GENDER, SEXUALITY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS: RE-EVALUATING OEDIPAL THEORY

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
At the University of Leicester

By
Nicola Juliet Barden
Department of Lifelong Learning
University of Leicester

October 2015
Abstract

Gender, Sexuality and Psychoanalysis: Re-evaluating oedipal theory

Nicola Juliet Barden

Psychoanalysis has been affected by the many legal, social and cultural shifts in attitudes towards homosexuality. Psychoanalytic institutions now accept gay and lesbian men and women as trainees, training supervisors and committee members, and have statements of equality that include sexual orientation. History indicates that psychoanalysis has come lately and sometimes reluctantly to this position, not least because oedipal theory, considered by some to be the cornerstone of psychoanalysis, places homosexuality as a developmental deficit. Resolution of oedipal conflict, on which psychic health depends, rests on the opposition of identification and desire, making it impossible to theorise homosexuality outside of pathology, however benign.

The research addressed itself to this clash between theory and policy with the aim of finding out whether and how it had been addressed, and to considering implications for future theory building in areas of gender and sexuality. Participants were invited to contribute as expert practitioners and theoreticians, all published figures in the field. Ten participants took part in two interviews each, separated by a year during which the researcher distributed a summary paper of the main themes arising in the initial interview, allowing the participants opportunity to respond indirectly to each other’s thinking. The second set of interviews were subject to a full thematic analysis which formed the basis for the discussion.

The research found that there was a mixed response to oedipal theory, with some participants able to shrug off past accretions and find in it a useful framework for thinking about broader issues of boundaries, omnipotence and limitation, while others felt it should be left behind as an artefact of the past. In considering the development of analytic theory there was general agreement that the field urgently needed to look beyond its own borders and work with science, academia and other theoretical approaches.

Transgender came out as a surprise topic that was referred to as ‘the new homosexuality’ in psychoanalysis, with some concerns being voiced over understanding this as had in the past been voiced over understanding homosexuality. This suggested that analytic theory about gender and sexuality had not been subject to substantive or systematic re-theorising following the greater acceptance of gay and lesbian sexualities, and that the problems with theory endemic to discussions of homosexuality were being repeated in relation to transgender. It was noted that drive theory presented difficulties in theorising away from gender difference as the organiser of desire and identity, and relational theory seemed to allow greater freedom in this regard.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the participants who contributed their time and their thinking so generously to this project.
I am grateful to my supervisors, Sue Wheeler and Alessandra Lemma, whose guidance has been unfailingly helpful.
I am grateful to my employers during this time, the Universities of Portsmouth and Winchester, and to my colleagues who supported this work.
I would also like to thank my family for their expectations of equality, and most profoundly my partner for supporting this project when she knew far better than I did what that would mean.
Publications

Some elements of Chapter Two have been reworked and incorporated from the previous publication:

# Table of Contents

## Chapter One – Introduction ......................................................................................... 10

1.1 Purpose and origin of the research question ............................................................... 10
1.2 Reflexive statement ..................................................................................................... 13
1.3 Terminology ................................................................................................................ 17
    1.3.1 Psychoanalysis ..................................................................................................... 17
    1.3.2 Sexuality ............................................................................................................... 18
    1.3.3 Gender ................................................................................................................ 19
    1.3.4 Patient/client ........................................................................................................ 22
1.4 Summary ..................................................................................................................... 22

## Chapter Two - Background and literature review ......................................................... 24

2.1 A brief history and background to psychoanalytic theory development ............... 24
    2.1.1 Cultural and historical context ............................................................................. 25
    2.1.2 British, American and French contexts ............................................................... 30
2.2 Freud on Oedipus ...................................................................................................... 42
2.3 Responses to Freud: Jung, the feminine and Klein ................................................. 47
2.4 Focus on homosexuality ........................................................................................... 54
2.5 Differences in transatlantic theory: drive and relationship .................................... 59
2.6 French psychoanalysis ............................................................................................. 65
2.7 Postmodernism, performativity and psychoanalysis .............................................. 72
2.8 Reviewing Oedipus .................................................................................................. 76
2.9 Focus on gender: moving forward ........................................................................... 79
    2.9.1 Different kinds of difference ............................................................................... 79
    2.9.2 Components of gender ....................................................................................... 82
2.10 Plural identities: gender, sexuality and race ......................................................... 85
Chapter Three – Methodology .................................................. 111

3.1 Development of the research question ...................................................... 111
3.2 Approach to the research question ................................................................. 112
   3.2.1 Quantitative or qualitative approach ................................................. 112
   3.2.2 The approach to knowledge ................................................................. 114
3.3 Consideration of methods ................................................................. 118
3.4 Method ................................................................. 124
   3.4.1 Interview structure ................................................................. 124
   3.4.2 Recruitment of participants ...................................................... 126
   3.4.3 First interviews ................................................................. 131
   3.4.4 Second interviews ................................................................. 131
   3.4.5 Pilot Interviews ................................................................. 132
   3.4.6 Interview questions ................................................................. 134
   3.4.7 Process of analysis ................................................................. 136
   3.4.8 Questions of reliability, validity and generalizability .................... 139
   3.4.9 Ethics ................................................................. 140
3.5 Summary ................................................................. 143
Chapter Four – Analysis of data

4.1 Introduction and research questions
4.2 Differences between the first and second round experiences
4.3 Building theory
  4.3.1 Psychoanalytic theory is incomplete if not integrated with other knowledge
  4.3.2 Differences within psychoanalysis can be paid more attention than differences outside them
  4.3.3 Agents of change
  4.3.4 The building blocks of theory are personal
  4.3.5 The moral basis of theory development
4.4 Oedipal theory
  4.4.1 The purpose of analytic theory
  4.4.2 Oedipus is relevant if you work at it
  4.4.3 There are better stories to tell
  4.4.4 Ways forward with Oedipus
4.5 Some rethinking of gender and sexuality
  4.5.1 There are different and changing understandings of gender and sexuality
  4.5.2 Gender as complementarity
  4.5.3 Re-theorising gender and sexuality
4.6 Transgender
  4.6.1 Transgender is the next big challenge
  4.6.2 Transgender as a challenge to thinking about gender
  4.6.3 Psychoanalytic theory is not helping
4.7 Final Reflection

Chapter Five – Discussion and conclusions

5.1 Introduction
5.2 Review of methodology
5.2.1 Reflection on the participants ................................................................. 201
5.2.2 Reflection on the methodology................................................................. 205
5.3 Oedipus .......................................................................................................... 207
  5.3.1 Thinking about theory .............................................................................. 207
  5.3.2 Oedipus: a framework for the future .................................................... 209
  5.3.3 Oedipus: to be dismantled .................................................................... 211
  5.3.4 Oedipal conclusions ................................................................................. 211
5.4 Transgender ................................................................................................. 212
  5.4.1 Transgender – repeating the pattern .................................................... 213
5.5 Revisiting gender, sexuality and identity ..................................................... 216
  5.5.1 Gender, politics and the body ................................................................. 216
  5.5.2 Complementarity .................................................................................... 220
  5.5.3 Identity ................................................................................................... 221
  5.5.4 Identity and the equality agenda ............................................................ 225
5.6 Revisiting theory .......................................................................................... 227
  5.6.1 Drive theory and relational theory ....................................................... 227
  5.6.2 Drive theory, relational theory and sex .................................................. 232
  5.6.3 Postmodernism, psychoanalysis and identity ....................................... 235
  5.6.4 The role and remit of psychoanalytic institutions ................................... 237
5.7 Reflections and further considerations ....................................................... 239

Chapter Six – Final conclusions ........................................................................ 246

6.1 Future directions .......................................................................................... 246
6.2 Future research ............................................................................................ 248

Appendix 1 ........................................................................................................... 251

Appendix 2 ........................................................................................................... 287
Appendix 3..................................................................................................................................................289

Appendix 4..................................................................................................................................................295

References..................................................................................................................................................298
Chapter One – Introduction

This chapter introduces the reader to the emergence and purpose of the research question, including a reflexive statement by the researcher. It then considers the use of terminology in four main areas (psychoanalysis, sexuality, gender and patient/client) before concluding with the aims of the research.

1.1 Purpose and origin of the research question

What is the response of psychoanalytic theorists to the construction of gender identity and sexual identity in the Oedipus complex, and to what extent is this theoretically consistent with adopting a non-pathologising approach to homosexuality?

What are the implications for psychoanalytic theorising about gender and sexuality?

The research set out to ask questions regarding the development of thinking about the relationship between gender and sexuality in psychoanalysis, with particular reference to the Oedipus complex, given the moves towards the de-pathologisation of homosexuality in society and in the profession. Through considering how expert theoreticians are currently thinking about Oedipus, gender and sexuality it was hoped to pull together existing knowledge and consider it in a new way, and thus to offer thoughts for future theory building.

The research emerged, as it often does, from a personal as well as professional interest (Habermas 1972; Marshall 1995). The personal/professional mix was also found in the research participants’ accounts of their own interests in this area of work. Romanyszyn
(2013) offered a view of research as ‘unfinished business’ (Romanyshyn 2013: 95) which captures the intellectual and personal niggle that certainly sat behind this research for many years, working its way forward in conversations, reading, writing, talking, listening and completing a postgraduate study that formed the platform for this project. It is when something feels unaccounted for within the available ways of understanding that there is cause to inspect it; research can begin with something that offends. Research in the social sciences includes an ethical agenda that it should be of use to its subjects (McLeod 2003, Mertens, Sullivan and Stace 2013) and this leans further towards a personal and professional meaning.

It is true that things have come a long way in terms of homosexuality and society. In 1972, when the American Psychiatric Association was considering proposals to remove homosexuality from the list of recognised mental disorders, John Fryer, a gay psychiatrist, testified in the hearings wearing a mask and a wig because of the risk that being identified would have posed to his place in the profession. In 2013, the Chief Executive Officer of the same association was an openly gay male psychiatrist, Saul Levin. Despite this, Byrne (2014) sounded a note of caution that while favourable policies now abound there is still a significant gap between their existence and their implementation in the education and training of mental health professionals, and advances in mental health for gay and lesbian people are generally restricted to liberal Western countries. There may likewise be a gap between the greater acceptance of homosexuality in psychoanalysis and a review of the analytic theories that came about in earlier and less positive times.

While therapists may have been thinking that their actions were non-discriminatory, studies of the actual experiences of lesbian and gay clients in therapy give a more mixed view. In Pixton’s research (2003) the attribute of ‘humanity’ was regarded as a helpful component by clients of gay affirmative therapy. If this was a stand-out feature then it was also a comment on the way in which sexuality was on other occasions experienced as standing apart from humanity in less consciously affirmative work. A systematic review (King et al 2007) of qualitative evidence of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered users of therapeutic services concluded that therapists should not rely
on their clients to educate them about gay and lesbian life but should do some preparatory work so that they were starting with a level of understanding as well as acceptance. A heterosexual practitioner is seldom required to confront an analyst with no knowledge of heterosexuality. It can be difficult for practitioners to imagine the inadequacy of a ‘we’re all the same under the skin’ approach to the individual whose experience of themselves is precisely that of not being the same. So often answered by the language and frame of commonality, it is the recognition of difference, and also of sameness in difference, that is the more complicated need. Psychoanalysis has defined difference in sexuality against a norm, missing out on the opportunities that common ownership might provide.

During the course of this research it became clear that personal and public histories, moralities, philosophies and epistemologies informed theory. Etherington (2004), an author immersed in reflexive research in counselling and psychotherapy, noted that individuals are both observers and subjects of that for which they seek to account. She emphasised transparency as key to the reader being able to account for the researcher’s involvement in the process, and argued that transparency could likewise be a part of the engagement between researcher and participant. This is one way to consider managing what in more analytic terms would be described as the transference/countertransference dynamic between researcher and participant, recognising that this is inevitably in the story of the research. Etherington’s argument was that engaging with this rather than seeking to eradicate or bracket it is a more productive way forward; the researcher must know themselves in relation to the research.

