. This led to an increase in the proportion of reports emphasising more mitigated blame in their most frequently used phrase to describe the crimes. 'Mitigated blame' (2) in Table 4.1(b) shows that mitigated blame rose from 17 per cent in speculative period stage 2 to 83 per cent in speculative period stage 3. The reason for greater mitigation of offender blame appears to be that the crimes were more often categorised as culturally excusable (even as a matter of Pitcairners' cultural rights). Consequently the credibility of the women's complaints was indirectly questioned.

The second most significant trend in the attributions of blame after the introduction of the idea of a local age of consent (report 9), coincided with the beginning of the legally-constrained period with an increase in press releases indicating the seriousness of the likely charges in the Pitcairn case. The immediate press response to official statements about the case was most frequently to use phrases that

constructed the crimes as unmitigated male blame. However, somewhat surprisingly, a significant number of reports began categorising the child sexual abuse as completely normal cultural practices, thereby indicating some notions of consent from the press. Most reports in the database represented the Pitcairn crimes as either unmitigated or mitigated offences of child sexual abuse when only the most commonly used phrase to describe the crimes in each report is considered. Figures for 'unmitigated blame' (1) and 'mitigated blame' (2) in Tables 4.2(a) and 4.2(b) show that a majority (75 per cent and 86 per cent) of the reports indicate the crimes were abusive (i.e., little consent). Figures 'indicating consent' (3) are low during the speculative periods and the first legally-constrained period. However, in the legally-constrained period after the first charges had been laid, phrases suggesting consent increased dramatically and remained high until the end of the database. This was particularly so in the new Zealand press. My content analysis needed to further investigate the processes of the mitigation of blame (minimising and spreading the blame) and the construction of consent (culturally normalising the crimes).

The two discursive strategies of minimisation (spreading the blame) and normalisation (by constructing consent as a cultural characteristic) are closely related in any categorisations of the Pitcairn crimes. The description of the crimes in Table 4.1(b) show a 'divergence' of the tabulated figures into significant proportions of sharply contrasting unmitigated offender blame and cultural consent in the legally-constrained period. This occurred at the point in the database when the first charges for the crimes of sexual abuse were laid against Pitcairn men. Table 4.1(b) emphasises the categorisation of the issue into distinctly different constructions of the case. It also emphasises the very ambiguous and contradictory diffusion into disparate constructions of unmitigated blame and of cultural consent. The latter involved a move away from the sexual realities of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls to a strong emphasis on cultural issues. This distinction between cultural and sexual consent became a focus of the rest of the content analysis.

Any text that describes the crimes as matters of cultural rather than sexual consent, whether mitigating (categorising) and spreading (minimising) the blame or

consenting to (normalising) the crimes, diffuses the central issue of the women's complaints of familial/familiar child *sexual* abuse. Overall, the totals in Table 4.1(b) show that 40 per cent of the reports primarily described the crimes to suggest unmitigated blame, 46 per cent as mitigated blame, and only nine per cent clearly diffused the blame with cultural consent. Further investigation of the database shows that, in the shorter reports that merely presented unmitigated official statements about the crimes and charges are ignored, the more substantive press constructions of the case generally preferred to mitigate and spread the blame for the Pitcairn crimes.

4.3 Who is blamed? Minimising the offender blame

This section analyses the database in terms of the mitigation of offender blame identified in the previous section, to investigate who else was blamed. Is the blame spread from individual sexual offenders to make it a matter of collective cultural responsibilities for the crimes? Section 4.4 then examines representations of the *age* of sexual consent in particular. These act to normalise the crimes as an issue of cultural consent.

The set of tabulations in this section (Tables 4.2(a) and 4.2(b)) focused on minimisation, as part of a discursive strategy of extrematisation. My content analysis of how the blame was minimised, by spreading the blame to the community (as their cultural responsibility), was influenced by Collings' (2002) content analysis of press accounts of both stranger-danger and familial child sexual abuse. He was particularly concerned to contrast the extent and nature of offender causal blame and to analyse victim causal blame, and whether others were considered to be morally responsible. Collings' tabulation of attributional categories suggested how I might investigate the spreading of blame that appeared to minimise the crimes in the Pitcairn case.

From his research findings, Collings (2002, p. 1141) argues that blame for 'non-stereotypic' familial child sexual abuse is spread because it is more difficult to attribute than blame for 'stereotypic' stranger-danger child sexual abuse. His content analysis and tabulations of the spreading of blame suggested that the focus for Tables 4.2(a) and 4.2(b) be the press representations of who is to blame for the Pitcairn

familial/familiar child sexual abuse. The focus is the tabulation of the spreading of the blame from clearly-defined categorised distinctions of individual (male-female) sexual blame to a more diffuse collective cultural responsibility for familial/familiar child sexual abuse. Bennett (2001) highlights the role of stereotypes in our understanding of 'facts', noting:

It is closer to the mark to conclude that the news helps people confirm their favourite stereotypes because those dramatic distortions fit better with the implicit guidelines for selecting and writing news stories. As one critic observed, both public and journalists are involved more in a process of creating convenient fictions than discovering convincing facts - stories move from truth to facts, not the other way around.

Bennett (2001, p. 64)

The categories of who was being blamed included: the individual offenders; Pitcairn society as a whole; the authorities (including the church); the adult women; and even the girl victims. Table 4.2(a) lists examples of attributions of blame for: the male offenders; the girl victims; the adult women; the local community; and outside authorities. The 'no offence/blame' category suggests that no blame is attributable because no offence is recognised according to Pitcairn cultural practices. This latter category suggests a cultural normalisation of child sexual abuse that will be analysed in the subsequent Section 4.4. Specific attributions are sorted according to when they occurred. Table 4.2(a) helps to give an overview of the coding decisions used for Table 4.2(b).

Table 4.2(a): Who is blamed? Examples from the database of press reports

Database Period/ Stage - Report #	(a) Attributing blame to the <i>male offenders</i>
Speculative/1 - #1:	'The men of the island are seen as in control, and if a man says it was not rape, it was not rape'
Speculative/3 - #15:	'a vestige of male chauvinism and brutality'
Speculative/4 - #38:	'[S]ecrecy was serving men on the island who were perpetuating a tradition of rape and sexual abuse'
Legally-constrained/1 - #61:	'not about cultural practices but serious criminal offences ... Minister Phil Goff'
Legally-constrained/2 - #76:	'[N]ine men - a quarter of the population - were charged with sex crimes against girls from their own community'
Legally-constrained/3 - #87:	'They face 21 charges of rape, 41 of indecent assault, and two of gross indecency with a child under 14.'

(Table 4.2(a) continued) ...

Database Period/ Stage - Report #	(b) Attributing blame to the <i>girl victims</i>
Speculative/2 - #9:	'shocking promiscuity because of what happened to [the girls]'
Speculative/3 - #25:	'was struck by the sexual precocity of the girls'
Speculative/3 - #35:	'for the girls it was a rite of passage'
Speculative/4 - #38:	'Support for the victims has been limited; some even blame them, putting the offending down to the way they acted and dressed'
Database Period/ Stage - Report #	(c) Attributing blame to the <i>adult women</i>
Speculative/2 - #9:	'I don't see what all the fuss is about. It happens to all of us' [comment from a middle-aged woman]
Speculative/3 - #32:	'The island's matriarchs allegedly told Mr Tosen that it was a rite of passage for young girls'
Database Period/ Stage - Report #	(d) Attributing blame to the <i>local community</i>
Speculative/1 - #1:	'If a girl says "He raped me", everyone on the island is saying "You asked for it", and the women are like that too'
Speculative/2 - #9:	'As in any small, isolated community, the rules and mores of modern society have been bypassed in favour of practicality'
Speculative/3 - #15:	'Certain ways of behaving have become normal. What becomes acceptable has much to do with the leaders of the community'
Speculative/4 - #38:	'Sarah says the children on the island are sexualised much younger than in New Zealand. It was normal for Pitcairners'
Speculative/4 - #49:	'The tiny community is protecting men who have sexually abused children as young as three'
Database Period/ Stage - Report #	(e) Attributing blame to <i>outside authorities</i>
Speculative/2 - #9:	[church pastors] 'chose to give them the benefit of the doubt'
Speculative/2 - #10:	'Pitcairn is a symbol of what we are failing to do on a much larger scale in the west'
Speculative/4 - #38:	'It was impossible for anyone to make a stand because there was not authority to turn to. The British knew what was going on'
Database Period/ Stage - Report #	(f) Attributing no blame because <i>no offence</i> of child sexual abuse was recognised
Speculative/2 - #9:	'[B]oys and girls enjoy sexual relationships and invite them at a very young age. It is not just a whole lot of men victimising girls'
Speculative/3 - #16:	'Although the British officials say the age of consent on Pitcairn was 16, it was understood Pitcairn girls were considered old enough for sex once they turned 12'
Legally-constrained/1 - #66:	'The woman is one of at least three to have withdrawn from the case, saying they had not known police planned to charge the alleged offenders, often extended family'
Legally-constrained/2 - #82:	Mr Dacre's claims: 'not only that his clients are innocent ...'
Legally-constrained/3 - #84:	'"Browbeaten" Pitcairn women recant island sex accusations'
Legally-constrained/3 - #85:	'The investigation was sparked by an "across the kitchen table" gossip session'
Legally-constrained/3 - #91:	'The seven are among 14 men charged with sex offences ... <i>against women on the island</i> ' [my emphasis]

In the next table (Table 4.2(b)) I tabulate *all* attributions of blame for the crimes. They are sorted chronologically against the time periods of the database (see Table 3.1). Every clear attribution in the 93 reports is tabulated, rather than only the most frequently used or predominant term that was represented in Table 4.1(b). The findings are directly comparable with those in Table 4.1(b) in terms of patterns and changing trends of sexual blame and cultural consent. These findings highlight the widely used discursive strategy of the minimisation of the Pitcairn crimes by spreading the blame and making the community culturally responsible for the crimes.

Overall, 43 per cent of the total attributions blamed the offenders (i.e., as sexual blame), 33 per cent blamed the Pitcairn community collectively (i.e. for cultural consent), and 19 per cent blamed other individuals or groups. Only six per cent attributed no blame at all. More attributions blamed the girl victims (nine per cent) than the authorities (seven per cent). What is evident from the pattern of results is a very similar pattern of diffusion of blame and consent to that revealed in Table 4.1(b). The results show the press construction of distinct categories for the cultural spreading and diffusion of the blame (i.e., both mitigating and spreading the blame) after the initial press response of unmitigated blame for the Pitcairn crimes in speculative period stage 1. Report 9 introduced the local (cultural) age of consent and the cultural explanation of abuse in a dysfunctional society, with anthropological support, at the commencement of speculative period stage 2. Many press reports surprisingly represented some degree of 'no blame' (20 per cent) from this time.

Table 4.2(b): Minimising offender blame by spreading the blame
(all attributions of blame for child sexual abuse in all 93 reports)

Who is Blamed? (percentages of attributions in each period)							
Period	Total attributions	Male offenders	Girl victims	Adult women	Local community	Outside authorities	No offence/ blame
Speculative Period (Stage 1)	14	57% (8) ¹	7% (1)	7% (1)	29% (4)	0% (0)	0 (0)
Speculative Period (Stage 2)	35	3% (1)	20% (7)	3% (1)	43% (15)	11% (4)	20% (7)
Speculative Period (Stage 3)	56	21% (12)	11% (6)	4% (2)	50% (28)	4% (2)	11% (6)
Speculative Period (Stage 4)	45	36% (16)	9% (4)	2% (1)	24% (11)	18% (8)	11% (5)
Whole Speculative Period	150	25% (37)	12% (18)	3% (5)	39% (58)	9% (14)	12% (18)
Legally-constrained Period (Stage 1)	26	81% (21)	0% (0)	0% (0)	4% (1)	0% (0)	15% (4)
Legally-constrained Period (Stage 2)	12	92% (11)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	8% (1)
Legally-constrained Period (Stage 3)	12	50% (6)	0% (0)	0% (0)	8% (1)	0% (0)	42% (5)
Whole Legally-constrained Period	50	76% (38)	0% (0)	0% (0)	4% (2)	0% (0)	20% (10)
Whole Database	200	43% (85)	9% (18)	3% (5)	33% (66)	7% (14)	6% (12)

¹ The number of attributions for each attributional category is given (in brackets) for each of the periods of press reporting.

Blaming the local community (mitigating offender blame by representing cultural blame) was strong throughout the speculative period stages 1 to 4. Despite low numbers of attributions after the commencement of the legally-constrained period, there were a total of 33 per cent of the attributions for the whole database which blamed the community. Particularly influential press feature reports marked the commencement of each of the four stages in the speculative period² and were instrumental in constructing a gradual shift of focus towards cultural diffusion of the issue of familial abuse in the press representations of the alleged Pitcairn offences. For example, the press constructs nine per cent blame for the girls across the whole database. In the speculative period stage 2, 20 per cent of the attributions blame the girls to some degree. There are no such attributions during the legally-constrained period. The feature article at the commencement of the period was report 9. A similarly result was reported in attributions of blame for the outside authorities. Seven per cent of the attributions across the whole database blame the outside authorities, with 18 per cent blame in the speculative period stage 4. The feature article at the commencement of this period is report 38. The roles that reports 9 and 38 play in categorising and diffusing the issue of familial/familiar sexual abuse of young Pitcairn girls, by both minimising and normalising the issue, was increasingly the focus of my thesis.

Collings (2002) argues that his research findings indicated that restrictive stereotyping in media representations of child sexual abuse have the 'potential for minimizing social perceptions of offender culpability' and for 'influencing social judgments of child sexual abuse in ways that are likely to create a non-supportive environment for abuse victims' (ibid., pp. 1143-1145). The spreading of the blame away from the offenders is part of this discursive strategy of minimisation. Collings (2002) suggests that the blame is spread because 'non-stereotypic' child sexual abuse (i.e., familiar abuse) is clearly unlike the 'stereotypic' paedophilic violence (i.e., stranger-danger abuse). According to the sex/violence dichotomisation widely used by the press to differentiate between normal or abnormal sexual practices, the Pitcairn case of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls appeared to be

² Reports numbered 1, 9, 15 and 38 respectively.

represented as more about culturally ‘normal’ familial/familiar heterosexuality than about culturally ‘abnormal’ paedophilia. The solution to this dilemma was to minimise and culturally normalise the crimes by spreading the blame to disperse or diffuse the offender responsibility. Spreading the blame made it a wider community and cultural responsibility, and even represented the abuse as normal, cultural, sexual practices. In this way, the Pitcairn abuse is not considered to be a breach of standard pattern and is often not represented as problematic. The next section of my content analysis looks at the discursive strategy of cultural normalisation of the Pitcairn crimes by the press.

4.4 Normalising a local age of consent

Pitcairn Mayor Steve Christian, speaking to the [New Zealand parliamentary] committee ... said the island did not have a specific age of consent.

The New Zealand Herald (2002, November 9 - report 53)

Accusations of child sex abuse against Pitcairn men were not about cultural sexual practices but serious criminal offences that included the alleged multiple rape of an eight-year-old girl, [New Zealand] Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Phil Goff told Parliament this week.

The Dominion Post (2002, December 19 - report 61)

Officially, the press reports quoted in the epigrams above deny any relevance of a discourse of a local cultural age of consent. In the ‘long soak’, the argument for a local age of consent of 12 years was clearly identified as the most important way that the issue of the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of Pitcairn girls was ‘gerrymandered’ by press representations. By making the Pitcairn crimes a cultural rather than sexual issue of consent, and linking it to a sex/violence dichotomisation used to categorise child sexual abuse (Cossins, 1999; Atmore, 1991), the issue became one of permissive sexuality according to Pitcairn cultural norms. The third set of tabulations in my content analysis (Tables 4.3(a) and 4.3(b)) shows the normalisation of the crimes by arguing for a local age of consent in the press reports, with a particular focus on how the ages of the abused girls were represented by the press. In this section, I examine the press construction of a ‘local age of consent’ of 12 years on Pitcairn Island. I analyse how the cultural issue of the age of the girls obscured the real issue of whether they gave meaningful sexual consent.

