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**Masculinity as a site of pre-emptive  
intervention in the prevention  
of child sexual abuse**

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## Abstract

This research aimed to challenge dominant assumptions regarding paedophilia and child sex offending and open up the possibility for interventions that engage men before they offend against children. Child sexual abuse (CSA) remains a serious social problem that is overwhelmingly committed by men, and yet masculinity is usually excluded from Criminal Psychology's endeavours to understand child sex offenders (CSO). Positivist approaches to the prevention of CSA have excluded dominant gendered power relationships. A poststructuralist informed reading of the literature revealed blurred boundaries between media representations and psychological constructions of CSO, producing a deviant subject that obscured gendered social power relationships and the discourses of hegemonic masculinity (HM) that are implicated in CSA. This thesis questions the pervasiveness and longevity of HM, and its effects, in order to produce a space to examine the narratives of four former CSO. The first analysis chapter used narrative theory to form a hybrid representation of the men's stories. This revealed a dominant form of normative heterosexuality where masculine privilege was so embedded in cultural practices that it was rendered invisible. It also located turning points in the men's negotiations of masculinity that led to their offending. The second analysis chapter involved a discourse analysis of the discursive constitution of masculinity in the men's talk. Together these chapters offer potential points of pre-emptive intervention and the potential for institutions to address cultural assumptions of heteronormativity.

## **Acknowledgments**

Creating this dissertation has been a journey, a difficult one but a rewarding one. I have enjoyed challenging the assumptions that underpin some of the mainstream ideologies covered in this thesis. In doing so, I have become aware of how influential these ideologies have been in my life and how pervasive they are in our culture. Doing this has given me an opportunity to look behind and beyond the taken for granted in psychology and other powerful institutions.

As is the case with all of my endeavours, this piece of work has been much more than a product of individual effort. My parents, Stan and Cate, and my brother, Ross, have provided me with love and support from day one and throughout this project. Although we are separated by several thousand miles, their support is never far away. My beautiful partner, Jemma, has known me for the last year and a half so has only known me as an intern psychologist. Meeting Jemma at this time has been very fortunate for me but probably unfortunate for Jemma given the time and energy that I have devoted to this project. Thank you so much Jemma for your love, patience, knowledge, encouragement, energy, smiles and laughs.

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