Our personal history, when it is known to us and processed in ways that allow us to remain in contact emotionally and bodily with others whose stories remind us of our own, can enrich our role as researcher. (Etherington 2004: 180)

Conscious awareness of such a link can, she argued, increase empathy and decrease unconscious bias. Alvesson and Karreman (2011) also emphasised the internal
resource that each researcher brings to their task, from their personal politics and history to the community of knowledge within which they work.

With this in mind this section is followed by a reflexive statement by the researcher which enables the reader to place the research in a personal and professional context, from which they can draw their own conclusions.

1.2 Reflexive statement

As the research data includes perspectives on the psychoanalytic professions as well as on sexuality and gender I have included some background on both to provide transparency in each area.

My undergraduate degree was in English and Theology, which responded to an interest in both stories and meanings. During this period I came to identify as lesbian. In a theological environment (I lived in a theological college for the final year of the degree and was considering a future in the Church) I found myself increasingly pushed towards secularisation. Gay and lesbian friends in the Anglican and Methodist churches were being asked to live double lives, and while heterosexual ordinands could and did argue against the prevailing Christian sexual orthodoxies in support of their gay and lesbian colleagues, the latter were effectively silenced. I watched my closest friends leave or be asked to leave their hoped-for futures and changed my own direction towards the social work field.

Training as a social worker brought with it a new political education in which feminism featured heavily and gave words to previously unarticulated experiences. I was extremely lucky to have my coming out period embedded in this feminist context; by the 1980s feminism was beginning to talk about lesbian sexuality, lesbian women were strong in the movement and there was a positive and empowering context in which to experience and understand what was then referred to as ‘my sexuality’. Community
was available for shelter, warmth and sustenance, providing Winnicott’s ‘facilitating environment’ (Winnicott 1963: 239) for this specific maturational process. At the same time, I started as a volunteer counsellor in a local youth counselling service. In this period, the 1980s, there were only a handful of counselling courses in the country and an alternative entry route of volunteerism was common. The nature of the voluntary sector meant that such services were often set within a counter-culture environment that supported left wing politics and were friendly to feminism. The counselling on offer was person-centred and so this was my first theoretical orientation, garnered through what might now be thought of as an apprenticeship route of on-the-job training, continuous professional development and clinical supervision.

Through all of this time, within these two arenas of social work and counselling, I experienced little conflict with my sexuality. There might have been ignorance, but to an extent I was fairly ignorant myself; people were quick to want to understand and support. I was different, but mostly in a good way, and I had plenty of company. Gay and lesbian practitioners gravitated towards these more benign environments and were arguably over-represented, which in turn provided greater opportunities for learning and inclusion. I went on to work in the voluntary sector, which continued to be politically aligned with a strong equality and diversity agenda that was heavily engaged with the anti-racist movement, and so a political continuity across the equality agendas slowly became evident. It became clear that identities were plural, that I was lesbian and female but also white and able bodied, and all of these things defined who I was to the world and led the world to offer me back a certain version of myself and the opportunities that went with it. Identity was political as well as personal.

After ten years I became accredited with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (although the ‘psychotherapy’ tag had not yet been added) and was working full time as a counsellor in Higher Education. Here the politics were different, more conservative, and I was more cautious about being ‘out’ at work. I worked with young people; there was considerable prejudice around homosexuality and a confusion between homosexuality and paedophilia. The age of consent for gay men
was twenty one and the Conservative Government had brought in Clause 28 (LGA 1988) limiting what teachers could say about sexuality in the classroom. While the counter-culture thrived I was now more in the mainstream culture. During this transition I sought to undertake further therapy training and, in the tradition that McLeod (2013) deplored, understood psychotherapy as rather a step up from counselling so looked for a course approved by the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy. I was completely unaware of the political differences between psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. At that time more courses were opening up outside the London area and my locality offered Contemporary Freudian, Jungian and Kleinian trainings. My contact with Freud on my social work training had depicted an out of date and patriarchal model unfavourable to women; the Kleinian training seemed rather rigid with more focus on children than I wanted; the Jungian training looked interesting and broad based rather than classical. I knew next to nothing about Jung, but on such bases are decisions made.

The interviews for the training were with two analysts, who were in receipt of a written statement of application. I had included a statement about my sexuality as I wanted this to be known from the start; the reputation of psychotherapy trainings was variable in this area. In both interviews I remember being struck by a question about whether I would consider having a relationship with a man, and being certain that heterosexual applicants were not being asked if they would consider a same sex relationship. Nevertheless, I was accepted on to the training and completed it five years later. The theory was broadly based and leaned towards rather than rested on Jung. There was one open lecture with a lesbian analyst who spoke about lesbian issues in relation to psychoanalysis, and a seminar by a gay male analyst, who was part of the training committee, on the psychology of homophobia. Seminars on Oedipus did not focus on sexuality as much as on the beginnings of difference discovered through gender, and more broadly on the possible readings of the mythology behind Oedipus, as might be expected. The Jungian aspect of the training may well have allowed for a more metaphysical approach to theory that pulled back from the specifics of the Freudian developmental emphasis, although the latter came across more strongly in the infant observation seminars. When I came to see training patients, at one point
two out of the three required were lesbian women and there was a long conversation
about why the third needed to be someone heterosexual; I wondered whether this
conversation was being had in reverse with other candidates who only had
heterosexual training patients.

The picture I am trying to paint is of a relatively benign training that did more than
most not to pathologise homosexuality. It just had nothing with which to endorse it
either. All the imagery, all the examples, all the reading – except where homosexuality
was specifically the subject matter – assumed heterosexuality. We did not think for
example about lesbians or gay men bringing up children despite the infant observation
seminar opportunities; Oedipus was not allowed to do any harm but neither was there
a critique to assist in negotiating its more perilous paths. The only way on offer to
understand homosexuality was as an issue of gender confusion, and this infiltrated my
own therapy, with a therapist who was entirely supportive of my sexuality but equally
had no other way to conceptualise it. Aetiology and meaning were entirely confused.
Now, I understand this was because these things generally were not available in the
analytic world, not in its discourse nor in its resources. It was no different from being
at work, but it was of course more of a problem to limit my authenticity to fit this
environment.

Psychoanalysis was clearly interested in why and how people became homosexual; I
was rather interested in that myself and for years rather ironically reflected on the
family story that I was expected to be a boy all during my mother’s pregnancy. I say
this to illustrate the subliminal strength of the same-sex identification, cross-sex desire
template used by Freud and institutionalised by his followers. What I knew was that I
felt fully female and fully lesbian and so oedipal complementarity made no sense to
me; my gender did not seem to require balancing with another gender, nor my
sexuality. This then had implications for the way in which both gender and sexuality
were viewed. If they were not used to balance each other out; if, as so clearly shown
by O’Connor and Ryan (1993) and so seldom taken up anywhere else, same-sex
identification and same-sex desire could quite comfortably co-exist, then what was
happening to gender complementarity, to animus and anima, to the whole
male/female interplay that was relied on to facilitate the delicate balance of difference and wholeness? Why were we still thinking in this way? And how else was there to think? This was my oedipal niggle that never went away, and that formed the basis of this research question.

1.3 Terminology

1.3.1 Psychoanalysis

‘Psychoanalysis’ is a politically contested term. This is referred to in Chapter Two in providing a historical background to the profession of psychoanalysis, and again in Chapter Three in describing the method for selection of participants. The level of the contest was better understood at the end of the research than it had been at the start. However, with hindsight this was fortunate as it allowed the researcher to include writers and practitioners whom some would consider outside the analytic fold who nevertheless were fully conversant with analytic literature and were moreover experts and leaders in the field of gender and sexuality. Gill (1954) stated that intensive psychotherapy and psychoanalysis ‘are not the polar opposites which they are often declared to be’ (Gill 1954: 795), although they are different. Some of the definitions of psychoanalysis could read as well for other forms of psychotherapy and counselling: ‘[psychoanalysis is to] help the patient understand, and so overcome, emotional impediments to his discovering what he innately already knows’ (Money-Kyrle 1971: 103) sits equally well with Roger’s (1951) client-centred conviction that clients would discover (re)solutions within themselves, with the role of the therapist being to help them remove the barriers to this.

Psychoanalysis is also a methodology, a way of working with someone against a particular map of the personality originating in the work of Freud. Whether it needs to be three, four or five times a week is not the subject of this thesis, which has taken a broad and inclusive view of what to include under the term ‘psychoanalysis’. The word
is used here in a way that includes practitioners who would define themselves as psychoanalysts, psychoanalytic psychotherapists, analytic psychologists and psychodynamic psychotherapists. It has allowed people to identify for themselves, through acceptance of the invitation to participate, whether they feel they contribute to psychoanalytic thinking. The phrase ‘traditional psychoanalysis’ in the text is used to refer to the tradition of the psychoanalytic organisations that are considered, or consider themselves to be, upholders of authentic psychoanalysis. The International Psychoanalytical Association is perhaps the foremost of these, founded by Freud in 1910 and describing itself as ‘...the world’s primary accrediting and regulatory body for psychoanalysts’ (IPA 2015).

1.3.2 Sexuality

While ‘homosexual’ might have been originally a term to change behaviour into identity as a move towards tolerance (Wright 1992), it has since acquired medical overtones not least associated with its use in the dominant diagnostic textbooks of the twentieth century. Psychoanalysis with its close alliance to the medical profession also used ‘homosexuality’ diagnostically with the accompanying overtones of sickness and treatment (Friedman and Downey 2002), and it has arguably remained a far from neutral term. It is still used in some analytic publications that seem uncomfortable with the imprecision or informality of ‘gay’, this being primarily a political term from the 1960s which was promoted as a positive alternative to ‘homosexual’. Peters (2014) commented on the legacy of deviance attached to ‘homosexual’ and the gradual decline of its usage in the press, replaced with ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’. He noted that when ‘homosexuality’ was used it was most often associated with a negative report.

Use of the terms in therapeutic circles is also influenced by theoretical orientation. The more humanistic therapies, always at a distance from the medical establishment, have been quick to adopt lesbian and gay, now shortened to an inclusive LGB and (usually) T to include bisexual and transgender, and occasionally now broadened simply into ‘sexual diversity’ (Pink Therapy 2015).
In an effort to reflect the changes of the times, this thesis will follow the terminology of the publications, participants and times referred to where possible, and will use ‘lesbian and gay’ when speaking from the researcher’s perspective. Changing times will stretch the reflective language to include queer, dyke, faggot and other reclaimed terms where appropriate.

1.3.3 Gender

(i) Transvestism, transsexuality, homosexuality

Gender terminology is complex. In public opinion as well as in psychoanalysis the conflation of gender and sexuality led to confusion between transvestism, transsexuality and homosexuality, particularly in earlier psychoanalytic writings (Greenson 1996). The iconic lesbian novel ‘The Well of Loneliness’ (Hall 1928) could be equally well understood as a transsexual novel (Prosser 1998) as Hall’s writing neatly demonstrated necessary confusion of the two, embodied in the cross-dressing lesbian protagonist. The psychoanalyst Fenichel (1930) clarified transvestism as the desire to dress as the other gender but not to identify with them, and transsexuality came to describe identification with the other sex. Homosexuality was understood to be different from transsexuality although a continuum was never far away, encouraged by the oedipal association between gender identification and homosexuality. A more modern definition of transvestism is a person who dresses in clothing typically worn by another gender, usually without the wish to transition into another gender, while homosexuality refers to an identity based around a sexual attraction to someone of the same sex, although this is not simple as concepts of identity, gender and sex become more diverse.