Under British, New Zealand and Australian law, girls under the age of 16 years can never give meaningful sexual consent. However, much of the press reporting of the case represents familial abuse as a cultural (and legal) difference of opinion over whether Britain has legal jurisdiction in matters of the Pitcairners' sexual practices. Whatever the arguments, what is being overlooked is that a large proportion of Pitcairn women have made official complaints of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls, particularly young girls, to the outside authorities.

The widespread acknowledgment of the local age of consent is often used by the press to represent the Pitcairn child sexual abuse in a very unspecific way as 'adultery', or consensual sex, and to effectively challenge the women's claims. Officially, in British-Pitcairn law, the age of consent is 16 years, and was 14 years even a century ago (Shapiro, 1968, p. 270). A rather typical use of the 'local consent' discourse is:

It is likely the islanders have developed their own laws since 1790, combining 18th-century British law and Polynesian mores ... [I]t appears the islanders have, after years, had no reason to question the established virtual age of consent of 12 ... a long-standing practice.

The Press (2002, July 27 - report 35)

Table 4.3(a) tabulates examples of typical press representations relevant to the issue of an age of consent. These examples provide an overview of the coding decisions used to construct the subsequent Table 4.3(b).

Table 4.3(a): Press representations of consent and the ages of the victims.

Database Period/ Stage - Report #	(a) Specifically mentioning the age of consent
Speculative/2 - #9:	'Now she had turned 12, she would be expected to have sex with whichever local male asked it of her'
Speculative/2 - #11:	'Though British officials insist that the age of consent on Pitcairn has always been 16, it is understood Pitcairn girls are considered old enough for sex once they turn 12' [typical of many press reports]
Speculative/3 - #15:	'But if sex with girls from the time they turn 10 is part of the island culture, why are there now complaints?' [challenging a local age of consent]

(Table 4.3(a) continued) ...

Speculative/3 - #25:	'They claim variously, that the age of consent on the island has long been 12 or 14, and say that if girls become sexually active earlier than in Western societies, it stems from their part-Polynesian ancestry and should be respected. The hypothesis does not withstand scrutiny, not least because some victims were allegedly five years old or younger'
Speculative/4 - #38:	'Pitcairners live a life based on their mutineer/Tahitian heritage and claim the age of consent there is 12'
Speculative/4 - #43:	'systematic sexual abuse of the island's girls by older men, some of whom, it has been alleged, regard the age of consent as 12. Islanders have spoken of widespread adultery, incest and startling sexual precociousness'
Speculative/4 - #53:	'the island did not have a specific age of consent'
Legally-constrained/1-3 - : ..	There were no further references to any specific age of consent.
Database Period/ Stage - Report #	(b) Making an issue of the girls' ages rather than whether they consented to sex
Speculative/2 - #9:	'[W]hile these charges involve allegations of straightforward child abuse ['girls as young as five'], more complex is the background surrounding other, potential, charges concerning girls aged between 12 and 25' [25 should read 15]
Speculative/2 - #10:	'Child sex is common, with girls made available from 12 or 13. This has probably been the way of things for 200 years, but now the island women are angry that girls are offered to passing sailors and tourists'
Speculative/4 - #38:	'[H]e heard complaints of sex abuse with children as young as 5 ... uncles and aunts with nephews and nieces and that sort of thing ... In contrast, Herb Ford ... says he knows there's been under-age sex on the island, "but if Pitcairn men are preying on young girls then I'm missing a lot."'
Speculative/4 - #44:	'a "score of alleged victims, probably three-quarters of them living in New Zealand ... there's probably about a dozen alleged offenders"' [Nowhere are offences against children mentioned in a 450-word press report on the Pitcairn case]
Speculative/4 - #49:	'the charges, which have so far remained secret, would involve toddlers as well as girls aged seven and 10'
Legally-constrained/1 - #70:	'charges ranging from sex with a person below the age of consent to rape of a seven-year-old, and indecent assault of a three-year-old'
Legally-constrained/2 - #79:	'Sex charges against nine men from the Pitcairn Islands includes 21 for rape, 41 for indecent assault involving teenage girls' [focusing on girls <i>older</i> than 12 years]
Legally-constrained/2 - #82:	'charged with 64 sexual crimes against children. They face 21 charges of rape, 41 indecent assaults against young girls and two charges of gross indecency with a child under 14' [focusing on young girls and children]
Legally-constrained/3 - #90:	'Four Pitcairn Island men living in New Zealand were charged with 32 offences ... including 10 counts of rape' [Nowhere are children, teenagers or girls mentioned]
Legally-constrained/3 - #91:	'The seven are among 14 men charged with sex offences, including rape and indecent assault, against women on the island' [Nowhere are children, teenagers or girls mentioned]

Press representations of the ages of the abused girls, and of a local age of consent of 12 years, are presented in Table 4.3(b). This table shows how and when the press used either distinct age and gender categorisations or a process of diffusion (vague formulations) of age and gender to ignore the issue of the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls (girls younger than 12 years) by respected men in a widely respected community. A discourse of collective cultural consent (e.g., the local age of consent), is used in place of the girls' lack of individual sexual consent. The legal and cultural ages of consent, that distinguish girls from women and child sexual abuse from adult sexual abuse, are a focus for most longer press reports constructing the issue of the Pitcairn crimes. Over 50 per cent of the reports specifically emphasised the gendered nature of the crimes (i.e., involving girls), while over 30 per cent represented the crimes as ungendered (i.e., abusing children). Some reports were apparently so convinced of the local age of consent of 12 years that they preferred to see most, if not all of the crimes as the sexual abuse (at the most) of adult women. A significant percentage (16 per cent) did not distinguish whether adults or children were abused. Table 4.3(b) presents the results of a content analysis of age and gender alongside the percentage of reports that mentioned the local age of consent at different times. Once again, the results are recorded for the seven time periods of the database to be able to track the changing discourses, particularly the discursive strategy of normalisation that is often used to construct the issue of familial/familiar sexual abuse in the Pitcairn case. The chronological tabulation suggests a number of normalising trends in the press reporting of distinct age and gender categories that can more readily be compared with findings concerning the categorisation and minimisation of the Pitcairn crimes by mitigating and spreading the blame, as presented in Tables 4.1(b) and 4.2(b).

Table 4.3(b): Was there consent? The local age of consent.

What ages were the abused?							
Period	Total reports	Percentages of reports representing the Pitcairn crimes as sexual abuse of:					Mentions local age of consent
		girls including less than 12 years	Girls only between 12 - 16 years	children less than 16 years	adult women specified	ages not indicated	
Speculative Period ² (Stage 1)	8	0% (0) ¹	0% (0)	88% (7)	0% (0)	13% (1)	0% (0)
Speculative Period (Stage 2)	6	0% (0)	33% (2)	67% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	83% (5)
Speculative Period (Stage 3)	23	9% (2)	17% (4)	61% (14)	0% (0)	13% (3)	35% (8)
Speculative Period (Stage 4)	17	24% (4)	53% (9)	0% (0)	0% (0)	24% (4)	35% (6)
Whole Speculative Period	54	11% (6)	28% (15)	46% (25)	0% (0)	15% (8)	35% (19)
Legally-constrained Period(Stage 1)	19	68% (13)	11% (2)	11% (2)	0% (0)	11% (2)	5% (1)
Legally-constrained Period(Stage 2)	10	40% (4)	30% (3)	10% (1)	0% (0)	20% (2)	0% (0)
Legally-constrained Period(Stage 3)	10	0% (0)	40% (4)	10% (1)	20% (2)	30% (3)	0% (0)
Whole Legally-constrained Period	39	44% (17)	23% (9)	10% (4)	5% (2)	18% (7)	0% (9)
Whole Database	93	25% (23)	26% (24)	31% (29)	2% (2)	16% (15)	22% (20)

¹ The number of reports in each age and gender, or local age of consent, category is given (in brackets) for each of the periods of press reporting.

During the speculative period of the database, 35 per cent of the reports (most of the longer reports) mentioned a local age of consent of 12 years to suggest that the Pitcairn crimes were normalised as culturally excusable. However, after the Pitcairn Mayor told a parliamentary committee in November 2002 that Pitcairn had no specific age of consent (see epigram for Section 4.4), the local age of consent was not mentioned in connection with a particular age in any subsequent press reports. Only a single report (report 53) mentioned the Mayor's statement and the local age of consent argument was never repudiated in other press reports. So, while reports only hinted at the age of consent in the legally-constrained period, it was apparent that an age of consent of 12 years was widely presumed to be a Pitcairn tradition.

Table 4.3(b) shows that, during the speculative period, 28 per cent of the reports that did specify age and gender described the crimes as teenage sex among 12 to 15-year-old girls. A total of 85 per cent of the press reports in the speculative period were clear that the crime was child sexual abuse including girls specifically (i.e., only 15 per cent considered the crimes to be adult sexual abuse). Most ignored the sexual abuse of young girls (11 per cent compared with 28 per cent for the abuse of older girls). While 77 per cent still identified the crimes as child sexual abuse (including abuse of girls) in the legally-constrained period, far more (44 per cent compared with 23 per cent) acknowledged the abuse of young girls under 12 years than represented in press reports in the speculative period. There was a tendency for the press to increasingly represent the Pitcairn crimes as crimes among adults, rather than as involving child abuse, in both the speculative period (increasing from 13 to 24 per cent) and the legally-constrained period (from 11 to 50 per cent).

Therefore, two discursive processes are evident. The first distinguished two age categories in the speculative period, and the second diffused the age and gender categories in the legally-constrained period. Both acted to culturally normalise the endemic familial/familiar abuse of young girls under 12 years, in different ways. During the speculative periods stages 2 and 3, the discursive process distinguished two age categories of girls according to a local age of consent. This enabled the press to focus on the problematic representations of teenage sex as precocious consensual

sex in the context of a sexually permissive Pitcairn community, and to ignore the 'straightforward' sexual abuse of younger girls. In the speculative period stage 4 there was a marked refocusing on the ages of all of the girls (87 per cent of reports) that continued during the legally-constrained period (97 per cent of reports). At first the emphasis (68 per cent) shifted to the young girls under 12 as official sources indicated the likely charges involved girls as young as 3 years old. However, after these charges were laid, the emphasis shifted back to teenage sex and 'adult' sex (presumably according to the local age of consent). This suggests a second process of cultural normalisation by diffusion in the later reports, using vague formulations of age and gender to cast doubt on the whole issue of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls and on the Pitcairn women's complaints.

The earlier process of distinct age categorisations could be linked to a widely accepted sex/violence dichotomy – stereotypically 'normal' familial/familiar sex as clearly different from stereotypically problematic paedophilic stranger-danger, as violent abuse. That allows a 'permissive sexuality' discourse of culturally normal consensual heterosexuality to be completely separated from a 'male sexual needs' discourse of criminal violation. The later process of diffusion developed after the local age of consent was discredited and the authorities said the issue was about sexual and cultural crimes (see *The Dominion Post* epigram at the start of Section 4.4). This diffusion resulted from ambiguities developing from the contradiction-in-terms that is endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls (even infants and toddlers) by the respectable men of a widely respected community, as definite charges were laid. Surprisingly, despite the explicit nature of the 96 child sexual abuse charges against so many Pitcairn men, some reports would not acknowledge that the crimes were against girls, particularly against young and very young girls. Women's complaints of child sexual abuse were being completely undermined with a discourse of cultural rather than sexual consent, despite all evidence to the contrary.

This shift from the first discursive process of the age categorisation and cultural normalisation of 'more complex' teenage sex (report 9), to the second process of diffusion of the issue of child sexual abuse into adult sex (e.g., reports 38 and 91) is

investigated further with discourse analysis described in Chapter Five. This is a remarkable gerrymandering of the term 'consent' to imply that the sexual abuse of young girls was somehow consensual and culturally normal. Goddard and Saunders (2002, p. 44) discuss press representations of a child sexual abuse case and argue that the 'serious sexual abuse of a child by an adult male has been reframed as a consensual relationship between adults ... Such lexical redescription amounts to the textual abuse of the child.'

Over 28 months, a large percentage of the press representations of the Pitcairn crimes, gradually 'transform' the Pitcairn crimes from serious abuses involving children to minor offences between adults. This textual abuse is an important aspect of press constructions of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls in the Pitcairn case in terms of blame and consent. Such a normalisation of the offences, as unproblematic adult consensual sex, contributes to the minimisation of most of the crimes and reduces the impact of child sexual abuse on the reader. By operationalising the local age of consent discourse, most of the Pitcairn child sexual abuse is either eventually loosely represented as 'normal' under-age sex in a particularly permissive society, or as problematic 'normal' sexual abuse in a dysfunctional society dominated by a patriarchal 'male sexual needs' discourse. This has been achieved by a discursive strategy of the categorisation of an ontologically gerrymandered (lexically redescribed) discourse of cultural rather than sexual consent. Such discursive strategies diffuse the issue of familial sexual abuse. However, diffusion is as much about what has not been said, as about a content analysis of what is said.

This construction conflates cultural consent, consensual sex, and sexual consent, and undermined the whole issue of the girls' agency concerning crimes of familial/familiar abuse. To look more carefully at the processes of distinct categorisation and diffusion by the 'ontological gerrymandering' of 'consent', I turn to the discourse analysis. Two pivotal press reports (9 and 38) have repeatedly been identified in the content analysis as the most influential reports in terms of this categorisation and diffusion of the issue of familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls.

These reports become the focus of the discourse analysis (Chapter Five) of the discursive strategies of categorisation, minimisation and normalisation, and in particular the local age of consent discourse and processes of diffusion of the Pitcairn crimes.

4.5 Conclusion

The content analysis in Chapter Four described *what* the press reports represented as the issue in the Pitcairn case through the use of three discursive strategies to mitigate the blame for the offenders with a local age of sexual consent of 12 years. The press constructed two very effective discursive processes, firstly to distinctly categorise the crimes according to the girls' ages and, secondly, to diffuse the whole issue with doubts about the credibility of the entire issue of the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls by respectable men. The content analysis of the whole database investigated three discursive strategies that were identified during the 'long soak', in order to understand how the press constructed the issue of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse in the Pitcairn case in terms of blame and consent. These three discursive strategies categorise, minimise and normalise the crimes by mitigating offender blame, spreading offender blame to the community at large (including to the girls and women), and by constructing cultural rather than sexual consent, respectively.

Section 4.2 showed that a process of categorisation into unmitigated and mitigated blame, or even consent, differentiated the press representations into two camps. Those that represented the crimes with unmitigated blame, described the child sexual abuse as 'child rape', 'sexual attacks' and so on, and drew on the widely used, sensationalising representations of stranger-danger paedophilia as serious, violent and inexcusable crimes. However, the majority of the reports, which mitigated the offender blame with less emotive phrases like child sexual abuse or sexual misdemeanours, or represented the issue as no crimes at all (e.g., 'precocious sexuality'), excused the offences to varying degrees, as 'soft' crimes or merely as permissive sexuality.

Section 4.3 minimised the discourse into stereotypically problematic paedophilia (unmitigated offender blame) and, more usually, into stereotypically culturally 'normal' familial/familiar heterosexuality (mitigated offender blame, community blame, and cultural consent). This allowed the press to introduce the sex/violence dichotomy. By spreading the offender blame to the community, an issue of individual sexual violation became an issue of collective cultural consent for 'normal' under-age sex and the crimes were minimised.

Section 4.4 looked at how the issue of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse in the Pitcairn case was normalised using a local age of consent discourse. In the speculative period, most reports used the local age of consent of 12 years to distinctly categorise girls'/children's ages so that reports could focus on the issue of teenage sexuality in a permissive society, and could ignore the very different and difficult issue of the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls in a respectable community. With increasing certainty during 2002 about the likely charges in the Pitcairn case involving the sexual abuse of many young and very young girls, press reports often turned to diffusing the whole issue with vague formulations of the age and gender of the victims of abuse.