These terms are therefore used with some variance in accordance with the literature or data being referred to.
(ii) Transsexuality, transgender and trans

Transsexuality is often subsumed in the term transgender as:

...an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression or behaviour does not confirm to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth’. (APA 2014).

Transgender more readily expresses this state than transsexual as it clarifies that it is gender not sexuality that is being referred to (Firth 2015). Transsexuality when used generally refers to someone whose resolution of gender issues is to live permanently in their chosen gender. Gender variance may also describe a mismatch between assigned and experienced gender identity, and gender transition has referred to the ‘processes of realignment of anatomy and gender role with one’s psychological gender’ (Firth 2015: 99). In medical terminology (APA 2013) gender dysphoria is used to refer to the gender assigned at birth being in opposition to the gender the individual experiences and expresses themselves as belonging to, when this opposition is causing the individual distress, either in itself or because of lack of access to treatment.

‘Transman’ and ‘transwoman’ have been commonly used as self-description for and by individuals who have transitioned, although of course the ‘trans’ may be omitted and simply ‘man’ or ‘woman’ be stated. ‘Trans’ has become a word in itself referring to the crossing of accepted gender boundaries, particularly in a way that challenges the binary status of gender, and in this way trans (which exists outside of quotation marks) is often linked with queer theory, described by Plummer as:

...the postmodernization of sexual and gender studies...a radical deconstruction of all conventional categories of sexuality and gender...a messy, anarchic affair.
(Plummer 2013: 410)

Of these terms, transgender will be used in preference over transsexuality to describe the clear dissonance between natal assigned and experienced gender, whether or not
this results in complete surgical transition, and trans will be used to describe the broader questioning or inhabiting of gender. It is worth noting that in trans vocabulary what used to be referred to as the sex of an individual is now referred to as their gender; the body has become part of a social definition that by implication takes it beyond the physical. It is difficult to remain completely consistent in this area when crossing discourses that approach these terms so differently.

(iii) Queer

Problematising sexuality and gender, ‘queer’ questions categories in a way that can be seen to liberate or equally to negate; for this reason it offers much in the way of disturbance but less in the way of resolution. Queer incorporates a broad range of binary-challenging positions including gendered and sexual instabilities. Arising out of AIDS activism in the 1980s, the queer movement grew into the academia of the 1990s (Hall 2003). It became the name for a perspective, recognised in the LGBT and frequently added Q tag, where not fitting and/or not wanting to fit had a prioritised place. The acronym represented a political alliance which recognised that a critique of gender norms cannot exclude a critique of sexual norms as they have such a long coincidence, and that any critique of gender or sexuality needs to include the issue of power. This facilitated queer theory in considering the colonialist imprinting of racialized norms onto gender and sexuality (Ferguson 2013).

Queer will therefore be used to denote a more political and academic aspect to the gender questioning.

(iv) Intersex

‘Intersex’ is used to describe a number of conditions in which the sexual or reproductive anatomy of an individual is incongruent with the usual expectations for that gender (ISNA 2015). Sometimes this is apparent from birth; at other times it may not become apparent until puberty or later. Intersex as a medical designation has recently been renamed a disorder of sexual development (APA 2013), somewhat
controversially allowing it to be associated with gender identity disorder (Kraus 2015). Harris drew attention to the tension between the intersex dialogue urging an openness to non-specific, non-binary gender and the transgendered urging towards a congruence of mind and body. Harris’s comment that ‘Gendered bodies and gendered minds are potentially assembled in various ways’ (Harris 2009: 210) speaks to the struggle with terminology that reflects the continuing struggle to find a language that can be simultaneously porous and impermeable enough to represent such multiple assemblage. Until relatively recently the usual medical response to intersex was to assign a gender to the infant and perform any surgery necessary to conform to this assignation. Now it is more likely that any intervention will wait until the individual concerned is able to make their own choice.

1.3.4 Patient/client

A further dilemma enters over the use of the words ‘patient’ and ‘client’. The former has overtones of medicalisation and treatment and the latter of a commercial transaction, although they are both attempts to acknowledge suffering and to contain the hope of amelioration. They belong to different traditions of therapy with ‘patient’ being more aligned to psychoanalysis and ‘client’ to the humanistic therapies. Psychodynamic psychotherapy and counselling have created an overlap between the two and there are individual exceptions to their use. This thesis will use the terms to reflect their context where possible, and will use ‘client’ outside of this, simply to reflect personal preference.

1.4 Summary

This Chapter has introduced the reader to the research topic, its origin and purpose. It has also addressed certain aspects of the terminology that the reader will encounter.
This is in preparation for the body of the thesis which will address the research question directly, the relevant literature, the methodology, analysis and main findings.
Chapter Two – Background and literature review

This Chapter provides a background to and reflection on the analytic literature relating to gender, sexuality and the Oedipus complex. By its nature it is selective as the field is so vast; it has largely kept to the more well-trodden paths. Acknowledgement is made of Jungian literature because of its impact through the concepts of animus and anima on ways of thinking about gender. Otherwise, the focus is on the two main seams in the UK of Freudian and Kleinian thought, and in the USA the Relational school is added to this. The timeline of the last century takes the chapter through modernism into postmodernism and the edges of queer theory, and the changes to ways of thinking this has brought to the analytic field. Mention is made of the tension between psychoanalysis and science as this has informed the way in which psychoanalysis has tried to make sense of the body and especially the links between body and mind.

2.1 A brief history and background to psychoanalytic theory development

This section considers the background to psychoanalysis and offers a telescoped history of the early development of the profession. It is now recognised as necessary to consider the assumptions that might lie underneath a perception of experience, rather than simply account for the experience as a thing in itself. Psychoanalytic approaches have been formed from and are appropriate to their context and situation; psychoanalysis is not the same throughout the world (May 1964). Thus the history and social context underlying the development of analytic ideas are important to include, even if briefly.

Over one hundred years of psychoanalytic theorising has led to a great deal of theory:
Psychoanalysis as a science encompasses a therapeutic technique, an observational method, and a theory derived from a method of inquiry. It is not a single theory, but a series of theories nested within each other: a theory of development; pathogenesis; how the mind is structured and functions; and technique, therapeutic action and cure. (Bachant et al 1995: 72)

Putting to one side whether psychoanalysis is a science, the nest of theories is now better described as a tree full of nests, with a forest growing up around it. Dimen has commented that ‘The noisy frontiers of psychosexual theory are a deconstructionist’s delight but a rapporteur’s nightmare’ (Dimen 1997: 538). In choosing the literature this research has kept largely to the USA and the UK as they remain the two most prolific sources of output in the English language, notwithstanding the recent growth in Latin America, much influenced by Klein (Gay 1988), and of course the French contribution. Within these geographical regions there are still too many areas to account for in a single thesis, so emphasis has been placed on the schools mentioned above, and on tracking changes in thinking across the years that relate to the central questions of the research.

2.1.1 Cultural and historical context

Psychoanalysis of course did not spring fully-formed like Athena from the head of Zeus. Although psychoanalytic views of the unconscious began with Freud, theories of unconscious life existed before him (Whyte 1979, Ellenberger 1970), as did (and do) many other culturally specific therapeutic traditions (Bond et al 2001). Freud’s theories arose out of his particular context and time: Vienna at the turn of the century, and his own family circumstance. Bettelheim (1964) suggested that industrialisation had given the opportunity to think about family in terms of relationships and not just survival, and post industrialist society had given significance to the individual as well as to collective life. Europe was not far from the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on rationality and progress, with science the new religion. Descartes’ valuation of mind over body, rationality over feeling, was the triumph of civilisation over raw nature, and
Freud’s emphasis on the precariousness of identity, the bargain made with the unconscious in order to achieve stability, both arose from and challenged this. Decker (1977) pointed to a European context which provided a base for both facilitating and working against Freud – the same Victorian values that provoked his theories inhibited their spread.

Freud valued the rational but was under no illusions about its dominion. Darwin’s work simultaneously undermined the God-given ascent of man and provided a platform for questioning what had previously been considered natural. ‘Natural’ became linked with nature rather than God and provided a framework based on biology rather than religion, reflected in Freud’s account of sexuality as a struggle between civilisation and unameliorated instinct. Dimen (1995a) pointed out the tension for Freud between this biological determinism with procreation as a guiding force, and the uncertainty required to question masculinity as active and femininity as passive.

There has been consideration of the ways in which Freud’s theories were built on his personal experience, particularly as his self-analysis must have limited his access to an external perspective. Stolorow and Atwood (1979) for example explained the Oedipus complex as an account of Freud’s management of his own sibling rivalry and repressed rage towards his mother. Whether they were right or not, there is now greater acknowledgement that theory is contingent not autonomous, although there have been objections to this idea from theoreticians more committed to the scientific standpoint (Kline 1984). The resettlement of post-war European analysts in the completely new culture of America heightened at least the awareness of cultural context as they experienced their own displacement, and social determinants started to compete with Freud’s biological imperatives (Stevens 1983).

Schwartz (2001) described psychoanalysis as having boundaries with literature, psychiatry, medicine and academic psychology. Certainly it is not the only discipline that tries to understand human emotion and behaviour, and one of its struggles has been between maintaining itself as a discreet entity and embracing its potential collaborators. The growth of psychoanalysis is in part a tale of division and splitting,
accounted for by the personalities of the protagonists (Macdiarmid 2013) and the struggle for recognition common to all new movements. The dilemma continues in the profession to this day; as Waintrater wrote, ‘Psychoanalysts are afraid of losing their “purity”, and this fear triggers a great resistance toward novelty’ (Waintrater 2012: 301).

By the nineteenth century medicine had overtaken religion and moved the healing arts into a science, and it was from a medical starting point that Freud developed the specific practice of psychoanalysis, which Stafford-Clarke asserted ‘was and will always be Freud’s original creation’ (Stafford-Clarke 1967: 17). Reflexivity as a research tool was not part of the academic or medical world then, and Freud cannot be entirely blamed for his lack of contextual awareness (Dinnerstein 1976). Neither was the academic relationship between arts and science what it is now, and even now the social sciences must work to gain credibility, or argue cogently against the need for such work. One hundred and fifty years ago enlightenment ideals were taken for granted. Knowledge required certainty and this was apparent in Freud’s rather forensic approach to patients and in the conviction of his conclusions. Medical training drew clear lines between health and illness in the mental realm no less than the physical, and the concept of reciprocity in the doctor/patient relationship was many years away. Braddock (2007) saw Freud’s search for the mechanics of the mind as congruent with the scientific views of his time. Systems sought equilibrium, and Freud’s concept of mind as a self-regulating system accorded with this; his tripartite model of the mind enabled it to regulate pleasure and survival in relation to each other. But the battle for scientific recognition was constant. Freud’s reception in his own time was mixed, and Schwartz put forward that:

At bottom, the critiques of psychoanalysis, no matter how accurately they may pinpoint real problems in theory and practice, carry as a subtext the nineteenth-century story about science being precise, neutral and objective. (Schwartz 2001: 7)
Such requirements for certainty, likely necessary anyway for a young man wanting to make his professional mark, and for a Jewish non-believer striving for credibility in an anti-Semitic world (Gay 1989, Miller 1972), may have made it more difficult for Freud to incorporate space for dissension. Some of the splits in the history of psychoanalysis, aggravated by language, geography, zeitgeists and two world wars, also originated in the personal need for concordance evident in Freud’s relationship with his followers (Masson 1985, McGuire 1991) and the resultant casting off when agreement failed. Adler’s emphasis on power and inferiority; Jung’s expansion of libido into a broader life energy (McGuire 1991, Shamdasani 2003); these became more than personal fallings-out when the capabilities of those involved led them to start schools of their own and claim an analytic title. Others did not dramatically split from Freudian thinking but slowly moved away to found schools of their own that have ended up at a considerable distance: Perls and Gestalt Therapy, Reich and Orgone Therapy, Ellis and Rational Emotive Therapy, Berne’s Transactional Analysis and Rogers’ Person Centred Therapy – all have Freudian lineage. Others claimed to remain true to Freud but this was a matter of interpretation, and Freud himself did not always agree with their claims. The analytic world was and to a degree still is marked by rivalries that show more of the id than the ego, aided and abetted by differences in language across Europe and culture across the Atlantic.