The results of the content analysis in this chapter showed that, in cases of abuse that do not accord with the stereotype of the child rapist as a violent paedophilic stranger, three discursive strategies of categorisation, minimisation and normalisation are widely used to diffuse blame and avoid the problematic issue of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls. Despite the official empirical discourse that girls can give no meaningful consent under age 16, the press constructed a two-part categorisation around a local age of consent of 12 years using three discursive strategies to minimise and normalise the Pitcairn crimes. Press reports 9 and 38 were identified as pivotal to the construction of the local age of consent discourse using a chronological study of the database in Chapter Four. These two press reports are a focus of the discourse analysis in Chapter Five which investigates in detail *how* the press constructs the issue of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of Pitcairn girls, in terms of blame and consent. The discourse analysis investigates how the press

distinctly categorises the girls' ages and then diffuses age and gender concerning such familial abuse, by constructing ambiguity and doubt and by leaving so much unsaid. Chapter Six looks at what was not said.

Chapter Five: Distinguishing and Diffusing the Age of Consent:

A Discourse Analysis

First, how are descriptions produced so they will be treated as factual? That is, how are they made to appear solid, neutral, independent of the speaker, and to be merely mirroring some aspect of the world? How can a factual description be undermined? And what makes a description difficult to undermine? Second, how are these factual descriptions put together in ways that allow them to perform particular actions? What kinds of activities are commonly done using descriptions? And why might descriptions be suitable for doing those activities?

Potter (1996, p. 1)

5.1 Introduction

The content analysis in Chapter Four revealed what the 93 press reports said about the Pitcairn case. It showed that the case has been represented using three discursive strategies: categorisation of the Pitcairn case which highlighted the mitigation of the offender blame; minimisation of the offender blame by spreading the blame to other groups such as women, the community, outside authorities, and even to the girl victims; and the normalisation of the crimes with cultural consent as the non-violent, hetero-normative practices of Pitcairn society. These discursive strategies all distinguish the crimes according to the girls' ages and diffuse the issue of the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young Pitcairn girls as a serious criminal offence. In this chapter, I investigate two significant press reports that were identified in Chapter Four as particularly relevant for understanding the processes of distinct categorisations and diffusion of the crimes. These processes are explored using a discourse analysis to better understand how the discursive strategies deployed constructed the issue of familial abuse in the Pitcairn case, in terms of blame and consent.

The analysis in this chapter contributes to understanding how representations work to create doubt, to diffuse the issue of the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of Pitcairn girls. Such doubt undermines the credibility of the women's complaints of familial sexual abuse as anything other than culturally permissible consensual sex.

Potter and Wetherell (1996, p. 88) argue that the aim of discourse analysis is to 'reveal the discursive practices through which ... categories are constructed and [actions] legitimated'. These categories are to be seen as discourses which encompass 'broadly discernible clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors or vivid images' (ibid., p. 89). This chapter engages specifically with how descriptions are constructed to be factual, and in particular how press constructions of blame in the Pitcairn case build on the terms, descriptions and the language of the many meanings of 'consent'.

Two influential press reports were identified repeatedly in the 'long soak' and in the content analysis in Chapter Four - reports 9 and 38. Copies of both reports are reproduced in the appendices with paragraphs numbered to facilitate reference for the discourse analysis. The chronological coding of the database identified these reports as pivotal to the press constructions of a local age of consent discourse. Discourse analyses of these two reports are used to answer the research question: How do the press reports construct the issue of child sexual abuse in the Pitcairn case in terms of blame and consent?

5.2 How *The Times* constructed the Pitcairn case

[title] 'That's what girls are for'

[byline] Investigations into two alleged rapes on Pitcairn Island, famous as the paradise haven of the Bounty mutineers, have exposed a society that treats women as sex objects. Stephen d'Antal reports ...

The Times (2001, May 9 - report 9)¹

This report represents the Pitcairn case as patriarchal crimes in a dysfunctional community and makes a particular point of authorising its arguments with the

¹ All indented quotations (with paragraph numbers shown) in Section 5.2 are from *The Times*, 2001, May 9, report 9. This report is reproduced in full in Appendix Two.

opinions of mature, very well warranted women. This report was the first substantive feature about the Pitcairn complaints and the first to introduce the ‘local age of consent of 12 years’ discourse for the first time. Report 9 clearly influenced (and was often quoted by) subsequent press reporting of the case. Report 9 marks the beginning of a speculative process (speculative period stages 2 to 4 of the database - see Table 3.1), a period that culminated in the *Weekend Herald* report 38 that is analysed later in this chapter.

Report 9 was one of the longer feature reports in my database and constructs a complex representation of the case that is well suited to fine-grained discourse analysis. I examine the discursive strategies used to construct descriptions as ‘factual’, and which point to the action orientation of these descriptions for representing the Pitcairn case in terms of blame and consent.

Firstly, I contextualise this discourse analysis within a brief summary of the whole press report which has an provocative headline: ‘That’s what girls are for’. The byline (see epigram above) adds intrigue with phrases like: ‘two alleged rapes’, ‘paradise haven’, ‘Bounty mutineers’, ‘women as sex objects’. The initial text [paragraphs 1-4] describes a scene of young girls in a playground, whose conversation is overheard and interpreted by a schoolteacher to indicate evidence of loose sexual practices within the Pitcairn Island community. The report describes the location, history and practicalities of remote Pitcairn Island life [paragraphs 5-7] before presenting a police investigation into the sexual abuse of young girls [paragraphs 8-9] with additional background and witness’s comments [paragraphs 10-12]. Early incidents leading to the current complaints are presented with comments by the investigating police [paragraphs 13-16] together with another recent investigation conducted among Pitcairners living on Norfolk Island [paragraphs 17-19]. Perspectives from a professional anthropologist and a student of anthropology are presented [paragraphs 20-25] and religious spokesmen discuss their involvement in the Pitcairn community [paragraphs 26-28]. Comments from a descendent of the original Pitcairn Island settlers are included [paragraphs 29-31] before additional

remarks from the schoolteacher [paragraphs 32-33]. The report concludes with comments from three professional British anthropologists [paragraphs 34-41].

The Pitcairn case is normalised by a discursive strategy representing a local age of sexual consent of 12 years, which is much lower than the British legal age of consent of 16 years. Distinguishing categories according to the girls' ages manipulates the boundaries of how the reality of the Pitcairn case is understood. Potter and Wetherell (1987, p. 137) describe categories as the 'building blocks of the many versions of the social world' that are 'moulded in discourse for use in different accounts'. Categorisation, according to age and gender with a discourse of a local age of consent, is evident in the following extract that set the tone for *the Times* report.

[paragraph 1] The two little girls were sitting in the playground giggling and whispering, the way girls do. One was 13, the other had just turned 12.

[paragraph 2] As Sheils Carnihan passed them, she expected to hear the conversation of innocents, something about the latest fashion, perhaps, or at most a childish crush on an older boy.

[paragraph 3] What she heard, however, appalled the schoolteacher, a newcomer to the community. "I overheard the older girl say to the younger 'You know, you'll be old enough for it'."

[paragraph 4] In effect, Carnihan believes, the older child was warning - or simply reminding - her friend that, now she had turned 12, she would be expected to have sex with whichever local male asked it of her. It wasn't so much the statement itself that shocked Carnihan, but the fact that it was so casual - a comment passed between two children who knew, and accepted, that despite their extreme youth, they were regarded within their community as sexually mature. On Pitcairn Island, a rocky outcrop in the Pacific Island with a population of just 44, it is accepted that boys and girls this young are sexually active.

Terms and metaphors in the above paragraphs both characterise and also evaluate a local age of consent. The report sets the stage to involve 'little girls' aged 13 and 12 [paragraph 1], and uses rich detail such as 'sitting in the playground giggling and whispering, the way girls do' [paragraph 1] to bolster and build the 'factuality' of the construction of the local age of consent. Potter (1996), in arguing for his discursive strategy of categorisation says that descriptions such as those found in press representations construct or frame factuality by 'selecting some descriptions and rejecting others' (p. 200). This selection process 'shows the way claims and arguments may be made effective by selecting particular sets of entities for

decomposition while treating others as unproblematic' (Potter, 1996, p. 200). Report 9 constructs a representation in a case of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls to focus sharply on girls in the 12 to 15 year-old age range - 'now she had turned 12' [paragraph 4]. The serious sexual abuse of very young girls 'as young as five' [paragraph 8] has been attended to by acknowledgment as 'straightforward child abuse' [paragraph 9] and is not followed by any further discussion. However, the aspect of the police investigation that he considers more problematic or 'more complex' [paragraph 9] relates to girls in the 12 to 15 age group as is seen in the following extract.

[paragraph 8] ... Over the past year detectives have interviewed scores of Pitcairn women, both those on the island and those who have left. Their investigations may result not just in a rape charge, but in a string of charges relating to girls as young as five.

[paragraph 9] But while these charges involve allegations of straightforward child abuse, more complex is the background surrounding other, potential, charges concerning girls aged between 12 and 25. [misprint, read 15]

At a time when little is known of whether charges will follow and what they will be, this report constructs two distinct categories of the girls' ages older and younger than 12 years for an explanation of the Pitcairn case. For girls older than 12 years, sex with adult men is constructed as widespread, endemic, normalised (unproblematic for Pitcairners), consensual heterosexuality according to locally accepted sexual practices [paragraphs 4, 6, 7]. However, for younger girls, and 'a string of charges relating to girls as young as five' has been suggested [paragraph 8], the crimes are a matter of 'straightforward child abuse' [paragraph 9]. Despite the string of likely charges, this report considers that the problem of girls aged 12 to 15 years is 'more complex' [paragraph 9]. The press representations of the Pitcairn case highlight an issue that many people find the whole subject of the 'sexual abuse of men's ideologically sanctioned power over women and children inside the family' (Segal, 1995, p. 131) too embarrassing to discuss openly.

The Pitcairn islanders' habits are believed by British detectives to be 'far from normal' [paragraph 8], which problematises a local age of consent with a distinct age-group categories. Report 9 'normalises' certain western stereotypes and then contrasts patriarchal and dysfunctional sexual practices on Pitcairn as problematic

according to a sex/violence dichotomy. For example, the following references indicate the 'normal' western approach: 'the rights of women and girls to have a say in their own sexual lives' [paragraph 6]; 'the most basic rights that women in larger societies expect as a matter of course' [paragraph 6]; and 'our more "civilised" eyes' [paragraph 5]. These are contrasted with problematised Pitcairn practices: 'a society that treats women as sex objects' [byline]; 'any girls from the age of 12 upwards were "fair game"' [paragraph 10]; 'Adult men and older teenage boys feel they have full rights to the girls' [paragraph 11]. Report 9 argues the inappropriate use of distinctions between age categories of girls, despite a local age of consent, when sexual crimes are committed against any girls under 16 years of age.

Report 9 categorises the child sexual abuse in patriarchal Pitcairn society as a function of a local age of consent. The author uses emancipated western women's opinions to argue Pitcairn girls' lack of emancipation in a patriarchal society [paragraphs 2-5, 7, 10-11, 19, 32-33]. Pitcairn is problematised as a dysfunctional western society. Women are treated as 'domestic slaves or sex slaves' [paragraph 21]. The 'expert' opinion of an anthropologist is introduced to reinforce that all societies have their own culturally normative values and social stereotypes: 'What happens in small communities is that certain ways of behaving become normal ... Maybe on Pitcairn there has always been loose sexual practice' [paragraphs 41-42].

This report constructed distinct categories to explain the issue of the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of under-aged girls according to a local age of consent on Pitcairn Island. These categories were culturally accepted sexual practices for 12 to 15 year-old girls, and unacceptable sexual abuse when girls were under 12 years. *The Times* press report 9 represented both categories as child sexual abuse and attributed unmitigated blame to the patriarchal Pitcairn society. The mitigated blame for the individual male offenders was spread to include the whole Pitcairn society. The introductory paragraphs of the report [1-4] represent that the girls over 12 years of age as 'expected to have sex with whichever local male asked it of [them]' [paragraph 4]. However, the overall tone of the article is of girls who are brought up to casually accept 'consensual' sex as playground matters, despite outsiders' shocked

disapproval. This press report certainly problematises the abuse [paragraph 26], despite spreading the blame to include the whole community as variously responsible. But geography and race [paragraph 6], the church [paragraph 25], precociously sexualised girls, and matters of class [paragraphs 30 and 31] are also blamed for the lawless and sexually abusive community standards and the local age of consent. Nevertheless, the report creates a degree of ambiguity and uncertainty concerning whether the blame is mitigated or not, and whether the crimes should be considered problematic or not.

5.3 How the *Weekend Herald* constructed the Pitcairn case

[title] Lonely island weathering a storm.

[byline] For the first time Pitcairn Islanders have broken their silence to tell Tim Watkin of their resentment over the clouds of suspicion that hang over them following allegations of sexual abuse.

Weekend Herald (2002, August 24-25 - report 38)²

Report 9 blamed a ‘dysfunctional’ Pitcairn community for the problematic crimes of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls by adult men in an uncivilised society with a rebellious heritage. However, by the time report 38 was written, the Pitcairn society was being represented as a widely respected community with a strong British heritage. If there had been widespread familial sexual abuse of young girls, it must have been by ‘respectable’ men.

The press report begins by introducing a secretive Pitcairn history and culture [paragraphs 1-4] hiding a possible tradition of sexual abuse [paragraph 5]. Paragraphs 6-9 are interviews with three Pitcairners breaking their silence to the media, before more background is presented [paragraphs 10-12]. The report returns to the interviews [paragraphs 13-14] and more background [paragraphs 15-17]. Only

² All indented quotations (with paragraph numbers shown) in Section 5.3 are from the *Weekend Herald*, 2002, August 24-25, report 38. This report is reproduced in part in Appendix Three. My discourse analysis focuses only on the first half [paragraphs 1-54] of this 3750-word, 111-paragraph report on the Pitcairn case, and paragraphs 1 to 54 are reproduced in Appendix Three. The second half of the report shifts from a discussion of the Pitcairn crimes to other matters of law, political autonomy and the economic survival of the island community, which is itself a significant process of diffusion away from the central issue of the Pitcairn familial sexual abuse.

in paragraphs 18-22 are child sexual abuse and the local age of consent raised. Religious spokespeople have their say [paragraphs 23-29] before the report returns to Pitcairn secrets [paragraphs 30-32]. The interviewees discuss childhood and police investigations [paragraphs 31-34] and compare Pitcairn with Norfolk Island and New Zealand [paragraphs 35-39]. Paragraphs 40-45 discuss British and church responsibilities before speculating on the seriousness of the offences [paragraph 46]. The interviewees admit Pitcairn practices are wrong [paragraphs 48-49] but are also angry at their treatment by outsiders [paragraphs 50-54]. The rest of the report turns to legal issues, human rights, development projects, politics and everyday Pitcairn life [paragraphs 55-111] without turning back to discussing the alleged crimes.

Report 38 was the first press report to have access to the Pitcairners' own perspectives on the current investigation. It also drew on a variety of official sources such as Deputy Governor Karen Wolstenholme, Public Prosecutor Simon Moore and Public Defender Paul Dacre, and a number of Seventh Day Adventist church representatives who presently serve on Pitcairn Island or have done so in the past.

'Alex', 'Sarah' and 'Mary' (all pseudonyms) are close to the case (e.g., 'Police knocked on ['Alex' and 'Sarah's'] door early in 2000 wanting to interview him about allegations of sexual offending made by women from Pitcairn' - paragraph 13). In addition to Pitcairners 'Alex', 'Sarah' and 'Mary', this report interviewed other present or former Pitcairn residents: 'Trent Christian, son of the Pitcairn mayor and now living on Norfolk Island' [paragraph 36]; 'Betty Christian, a 59-year-old, sixth-generation Pitcairner' [paragraph 54]; and 'Pitcairn Mayor Steve Christian' [paragraph 74]. All three are authentically warranted by their Fletcher Christian ancestry. This same name acts to suggest the integrity of their testimony through its association with a long Pitcairn religious heritage and with Christian religious tenets of truth and honesty. The report's constructions from these interviews with Pitcairners provide new authoritative perspectives for subsequent press representations of the Pitcairn case, at a time when much of the press (e.g., report 35) was frustrated by a lack of press releases and with being denied access to Pitcairn Island. Report 38 marks the beginning of the final speculative period of the database,

as it began to be legally-constrained by more frequent official press releases, likely legislation changes in New Zealand, and the increasing certainty of charges being laid.