Young-Breuhl and Dunbar (2009) undertook the difficult task of tracking the trajectories of the development of psychoanalysis as a profession from 1900-2000. The necessary brevity of their (and this) summary excluded details that could illuminate many dark corners of analytic history, but they did clearly communicate the politics, factionalism, historical accident and personal charisma that arguably influenced which psychoanalytic theories dominated as much or more than is explained by the merits of the theories alone. Young-Breuhl and Schwartz (2012) likened psychoanalysis to a traumatized profession with its diaspora and early schisms, and the death of the founding father, viewing its history as a series of fragmented trauma narratives.
Prior to the First World War the growth in psychoanalysis was brisk, and analytic institutes were founded in Vienna, Berlin, Budapest, London and New York. In 1920 Freud established the International Psychoanalytical Association to provide:

...some headquarters whose business it would be to declare: ‘All this nonsense is nothing to do with analysis; this is not psycho-analysis.’ (Freud 1914: 43)

Dream interpretation, Oedipus, the unconscious and sexuality were defining aspects of what was to be included as psychoanalytic (Kirsner 2010).

After a standstill in the war years the profession again flourished. Work with ‘shell-shocked’ soldiers gave weight to the endeavour, and early beginnings were consolidated. Schools or societies opened up in France, India, Tokyo, the Nordic countries, Holland, Switzerland, Italy, Jerusalem, South Africa, Latin America and additional States in North America. This was also a time of controversy and political debate. The home ground of psychoanalysis in medicine and/or psychology was contested under the question of lay analysis. Freud’s position was clearly in favour of psychology, and he feared that medicine might swallow analysis up under the guise of protecting it from quackery (Freud 1926). Undergoing an analysis rather than undertaking a medical degree was the foundation stone of the profession and while psychoanalysis and science should be friends they should not be mistaken for each other. A similar battle was fought in the USA some years later as in 1939 the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) approved the requirement of medical degrees by the American Psychoanalytic Association (APsaA), rescinded by the APsaA only after a court case in 1989 (Mintz 2005).

The coherence of psychoanalysis was further fractured by the growing unease over the growth of National Socialism in Germany in the 1930s which led to the emigration of significant numbers of European analysts, mainly to Britain and North America. Thus, although there was a flowering of different psychoanalytic approaches postwar – Jungian, Lacanian, Marxist – greater resources and commonalities of language led to a
British and North American domination, with Freud the significant influence in the USA and Klein in the UK (Jacobs 2003).

2.1.2 British, American and French contexts

(i) British directions

Psychoanalysis was introduced to the UK through Ernest Jones, a Welshman who worked first with Jung and then Freud, establishing himself as a facilitator for the development of both British and American psychoanalysis and forming psychoanalytic societies in the UK and the USA. Jones was loyal to Freud, although not much liked by him (Schwartz 2001) even though he later took Klein’s side against Freud’s daughter Anna.

The period between the two World Wars in Europe was a time of tumult, and gaining a foothold for psychoanalysis was no easy matter. It grew largely through private institutions which gave it greater independence but less authority, and the Institutions became the gatekeepers for standards of practice and orthodoxy of theory. In the class based UK society, it was class alliances that kept the top analytic organisations in the position of a closed shop with unique access to patients and jobs, the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) being the most significant guardian of the profession.

The advent of the Second World War saw many European analysts emigrating to the USA or to the UK. The traffic of would-be analysts flowing into Europe to learn from the experts went into reverse as the expert analysts moved out of Europe to establish their practices on safer ground, and the expertise went with them. Although Britain retained her share of analysts, sheer numbers meant that America was in a position to grow more quickly. Britain post-war was in a retrenched, steady-as-she goes state. Rationing continued until 1954. There were plenty of opportunities to work with
psychologically shattered soldiers and traumatised evacuees, but little private practice and few public or private funds.

British psychoanalysis maintained a left-of-centre postwar position. The Tavistock Clinic and the Cassel hospital both joined the National Health Service when it was established in 1948, working with the Welfare State to support social reconstruction and keeping to Freud’s liberal individualist position in focussing on authentic personhood over authority and convention (Rustin 1995). The other main contender of the time, the London Clinic of Psychoanalysis with its IPA link, remained outside of the medical establishments. The Tavistock and the Cassel became leaders in the field; they provided the opportunity for psychoanalysts to treat neurosis rather than psychosis while still in a medical setting. Bion and Foulkes continued with this work in groups and therapeutic communities after the Second World War.

Within the NHS psychoanalysis continued to travel both medical and non-medical paths, slowly transforming into something now better recognised as psychoanalytic psychotherapy (Pedder 1996). In 1971 the Royal College of Psychiatrists established a psychotherapy section for its members, and in 1975 psychotherapy became a specialism recognised by the Department of Health. Non-medical psychotherapy was delivered through nurses, psychologists and counsellors in the Health Service, and for a while amongst social workers outside it. The IPA continued to regulate private psychoanalysis, and the difference between psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy was jealously guarded in the private sector. The issue of ownership remains contested, with the Institute for Psychoanalysis, the present day guardian of IPA trainings in the UK, having only around 400 members.

Klein, whose formative ideas about child therapy were developed in the period between the wars, had experienced some success in lecturing in the UK, and used Jones’ patronage to make a permanent move to England in 1926. The response to her in the rest of Europe, which remained loyal to Freud (as, ironically, did Klein, although Freud did not see it that way), was more negative, whereas the broad-minded Bloomsbury Group in London were interested and prepared to give Klein a platform
from which to disseminate her ideas (Schwartz 2001). Strachey and Riviere, who translated Freud’s complete works into English, were Bloomsbury-ites, which indicates the group’s influence.

Anna Freud came over to the UK with her father in 1938, and also focused on child analysis. Theory and practice flourished under Klein and Freud’s different approaches, with both claiming the true Freudian mantle, but Kleinian theory retained the greater weight in the UK, particularly in the trainings. Anna Freud became more influential in terms of theory in America, where Klein’s ideas never took hold - to the extent that in 1983 the American psychiatrist Gill was able to write of Klein having ‘remained outside the mainstream of psychoanalysis’ (Gill 1983: 536), when in the UK she has remained of central influence. Her work helped to embed child analysis in the Tavistock Clinic, while Anna Freud’s work continued with the Hampstead Clinic. Klein did not leave the psychoanalytic fold as Jung, Adler and others had done but continued to work from within while developing her own theories, always as she saw it building on Freud and pursuing internal, unconscious life more purely than Freud himself, Jacobs suggested, although whether in the end she developed or deviated from Freud is still in question (Jacobs 2003).

Following a series of debates, described as a ‘bitter succession struggle’ by Schwartz (2001: 219), between Klein and Anna Freud, a compromise was reached in which an Independent or Middle School inserted itself between the two, taking neither side (Segal 1992) but aligned with what gradually became known as the British Object Relations School, beginning with Fairbairn, Winnicott and Guntrip. These three approaches – Freudian, Kleinian and Independent - then made up the membership of the British Psychoanalytic Society (BPS), then the UK component of the IPA. This compromise allowed the field to stay united through managing its divisions rather than creating the splits that characterised other fields.

Guntrip’s experience of being analysed by both Winnicott and Fairbairn led him to conclude that psychoanalysis could never resolve everything, but success required the analyst to be a good object to the patient just as the parent must be a good object to
the child (Guntrip 1986). British Object Relations emphasised this relational aspect of the work over and above the instincts and the psychobiology of Freud, although in many other ways it supported Freudian thinking, and Guntrip observed Fairbairn returning to an increasingly classical stance as time passed. In Klein’s thinking there must be the phantasy of a relationship if the object were to be able to satisfy the drive. The object relations libido was object-seeking rather than pleasure-seeking, making instinct meet relationship (Jacobs 2003).

British Object Relations broadly took child analysis through to a more interpersonal, socially aware level that was in tune with American interpersonal and relational perspectives, and it has been influential in those schools, even though Winnicott had a poor reception in the States to begin with. His concept of true and false selves did also allow scope for understanding the impact of child/parent dynamics on preconscious gendered experience (Davis and Wallbridge 1990) as the parental anticipation of gender impacted on the child’s own developing sense of gender. Winnicott (1956a) was out on a limb with the British establishment in terms of being seen as too much involved in the external environment and not enough with the internal world; yet his point was precisely the need to see them as interacting entities (Winnicott 1960).

The American analyst Schwartz (2001) was quick to see the confluence between British Object Relations and the American Interpersonal movements, as they both compensated for Freud and Klein’s intense interiority by addressing the very real impact of the external world on the infant. As scientific understanding of infant life grew (Stern 1985), information about the inherent relatedness of infant experience became available that would surely have impacted on Freud’s own thinking had it been available to him at the time.

In the 1920’s and 1930’s every psychoanalyst read their Freud. In the 1960s and 1970’s every psychoanalytic psychotherapist read Winnicott (Schwartz 2001:243)

Yet in the confines of the influential IPA, Freud, Klein and the Independents remained at the centre of the curriculum, and rigour remains associated with drive.
(ii) American directions

The President of Clark University, G. Stanley Hall, is often credited with introducing psychoanalysis to America as a result of his invitation to Freud and Jung to speak at the University’s conference in 1909 (Rosenweig 1992). The cure of the mind had been largely situated in the cure of the body until the turn of the century, when American neurologists and psychiatrists were influenced by the French advances around hypnosis and hysteria made by Charcot and Janet, of whom Freud was aware, and which had led him towards his ideas of unconscious defences. There was much interest in medical circles in the idea of a specifically psychic cure (Schwartz 2001) and Freud’s analysis of underlying sexual repression as a root cause seemed to bring with it a welcome promise of freedom from constraint (Kurzweil 1998). The Clark conference received wide and largely positive press coverage, a first experience for Freud who had found no comparable reception in Europe. While he wrote with pleasure of finding psychoanalysis treated as a valuable contribution to academia and psychiatry, he nevertheless felt it had ‘suffered a great deal from being watered down’ (Freud 1925a: 52). If the Americans had liked psychoanalysis so much, he thought, they cannot have truly understood it, and there remains a flavour of this in the way that more conservative mainstream British psychoanalysis still views the American ego based approach. In a sense, Freud’s concerns were understandable, if poorly directed:

In sum, simplified versions of psychoanalysis, at every level, although it had not gained much prestige among the majority of doctors, were permeating American culture. (Kurzweil 1998: 130)

This popularity left it outside of Freud’s control, and the medical establishment responded by attempting to dominate psychoanalysis through the formation of professional associations in America, with arguments largely centred on standards of training and the issue of lay analysis.

American psychiatrists went to study under Jung and Freud, and European analysts were invited to America to lecture. Visits were also undertaken by American would-be
analysts to train in Europe between the wars. Freud established allies through relationships with Brunswick, Gardiner and the like, and the early translation of his works into English, including by the American Brill, spread his ideas. Within five years of his Clark visit the American Psychopathological Association, the New York Psychoanalytic Society, the American Psychoanalytic Association and the Washington Psychoanalytic Society were all formed.

America thrived after the Second World War, entering a time of growth, prosperity and optimism that fuelled the development of new movements and the resources to support them. The emigration of many psychoanalysts to America prior to and during the Second World War fed this growth and made it more home grown, as the immigrants brought their own experience of culture shock and therefore social awareness into their theorising, blending the intra- more with the inter-personal. They also brought the more classical European culture to bear, integrating arts and literature and social science and encouraging a place for psychoanalytic study in the Universities. American psychoanalysis was insulated by its alliance with the medical profession; state regulation was eventually to control title which then did not rely on the IPA, and there were simply many more people writing and practicing with enough critical mass for new schools to be formed and to survive independently of each other. Erikson, who himself had emigrated to America in 1933, recalled, in an interview with Coles (1998), the sense of optimism that accompanied the popularity of analytic ideas, which became caught up in the press rhetoric of certainty and solution.

It was the American Psychoanalytic Association, with its better connections, that kept an open relationship with the medical establishment, which continued to have major reservations about the scientific base of psychoanalysis, especially in relation to Freud’s ideas about sexuality. The question of lay training focussed the clash of approaches. It was regarded by psychiatrists and psychologists alike as inappropriate, and while this was much later resolved in the courts it reflected a philosophical divergence that presaged the development of the interpersonal and later the relational schools. Initially this was in the Washington Psychoanalytic Society that, from the start, had not restricted itself to medically qualified members. In the 1960s
the New York University Postdoctoral Programme was established to train clinical psychologists as psychoanalysts, taking the profession out of the hands of the Institutes and into the Academies (Ghent 1992). Interpersonal humanity was most fully expressed through culture; neurosis was therefore not an individual illness but a social phenomenon, and interpersonal theorists reflected this (Ruitenbeck 1964a). The pragmatic, can-do philosophy of the States (Pierce 1905; Campbell 1995) supported the move towards the more social elements of theory (Rustin 2007) and away from the concepts of biological instincts and drives that seemed much less amenable to a warmer view of human nature. Referring to William Alanson White, founder of the Washington Society, and the Medical Superintendent of St Elizabeth’s Hospital in Washington, Schwartz summarised:

‘White’s view of human individuality as being fundamentally social was radically different from Freud’s concept of the human being as a biological organism whose instinctual conflicts needed to be tamed as part of the process of entering the social environment. Freud saw the untamed group as a potential threat to the civilised individual. White saw the human group as fundamental, as necessary for the very existence of the individual. (Schwartz 2001: 166)

This difference in philosophy may also have contributed to the poor reception in America of Kleinian ideas that emphasised both drive and aggression in the infant (Grotstein 1992), and the greater warmth towards Anna Freud’s work, which was less about drives and more attuned to ego psychology, a major force in American psychoanalysis. Actual relationships mattered, as did the social world, and the ego was formed from these. Drive was integrated with ego through the experience of action: real life mattered. This approach led to accusations of over-simplification from across the pond, where ego psychology was deemed to lose the very principle of Freudian unconscious motivation that was more powerful than external events.

Anna Freud’s child therapy courses at the Hampstead Clinic trained both English and American child psychotherapists after the Second World War. Thus the more ego-
based aspects of Freud’s psychology held sway, encompassing the influence of the outside world on the development of the self; but his drive theory did not. Neither did the centrality of the father as introducing the oedipal third become as significant in a county where the closer pre-oedipal ties of motherhood had first call (Appignanesi and Forrester 1993). America integrated Freud, broadening things out rather than dividing them up, and leaving out those aspects that did not fit. The social emphasis of the United States was remarked on wryly by Brown (1964), who saw psychoanalysis in the USA theorising loneliness as a significant problem whereas in the UK it was viewed as the middle class ideal of privacy. The emphasis on the relationship in American analysis was therefore no surprise, and Ferenczi’s view (Raphael-Leff 2012) of analysis as a two way street found its place. Stack Sullivan (Evans 1996), who had worked under White at St Elizabeth’s (and later contributed to establishing the William Alanson White Foundation in New York), championed the interpersonal way, emphasising the individually internalised interpersonal relationships from which the ego was built. The subjectivity of the analyst became a significant part of the analytic process, whereas the UK in many quarters continued to pursue if not an objective analytic stance then an understanding of countertransference that emphasised its receptivity to the patient’s projections. The dissident Ferenczi, who worked in both Canada and America as well as England, was at one point named as a contender for Freud’s replacement by Mitchell (1995a), and Harris (2010) felt that more could have been thought of him, whereas in the UK he remained a minor figure, possibly tainted by hints of scandal over his early work with children (Gay 1988). Ferenczi’s conviction that psychoanalysis was appropriate for severe mental illness supported his view that if a patient did not get better it was psychoanalysis that should change, not the patient who should be considered inappropriate for it, whereas British psychoanalysis was more protectionist, with its strong IPA allegiance.

At the same time as this loosening of ties in Washington, In New York psychoanalysis remained taught largely within the psychiatric curriculum in medical schools. Many American psychoanalysts were also psychiatrists, and the management of medical and psychiatric care went hand in hand. The ultimate reliance of this on private healthcare insurance, as well as the link through medical qualification, kept the profession
connected to the language of treatment and cure and to a reliance on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) that was never mirrored to the same extent in the UK’s use of the equivalent International Classification of Diseases (ICD). However, as lay analysis was eventually taken on board the training of analysts migrated more to the academy and the private sector, and the influence of the analytic associations in the corridors of medical power began to wane. This was a tortuous process and there were many arguably creative splits along the way, with separate institutions being formed by the likes of Horney, Fromm, Thompson and Rado.

The self-perpetuating nature of the training analysis (Kernberg 2010) as well as its remaining attachment to drive theory contributed to the continuing conservatism of the American Psychoanalytic Association in its approach to sexuality despite the influence of the Universities, and in later years those reading its journals could have remained unaware of Stonewall, AIDS activism, the growing gay community and the change in social attitudes. It lost traction on both the radical and the medical fronts.

...psychoanalysis had so isolated itself from other scientific and clinical disciplines, and had so girded itself in the mantle of pure analytic process as the source of all knowledge and wisdom, that it took some rather dramatic changes to wake us up. It became apparent that we had lost the place of leadership that psychoanalysis had once enjoyed. (Roughton 2002a: 84)

The effort to hold on to power was the mechanism that facilitated its dispersal (Person 2002).

(iii) French connections

Both America and France turned to psychoanalysis for solutions, but culturally required very different discourses to provide them. American analysis sought change through personal autonomy and relationship; French analysis sought an understanding of and accommodation to the essential unreachableness of the self (Turkle 1978).
Birksted-Breen and Flanders’ history (2010) is particularly helpful. In France the Paris Psychoanalytical Society (PPS) was founded in 1926 by Marie Bonaparte, who some years later was to help Freud flee the Nazis in Austria through France to England. The PPS was a member of the IPA, and led the field in France until a conservative/liberal split in 1953 when Lacan, having been a member since 1934, led his followers in establishing the alternative Freudian School of Paris. Prior to the split he presented two of his papers to the IPA congress, in 1936 and 1949.

Lacan was another theorist who eschewed American psychoanalysis as simplistic, especially regarding the ego, which he thought of as being without the capacity for autonomy or relationship to reality, the notion of which was in any event a mythology (Turkle 1978). The split was occasioned substantially through Lacan’s by then powerful position, his idiosyncratic presentations and his refusal to adhere to the IPA’s training requirements of the fifty minute analytic session. The IPA eventually removed Lacan’s authority as an approved training analyst, and the School broke up in 1964. Members continue to group and regroup to this day. Roudinesco (1990) implied this was both a strength and a weakness of Lacanianism. Fractured into multiple families, it would never have the unity to conquer the psychoanalytic world; on the other hand, without the restrictive apparatus of imperialism it had the flexibility to address multiple audiences and be carried forward on its own momentum. Turkle (1978) argued that the resurgence of psychoanalysis in France was stimulated by the failure of the 1968 student protests to produce change. People wanted answers but in a French, textually aware way. This left Lacan, whose ideas had been maturing since the 1930s and whose politics appealed to the French Left with their intellectual, anti-establishment slant, in a place to thrive and even dominate the field. His remains the most recognised international legacy of the French psychoanalytic movement to date.

Lacan, medical by profession, drew on a broad range of disciplines to develop his theories, including anthropology and structural linguistics. Roudinesco (2014) saw Lacan as releasing Freud from biology without resorting to religion. Mitchell (1982) suggested that Lacan wanted to provide Freud with a sustainable framework within structural linguistics that had not been available to him at the time. Where Viennese
psychoanalysis developed in the world of neurosis and private patients on the couch, French psychoanalysis grew up in the inpatient world of psychosis on the hospital wards (Bailly 2009). This was more akin to the beginnings of the Jungian tradition, and indeed Lacan spent time studying in the same Burgholzi hospital in Zurich that Jung had studied in years previously, both men in their different ways discovering meaning in the voices of psychosis. France was also marked by a different war trauma of occupation and resistance, and Lacan lived, worked and taught through this. Roudinesco (2014) suggested that in the post-Auschwitz era it was important for the non-human to find space within the human, and Lacan’s theme of paradise lost echoed this. Lacanian psychoanalysis found its place in the Universities, in philosophy and the humanities, and maintained its academic basis. This was a difference from British psychoanalysis which made its mark outside of psychology and philosophy departments.

The French legacy of Lacanian psychoanalysis has had a significant though sometimes indirect impact in the UK and the USA, and British and American analysts have remained interested in making use of Lacan. His metaphysical approach did not integrate easily with the more technically focused psychoanalysis of Britain or America, and his visit to the States in 1975 had limited success, his elliptical style being a poor match for the more straightforward approach that American culture valued. Knowledge of his work was originally through word of mouth, in lectures and weekly teaching seminars. It was not until the 1950s that these began to be gathered into publications, and not until the 1970s that they were published in English, meaning that Lacan was originally known through the (mis)interpretations of others (Fink 1997). The complexity of his own writing has to a degree continued to make that the case. Lacan is to be approached indirectly, is what is often understood as a deliberate if frustrating mirror experience of the elusive and counter-intuitive concepts that he imparted.

Fink (1997) suggested that Lacan was most effectively made visible through practice, and the limited practice of Lacanian analysis in the USA had reduced the spread of his ideas. Literature alone was not enough without a Lacanian culture to champion it, given the density and obscurity of his writings. Roudinesco emphasised Lacanian
thinking as ‘culturally French’ (1990: 123). In more recent years the questioning of power and social control and the deconstructive and postmodern perspectives have found common ground with Lacan’s insistence on the domination of culture over the individual (Frosh 1987). French psychoanalysis remains a thriving school within its own borders (Waintrater 2012) and its influence has certainly been felt in the postmodern movement. Influenced by surrealism, by the French focus on the underlying linguistic structures and complexity of mental apparatus, Lacan’s thinking was increasingly in contrast to the more optimistic, action-based ego psychology developing in America (Birksted-Breen and Flanders 2010). The Lacanian ego was alienated at heart; the American one more cheerfully at home.