Several references are made to the nature of the ‘storm’ which the Pitcairners are weathering. The report’s byline mentions ‘allegations of sexual abuse’. This is expanded in paragraph 5, where sexual abuse claims being investigated are expected to result in charges before the end of the year 2002. Further information on the investigation and allegations are represented in paragraphs 13-14 where interviewee ‘Alex’ is positioned as a possible ‘alleged offender’ in the case. However, it was not until paragraphs 18-22 that the more serious nature of the Pitcairn investigation is presented at length.

[paragraph 18] That investigators have uncovered sexual misconduct - at least some very serious - can hardly be doubted, given the extent of their inquiries. But just how grave and widespread the offending has been divides even those who know the island well.

At this point of the article there is still no suggestion that the alleged crimes involve other than the rape or sexual abuse of adult women. The only reference to the crimes is that the ‘allegations of sexual offending’ have been ‘made by women from Pitcairn’ [paragraph 13]. The sexual abuse of girls under the age of 16 is not introduced until paragraph 19³. From paragraph 19 the report focused on the under-16 age group, none of whom, according to British law, can give meaningful consent to sexual relationships. The local age of consent discourse is constructed to represent two different age groups. Firstly, girls aged 12⁴ to 15-years are represented as older than a ‘cultural’ age of sexual consent. Secondly, girls younger than 12 years with whom sex with adult men is unacceptable by any standards. Paragraphs 19 and 20 construct historical precedence for a ‘cultural’ age of consent:

[paragraph 19] One outsider who spent several years on Pitcairn, but refused to have his name revealed, says Pitcairners live a life based on their mutineer/Tahitian heritage and claim the age of consent there is 12 (according to Pitcairn ordinances it is 15). While they travel and are aware

³ The Pitcairn case involves only allegations of sexual abuse against girls under 16-year-of age (report 82).

⁴ This report also ambiguously mentions girls as young as 10 years and diffuses the ‘cultural’ age of consent category [paragraphs 33 and 46].

of modern sexual mores, they have secretly continued a tradition of adultery and under-age sex, he says.

[paragraph 20] 'It was ingrained, their way of life, and they tried to hide it. The grandmothers claim they had their turn and the next generation must endure it. The men controlled everything and immorality on the island was very high.'

The witness representing Pitcairn life is unnamed. Usually this would reduce the credibility for his reported observations. However, at the same time, his evidence is validated because he 'spent several years on Pitcairn' [paragraph 19] and his anonymity is justified on the grounds of emotional trauma from his Pitcairn experiences. This is represented in paragraph 22 which explains that the witness 'and his family needed counselling after leaving the island and he desperately wants to put Pitcairn behind him'. The 'outsider' claims 'the age of consent [on Pitcairn] is 12' [paragraph 19]. The report adds: 'according to Pitcairn ordinances it is 15' [paragraph 19]. The reference to 'a tradition of adultery and under-age sex' [paragraph 19] represents both a situation of loose sexual morality on one hand, as well as married adult men (as adulterers) committing sexual offences against girls under 16 years of age on the other. The meaning is ambiguous.

The representation of loose sexual morality is supported by: 'The men controlled everything and immorality on the island was very high' [paragraph 20]. Extreme case formulation is employed to emphasise the contrast between Pitcairners sexual practices and a western sexual stereotype: '[Pitcairners] travel and are aware of modern sexual mores' [paragraph 19] is juxtaposed against 'Pitcairners live a life based on their mutineer/Tahitian heritage' [paragraph 19]. The sexual practices on Pitcairn are represented as culturally (locally) normal. An outsider is quoted as saying that Pitcairners 'tried to hide' [paragraph 20] a 'tradition of adultery and under-age sex' [paragraph 19]. While under-age sex is represented as 'normal' sexual practice on Pitcairn, it is not necessarily unproblematic for all Pitcairners. That the grandmothers are reported to say 'the next generation must endure it' [paragraph 20] suggests a gender-power imbalance precluding female agency. That Pitcairn women have made complaints of sexual abuse is confirmation. The next sentence in the report: 'The men controlled everything' [paragraph 20] endorses the

conceptualisation of a power hierarchy on the island. The gender-power imbalance is extended to include the sexual abuse of very young girls.

[paragraph 21] Worse, he heard complaints of sex abuse with children as young as 5 and says while he doesn't believe there was incest, "you'd come across uncles and aunts with nephews and nieces and that sort of thing".

[paragraph 22] The outsider says he told the islanders their behaviour was unacceptable and was ostracised....

From paragraph 21 the author begins to undermine and diffuse age and gender categories that were previously clearly distinguished to represent girls above and below the age of consent of 12 years. While 'sex abuse with children as young as 5' [paragraph 21] is still constructed as 'unacceptable' [paragraph 22], there is a denial that the sexual practices on Pitcairn involved 'incest' [paragraph 21]. This diffuses the impact of the crimes against girls as young as 5 being considered to be unacceptable. The issue is further diffused by the statement that 'you'd come across uncles and aunts with nephews and nieces and that sort of thing' [paragraph 21], because the alleged complaints all involve the adult male sexual abuse of under-age girls. As such, the reference to 'aunts' and 'nephews' is contradictory and fosters uncertainty. The 'uncles' sexually abusing their 'nieces' is both incest and the familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls.

[paragraph 23] In contrast, Herb Ford, director of the Seventh Day Adventist-sponsored Pitcairn Island Study Centre in San Francisco, says he knows there's been under-age sex on the island, "but if Pitcairn men are preying on young girls then I'm missing a lot. I don't think it would have been denied by silence, by these people who have considered themselves Christian people.

[paragraph 24] "I think we are talking about a few isolated cases, not a rule."

Herb Ford is well warranted to voice an opinion concerning Pitcairn practices, as he is the director of the Californian 'Pitcairn Island Study Centre' [paragraph 23]. He denies that 'Pitcairn men are preying on young girls' [paragraph 23]. Ford will not accept the interpretation of the alleged Pitcairn offences as violent sexual abuse of young girls, although he is willing to acknowledge that 'there's been under-age sex on the island' [paragraph 23]. Ford's impressive credentials as knowledgeable of Pitcairners are undermined by his vested interests as a Seventh Day Adventist church representative wanting to maintain the previously good reputation of his congregation

‘who have considered themselves Christian people’ [paragraph 23]. Ford’s attempt to minimise the acknowledgement of any possible alleged sexual offending (‘a few isolated cases, not a rule’ [paragraph 24]) is undermined and a reader remains uncertain concerning the extent and seriousness of the Pitcairn crimes.

The author then uses the following comments by Seventh Day Adventist pastor, Rick Ferrets which begin by typically referring to the under-age sexuality of the 12-15 year-old age group. The credibility of Ferret’s observations are undermined by the representation of hesitancy and uncertainty in his testimony.

[paragraph 27] He was aware of adultery, “like anywhere”, but never received reports of rape or under-age sex. Yet he wasn’t surprised when the allegations were made. He stopped and started as he tried to explain what he knew.

[paragraph 28] ‘It was never obvious ... We never witnessed ... You may have had a hunch in the back of your mind, but nothing was overtly said. It’s a close-knit community and there’s a veneer of culture that obvious and a deeper one that’s hidden from most people.

[paragraph 29] ‘I’m sure there may be a lot of secrets. A bundle of secrets.’

The representations shown above (and others in the report following paragraph 24) bolster the ‘factuality’ of the report using vague formulations that are difficult to undermine. By constructing his sources with these vague formulations, the author is diffusing the distinct categories of the Pitcairn case ‘cultural’ age of sexual consent [e.g., paragraphs 33-34, 36-38] that he had previously established in the report. There are few further explicit representations of a discourse of adult male sexual abuse of young girls under the age of 12 years. It is only the ambiguous ‘secrets’ of paragraph 29 that suggest there may be sexual abuse of young girls. Report 38 referred to secrecy six times in the first six paragraphs. The representation of a ‘close-knit community’ that remains ‘hidden from most people’ [paragraph 28], is used to maintain the theme of secrecy to and avoid engagement with the issue of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls. In discussing crimes of familial/familiar child sexual abuse, MacMartin (2002, p. 10) observes that such crimes are typically perpetrated and repeated in secrecy. The ‘culture of secrets’ [paragraph 44], and the emphasis on secrecy in this report suggests our own western cultural secrecy concerning this issue.

Sympathy is sought from the reader for the respectability of Alex, and hence for all those under suspicion of committing secretive crimes, when 'Alex finds it hard to talk about his past' [paragraph 33]. Alex admits to sex with 'under-aged girls' after he was 'at least 16'. The report constructs a time period '25 years ago' during the mid-1970s when 'teen sex was common'. Alex is consistently constructed as conservative, both then - at a time when 'some 10-year-olds were sexually active' - and now, as a 'burly, middle-aged man'. If the stereotype of child sexual abuse is paedophilic stranger-danger and violent abuse, then this is certainly not how Alex is represented. The concept of respectable 'Alex' as a child molester diffuses and creates doubt about any real child sexual abuse in the Pitcairn case. In this way, the more problematic issue of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls can be avoided. Alex is constructed as a normal, respectable and trustworthy man. Such men are not child abusers. Conservative, honest and respectable men could not abuse little girls.

This report diffuses the issue of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls quite differently from *The Times* report 9, discussed in Section 5.2. Report 9 constructed distinct categories to represent Pitcairn society as dysfunctional, and to spread any blame by making it a cultural, rather than a sexual, issue of whether or not there was consent. The *Weekend Herald* report 38 begins by constructing the same distinct categories but then diffuses the whole issue with a rich, but confusing, array of opinions and comments from both well-warranted Pitcairners and non-Pitcairners (complete with their vested interests). These vague formulations appear quite innocuous and trivial on their own but, when used together in the very long report 38, create an array of complexity, multiplicity, ambiguity, contradictions, and uncertainty that can be seen to be press neutrality and balance, but that make the constructions difficult to refute.

The following examples from report 38 construct the discourse of a local age of consent: an 'outsider' who lived on the island for several years was represented to claim that 'Pitcairners live a life based on their mutineer/Tahitian heritage and claim the age of consent there is 12' [paragraph 19]; Herb Ford, the director of a church-

sponsored study centre of Pitcairn Island is represented to know ‘there’s been under-age sex on the island’ [paragraph 23]; a Pitcairner, and likely offender, ‘Alex’ who admits to under-age sex in his youth and realises it was wrong [paragraphs 13, 34] comments that ‘teen sex was common’ [paragraph 33]; a Pitcairn mother ‘Sarah’ who complains about ‘Pitcairn’s sexual culture’ [paragraph 40]; and Seventh Day Adventist pastor, Rick Ferret, speaks of Pitcairn’s ‘culture of secrets’ [paragraph 44]. The individual comments often seem quite innocuous and trivial. Edwards and Potter (1992, p. 162) argue that the ‘factuality’ of vague formulations is difficult to refute ‘while at the same time providing just the essentials to found a particular inference’. This discourse of an age of consent has robustness in the construction of its ‘factuality’. When the individual facets are constructed as a ‘whole’, the impression for the reader is one of significance. However, the construction of vague formulations of previously well-established categories serves to diffuse the issue of sexuality on Pitcairn and to cast doubt on the credibility of the women’s complaints about alleged crimes concerning girls of any age.

By drawing on familiar social role modelling in childhood play (e.g., ‘mothers and fathers’ [paragraph 34]), the reader’s fears of problematic behaviour are allayed. Sexual development is put down to normal childhood behaviour and actions from age ‘5 or 6’ [paragraph 34] where ‘children on the island are sexualised much younger than in New Zealand’ [paragraph 34]. The phrase ‘playing with girls’ constructs a ‘normal’ sense of play in sharp contrast to, and distancing from, the earlier description of the crimes as ‘preying on young girls’ [paragraph 23]. The crimes of adult males sexually abusing under-aged girls are diffused as peers playing ‘mothers and fathers’. The report contrasts social stereotypes that are ‘normal’ for western societies like New Zealand, with the sexual behaviours that are ‘normal for Pitcairners’ [paragraph 35]. A normative sexual stereotype for Pitcairn is proposed by Trent Christian when, during his childhood, an ‘age of consent was 12 or 13 and [he] knows young people were sexually active’ [paragraph 36]. The resulting confusion shifted the focus from offender blame for endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls to a justification of whose cultural stereotypes have fewer aberrations [paragraphs 37-39].

Report 38 does not dispute that under-age sex has taken place on Pitcairn Island. The report does not explicitly suggest that the girls and women consented, despite clear suggestions that victims are at least be partially responsible because of ‘the way they acted and dressed’ [paragraph 52]). However, the report presents a broad range of different perspectives to present the argument that endemic child sexual abuse is less important than the survival of the Pitcairn people. The author’s statement that ‘Surely making a community wait 2 1/2 years for a trial is cruel and unusual punishment, adding tragedy to tragedy’ [paragraph 60], minimises the tragedy of many years of familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls. The report constructs consent as acceptance of a specific cultural tradition. Attributions of blame for the abuse are obscure. Constructs of multiple intersections and contingencies serve to mitigate offender blame for familial/familiar child sexual abuse by reworking offender blame and attributing blame to other issues such as a lack of economic development and to the many legal anomalies of the case. Again, the effect is that the issue of familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls is diffused. The title of the report - ‘Lonely island weathering a storm’ - constructs an impression of waiting for the issue to ‘blow over’ and the storm to die down, in conjunction with the ‘storm in a teacup’ metaphor of great excitement over a trivial matter.

The *Weekend Herald* report 38 diffuses the issue of the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of Pitcairn girls to a much greater extent than the earlier report 9 in *The Times*. Report 38 presents a balance of overall disapproval for the ‘serious offences’ [report 38, paragraph 44] of child sexual abuse. However, the representation that young girls under 12 years of age, and as young as ‘5 or 6’ are ‘sexualised [‘by play’] much younger than in New Zealand’ [report 38, paragraph 34], serves to cast doubt on their innocence and diffuse the issue of the serious nature of even the sexual abuse of very young girls.

Discursive strategies of cultural normalisation of permissive sexuality (the stereotypic teenage girl), rather than problematisation of a male sexual needs discourse of the familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls under age 16 (the deviant adult male), are used in conjunction with the minimisation rather than maximisation of the

sexual offences (e.g., as associated with play). Unlike report 9, report 38 uses the discursive strategies to diffuse the whole issue of child sexual abuse on Pitcairn Island in a way that suggests that it is largely harmless, normal, heterosexual, Pitcairn life. The crimes are categorised according to the ‘local age of consent of 12 years’ discourse, rather than as an issue of a lack of sexual rights or real consent in a dysfunctional culture (as was presented in *The Times* report 9). Report 38 focuses on Pitcairners’ cultural rather than sexual rights, and on their political and legal autonomy to deal with the women’s complaints in their own way. And yet, report 38 also represents women as complaining to outside authorities because they could get no legal or other justice in their community: ‘It was impossible for anyone to make a stand [against sexual abuses] because there was no authority to turn to. [‘Sarah’] believes the British must share the blame for allowing Pitcairn’s sexual culture to continue’ [paragraph 40]. Used together, such balanced reporting creates ambiguity and uncertainty that diffuses the issue of familial sexual abuse.

The *Weekend Herald* report 38 acknowledges the familial respectability of the male offenders like ‘Alex’, and the widely respected Pitcairn community. It extends earlier constructions of cultural rather than sexual consent, to further diffuse the very problematic issue of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls by the respected men of a respectable community of men like ‘Alex’. While it is possible to present the Pitcairners as ‘uncivilised’ and ‘dysfunctional’ in the British press (report 9), the normality of Pitcairners is obvious to Aucklanders who live alongside an expatriate Pitcairn community (report 38). The issue of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls was diffused because it seems inexplicable among respectable family men.