(iv) Summary

In this way psychoanalysis developed along different tracks in the UK and USA. The UK characterised the American schools as rather shallow and behavioural with no deep view of the unconscious; the USA saw the British as ignoring social context and increasingly out of touch. Mitchell and Harris (2004) recognised the influence of national character in shaping theory, much as culture shaped mind, but commented on how seldom this was explored. They saw America as more connected to European psychoanalysis than vice versa; exacerbated by the Freud/Klein split in London which translated itself into geography, there was comparatively little transatlantic working together after the war. The continental hermeneutic tradition emphasised psychoanalysis as a method of interpretation (Braddock 2007), looking for understanding and reason rather than cause. In the United States it became more firmly fixed as a mental health profession with a focus on treatment, in a country full of optimism rather than shattered after war and occupation (Young-Bruehl and Dunbar 2009). Freud saw the mind as wild nature, the drive-ruled id battling against the ego; American psychoanalysis saw mind as working in cooperation with nature. Freud’s libido acted on behalf of the body (feed me); the American body made demands on relationship (come to me) (Mitchell and Harris 2004).
2.2 Freud on Oedipus

This section offers an account of Freud’s thinking on Oedipus as it emerged over the course of more than thirty years.

While unwavering in his emphasis on both the centrality of the libidinal drive and the Oedipus complex as a model for libidinal development, Freud was more flexible than many of his followers when it came to detail and moral judgment about either. He acknowledged the influences of Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis and Hirschfield, all authors devoted to expanding the understanding of sexuality while reducing moral judgement on its varied expressions. In a way, the categories of gender and sexuality available to him were not the best match for the direction of his thinking about them (Young-Breuhl 1990); but each thought must necessarily be of its time.

First mentioned in a letter from Freud to Fleiss on October 15 1897, Freud drew upon his own experience to universalise the concept of the boy falling in love with his mother and being jealous of his father, so well encapsulated in the Oedipus myth:

> Everyone in the audience was once a budding Oedipus in fantasy and each recoils in horror from the dream fulfilment here translated into reality, with the full quality of repression which separated his infantile state from his present one. (Masson 1985: 272)

This came with a conviction that the incest reported by his patients was more likely to be an expression of unconscious phantasy, which led Freud to the possibility of infantile sexuality. Expounded in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud 1900) with reference to the play Oedipus Rex, this idea of infantile sexuality created a significant stir and continued to do so throughout Freud’s life. In later writings he made clear the understanding that such sexuality took place on its own terms and was not simply adult sexuality in miniature – ‘the child makes the person it loves into the object of all
its still not properly centred sexual trends’ (Freud 1921: 137) – but even with this proviso it was and remains a startling concept.

The failure of Oedipus was as necessary as its continuance on an individual psychic level and on a fundamental species survival level, the latter more fully dealt with in *Totem and Taboo* (Freud 1913). Analysing the case of ‘Dora’ (first written in 1901, though not published until 1905), Freud referred to Oedipus as a ‘poetical rendering’ (1905a: 56) of a common constellation of early family dynamics. In 1910 Freud first used the clinical term ‘Oedipus complex’ (1910a) in understanding the boy’s denigration of his mother as a reaction to his thwarted desire for her. Freud became increasingly convinced that it was the boyhood stage of Oedipus that held the most sway over the man, tracing perversions back to the original negotiation of the Oedipus complex:

> For in our opinion the Oedipus complex is the actual nucleus of neuroses, and the infantile sexuality which culminates in this complex is the true determinant of neuroses. What remains of the complex in the unconscious represents the disposition to the later development of neuroses in the adult. (Freud 1919: 193)

Oedipus was more fully explored in the *Three Essays* (Freud 1905b). At this point the differentiation of desire as a consequence of gender is referred to by Freud in the frame of a natural impulse directing the boy to his mother and the girl to her father. In later renditions of the *Three Essays*, Oedipus is referred to as the essential constituent of the neurosis; the 1920 footnote confirms Oedipus as ‘the shibboleth that distinguishes the adherents of psycho-analysis from its opponents’ (Freud 1905b: 226). In a clear outline Freud laid out, over time, the oral, anal, genital, phallic and latency stages; the state of polymorphous perversity in the infant that leads to the flexibility of the sexual object; castration anxiety, the castration complex and penis envy; and the route through which the multi-potentialities of childhood find their way to ‘what is known as the normal sexual life of the adult, in which the pursuit of pleasure comes under the sway of the reproductive function’ (1905b: 197). The boy turns away from
the mother through fear of the father’s castrating potential and is free to search for his own object of desire in puberty. The girl turns away from her mother and towards her father in the disappointment of penis envy, relinquishing him in puberty in favour of a penis/baby with another man. Desire and identification are set in opposition to each other. Oedipal feelings were reawakened in puberty when they could either continue along or divert from the path set in childhood.

This oddly reductive conclusion of normal sexual life perhaps owed a debt to Darwinian influence and some notion of the natural, but it set up a conundrum forever present in Freud’s view on ‘deviations’ from the sexual object, which included homosexuality. While repeatedly asserting that homosexuality was no vice and no bar to training, Freud’s construction of Oedipus was ultimately normative and homosexuality was inevitably immature. With gender differentiation as the organiser of desire there was no other way to go. In the negative Oedipus complex the homosexual boy holds on to the mother in the absence of a strong father by identification with her, thus avoiding castration, and makes a narcissistic object choice (Freud 1905b, 1910b). The homosexual girl refuses to give up the penis and remains identified with her father, taking her mother as the object of desire. These ideas were reworked and refined particularly in The Ego and the Id (Freud 1923a), which attributed the development of the super-ego to the successful negotiation of the Oedipus complex and the internalisation of the role of the father in that process. By this means the unsuccessful negotiation of Oedipus, or a stall at the negative Oedipus complex, led to a weaker super-ego, an implied inheritance of the gay man and indeed the woman. A little later, in The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex, Freud (1924) confirmed the destruction of the complex through the threat of castration for boys, and also acknowledged the need for a different explanation for girls, outlined further below.

It may be that Freud’s scientific perspective enabled him to separate what he took as fact from opinion; certainly his personal relationships with homosexual men and women seemed warm and without condescension, for example with his analysand and friend Hilda Doolittle (Appignanesi and Forrester 1993). His thoughts about
homosexuality, when he turned his mind to them, sought to acknowledge complexity, and while he rejected the idea of innate homosexuality he reflected that not everyone with the predicted childhood influences became ‘inverted’, thus leading him:

....to a suspicion that the choice between ‘innate’ and ‘acquired’ is not an exclusive one or that it does not cover all the issues involved in inversion. (Freud 1905b: 140)

Configurations in childhood might predispose someone to homosexuality, but not everyone with those factors would become homosexual. While psychoanalysis could trace backwards someone’s route to the present, it could not foretell the future from the runes of the past. Constitution, situation, timing and opportunity all played their part (Freud 1920a).

Freud rejected the ‘third sex’ theory of homosexuality propounded by Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing: replacing the psychological problem of femininity and masculinity with an anatomical one was of no help. However, Drescher (2007) pointed out that the cross-gender view of homosexuality in the Oedipus complex held parallels:

From a narrative perspective, a man’s identification with his mother is not altogether unlike a woman’s spirit trapped in a man’s body. Both stories imply that there are only two genders and that some quality of one gender has found its way into the other. (Drescher 2007: 223)

Freud did acknowledge that bisexuality might play a part, although it was difficult again to know what this meant psychologically, having grasped it biologically. He did not regard bisexuality itself as an explanation for homosexuality (Freud 1924); it was, rather, an important constituent of both homo- and hetero-sexuality, and heterosexual exclusivity could also be problematic (Freud 1905b). The repression of the latent homosexual feelings that were the legacy of bisexuality was something Freud expected to emerge in any analysis, sometimes to the frustration of his analysands (Kardiner 1977). Masculinity did not assure heterosexuality, nor effeminacy
homosexuality. However, he did at the same time look to cross-gender identification in homosexual experience (Freud 1920a).

The *Three Essays* were reworked considerably over time and are testament to the development of Freud’s thinking in terms of gender in particular. He placed gender in three fields: character, biology and sociology (Freud 1905b). The former, relating largely to the active/passive contrast, he found to be the most relevant to psychoanalysis as it related to the character of the libido, but he did not tie active/passive down exclusively to their masculine/feminine counterparts. In biology, gender was linked to the genitals and reproductive functions, but Freud questioned the exclusivity implied in this and noted that aggression, strength and libido were by no means the domain of the male. From a social perspective, masculine and feminine behaviours were to be found as a mixture in most people but it was not possible to simply translate biological bisexuality into psychological traits, and Freud returned repeatedly to the dilemma of using the terms with no sufficient way to describe them (Freud 1930). He also recognised that girls and boys developed asymmetrically, particularly in relation to the Oedipus complex (Freud 1925a), and worked out a different trajectory in his later papers, particularly the 1931 ‘Female Sexuality’. He emphasised the physical distinction between the sexes as integral to the negotiation of the Oedipus complex (Freud 1925b). The girl does not suffer castration anxiety because she perceives herself as already castrated. She must deal with not having a penis as a central dilemma of her oedipal conflict (Freud 1940). She must also transfer the active, inherently masculine pleasure of the clitoris to the receptive feminine pleasure of the vagina and, alongside this, transfer the object of her desire from the one parent to the other. In response to these tasks she may give up all sexual strivings in defeat; she may persist in masculine identification and move towards homosexuality; or she may find her way to the father as sexual object. In this way the female Oedipus complex ‘is not destroyed, but created, by the influence of castration’ (Freud 1931: 230).

The original Oedipus myth is exclusively about the boy, and Freud’s efforts to give Oedipus his mythical sister stretched his own imagination as well as that of his readers.
Freud rejected Jung’s adoption of the Electra myth but there is the feeling nevertheless of making the best of a hand-me-down, an Adam’s rib of garment manufacturing, rather than the personally felt inspiration of Freud’s original excited declaration of discovery to Fleiss. Robinson (2001) considered the possibility that the misogyny of his time contributed to Freud’s construction of female homosexuality as his accounts of both femininity and lesbianism are ‘analyzed by him in terms of women’s psychic problems with the penis and their disappointment with men’ (Robinson 2001: 94-5).

In 1914 Freud wrote a historical account of psychoanalysis. His reports of the schisms between himself and erstwhile followers is an account of the struggle for ownership of title. While able to live with secession when the individual founded an alternative school that was not called psychoanalytic, as with Adler’s ‘Individual Psychology’ and Jung’s ‘Analytical Psychology’, he could not tolerate attempts to include in a psychoanalytic frame ideas that diluted his conviction about the centrality of the libido as a sexual drive and Oedipus as central to neurosis. Symbolism was not enough. Perhaps inevitable, these schisms may have delineated those whom Freud felt were in and out of his analytic camp, but did not distinguish this delineation to the outside world. Yet early writers were of course framing their work with reference to Freud’s as the originator.

2.3 Responses to Freud: Jung, the feminine and Klein

(i) Jungian thinking

Jung’s work moved away from the period of early life that held such interest for Freud. Although Jungian psychology has since developed its own ideas on infancy, the self and ego development (Fordham 1986, Astor 1998), in terms of gender and sexuality it is the realm of the archetype that has been most influential. Jungian thinking about gender and sexuality was metaphysical, working with myth and archetype (Jung 1986,
1989). The interaction between opposites was the stuff of life; stability was not about the pendulum settling in the middle, but the management of the eternal tension between two extremes (Jung 1916). Jung’s focus on gender was concentrated in the animus and anima, archetypes that placed gender in a timeless contrasexual lock. He believed that aspects of both genders existed in each individual and the work of life was to find the balance between them. Failure of the man to integrate his anima led to a moody, timid and effeminate character; failure of the woman to integrate her animus led to her becoming disputatious and inflexible. Core to integration was being able to separate the archetype from the individual (Hillman 1991) and this is what led to the character being gripped by the archetypal, not just the personal, characteristics of its opposite. This should mean a separation between cultural representations and the archetype itself but Wehr (1988) critiqued Jung for representing archetypes through their stereotypes, as the examples above demonstrate. Animus and anima are complementary opposites with shifting content; the different aspects of each must find a relationship within the individual and within society for a balanced wholeness to emerge (Bratherton 1998). Contrasexuality thus becomes a troublesome concept in relation to sexuality. Even when masculinity and femininity are consciously unhooked from animus and anima and contrasexuality takes its more rightful place as an image of soul (Colman 1998), wholeness remains represented by desire for the other, and this is inevitably represented as gendered.

Sitting outside of the central melee of analytic institutions, Jungian psychology continued on its independent trajectory. As Freudians highlighted the impact of the primal scene in pre-oedipal terms, Jungians emphasised it as symbolic of creation and rebirth. Samuels (1982) took the infant’s inner images of two-ness: the mother-father and the infant-mother; and rather than being stuck in immobile, separate intercourse Samuels visioned them as mixing and relating creatively and providing opportunities for three-ness. The parents were both differentiated and brought together as the infant-father dyad also developed.

In working further with the myth, Gee (1991) described the oedipal father as representing consciousness and the mother the return to unconsciousness, with the
adolescent working out their battle to adulthood between the two of them. The origin of the oedipal myth in Laius’ illicit homosexual liaison with the younger Chrysippus drew on homosexuality as a repressed shadow. Frey-Wehrlin (1992) suggested that dealing with analytic negativity about homosexuality and the repressed homosexuality present in father-son relationships may be a part of reintegrating the shadow. Perhaps, he suggested, it ‘could be that, in addition to the coniunctio of opposites...there might be an equally creative coniunctio of likes?’ (Frey-Wehrlin 1992: 180). The oedipal space could be in part a relationship between experience and archetype; the incestuous wish is to conflate the two by uniting the parent and the contrasexual archetype (Colman 1996). When the person is separated from the archetype the child moves on to look for the archetype anew in others, moving out of the oedipal triangle, hopefully armed with the capacity to maintain knowledge of the difference between individual and archetype.

Wheeley (1992) speculated on the abandonment of Oedipus on the mountain which could have moved the motif more to infanticide and patricide and the necessity of containing murderous rage in order to survive. Mann (1993) picked up on the origins of the curse in Laius’ desire for Chrysippus, this time not in repressed homosexuality but in Laius’ failure to conduct himself appropriately in pursuing his desires. The oedipal dynamics in the father-mother-son triangle can awaken repressed oedipal feelings in the father who has attacking impulses towards the boy, whose castration anxiety is thereby intensified. There is a positive outcome to the rivalry – it gives the boy ‘something to grow against’ (Mann 1993: 59) and a benign experience of success and failure, provided the father does not act out his retaliatory feelings and holds on to both wife and life.

(ii) Focus on the feminine

Much early work circulated around the points of femininity and masculinity, desire and identification. Masculinity and femininity were made sense of through the body. For Freud this was inescapable; the body was the source of the ego (Freud 1923a) and the psyche:
We often have the impression that with the wish for a penis and the masculine protest we have penetrated through all the psychological strata and have reached bedrock, and that thus our activities are at an end. This is probably true, since, for the psychical field, the biological field does in fact play the part of the underlying bedrock. (Freud 1937: 252)

Once homosexuality was accounted for as a complement of disordered gender identity its disordered-ness, though not its existence, became as immutable as gender. Freud did however have an ‘egalitarian approach to neurosis’ (Goldberg 2001) and all psychic health was relative. Analytic attitudes towards homosexuality took the less enlightened path from Freud’s offerings and maintained homosexuality in the position of heterosexuality’s unwanted feminine. This was often aligned to a denigration of or at least ambivalence towards the woman’s position. Boehm (1930) argued that such misogyny originated in castration anxiety and also in the boy’s desire to be the woman, with his envy of not only her favoured position with the father but also her capacity to give birth, to suckle, to have breasts and a vagina. The boy’s passive love for the father (emphasising the oral and anal stages over the phallic) put him in a female position that required an oedipal push to move through it and become a little man. Boehm interestingly had the male returning to a more passive femininity in old age, revealing Boehm’s association between femininity and frailty. Bonaparte (1935), in allied fashion, characterised masochism as essentially feminine. Women’s bodies suffer more pain than men, made up for by sexual pleasure initially through both clitoris and vagina but eventually through a more passive receptive attitude. Women analysts seeking a place for female experience that did not start with the male looked to the body, searching for an essence that would provide a different but equal place for female psychology. For Deutsch (1946) this was motherhood, even though it brought with it the passivity and (controversially pleasurable) masochism of suffering. Horney (1926), sensitive to cultural context (Stevens 1983), likewise held to male envy of pregnancy and motherhood, but went further to claim equal genital pleasure in sex for both sexes. Less interested than Freud in the consequences of the biological distinction between the sexes, she challenged the universality of Oedipus and instead placed
anxiety as the core of the infant experience and the root of neurosis. Mayer (1996) was later to realise the limitations Horney and others faced on basing theories of womanhood on an absence; even reversing the absence (penis) into a presence (vagina, breasts, babies) was not convincing. She was to argue, as others did increasingly, that psychoanalysis needed to broaden its source material into sociology and politics to fully understand sex and gender.

Female homosexuality gained no ground. Jones (1927) drew a straight choice for the girl between the penis/father or femininity/mother; wanting to hold on to the penis would mean the girl taking a homosexual turn. Deutsch found it to be pre-oedipal in origin, but oedipal in nature: the girl’s active masculinity was engaged towards the mother as a substitute for longings toward the father; this masculine identification continued and the penis was retained through continuing with a woman as a love object (Deutsch 1933). The homosexual woman did not reach full genitality and did not (it was assumed) engage with the unique experience of motherhood.

(iii) Klein

Klein set the scene for post-Freudian psychoanalysis in the UK. She worked with children and it was her direct observations that caused her to rethink Oedipus in the early years. She continued to see herself as a Freudian, despite the bitter disputes with Anna Freud and the later ‘Controversial Discussions’ that took place in the British Psychoanalytical Society from 1942 to 1944. Klein emphasised her support for the Oedipal complex (Klein 1928) but radically repositioned it (Heimann 1952), bringing it forward into the oral stage in relation to the mother with the breast becoming the primary object (Klein 1960).

The girl wants to consume and destroy all that is inside the mother, including breast and penis and babies. The desire to make reparation for these wishes to the external mother can lead towards homosexuality; the solution of making reparation to the internal mother by providing her with a penis and babies leads towards heterosexuality. The boy also wants to possess and eradicate the contents of the
mother’s body; he must struggle between wanting to have the penis internally and with it a feminine identification, and the move towards a masculine identification by orienting his desire towards the external mother, which his anxiety will lead him to do (Segal 1988). This repeats Freud’s relationship between identification and desire but takes Oedipus out of its developmental sequencing into a much earlier stage, not relying on a conscious knowledge of genital difference to make it significant in the unconscious. ‘For Freud, the child is a selfish savage; for Klein, it is a murderous cannibal’ (Gay 1988: 468).

Klein (1960) also extended oedipal dynamics to include love and guilt as well as hate and rivalry. There is an element of homosexuality in the development of both the boy and the girl as they engage with love for the same sex parent. In effect the negative Oedipus is unchanged from Freud, though taking place within a more primitive stage of phantasy in terms of its early formation (Weininger 1992). Because the primal scene was conceptualised by Klein with gender at the heart of it, Ryan (1997) criticised Klein for having literalised heterosexuality into mental health.

More contemporary Freudians saw Oedipus as neither the first nor the only triangular configuration to be negotiated, but it was seen to coincide with the physical and cognitive stages of development that made certain phantasies available to the child, and was therefore a particular developmental pathway. Klein’s paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions suggested but did not require developmental sequencing; they were repeated states of mind that, if the depressive position was strengthened, enabled the more paranoid and anxious position to be better tolerated. While this aspect of Oedipus began as an explanation of pathology it had become a descriptor of development (Britton et al 2006a). Freud’s Oedipus was an integral part of the development of a mature sexuality, and the overt oedipal behaviours associated with gender and sexuality therefore came later than Klein’s much earlier siting of the Oedipus complex, which was facilitated by her inclusion of the primal scene and the part-object representation of the internal couple in the primitive psyche (Britton et al 2006b).
In a 1989 publication updating Kleinian oedipal theory (Britton, Feldman and O’Shaughnessy 1989), Britton (1989) argued that the negotiation of the primal scene was integral to Klein’s vision of oedipal resolution as it was the basis for negotiating the parents' union as necessarily but beneficently excluding the child. In 1992, asking what was new about Oedipus since Freud, Britton again wrote about Klein’s feat in bringing Oedipus forward into the life of small children. Klein’s depressive position, the place of being able to tolerate and make good internal conflict towards the other, was part and parcel of Oedipus: ‘the depressive position cannot be worked through without working through the Oedipus complex, and vice versa’ (Britton 1992: 39). Both required giving up the idea that it was possible to have and to hold, but to discover instead that love could survive attack and separation. Feldman emphasised the position of Oedipus as present in the earliest days, with the parental couple continuing the ‘creative intercourse’ (Feldman 1989: 109) started between mouth and breast; O’Shaughnessy (1989) put forward doubts about the centrality of Oedipus from Kohut’s self-psychology, but answered it with Klein’s own conviction that its absence could only be a defence. The book, intended as an update, confirmed how little had changed. In her introduction Segal suggested that theory is developed through the demands of clinical practice; the case illustrations revealed that it could also be true that clinicians found confirmation in their practice of the theories they were expecting. Rusbridger (2007) asserted that the analysis of oedipal conflicts was the most essential component of any analysis and that the link between Oedipus and the depressive position was the most productive aspect of post-Kleinian thinking about the oedipal complex. Sanity required an acceptance of the link between the parents, and the oedipal route made this possible to achieve. When oedipal dynamics were not obvious as a central part of an analysis it was because of the defences marshalled against them, or their misinterpretation as something else. If the transference was correctly analysed, Oedipus would be found: the back and forth of allowing minds to meet was itself an oedipal happening. In this way heterosexuality was further embedded as the building block for discourse and so indeed for mental health.
2.4 Focus on homosexuality

Prior to the 1970s, analytic attitudes to homosexuality kept fairly closely to a familiar pattern of origins and their correction, ostensibly related to Freud and Klein but equally clearly linked to the medical and cultural views of the time.

Freud (1905a) had acknowledged an acquired homosexuality that he believed could arise through external influences, from circumstances of deprivation of opposite sex opportunity, for example in prison, or in war. In another vein Ovesey differentiated between a ‘real’ homosexual and a ‘pseudohomosexual’ by viewing pseudohomosexuality as an adaptational neurosis. Based on anxiety rather than desire it was not erotic but shared with true homosexuality the function of negotiating unresolved issues of dependency and power. The genitals were in these situations symbolic but too often taken literally by analysts as evidence of homosexuality, based on Freud’s constitutional bisexuality, whereas ‘In reality…they were only symbolically homosexual or, as I label them, pseudohomosexuals’ (Ovesey 1969: 11). In this explanation Ovesey perhaps missed an opportunity to retheorise with greater novelty the boundary between homo- and heterosexuality, but this was difficult in an era retaining a comparatively singular notion of sexual identity.