5.4 Conclusion

Reports 9 and 38 are pivotal in this chronological study of the press representations of the Pitcairn case because they both redefined the Pitcairn case as a cultural rather than a sexual issue in different ways. Both found excuses to marginalise the sexual abuse of the young girls and to focus on the older girls’ sexual maturity. Neither report appeared willing to address the crimes against young girls, particularly pre-

pubescent girls as young as three and five years old. The ‘endemic familial/familiar’ aspect of the sexual abuse of young girls is problematic in terms of the family values ideology of western society. However, a distinct categorisation in matters of sexuality in the western press (e.g., the age of consent), linked to a dichotomy of normal sex and abnormal violence, fails to accurately represent the crimes in the Pitcairn case. The press reports construct the Pitcairn crimes using discursive strategies of diffusion because they appear to find the issue of familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls by respectable men contradictory and thus problematic, and difficult to represent. It appears easier to turn the readers’ attention to the more comfortable subject of teenage sex in an increasingly permissive western society, and to ignore the far more painful indictment on western society that is endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young and very young girls. But the biggest problem in the Pitcairn case appears to be that the abuse is widespread among the respectable family men of a widely respected, largely British and Christian, community. Report 9 did not address the respectable normality of Pitcairn society. Report 38 did. While the former dichotomised the issue of the sexual abuse of girls younger than 12 years as violent, the latter had to diffuse the issue of respectable family men abusing infants and toddlers.

In this chapter, I have identified how two reports constructed the issue of the Pitcairn familial/familiar sexual abuse in terms of blame and consent. I have demonstrated how the ‘factuality’ of the press representations of the Pitcairn case was constructed into a convenient discourse to explain the issue. Firstly, the discourse of a cultural age of consent was represented in the press to focus the readers’ attention on girls aged between 12 and 15 years of age. The discourse is inappropriate because, according to British law, girls under 16 years of age can *never* give meaningful consent to sexual relationships with adult males. Secondly, this discourse of distinct age categories of girls clearly differentiated, but then failed to discuss, the abuse of girls under 12 years of age.

The *Weekend Herald* report 38 used the label ‘preying on young girls’ [paragraph 23] to describe the secretive but rare sexual abuse of young girls [paragraph 24]. This is

close to the popular understanding of stranger-danger violation by paedophiles. Reports 9 and 38 which constructed the Pitcairn case quite differently in terms of the age of consent discourse, only rarely alluded to sexual violence [e.g., report 9, paragraph 8; report 38, paragraph 5]. An early clear distinction as either teenage consensual sex or the violation of young girls without consent became increasingly diffused in time as can be seen in the different representations of reports 9 and 38. Report 9 accepted that all the girls under 16 years were abused but makes the distinction between two age groups of girls above and below a local age of consent that is linked to a sex/violence dichotomy. The distinction of the issue of the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of Pitcairn girls, according to whether girls were older or younger than 12 years old, was still evident but diffused in the *Weekend Herald* report 38 in 2002.⁵ However, when report 38 represented alleged Pitcairn offenders as respectable men of their community, it was problematic to construct such men as violent abusers of young girls. As a consequence, report 38 tended to diffuse the whole issue of a local age of consent as well as the sexual abuse of young girls in favour of a construction of cultural relativity. Other press reports about the Pitcairn case disagree with the cultural argument for Pitcairn Island in a different way.

The cultural relativism argument is dismissed by Sheils Carnehan: 'That's pathetic. They're West-erners; they don't lead a Polynesian lifestyle and most of them have spent time in New Zealand or Australia. If it was culturally acceptable, why did they hide it? They didn't want the world to know.'

The Independent (UK) (2002, January 23 - report 25)

However, many influential press reports continued to represent the discourse of cultural consent rather than acknowledging the emerging evidence of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls in a respectable British colonial society, that appears to be a microcosm of our own in so many ways.

Confusing age and gender categories and diffusing differences has more to do with the very indifference that perpetuates the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of

⁵ However, a year later (mid-2003), diffusion of the crimes was often so complete that the sexual abuse complaints and charges were not even represented in many reports as involving any children at all (see Tables 4.4(a) and 4.4(b)). Even when the 'local consent' discourse was no longer mentioned, after the Pitcairn Mayor said there was 'no specific age of consent' for Pitcairn Island (report 53), the influence of the discourse remained.

young girls in western society. The diffusion of the issue undermined the credibility of the Pitcairn women's complaints. Press representations of the Pitcairn case have drawn on wider discourses about false rape allegations, rape-myths, and women's duplicity concerning sexual abuse claims (Gavey & Gow, 2001), that subtly support the particular 'local consent' discourse constructed by the press for the Pitcairn case. By addressing the 'more complex' issue of teenage sex, and dismissing the sexual abuse of young girls as 'straightforward', report 9 [paragraph 9] leaves the readers to their often myth-based misunderstandings about the issue of familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls. Likewise, report 38 [paragraph 46] leaves the reader to their own interpretations of the 'extremely serious' offences, while the teenage sex and cultural rights issues are discussed at length in the report.

Chapter Four described what the three discursive strategies of categorisation, minimisation and normalisation constructed as a discourse of cultural rather than sexual consent. I also identified two discursive processes of distinct categorisation according to the local age of consent, and of diffusion using vague formulations of 'factuality'. Chapter Five described how these discursive strategies were used to create the distinct age categories in report 9 and to diffuse the crimes with cultural relativism in report 38. Chapter Six looks at how the press constructions have normalised the Pitcairn child sexual abuse by leaving so much unsaid. I discuss how the distinct categorisations of age groups of girls above and below an age of consent neatly reflect the sex or violence dichotomy used to explain familial or violent paedophilic crimes of sexual abuse. Of particular interest is the diffusion of the blame and consent for the 'inexplicable' familial sexual abuse crimes. A significant finding has been the recognition that the press has deployed cultural normalisation by gerrymandering sexual consent as cultural consent to explain the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young Pitcairn girls and to diffuse the difficult problem of abuse by respectable men in a respectable community. What is missing from the press discourse is acknowledgement of the most 'glaring feature of child sexual abuse' is that it is something, overwhelmingly, that *ordinary* men do to young girls (MacLeod & Saraga, 1988, p. 17).

Chapter Six: Endemic Familial/Familiar Sexual Abuse of Young Girls

Discourse analysis encourages us to notice what may be missing from an account ... A story may seem 'not right' as much because of what is absent as what is present.

MacMartin (2002, p. 32)

6.1 Introduction

It was very obvious to me, as a feminist researcher analysing the findings in Chapters Four and Five, that something was missing in most of the press representations concerning the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls. Few of the 93 reports in the database clearly supported the complainant women. Nobody provided supportive empirical data from the very large interdisciplinary research base about child sexual abuse. Discursive strategies of categorisation, minimisation and normalisation create doubts that undermine and silence non-stereotypic discourses about child sexual abuse, such as women's complaints about a society where familial/familiar sexual abuse of its young girls is endemic and common.

In Chapter Four, I presented the findings from a content analysis of the database of press representations of the Pitcairn case of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls. Two reports were identified as pivotal in their influence on subsequent press representations. In Chapter Five, a discourse analysis of these two press reports demonstrated how the press constructed the Pitcairn case using discursive strategies of categorisation, minimisation and normalisation. The issue of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls was diffused with vague formulations, rather than merely distinguished into age categories, when it was necessary to divert attention away from the involvement of respectable men in such crimes.

This chapter is in two parts. From a feminist perspective, I discuss what the press constructions did not represent in their reports. I then conclude this chapter by reiterating the research findings in relation to the research question and suggest possible future lines of investigation.

6.2 What is missing from the press discourse?

In this section, I take a feminist standpoint perspective on the gendered reporting of the Pitcairn case, and on the discursive strategies deployed to construct the issue of the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls. I discuss feminist theories of significance for understanding these press constructions. This discussion is in two parts. Firstly, the reports in the speculative period of press reporting (of which report 9 is a particularly good example) addressed the cultural normalisation of the Pitcairn crimes using a discursive process that constructs distinct categories according to the girls' ages, with respect to a local age of consent. However, although the press acknowledges the seriousness of the sexual abuse of girls under age 12, it does not discuss this age group of young girls. In this way the difficult aspect of the sexual abuse of young, especially pre-pubescent girls is silenced. Secondly, many press reports in the late speculative and legally-constrained periods (of which report 38 is the best example) addressed the cultural normalisation of the Pitcairn crimes with discursive processes which diffused the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls within representations of a wide range of economic and cultural issues. While the seriousness of the sexual abuse of the very young girls is acknowledged, what is missing is any critical discussion of the abusers as respected men from a respectable, British, Christian community.

The position of sexually abused young girls is identified by Pengelly (1991), as being an issue of the 'family'.

The case for the detection and normalisation of 'dysfunctional' families rests largely on a rhetorical analogy between the child's situation and that of an inmate in a concentration camp.... Both parents are implicated in the gross abuse of power, which justifies state intervention in the guise of the liberating army ... representing freedom and humanistic values. The focus is on the detection and normalisation of 'dysfunctional' families and the most humane ways to effect transformation.

Pengelly (1991, p. 191)

The Times report 9 noted the similarities between the Pitcairn familial/familiar sexual abuse and a dysfunctional family or community. MacMartin (2002) analysed notions of sexual consent in textual descriptions of trial judgements in child sexual abuse cases. She described the parameters of an abusive familial/familiar environment of child sexual abuse as ‘an admixture of ambivalence and affection intertwined with coercion’ and compared long-term intrafamilial abuse to the ‘relationship between hostage and terrorist, concentration camp victim and guard’ (2002, p. 32).

Until the girls are teenagers and old enough for high-school in New Zealand, there appears to be a similarity between remote Pitcairn Island and a concentration camp for young girls. Young girls’ situatedness within the family and community traps many of them in intergenerational endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse over many years. It takes very serious offences and suffering, and considerable courage, for women on the island to make complaints to outside authorities.

[A pastor says] ‘If you look back, it seems that each man had his own particular young girl’. He asked the mothers and grandmothers how they could allow such things. ‘Their reply was that nothing had changed. They said “We went through it too; it’s all a part of life on Pitcairn.” One grandmother wondered what all the fuss was about. But the girls are damaged; they can’t settle or form solid relationships. They did suffer, no doubt about it.’

The Independent (UK) (2002, January 23 - report 25)

Patriarchy is founded on the romanticised premise of benevolent males caring for dependent females. Instead, widespread and endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls, by respected adult men, suggests the patriarchal use and abuse of men’s power and position of responsibility. Such widespread abuse suggests male subjugation of girls and women. Sheffield (1997, p. 115) argues that, in western societies, obsolete statutory laws, the low level of convictions, and lenient sentences reflect the fact that a level of sexual abuse is tolerated in and around a family where girls are imprisoned in abusive familial/familiar circumstances. This indicates a situation of sexual violence, coercion and terrorism (ibid.) that is perpetuated by the social norms and stereotypes of an ideology of ‘family values’ (Giddens, 1997, pp. 167-168). Only a few press reports (e.g., report 25) represent the sexually abused Pitcairn girls as trapped in a patriarchal society that is perceived by most of the press to be generally benign and relatively normal.

Because young girls are never able to give meaningful sexual consent, sexual intercourse with any adult male, even with some sort of consent, is always rape (Sheffield, 1997, p. 115). While the Pitcairn case is widely constructed in the press in terms of blame that is mitigated by discourses of consent, a large proportion of the Pitcairn crimes are rape, as the charges eventually confirmed. These crimes must be considered to have been sexually violent, coercive or terrorising for Pitcairn women to eventually make official complaints. The women now face further marginalisation within their close-knit community, as well as stereotyping by a press that is largely unwilling to acknowledge complaints of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls. These responses are confirmed by the press representations that followed the withdrawal of three women's complaints in 2003 (reports 65,84 and 85)

The problematic nature of familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls can result in silence about the issue. Bolen (2001, p. 148) argues that: 'Society's unwillingness to accept the full scope of the problem of child sexual abuse nonetheless allows for a culture in which the child sexual abuse thrives by its secrecy'. In the *Weekend Herald* report 38, such secrecy was expressed by a number of interviewees: the 'secrecy [that] was serving men on the island who were perpetrating a tradition of rape and sexual abuse ...'; "It was never obvious ... You may have had a hunch in the back of your mind, but nothing was overtly said"; and "I'm sure there may be a lot of secrets" [report 38, paragraphs 5, 28, 29]. The words 'secret', 'secrets' and 'secrecy' are used by the press to imply the existence of the familial/familiar sexual abuse of the very young girls under 12. The final comments on the secret abuse issue in report 38 failed to lead to any further discussion and ended with a question: 'Just how dark are those secrets?' [paragraph 46]. The dark secret of western society is that familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls is so widespread and endemic. An anthropologist suggested that 'the abuse of children is more common in the West, where families turn in on themselves' [report 9, paragraph 37].

Report 9 referred to the problematic normalisation of the sexuality of the 12 to 15 year-old girls and argued that the teenage sex is not normal sexuality because these girls are under a legal age of consent of 16 years. However, the report's suggestion

that the Pitcairn case implied a cultural age of consent of 12 years precipitated a discourse in other press reports concerning a local age of consent that accepted mature sexual relations from age 12 as traditional cultural practice on Pitcairn Island. The implied cultural hetero-normativity of sex from age 12 normalises the sexual abuse of Pitcairn girls aged 12 to 16. The boundary age of 12 is linked to a sex/violence dichotomy with a conceptualisation of violent sexual abuse only when involving girls under age 12. Report 9 refers to such sex as the 'straightforward' child abuse of the under 12 year-old girls, because unlike the teenage sex, sex with young girls is presumed to be violent.

The discursive process of categorising two distinct age groups of girls older or younger than 12 years, according to an age of sexual consent, was mapped onto an existing sex/violence dichotomy to construct extenuating circumstances for the Pitcairn abuses. A sex/violence dichotomy clearly separates normal sexuality from violent stranger-danger paedophilia. In the Pitcairn case this age distinction suggests that the issue is 'normal sexuality' when it involves girls over 12 years of age, but is more like violent stranger-danger paedophilia when girls under 12 years are involved.

Adult male sex with girls under 12 years of age is seen to be a serious crime. However, when the male abusers are respected men in a respectable community, and not stranger-danger paedophiles, it is difficult to conceptualise the crimes as violent. The dichotomised distinction between sex or violence becomes ambiguous and diffused for familial abuse. While usually considered to be criminal acts, the severity of the familial crimes is minimised and categorised as mostly harmless, precocious hetero-normativity. The offender blame is mitigated and spread, with a discourse of cultural consent.

When, in report 38, alleged Pitcairn offenders were interviewed, they were represented as respectable men and not as violent stranger-danger paedophiles. While report 38 still promoted the age distinction older and younger than 12 years that is linked to a sex/violence dichotomy, the whole problematic issue of respectable men having sex with under-aged girls is diffused as traditional cultural practices on

Pitcairn Island. It is presented as no one's concern but the Pitcairners'. As a result of the sex/violence dichotomy there is an implicit suggestion in the press reports that, if the crime is not violent, then it is only sex. This in turn suggests that if the act is non-violent sex, then women's claims that these are crimes of sexual abuse are undermined, and women's credibility concerning the whole issue of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls is also undermined. Atmore's (1991, 1996) argument that a sex-violence continuum better conceptualises women's lived reality is significant in cases of familial sexual abuse.

This continuum of sex with violence highlights the second aspect that is missing from the press constructions of the Pitcairn case of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls that relates to the sexual offenders. The widespread sexual abuse of young girls by respected family men also remains one of western society's dark secrets. The issue of familial/familiar child sexual abuse of girls in the Pitcairn case was undermined and diffused by a large sector of the press, with representations of a local Pitcairn age of consent that often ignored the women's complaints of child sexual abuse. The refusal of the press to attend to the women's complaints of sexual abuse reflects a widespread social embarrassment concerning familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls by respectable men that has serious consequences for women.

Atmore (1991, pp. 40-41) conceptualises familial abuse as part of a 'continuum of normal male sexual behaviour, from "normal" heterosexual sex through to "unambiguous" rape situations'. Her conceptualisation challenges a binary system of western logic that prefers clearly dichotomised categorisations (e.g., sex/violence). The contradiction in terms that is the widespread endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young Pitcairn girls by the respected and trusted adult men of their community cannot be explained by linking a discourse of a local age of consent of 12 years to a discourse that dichotomises the abuse as sex rather than violence. Atmore (1991, pp. 42-43) argues that:

The distinction between normal-common-consent-based male sexual behaviour ('sex') and aberrant-rare-coercive male sexual behaviour (rape, violence) is based on an A/not-A model... In the child sexual abuse accounts, the A/not-A model is threatened by the feminist argument that male sexual behaviour is both coercive *and* common, both sex *and* violence.

Press representations in the Pitcairn case constructed a discourse to explain the issue of the sexual abuse of girls younger than 16 years of age. This discourse created a distinction around age 12 years that resulted in many of the abused girls of the Pitcairn case, who were 12 to 15 years of age, being assumed to be involved in consensual sex in a permissive society. Only sex with girls under 12 years was being constructed as violent abuse. Atmore argues that the continuum of sex and violence precludes such a dichotomous distinction between sex or violence. Gavey (1989) extends the conceptualisation of a sex-violence continuum to argue that much female consent to hetero-normative sex is coerced.

Gavey (1989, p. 467) argues there is a 'continuum of normative heterosexual practices' that socially constructs the passive, responsive female, where rape and sex, sexual coercion and 'non-coercive heterosexual sex', are sometimes not clearly distinguishable. She identifies a 'permissive sexuality' discourse of 'sexual coercion' (e.g., engaging in sex to appear sexually 'liberated'), and a 'male sexual needs' discourse of 'interpersonal coercion' (e.g., engaging in sex to stop male harassment) (ibid., p. 468). Gavey argues that these 'more normative forms of coercion include situations where the woman appears to consent ... despite not wanting to' (ibid.). Presumably, young girls such as the Pitcairners grow up amidst such normative familial coercion and are socialised to passively defer to a sense of male entitlement (report 9, paragraph 4). A long history of male entitlement to young Pitcairn girls was represented in report 25 (see the pastor's comments quoted earlier in this section). Such practices too often acknowledge a 'male sexual needs' discourse when sexually immature (e.g., pre-pubescent) girls are too young to know what that means.

Are little girls being socialised into normative gender stereotypes that accommodate male entitlement and sexual coercion? Bolen (2001, p. 154) notes that, in the family, boys are often socialised to expect preferential treatment and to be more sexually aggressive, while girls are often socialised to be more deferential and passively dependent in the face of such male entitlement and power. Young males are inculcated into a system of male entitlement over females that extends to expectations of the marital benefits of family labour, economic support,

marital/familial sharing and 'romantic' relating with those made dependent upon them (Bolen, 2001, pp. 144-145). Females are socialised to subsume their own entitlements to equal rights beneath family and community priorities and a gendered reliance on male power. The press suggests that many Pitcairn women would rather withdraw their charges than be held responsible for the 'extinction' of their community or imprisonment of family (e.g., report 66).

Bolen (2001, p. 147) argues that 'because the prevalence of child sexual abuse may be an anathema to a society that prefers to view itself as technologically advanced and compassionate, society as a whole may try to defend against and deny' the implicitly violent reality of widespread endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls. A primary role of the family is to respect cultural norms. Gendered acceptance of male dominance and entitlement for men, as the most empowered members of a society, still exists. The press representations of familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls as abnormal paedophilia in an otherwise safe society, hides the extent of endemic sexual abuse of young girls by respectable men they trust. Where this representation of abnormality is not possible, because the popular stereotype of violent paedophilic abuse is clearly inconsistent with a Pitcairn reality of social respectability, the abuse must be represented as normal heterosexuality. Bolen (2001, p. 148) argues that a culture of collective denial and conservatism affects the apparent patterns and prevalence of endemic familial/familiar abuse, while surprisingly little ever really changes when such a 'problem' is so widely and normatively socialised and inculcated through the gender stereotypes learned in early childhood.

Much of the press constructed a 'local consent' discourse to diffuse this issue in particular, by representing sex with under-age girls as normal heterosexuality, either in a culturally dysfunctional community (as is suggested in report 9), or as Pitcairners' cultural rights to legal autonomy (e.g., report 38). The later constructions and diffusions of the issue appear to be much less problematic for the press. Nevertheless, the *Weekend Herald* in its interviews with local Pitcairners, some of whom were likely to be charged with serious sexual offences (report 38), had to

address the problem of representing the offending men as respectable members of their community. This report represented the crimes as little more than sexual misdemeanours among adults (e.g., adultery), according to Pitcairn cultural practices which had been 'going on for 200 years' (report 38, paragraph 34). Report 38 strongly supported Pitcairners' rights to political and legal autonomy in deciding what is considered to be child sexual abuse or not. This approach is revealing as an explanation of the role that the press plays in perpetuating endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls by diffusing the crimes, silencing scepticism and undermining the credibility of the women who complain.

6.3 Conclusion. An age of consent

In the final section of this chapter, I summarise my research findings and overall thesis argument, and make suggestions for further research into the Pitcairn case, as it goes to trial in 2004.

[E]ither way the allegation could see Pitcairn Island relegated from its fanciful position as an island paradise founded on contempt for mindless British authority, to a vestige of male chauvinism and brutality.... But what could be far worse for an island that trades on its mystique, is for the rest of the world to discover the depths of its ordinariness.

Weekend Herald (2002, June 30-July 1 - report 15)

As indicated by this quote, not all press reports constructed the Pitcairn case through the local age of consent discourse. However, the overall conclusion is that, being unable to explain the contradictions of respectable family men sexually abusing young, often pre-pubescent girls, much of the press could only diffuse the issue. This catered to the popular, myth-bound theories and gender stereotypes of a society that expects dependent females to defer to the cultural entitlements of dominant males. This research finds that much of the press represents the Pitcairn case by diffusing the blame and constructing the issue as one of cultural, rather than sexual, consent. Where the press reports categorised, minimised and normalised the familial sexual abuse in the Pitcairn case, their category distinctions and diffusion left much unsaid. There is a shroud of secrecy around endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls by respectable men because such familial sexual abuse will not fit the comfortable stereotypes of either normal sex or abnormal violence.

In this thesis I have argued that the press finds the issue of familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls problematic and difficult to represent. Discursive strategies such as categorisation, minimisation and normalisation of an issue like the familial abuse by respectable men in the Pitcairn case, ultimately diffuse the offender blame and the credibility of such crimes by leaving so much unsaid. The women complainants' credibility is undermined, and the whole issue of endemic familial/familiar abuse of young girls (under 12 years old), which is the most common category of sexual abuse in *our* society, is represented as implausible. Much of the western press constructed the Pitcairn case as a matter of cultural relativism - of cultural (moral) blame and consent - rather than in terms of causal blame for the offenders.

I began this chapter by discussing what is missing from the press constructions of the case. Instead of minimising the crimes of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of girls, maximising the reality of the girls' abuse requires that we address a continuum of familial abuse as both sex and violence. The crimes were often constructed as 'liberated' sexual freedoms for teenage sex, in a 'permissive sexuality discourse' that ignored the 'concentration camp' reality of the 'male sexual needs discourse' of child sexual abuse. The problematic matter of abuse of young girls was itself normalised to some degree by association with arguments in favour of permissive, heterosexual norms for teenagers. In that way, obvious sex/violence dichotomies were diffused with ambiguity and doubt, and these 'softened' crimes were categorised, minimised and normalised as less problematic.

The likely Pitcairn male sexual offender 'Alex' was constructed by the press to be a normal middle-aged family man with children of his own (report 38). The role of male respectability in perpetuating the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls in western society must not be underestimated. As pre-pubescent girls are not considered to be driven by hormonal desires, the sexual abuse of young girls requires a different explanation for why they would engage in apparently non-violent sex with adult men. That the girls do engage in sexual relations with these men must rest on an imperative other than agentic sexual desires. I suggest that pre-pubescent young girls are socially conditioned to acquiesce to a male sexual needs discourse of

heterosexual coercion which perpetuates endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls as relatively benign and non-violent. The psychological, social and gender implications of such childhood conditioning all need to be researched to reveal whether the endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls plays a role in the perpetuation of a gendered violent society.

In summary, this thesis showed that, in order not to have to explain the socially embarrassing contradictions of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young girls by respectable men, the press diffused the issue. This, in turn, perpetuates such endemic familial abuse by entitled males who the young girls are expected to respect and trust most. The press representations of the Pitcairn case would appear to indicate that we live in an age of denial of - an age of consent for - the problematic issue of familial/familiar abuse of young girls by the respected men of our communities. It is a problem that contradicts the cultural dichotomisation of sex and violence. This suggests the necessity for further research into how endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of pre-pubescent girls by respectable men often becomes normalised in the gendered relations of western society as in the Pitcairn case. This thesis suggests that western society precociously sexualises its young girls with gender stereotypes and role models from early childhood. The press often reinforces these established stereotypes of sex and violence.

MacMartin (2002, pp. 33-34) recommends that we 'acknowledge the difficulty of formulating sexual violence perpetrated by familiars rather than strangers'. There is an 'inadequacy of current cultural resources' for representing the crimes of child sexual abuse in terms of blame and consent, when the membership category of the offender (e.g., family friend and community elder) includes 'category-bound activities that undermine the very description of such offences' (ibid.). Endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of young Pitcairn girls has certainly not been acknowledged in the press to be an issue of the western socialisation and normalisation of gender role stereotypes of male respectability, male dominance and male entitlement. Such socialisation of young girls may result in female sexual passivity, female dependency and female deference. The precocious sexualisation of

girls who have sex with their adult role models as a 'rite of passage' (e.g., reports 25; 35; and 38, paragraph 20) is represented by the press entirely as a local Pitcairn problem.

In the short term, I would suggest that it is necessary to study the immediate resolution of the Pitcairn case in terms of justice for women. In the longer term, I suggest it is necessary for research to reconceptualise the gender role stereotypes of our society, and to address the sexualisation of very young girls as a means to eliminating the most important factors contributing to the perpetuation of endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of these girls. Few people seem to be aware that the sexual abuse of girls under 12 years of age is the most prevalent type of adult or child sexual abuse in our society. Young girls need the public to be so outraged by the levels of such abuse that society becomes intolerant of the sexual abuse of any child. For whatever reasons, our society is interested in the Pitcairn case and in child sexual abuse in general. Feminist researchers have a significant opportunity to redress a serious social issue by giving the public something to feel outraged about. This thesis suggests that endemic familial/familiar sexual abuse of the young Pitcairn girls is categorised and minimised in terms of normalised gender stereotypes taught in the family, school, church and media. These discursive strategies act to diffuse the issue of sexual abuse by the very men whom these girls are taught to respect and trust the most. In many ways, Pitcairn society is a microcosm of our own society. Familial sexual abuse, while an immense personal tragedy, is also a socially constituted problem.

Appendix One: Database of 93 press reports of the Pitcairn case

Date #	Headline [word count]	Newspaper	Author/ Source	Brief Comments
Speculative Period (Stage 1): Hints of an impending 'sex scandal'				
10/3/01 #1	Dark secrets of the world's most isolated speck of rock [1000]	The Australian	Niesche, Christopher Wellington, NZ	First by-line journalist to recognise possible case - endemic child sexual abuse scandal on Pitcairn
29/3/01 #2	Capital cop goes to Pitcairn [150]	The Evening Post	none cited	Karen Vaughan, NZ police paedophilia expert goes to Pitcairn
30/3/01 #3	Pitcairn inquiry [50]	The Evening Post	NZPA	Brief (as #2) - More than 15 allegations
30/3/01 #4	British seek help on Pitcairn rape case [150]	The Times	Maynard, Roger	Investigation taking place
30/3/01 #5	Police widen Pitcairn sex attack investigation [340]	The Australian	none cited	Expansion of inquiry from rape to allegations of child sexual assault
30/3/01 #6	NZ Cop joins Pitcairn inquiry [150]	The New Zealand Herald	NZPA	Draws on #2-5
30/3/01 #7	Pitcairn rocked by sex attack claims [350]	The Telegraph	Dutter, Barbie (in Sydney)	Authorities & Pitcairners keen to clear up growing sex scandal
3/5/01 #8	Pitcairn rape decision soon [50]	The Dominion	none cited	Results from investigation suggesting charges by June 2001
Speculative Period (Stage 2): Child abuse, child rape or child prostitution?				
9/5/01 #9 ¹	'That's what girls are for' [2000], and, Do small communities mean less freedom for women [350]	The Times	d'Antal, Stephen	Major investigation of dysfunctional Pitcairn; academic experts; local age of consent supported
15/5/01 #10	Who's guilty of teenage sex? [800]	The Guardian	Winterson, Jeanette	Uses Pitcairn case to make point about West's social responsibility
2/6/01 #11	Pitcairn rapes report with prosecutors [305]	The Dominion	none cited	Widespread abuse; trial and tourist development; local age of consent.
4/6/01 #12	Investigation into rapes on Pitcairn [100]	The Press	NZPA	Similar to #11
4/6/01 #13	Pitcairn Island waits for rape report [50]	The New Zealand Herald	none cited	Draws on #11, #12

¹ For the full text of report 9 see Appendix Two.

18/6/01 #14	Pitcairn's declining stamp sales blamed for social embarrassment [600]	The Guardian	Haeseler, Rob	As #10, suggests Pitcairn girls' abuse included availability for ships.
Speculative Period (Stage 3): Many cultural diversions				
30/6-1/7/01 #15	End of legend as Pitcairn Island meets the modern law [2650]	The Weekend Herald	Corbett, Jan & Stickley, Tony	First substantive NZ article; endemic sexual abuse; age of consent; cultural practices, 'truth & reconciliation process.
14/7/01 #16	Lawyers tackled on Pitcairn Island sex case [306]	The New Zealand Herald	Stickley, Tony	Revision of #15
17/7/01 #17	Legal obstacles to trial, say Christchurch QC [350]	The Press	Martin, Yvonne	Recap #16 - difficulties of trial logistics
22/7/01 #18	TV-link option for Pitcairn sex abuse claim [350]	The New Zealand Herald	Stickley, Tony	Case discussed between Moore & UK detectives - draws on #16
25/7/01 #19	Pitcairn prosecutor yet to decide on sex charges [275]	The Evening Post	NZPA	Copy of NZH #18
30/8/01 #20	Sex investigation may be stalling tourism plan [400]	The Dominion	Ruscoe, Kim	Age of consent argument & a new economic twist
30/8/01 #21	Pitcairn Island sex allegations stall tourism development [550]	The Dominion	none cited	Similar to #20 - economic priorities override the case
13/10/01 #22	Slow boat to Pitcairn for sex case [200]	The New Zealand Herald	Stickley, Tony	13 October - Moore leaves on visit to Pitcairn
30/10/01 #23	Pitcairn may hold rape trial [280]	The Dominion	Ruscoe, Kim	Moore to Pitcairn, logistics of trial, draws on #15 & #22
10/11/01 #24	Pitcairn charges a hard call [305]	The New Zealand Herald	Wycherley, Gregg	Moore investigates logistics of rape trial on Pitcairn - (2 nd trip)
23/1/02 #25	The paradise that's under a cloud [2050]	The Independent	Marks, Kathy	Substantive article which explains patriarchal history of abuse of girls/ women, present culture, with interviews-offender blame unmitigated
4/5/02 #26	Crown Solicitor the hunter of all our nightmares [1400]	The New Zealand Herald	Hewitson, Michele	Background to Simon Moore. 'Endemic abuse'
7/6/02 #27	Sex charges likely against Pitcairn islanders [400]	The Dominion	Ruscoe, Kim	Revision. NZ legislation change, Steeve Christian speech to UN, considers child sex 'consensual'.

22/6/02 #28	Island trial a tribulation [350]	The Australian	none cited	Drawing on #1 from 10 March 2001
18/7/02 #29	Pitcairn sex-abuse trial likely to be held in New Zealand [350]	The Press	NZPA	Charges will be laid but venue logistics pending
18/7/02 #30	Sex-abuse charges [50]	The Dominion Post	none cited	Brief - recap of #29
18/7/02 #31	Pitcairn sex charges laid [100]	The New Zealand Herald	none cited	Draws on #29 - #30
18/7/02 #32	Sex abuse inquiry tears Pitcairn apart [650]	The Independent	Marks, Kathy (in Sydney)	Revision of #25 and update
19/7/02 #33	Sex abuse trial threatens Bounty mutineers' haven [400]	The Times	Brace, Matthew	Summation of events to date - not very accurate - After #9, racial overtone
23/7/02 #34	Sex abuse trial cast giant cloud over tiny Pitcairn [500]	The Guardian	Watts, Jonathan	First report that NZ PM considers NZ legislation change
27/7/02 #35	Isle of unease [1800]	The Press	Welham, Keri	Comprehensive, ironical article on case challenges the 'facts' when press is excluded from Pitcairn
15/8/02 #36	'Bounty' descendants on Pitcairn Island face rape charges [550]	The Guardian	Watts, Jonathan	Legal and logistic problems for a trial
24/08/02 #37	Islanders fight back on sex abuse claims [250]	The New Zealand Herald	none cited	Abuse of legal process more than child abuse
Speculative Period (Stage 4): Promoting Pitcairn legal autonomy				
24-25 8/02 #38 ²	Lonely island weathering a storm [3750]	The Weekend Herald	Watkin, Tim	Most substantive NZ article - Pitcairners' first interviews, challenges British & NZ authority ('hidden agendas')
29/8/02 #39	Plea for sex case trial to be held on Pitcairn Island [200]	The New Zealand Herald	none cited	14 of 17 Pitcairn women petition NZ Prime Minister trial on Pitcairn
28/9/02 #40	Pitcairn trial decision soon [250]	The Press	Welham, Keri	Rehash of earlier issues - focus on trial decision
11/10/02 #41	Pitcairn trial move [50]	The Dominion Post	none cited	Brief - on trial legislation
11/10/02 #42	House to consider law change to allow Pitcairn sex-abuse trial in NZ [295]	The Press	NZPA	Revision of background & issue of trial
13/10/02 #43	Sex abuse trial threatens Pitcairn's survival [850]	The Telegraph	Squires, Nick (in Sydney)	Case summary - sexual abuse 'systematic'; 'one family'; 'blame British'

² For the text of report 38 analysed in Chapter Five see Appendix Three.

15/10/02 #44	Pitcairn sex trial likely in NZ [450]	The Press	NZPA	Reasons for & progress with legislation changes - government statement
15/10/02 #45	Pitcairn Islanders set to fight sex charges [350]	The Dominion Post	Ruscoe, Kim	'Consensual sex' and abuse of process; as #44
16/10/02 #46	Island faces extinction as sex charges threaten half the population [500]	The Telegraph	Squires, Nick - © Sydney Morning Herald	Drawing on #43 with update of NZ legislation. Widespread abuse
19/10/02 #47	Governor gags Pitcairners [550]	The New Zealand Herald	Watkin, Tim	Revision + Pitcairn governor's threats about spreading gossip
7/11/02 #48	Pitcairn Islanders oppose trial in NZ [700]	The New Zealand Herald	NZPA	Trial bill debate. British law or Pitcairn law?
8/11/02 #49	Pitcairn Is child-sex trial debate [350]	The Australian	Harvey, Claire in New Zealand	Charge details 'toddlers as well as girls aged 7 & 10' - Moore
8/11/02 #50	Sex trial threatens Pitcairn survival [350]	The Times	Maynard, Roger in Sydney	Pitcairn tradition of child rape; last British-based report of the case in the database
8/11/02 #51	Pitcairn men may be tried for child rape [500]	The Dominion Post	Ruscoe, Kim	Accepting charges, case is like Jewish final solution - Pitcairn extinction.
8/11/02 #52	Pitcairners want island trial for child-sex charges [350]	The Australian	none cited - but similar to #50	Like #51 plus recap of case to date - also builds on #49
9/11/02 #53	Sex trial would destroy Pitcairn, says mayor [650]	The New Zealand Herald	NZPA	No Pitcairn age of consent; not incest.
16/11/02 #54	Brittle paradise [1850], and A tribe of mutineers [700]	The Dominion Post	Ruscoe, Kim	Substantive article - outrageous allegations; age of consent; defiance; international law
Legally-constrained Period (Stage 1): Legislation changes/ waiting for charges to be laid				
26/11/02 #55	Pitcairn trial bill gets the go-ahead [550]	The New Zealand Herald	none cited	Legislation announced allowing NZ trial for 'rape and indecent assault of young girls' (some aged 3, 7 and 10)
27/11/02 #56	Special law to allow Pitcairn prosecutions [450]	The Press	NZPA	Law change bill to go ahead
27/11/02 #57	Pitcairn Island sex offences trial bill gets go-ahead [400]	The Dominion Post	NZPA	Similar to #56
27/11/02 #58	Pitcairn trials a step closer [350]	The New Zealand Herald	Watkin, Tim and NZPA	Draws on #56 & #57 & revision of NZH articles

18/12/02 #59	Pitcairn prosecutions [50]	The Press	NZPA	Legislation passed in parliament
18/12/02 #60	Law clears the way for Pitcairn trial to be held in NZ [150]	The New Zealand Herald	NZPA	Brief revision report on law changes and expected charges
19/12/02 #61	Pitcairn child-sex trial bill passed [150]	The Dominion Post	none cited	NZ Justice Minister says multiple rape of 8 year old serious criminal offence
27/02/03 #62	Pitcairn men to face sex charges [305]	The Dominion Post	Trow, Richard and NZPA	Charges to be laid in April
27/02/03 #63	Date set to charge Pitcairn Islanders [450]	The New Zealand Herald	none cited	Similar to #62
27/02/03 #64	Briefs - Pitcairn charges [50]	The Australian	none cited	Brief - charges to be laid
17/3/03 #65	Travel ban upsets islanders [500]	The New Zealand Herald	Watkin, Tim	Pitcairn preparing for charges
22/3/03 #66	Pitcairn case complaint [500]	The New Zealand Herald	none cited	Women claim police seek false accusations to support charges
3/4/03 #67	Pitcairn sex abuse trial may destroy island community [400]	The Telegraph	Chapman, Paul in Wellington	Revision of case as charges to be laid - official British perspective
4/4/03 #68	Pitcairners ready for charges [550]	The New Zealand Herald	Watkin, Tim	Charges finally give credibility to case - also presents Pitcairn side
5/4/03 #69	Pitcairn sex charges [50]	The Dominion Post	none cited	Brief - team to lay charges
5/4/03 #70	Pitcairn Island sex arrests likely today [350]	The Press	Welham, Keri	Identities in party to lay charges
5/4/03 #71	Briefs - Pitcairn sex charges [50]	The Australian	none cited	Charges to be laid
6/4/03 #72	Tension rises on Pitcairn as prosecution party arrives [350]	The New Zealand Herald	Watkin, Tim	Last-minute legal objections
7/4/03 #73	Pitcairn locals give cold shoulder to legal team [400]	The New Zealand Herald	Watkin, Tim	Revision and expansion of #72
Legally-constrained Period (Stage 2): Charges and arrests are announced				
7/4/03 #74	Nine men arrested on Pitcairn [305]	The Press	Welham, Keri	Report that charges finally laid on 4 April
8/4/03 #75	Pitcairners charged with sexual offences [100]	The New Zealand Herald	none cited	Brief - charges laid & suppression of identity of victims & accused

8/4/03 #76	Rape trials threaten to destroy South Sea island [550]	The Independent	Marks, Kathy in Sydney	Update after charges laid (Ford says case will be contested)
8/4/03 #77	Nine men charged in Pitcairn abuse case [330]	The Telegraph	Chapman, Paul in Wellington	Update of Telegraph article of 3 April #67 and revision of case
9/4/03 #78	Sex charges threaten future of Pitcairn (All-round country edition) and Legal quagmire of Pitcairn sex trial (Metro edition) - [340]	The Australian	none cited	Charges laid - opposition to men being removed to Auckland for trial - Irma Christian: 'island [will] die'
11/4/03 #79	Pitcairn Islanders face dozens of sex charges [400]	The New Zealand Herald	NZPA	Identity suppression to protect defendants (or seek more complaints)
11/4/03 #80	Pitcairn legal wrangle [50]	The Dominion Post	none cited	Dispute over suppression orders
12/4/03 #81	Pitcairn Island sex accused in court [250]	The Dominion Post	none cited	Report 64 charges laid; name suppression to prevent speculation and protect victims
12/4/03 #82	Islanders stand by child sex accused [550]	The Australian	none cited	Focus; Pitcairn secrecy; attacks on children
13/4/03 #83	Inshort - Pitcairners case starts [100]	The New Zealand Herald	NZPA; staff reporters	Emphasises teenage crimes
Legally-constrained Period (Stage 3): Women withdraw complaints/ the long road to trial				
14/4/03 #84	'Browbeaten' Pitcairn women recant island sex accusations [350]	The Australian	none cited	Some NZ victims want to change testimony. New Australian-based defence of Pitcairners
16/4/03 #85	Pitcairn women hire lawyer [250]	The Dominion Post	Ruscoe, Kim	Lawyer hired to fight for women to withdraw claims
19/4/03 #86	Expats to face charges in Pitcairn Island case [250]	The New Zealand Herald	Garner, Theresa	Prosecutor returns from Pitcairn - more men to be charged - three women have withdrawn charges - No mention of child sexual abuse
10-11 5/03 #87	Trials of a faraway island [1450]	The Weekend Herald	Watkin, Tim	Pre-trial hearing starts Auckland (but as Pitcairn court) Pitcairn cultural traditions of under-age sex
17/5/03 #88	Mutiny if the bounty doesn't arrive [270]	The Australian	none cited	Ironical report re tobacco

30/5/03 #89	Pitcairn asks UN to remove British police [370]	The Dominion Post	Ruscoe, Kim	UN special committee asked to visit 'familial' Pitcairn in bid to remove British officials
7/6/03 #90	Four more Pitcairn men charged with rape charges [200] - (alternative title: More Pitcairn rape charges)	The New Zealand Herald	none cited	Papakura District Court - 4 men on 32 charges (incl 10 rape) = total of 14 men on 96 charges. No specific mention of child sexual abuse.
8/7/03 #91	Seven men sent for trial on Pitcairn sex charges [260]	The New Zealand Herald	none cited	Court report; 'offences against women' - no mention of children
21/7/03 #92	Sex-case prosecutors' shipboard antics prompt talk of legal action [720]	The New Zealand Herald	Hoby, Katherine	Report and pictures of prosecution team adult 'sex-play'.
22/7/03 #93	No case to answer over Pitcairn jest [610]	The New Zealand Herald	none cited	Editorial explaining #92 - no mention of child sexual abuse.

Appendix Two: D'Antal, Stephen (2001, May 9). 'That's what girls are for'. *The Times*, pp. 2-3 (report 9)

Introduction: Investigations into two alleged rapes on Pitcairn Island, famous as the paradise haven of the Bounty mutineers, have exposed a society that treats women as sex objects.

[paragraph 1] The two little girls were sitting in the playground giggling and whispering, the way girls do. One was 13, the other had just turned 12.

[paragraph 2] As Sheils Carnihan passed them, she expected to hear the conversation of innocents, something about the latest fashion, perhaps, or at most a childish crush on an older boy.

[paragraph 3] What she heard, however, appalled the schoolteacher, a newcomer to the community. "I overheard the older girl say to the younger 'You know, you'll be old enough for it'."

[paragraph 4] In effect, Carnihan believes, the older child was warning - or simply reminding - her friend that, now she had turned 12, she would be expected to have sex with whichever local male asked it of her. It wasn't so much the statement itself that shocked Carnihan, but the fact that it was so casual - a comment passed between two children who knew, and accepted, that despite their extreme youth, they were regarded within their community as sexually mature. On Pitcairn Island, a rocky outcrop in the Pacific Island with a population of just 44, it is accepted that boys and girls this young are sexually active.

[paragraph 5] When Fletcher Christian landed on Pitcairn in 1790 he pronounced it Paradise, and this romantic myth has endured. Even today most visitors who arrive on the longboats that remain the only mode of transport to the island come with an image of the Pacific Island drawn straight from a Gauguin painting. Most go away satisfied that they have indeed found a little bit of South Seas heaven in this tiny cluster of islands.

[paragraph 6] But beneath the surface innocence of the islanders' lives is a society in which the rights of women and girls to have a say in their own sexual lives has gradually faded. On Pitcairn, 3,000 miles away from New Zealand, the nearest country, the most basic rights that women in larger societies expect as a matter of course have simply eroded away. As in any small, isolated community, the rules and mores of modern society have been bypassed in favour of practicality. While a larger community would offer any number of potential partners to both men and women, the very size - and extreme isolation - of this largely forgotten British outpost has legislated against such luxury of choice. And while this may be shocking to our more "civilised" eyes, it is seen as totally normal by the islanders themselves. Thirty years ago, one told a visiting writer: "When it comes to sex, and young people are involved, we are Polynesian first and whatever else second."

[paragraph 7] This attitude has not changed over the years, says Sheils Carnihan, 45, who spent two years on the island with her husband and two children, working as a teacher and government adviser. "They think there's nothing wrong with it. Men's desires are very healthy and strong and girls, well, that's what they are there for."

- [paragraph 8] Now, however - to the islanders' dismay - this way of life may be about to come to an abrupt halt, brought to an end by British detectives who believe that, far from being normal, the islanders' habits may amount to systematic abuse of their young. An investigation into an alleged rape in 1999 has expanded to include the entire community. Over the past year detectives have interviewed scores of Pitcairn women, both those on the island and those who have left. Their investigations may result not just in a rape charge, but in a string of charges relating to girls as young as five.
- [paragraph 9] But while these charges involve allegations of straightforward child abuse, more complex is the background surrounding other, potential, charges concerning girls aged between 12 and 25.
- [paragraph 10] While UK government officials insist that the age of consent on Pitcairn is, and has been for generations, 16, that clarity is said to have been lost on the islanders themselves amid the strange mish-mash of laws that governed them. According to Carnihan, among others, the Pitcairners have for years interpreted Polynesian mores as it suited them. Many who have lived and worked here insist that, until the police arrived, it was generally accepted that any girls from the age of 12 upwards were "fair game".
- [paragraph 11] Carnihan says: "Adult men and older teenage boys feel they have full rights to the girls. I don't think that they think they have done anything wrong, but I think they are terrified that people are going to find out."
- [paragraph 12] The young girls, on the other hand, "were immeasurably affected - they had personality disorders and there was shocking promiscuity because of what had happened to them".
- [paragraph 13] It was the alleged rape of an 11-year-old girl that set off the chain of events that may finally lay open the inner workings of Pitcairn and, say some, result in its collapse. In 1997 two senior police officers from Kent first arrived to investigate the girl's alleged rape at the hands of a local boy in his late teens. They found that the two youngsters had been in a long relationship. No charges were laid; the girl's family left the island. Reports at the time suggested that the officers had been appalled by what they found on Pitcairn.
- [paragraph 14] Subsequently a long review of Pitcairn law got under way. An experienced WPC, Gail Cox, arrived in October 1997 to spend six weeks training the island's law officer, Meralda Warren. Progress appeared to have been made, but on Cox's next visit, in 1999, she reported another alleged rape, this time involving a visitor from New Zealand in his early twenties and a 15-year-old Pitcairn girl after a party.
- [paragraph 15] Detectives returned to the island and in the course of that inquiry began probing deeper into the cocoon within which the Pitcairners live, largely hidden even from those outsiders sent to share the island with them.
- [paragraph 16] They found surprising attitudes. One middle-aged woman, says a source close to the investigation, told them: "I don't see what all the fuss is about. It happens to all of us."

[paragraph 17] Slowly, other women have revealed more. The investigation gathered apace alongside a parallel probe on the larger Norfolk Island, whence the Pitcairners briefly decamped en masse in 1856 and which is still home to more than 600 *Bounty* descendants. There, a 68-year-old former Seventh Day Adventist deacon, Stephen Nobbs, was convicted earlier this year of a 20-year history of abuse involving children aged seven to 13.

[paragraph 18] His unusual sentence - 48 hours' custody each weekend for 48 weeks - and the behaviour of the church incensed many islanders who felt that Nobbs had been shielded by the island hierarchy.

[paragraph 19] "Women are angry; this is a patriarchal society and the attitude seems to be 'Well, that's what men are like'." Says Kate Davies, 59, a writer. "Many good old boys here don't think that what Nobbs did was wrong."

[paragraph 20] Karen Keeney, 55, a photographer from Colorado who spent 97 days on Pitcairn from October 1998 researching a Master's thesis in cultural anthropology, compares the island to the amoral society of children portrayed in the book *The Lord of the Flies*. "If you think of that situation of having 12-year-old boys on an island, then add little girls, you can imagine how they would treat the little girls," she says.

[paragraph 21] "It's a bit like how Pitcairn men treat Pitcairn women - they are slaves, whether they are domestic slaves or sex slaves."

[paragraph 22] Other anthropologists believe that Pitcairn's isolation has led to the current situation. Dr Susan Benson, A Fellow of New Hall, Cambridge, and a lecturer in the social anthropology department, believes that the community on Pitcairn is similar to a dysfunctional family. "The island's utter isolation and unusual history make it a one-off," she says. "There are some Amazonian people who form tiny linguistic communities no bigger than Pitcairn, but they tend to marry off their daughters to neighbouring tribes that don't even speak the same language."

[paragraph 23] Keeney agrees that the Pitcairn community is dysfunctional, and speaks of a lack of affection and an emotional immaturity born of the limitations of lives lived on a tiny volcanic rock where survival is the paramount order of each and every day.

[paragraph 24] She describes a pervasive inner gloom stemming from communal guilt about the people's origins as mutineers with Tahitian concubines. But she also also [*sic*] points out: "All people are evil and good, but what becomes manifest at any given time depends on many given factors. It's nature, and whether you are nourished or not."

[paragraph 25] Ironically, Pitcairn has, over the centuries, gained a reputation as a Christian paragon, a fable of salvation after a mutinous and murderous genesis. The Church of the Seventh-Day Adventists still has a resident pastor, changed every two years, to minister to what was once seen as one of the world's most devout flocks. The entire population converted to Adventism in 1890; this meant no drinking, no dancing, no smoking, no pork, no shellfish, and strict observance of the Sabbath on Saturday. But while the SDA-backed Pitcairn Study Center in San Francisco still claims around 30 of the current inhabitants as church members, the most recently departed pastor, Neville Tosen, A South African, has no illusions. "It's not a Seventh-Day Adventist

island. That's a misconception," he says. "There were eight who attended church regularly and only one or two who were sincere."

[paragraph 26] Within months of his arrival, Tosen and his wife became aware of the island children's bizarre sexual environment. "There were some who thought that sex among and with the under 16s was merely Pitcairn's way," he says. "But as far as I was concerned, when children are hurt cultural mores are not an issue, and children were being hurt." Tosen made enemies among the islanders by condemning their practice from the pulpit, but points out that he was the first pastor to do so.

[paragraph 27] "I couldn't believe that I was the only one," he says. On his return he spoke with previous pastors going back 30 years. "I asked them 'How come you men didn't bring it out?' and as they considered the matter they said 'We should have known. The indicators were there, but we chose to give them the benefit of the doubt'."

[paragraph 28] "The Church does not condone what took place and what happened over the years there in any way."

[paragraph 29] One of the island's staunchest defenders is Glynn Christian, a former food presenter for BBC TV, a descendant of Fletcher and the author of a definitive biography of the mutineer. Christian, now living in Auckland, makes it clear that he condemns any abuse of children. But he believes that a number of factors have contributed to the island's loosening morals.

[paragraph 30] "It is utterly wrong from our point of view," he says. "But boys and girls enjoy sexual relationships and invite them at a very young age. You have to put in a bit of the isolation, a bit of the sexuality of young people, a bit of the climate - put it all together and it's not surprising. It's not just a whole lot of men victimising girls."

[paragraph 31] Christian believes that any culprits cannot be judged under British or New Zealand law: "You can't take middle-class standards onto Pitcairn."

[paragraph 32] Sheils Carnihan agrees, to some extent. "There's not the environment for them to develop, so they haven't grown," she admits. She adds, however: "If it were cultural and if it were acceptable and a part of what they did, I could actually almost accept that. But I believe that they knew it was wrong, and that's why they are so terrified."

[paragraph 33] "Really, they don't think it's anyone's business what goes on there. But if you are going to damage your children, you deserve to be punished."

Sub-Title: Do small communities mean less freedom for women?

[paragraph 34] Stephen Hugh-Jones, King's College Cambridge, an anthropologist who studies Amazonian tribes:

[paragraph 35] "It would not be safe to draw [*sic*] any parallels between the islanders' treatment of women and small tribal communities. Pitcairn is an artificial community that is completely isolated. Amazonian tribes are constantly exchanging with the outside, travel farther afield and have neighbours."

[paragraph 36] It has not grown up organically - its values, I suspect, will be a combination of the original 18th-century mores of the British settlers and the values imposed by the circumstances of the island.

[paragraph 37] If one were to ask whether women are treated as chattels in small, tribal societies, the answer is no. In the Amazon, women have a large degree of independent action and a high economic status: they are relied upon for cultivation. They have a strategic importance in securing good marriage deals - they would lose that if they were fair game for all local men. Girls might marry young but the abuse of children is more common in the West, where families turn in on themselves.”

[paragraph 38] Dr Susan Benson, Fellow of New Hall, Cambridge, and an anthropology lecturer:

[paragraph 39] “Some small, traditional societies practise complete egalitarianism between the sexes: women decide who they marry and whether they can leave. In other communities marriage and sexual relationships are more tightly fixed by parents. It could be that Pitcairn has more in common with modern, dysfunctional families.”

[paragraph 40] Dr Lissant Bolton, an anthropologist specialising in the Western Pacific, British Museum:

[paragraph 41] “What happens in small communities is that certain ways of behaving become normal. What becomes acceptable has much to do with the leaders of the community. With a claim such as the one about Pitcairn, it could be that people want to justify their behaviour by laying claim to prior practice - and that depends on how they have interpreted the past. Maybe on Pitcairn there has always been loose sexual practice.”

Appendix Three: Watkin, Tim, (2002, August 24-25). Lonely island weathering a storm. *Weekend Herald*, pp. B7-B8 (report 38)

[Paragraphs 1 to 54]

Introduction: For the first time Pitcairn Islanders have broken their silence to tell Tim Watkin of their resentment over the clouds of suspicion that hang over them following allegations of sexual abuse.

[paragraph 1] Secrecy surrounds Pitcairn Island as completely as the Pacific Ocean. Like the boundless sea and sky, it's always been part of the way of life.

[paragraph 2] When Fletcher Christian first spied Pitcairn on the evening of January 15, 1790, secrecy was exactly what he wanted. Having led his now famous mutiny on the *Bounty* against the bullying Captain Bligh, he was looking for a place to hide beyond the reach of English law.

[paragraph 3] A mere 3.2 km long by 1.6 km wide, 500 km from the nearest land, and incorrectly charted on maps of the day, Pitcairn was virtually invisible. The nine mutineers and 18 Polynesians torched their ship and disappeared.

[paragraph 4] Secrecy continued to serve their descendants well. Outsiders entranced by vague notions of swashbuckling adventure, an Eden-like Christian community and tropical idyll bought their postage stamps and curios.

[paragraph 5] But for the past 2 1/2 years, police have been investigating claims that the same secrecy was serving men on the island who were perpetrating a tradition of rape and sexual abuse. While the investigation is wrapped in its own layers of secrecy, Pitcairn public prosecutor Simon Moore has announced that charges will be laid; indications are before the end of the year.

[paragraph 6] In a bustling Parnell café, former Pitcairn Islanders Alex and Sarah (not their real names) have just broken this centuries-old tradition of secrecy. Through a two-hour interview, Sarah's voice has cracked with emotion and beads of sweat have appeared on Alex's forehead. A week later in a South Auckland office, a third Pitcairner, Mary (not her real name), will also speak out, constantly fiddling with a pen and shaking with agitation.

[paragraph 7] Until now, throughout the investigation, islanders have refused to speak to the media. But they have grown weary of waiting for their day in court and are angry at the way the authorities are treating them.

[paragraph 8] "There are a lot of Pitcairn families out there very sad and dejected and feeling hopeless about everything," Sarah says.

[paragraph 9] "One of the main reasons I came to this interview is that we were told by people on Pitcairn that they're sick of it now," says Alex. "They want the world to know what's happened rather than these little snippets which are all from the Governor's side. Now, we want to fight back."

- [paragraph 10] Pitcairn is one of the most isolated places on earth; a chip of volcanic rock 5300 km west of New Zealand with still further to go before you reach Panama.
- [paragraph 11] There is no running water, no airstrip and electricity only eight hours a day. To visit the island takes eight days by container ship from Auckland.
- [paragraph 12] The population varies as people come and go, but has fallen from a peak of 233 in 1937 to around 43 today. Roughly 200 Pitcairners live in New Zealand and another 200 are scattered around the world, chasing a modern lifestyle or an education for their children.
- [paragraph 13] Alex and Sarah came to Auckland in the 1990s for just those reasons. But here Alex's island life caught up with him. Police knocked on the door early in 2000 wanting to interview him about allegations of sexual offending made by women from Pitcairn.
- [paragraph 14] The police and public prosecutor have consistently refused to confirm the number of complainants and accused and what the charges will be, but we know the investigation was sparked by two complaints late in 1999 to Kent policewoman Gail Cox who was on Pitcairn training an islander in community policing.
- [paragraph 15] Pitcairn's Deputy Governor Karen Wolstenholme, sitting in the Governor's modest office in the British High Commission on a hill overlooking parliament, says diplomats quite properly know nothing of the investigation. But, she adds, "I know what those first allegations were and there is no way the Governor could have ignored those. No way."
- [paragraph 16] There was also no way anyone could have foreseen the 'multiple allegations' that followed. In the years since, police have travelled the globe conducting interviews and Moore has received 'dozens of statements' as a result.
- [paragraph 17] The island community once famed for its virtue and praised in countless Victorian sermons now lives under a cloud of vice.
- [paragraph 18] That investigators have uncovered sexual misconduct - at least some very serious - can hardly be doubted, given the extent of their inquiries. But just how grave and widespread the offending has been divides even those who know the island well.
- [paragraph 19] One outsider who spent several years on Pitcairn, but refused to have his name revealed, says Pitcairners live a life based on their mutineer/Tahitian heritage and claim the age of consent there is 12 (according to Pitcairn ordinances it is 15). While they travel and are aware of modern sexual mores, they have secretly continued a tradition of adultery and under-age sex, he says.
- [paragraph 20] "It was ingrained, their way of life, and they tried to hide it. The grandmothers claim they had their turn and the next generation must endure it. The men controlled everything and immorality on the island was very high."
- [paragraph 21] Worse, he heard complaints of sex abuse with children as young as 5 and says while he doesn't believe there was incest, "you'd come across uncles and aunts with nephews and nieces and that sort of thing".

- [paragraph 22] The outsider says he told the islanders their behaviour was unacceptable and was ostracised. He and his family needed counselling after leaving the island and he desperately wants to put Pitcairn behind him.
- [paragraph 23] In contrast, Herb Ford, director of the Seventh Day Adventist-sponsored Pitcairn Island Study Centre in San Francisco, says he knows there's been under-age sex on the island, "but if Pitcairn men are preying on young girls then I'm missing a lot. I don't think it would have been denied by silence, by these people who have considered themselves Christian people.
- [paragraph 24] "I think we are talking about a few isolated cases, not a rule."
- [paragraph 25] Referring to the outsider's claims, he adds: "What surprises me about his revelations is that only he has come forward with them. He's probably in the field of guessing."
- [paragraph 26] One Seventh Day Adventist pastor, Rick Ferret, who served on the island from 1989 to 1992 with his wife and three preschool children, says: "We didn't perceive that the island was immersed in this kind of thing".
- [paragraph 27] He was aware of adultery, "like anywhere", but never received reports of rape or under-age sex. Yet he wasn't surprised when the allegations were made. He stopped and started as he tried to explain what he knew.
- [paragraph 28] "It was never obvious ... We never witnessed ... You may have had a hunch in the back of your mind, but nothing was overtly said. It's a close-knit community and there's a veneer of culture that obvious and a deeper one that's hidden from most people.
- [paragraph 29] "I'm sure there may be a lot of secrets. A bundle of secrets."
- [paragraph 30] While it seems unlikely there could be such disturbing secrets among this small, remote community, Wolstenholme supports Ferret's observation.
- [paragraph 31] "On the surface it's a village where everybody knows everyone's business, which is why I think this has become such a protracted investigation. Because as you dig deeper you find people don't actually know what's been going on."
- [paragraph 32] Before he left for Pitcairn, Ferret visited an elderly pastor who had served on the island. He warned Ferret that after a while he would see "a different level of morality".
- [paragraph 33] Alex finds it hard to talk about his past. The burly, middle-aged man says he did not have intercourse until he was at least 16, but does admit to having sex with under-age girls after that. It was 25 years ago. Teen sex was common. Even some 10-year-olds were sexually active.
- [paragraph 34] "A lot of it was 12- and 13-year-olds together. The ones you grew up with. Put is like this, when we were young, I'm talking 5 or 6, we were playing with girls - mothers and fathers and that. It's been going on for 200 years." Sarah says children on the island are sexualised much younger than in New Zealand.
- [paragraph 35] "It was normal for Pitcairners. It shouldn't have been, but the whole society was built up like that."

- [paragraph 36] Trent Christian, son of the Pitcairn mayor and now living on Norfolk Island, says he grew up thinking the age of consent was 12 or 13 and knows young people were sexually active. But he's surprised by accusations of adults abusing minors.
- [paragraph 37] Mary says she left the island a virgin at age 13 and was unaware of friends having sex. "I'm not saying that under-age sex doesn't go on, just like it goes on here. In Otahuhu we've got 11-year-old prostitutes down here," she says. "We wanted the police to do something. They weren't interested. What can they do?"
- [paragraph 38] Her brother had sex with an under-age girl when he was over 16, but thought it was consensual. You can't judge Pitcairners as if they live in Parnell or Pakuranga, she says.
- [paragraph 39] "In Turkey you can marry at 11. Different countries have their own way of life."
- [paragraph 40] Sarah says that, concerned for her daughter, she raised the subject with one man and was frozen out by the community. It was impossible for anyone to make a stand because there was no authority to turn to. She believes the British must share the blame for allowing Pitcairn's sexual culture to continue.
- [paragraph 41] "The British knew what was going on. There were mothers at the age of 12, 50 years ago. Why did they not supply some information, some guidance?"
- [paragraph 42] When that point is relayed to Wolstenholme, she nods wearily.
- [paragraph 43] "That's something I'm very conscious of," she concedes. But she will not be drawn on whether her predecessors should be held responsible for not intervening sooner.
- [paragraph 44] Ferret suggests the outside authorities - church and state - have fallen prey to Pitcairn's romantic myth. And its culture of secrets.
- [paragraph 45] "No one wanted to see reality. It may have been their reasoning to think the better of everything rather than see the reality of something."
- [paragraph 46] The question remains: just how dark are those secrets? It's hard to imagine Moore and the New Zealand and British police have spent years merely investigating teenage sex, even if some of those involved were under 16. While the law can't turn a blind eye to children as young as 10 having sex - and some adults are likely to be prosecuted for under-age sex - it hardly warrants the resources spent. The reasonable conclusion is that a range of charges will be laid, from the relatively minor to the extremely serious.
- [paragraph 47] But until Moore announces what those charges are, every Pitcairner feels guilty.
- [paragraph 48] Alex says most islanders recognise their way of life was wrong and must change. He knows of at least one receiving sex counselling.
- [paragraph 49] "Now I'm in New Zealand and I've lived here for years I see it [sex with minors] as totally wrong. I've said that [to police] right from the word go."
- [paragraph 50] But he's also angry, and it's an anger simmering throughout the Pitcairn community.

[paragraph 51] They're angry that their children are called rapists and their mothers are suffering depression; that men have suffered stress-related illnesses, including heart failure; and that even the women and children on the island may lose their home if the able-bodied men needed to work the longboats are imprisoned.

[paragraph 52] Because the community is so small and interdependent, the offenders in this case have hurt not only their victims; they have jeopardised a way of life. Islanders have become suspicious of each other. Support for the victims has been limited; some even blame them, putting the offending down to the way they acted and dressed.

[paragraph 53] The entire population is suffering for the perpetrators' sins.

[paragraph 54] Betty Christian, a 59-year-old, sixth-generation Pitcairner, wrote from the island this week: "Our very existence is at stake. We are like one family, and whatever decision is made, we are the ones who will suffer. Regardless of our differences and problems, none of our people want to see Pitcairn closed down and abandoned ... Whatever the outcome, all of us will be affected as we are related to both alleged victims and alleged perpetrators."

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