In the USA, Rado (Mitchell 1995b) had exerted considerable influence in the post-was period, rejecting Freud’s universal bisexuality and instead reinforcing heterosexuality as a biological and psychological complementarity. Homosexuality carried a fear of the opposite sex and was therefore open to reparative therapy (Dean and Lane 2001). In this scenario if the fear of intercourse could be overcome, all may be well. Oddly behaviourist in outlook, and omitting any reference to emotional attachment in same sex desire, the activity of intercourse seemed to hold the key to an acceptable heterosexual identity, even when homosexual fantasies remained. This was later contradicted by Kaplan (1979), a psychiatrist and pioneer of psychosexual therapy, whose studies indicated that gay men could have sex with women but if the fantasies remained homosexual then the basic orientation was probably unchanged.
Definitions of homosexuality came from within an individualised, privatised, post-industrial concept of family that rendered sexuality itself as a private, individual affair (Derbyshire 2008). Analytic isolation left it relatively immune to the sociological studies of Kinsey (1948) and the physiological research of Masters and Johnson (1970). Claimed analytic detachment did not prevent descriptions of homosexuals as weak, narcissistic, incipiently psychotic and connected with a range of gender identity disorders (Bryan 1930, Bychowski 1945, Gillespie 1952, Bak 1953, Freeman 1955).

Ruitenbeck (1964b) linked the emancipation of the American female with the increasing oedipal bind of boys to their now domineering mothers, with a subsequent increase in homosexuality. This was consistent with the comparative studies Green (1985) conducted of boys exhibiting feminine and masculine traits, the majority of whom he found grew into a homosexual identity in adulthood rather than a transsexual identity, leading him to assert:

> From a psychological perspective, cross-gender behaviour in childhood and homosexual behaviour in adulthood are age-dependent expressions of the same underlying, evolving pattern of female sexual identity. (Green 1987: 371)

Green found reinforcements for this view in the social learning theories of the day – learn to identify as a girl and a leaning towards the erotic life of a girl will follow – and allowed for the effect of the responsive environment on the child’s gender identification. Hormones also had their place. But classical psychoanalysis had retained the view of heterosexuality as the final stage of sexual development, with homosexuality in the position of an under-developed infantile sexuality (Bergmann 2002), oedipally unresolved from the point of castration anxiety and in more object relations terms from a primary identity with the mother. Deeply reflective of its era, there was little incentive for psychoanalysis to move on from these views. The first openly gay analyst (Isay 1996) was not yet even in training, though there were open secrets kept about some prominent analysts on a ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ basis. Discussions continued to be limited to closer examination of aetiologies that confirmed greater or lesser pathological origins, from Wiedeman’s 1962 literature survey to
Socarides’ (1968a) assertion of homosexuality as caused by pre-oedipal dynamics, and Bieber’s later (1988) comparative study of pathologies in heterosexual and homosexual men (criticised by Friedman (1988) for seeking the views of analysts rather than their patients). Socarides’ (1968b) approach to understanding and treating homosexuality as a failure of gender identity was recommended for its clarity and practicality to psychiatrists and psychoanalysts (Freedman 1983).

In the meantime, and in relation more to transvestism and transsexuality rather than homosexuality, Stoller (1977) was developing a theory of perversion as motive rather than behaviour. Perversion exchanged love for hostility as its motivation and this could leave heterosexuality as much as homosexuality open to assessments of perversion. Core trauma was not limited to castration but to that which impacted on the developing sexual or gendered identity of the child. Wood (2006), in tracing the analytic use of the word ‘perversion’, noted its transition from Freud’s deviation from normal behaviour through Stoller’s (1977) move from morality to motive, Limentani’s (1979) emphasis on truth – leaving transsexuality open to charges of delusion – and Glasser’s (1986) core complex which again acknowledged the trauma and early damage at the heart of perversion, the Freudian psyche always guarding the ego’s role of maintaining psychic equilibrium.

Homosexuality was for a long time viewed primarily as a cross-gender identity problem (Person and Ovesey 1983) and this continued as a medical as well as an analytic perspective. The cultural critic Sedgwick commented that the inversion model of homosexuality depended on a ‘distinctness’ (Sedgwick 1991a: 88) being maintained between identification and desire, harking back to Freud and Hirschfield. In 2006 sexual differentiation in the brain as a result of anti-male antibodies in the womb was being considered as a possible contributor to homosexuality (James 2006), indicating how little some things had changed. Gender difference was the core of gender identity and opposite sex attraction was a part of what constituted clear gender identity (Ovesey and Person 1973). Isay (1991) began a process of viewing things from another perspective, suggesting that it was the boy’s homosexuality that drove the father away rather than the father’s distance that created the boy’s homosexuality. Goldner (1995)
similarly considered the tensions in a homosexual boy’s attempts to compete with his mother while she was anticipating a closeness between them, and the ‘double agent’ (Goldner 1995: 118) role for the boy in keeping up appearances while preserving his real hopes and strivings. Morris (1997), in her own transsexual memoir, conjectured that failure to meet the gendered expectation of the m/other may become a part of the feeling of difference that many gay and transgender children report carrying with them from a young age, a knowledge of not fitting, even if unsure of with what.

The political changes and shifts of the 1970s seemed to inspire new directions in analytic thinking, although there was resentment of this impingement and pressure of the outside world on the believed objectivity of the profession. Traditional psychoanalysts felt under attack, and Macintosh (1994) felt compelled to survey analysts against Isay’s claim of prejudice, concluding that the prejudice was Isay’s.

The UK remained more focussed on the intrapersonal although a growing awareness of prejudice was starting to impact on the ideas around internalised objects. The existence of a strong interpersonal school gave the USA a stronger platform for taking political change on board. The development of the Relational school, based on the work of Greenberg and Mitchell (1983), was a significant move for theorising about gender and sexuality. In 1978 and 1981 Mitchell published two papers on homosexuality, giving an overview of theory and practice to date. From a relational perspective he was able to address the equation of sexual identity with sexual object that had led to such a reductive view of homosexuality, focussing on behaviour but not relationship:

> These questions are not often raised, since the behaviour, or, more concretely, the type of genitals the patient is juxtaposing to his own, is seen as containing all the relevant information. (Mitchell 1981: 68)

He confirmed that insight, not behaviour change, was the central purpose of analytic work. Chodorow (2002) later noted how ahead of his time Mitchell’s views were in the analytic field and Roughton (2002b) reflected on the length of time it took Mitchell’s
writings on sexuality to reach beyond a Relational school audience; Roughton himself did not read them until ten years after publication. He concluded it was a result of the historical divide between analytic camps in which the American Psychoanalytic Association (APsaA) saw itself as the holder and publisher of analytic knowledge and did not introduce its members, of which Roughton was one, to writings outside its purview. Mitchell in his own background combined an internship at Columbia with a training at the Alanson White Institute and being on the Faculty of the New York University Postdoctoral trainings, which were also perhaps less inclined to mix with the APsaA, although Mitchell himself was largely inclusive in approach (Mitchell 2004). Roughton was convinced that activism preceded change, and the APsaA establishment nourished few activists in its camp. They simply went elsewhere, not least into the Division of Psychoanalysis of the American Psychological Association, which then grew its own analytic institutes not requiring the impress of APsaA.

By the 1990s psychoanalysis was questioning itself about homosexuality, particularly about female homosexuality, which continued to take a subsidiary seat (Ryan 1995). The German analyst Rohde-Dachser (1992), also a sociologist, considered some wider reasons for the lack of thought about homosexuality, including the legacy of the Second World War and widespread socio-cultural prejudice. From this perspective the bias of psychoanalysis was something to ponder: its male emphasis; its lack of engagement with new evidence such as Kinsey (1948) provided; its reliance on family dynamics as a unitary explanation. The analytic homosexual was, she suggested, a limited fiction. While not free of focussing sameness and difference on gender, Rohde-Dachser maintained that homosexuality was not a single entity that could be made accountable to a single theory and that it could operate in the service of psychic wellbeing for the individual. Homosexuality facilitated an encounter with sameness that could address the pain of the overly-separated male while allowing a valuation of the feminine for girls in a masculine dominated society. This was countered by Cohler’s (1992) assertion that while homosexuality might be adaptive it was essentially deviant, not progressive.
2.5 Differences in transatlantic theory: drive and relationship

The energy with which the American literature has addressed British Object Relations has generally not been matched by the British literature engaging with the American alternatives. Their paths have continued to diverge, particularly in the divide between drive and relationship.

The Standard edition of Freud’s works often uses ‘drive’ and ‘instinct’ as the same translation for the German ‘Trieb’, for example referring to the death ‘instinct’ in the same way as the death ‘drive’. This confuses the modern English distinction between the two, instinct being the innate behaviour of response to a stimulus, whereas drive is the innate push to satisfy a need. While the latter is closer to Freud’s meaning, he emphasised the mental representation of such a push rather than the move itself. The innateness remains; Freudian instinct and drive arise from the body, being ‘...the representatives of all the forces originating in the interior of the body and transmitted to the mental apparatus’ (Freud 1920b: 34). They are unequivocally rooted in something that predates relationship, in a body understood to operate under its own steam. Mind arises from the instinct. Freud (1923b) argued against Jung’s condensation of all instinct into a primary mental energy as wishing away the two fundamental and different streams of aggression and libido, destruction and reproduction. The tension between these two directions was fundamental to Freud’s construction of mental life. Both were part of the ego, and the id contained the ‘great reservoir of libido’ (Freud 1923a: 30) that flowed into the ego, and from the ego found its object. Body and mind were joined through the drive, and the object relationship was driven by instinct. Oedipus described the trajectory of the drive through the id, the ego and the superego as the libido and the reality principle forged an acceptable outcome. Sexuality was in this way formed from drive and its compromises.

Klein emphasised the adaptive functions of object relations as one aspect of the ego. Klein’s objects were within the theory of drive; they were the things on which the drive was concentrated, and this direction she took from Freud. The purpose of the drive
was to discharge libidinal energy, and the object was the means of doing this. Internalised as mental representation, and not direct experience, part-objects shaped the future direction of the drive as they cohered into a rudimentary ego comprised of both the interpersonal and the intrapsychic. Love – or attachment - began as satisfaction of need at the breast: ‘...love has its origin in attachment to the satisfied need for nourishment’ (Freud 1940: 188), and the narcissistic internalisation of this first not-me object became the prototype for future relationships. The infant’s projections onto the breast, and the splits used to manage its internal aggressions, Klein saw as becoming incorporated into the ego.

Klein was inferring internal life from her observations of children and infants, as Freud had from his patients’ dreams and associations. Buckley (1986) challenged that there was no proof for this, nor any way apart from subjective argument of refuting her interpretation of such observations. He also noted that despite her support for the drives, Klein’s account of object relations ironically provided a springboard for the work of Fairbairn and Winnicott to move away from them. Object relations became more significant in their own right as the early mother/infant relationship was increasingly studied (Blanck and Blanck 1986), and the lived experience of relationship became as relevant as the phantasy. Winnicott’s work on motherhood was highly influential in the UK where, derived from object relations and cognisant of the internal phantasy life of the infant, it placed greater emphasis on the influence of the actual relationship between infant and mother. He provided a link between Klein and Bowlby through their shared emphasis on deprivation, with Klein’s loss of the internal object and Bowlby’s loss of the external object being mutually informing (Winnicott 1956b).

Where Freud started from libido, and Klein followed, Fairbairn began from ego (Jones 1954). Mental representation was of actual not phantasied relationships, and this experience of object relatedness was the primary source of motivation in development, not the drives (Fairbairn 1951). The libido sought objects, not pleasure. While not rejecting the paranoid/schizoid positions, he saw them arising from childhood experiences which were always imperfect enough to provide some cause for neurosis. Objects were real, and mattered:
...psychology may be said to resolve itself into a study of the relationship of the individual to his objects, whilst, in similar terms, psychopathology may be said to resolve itself more specifically into a study of the relationship of the ego to its internalised objects. (Fairbairn 1943: 103)

This emphasis on experience and ego did not negate the drives as much as redirect them, so that the libido became object- rather than pleasure-seeking, and erotic zones mediated or pointed towards the ego’s search for the object rather than determining it (Fairbairn 1951). This connected with Winnicott’s notion of the transitional object, as the sucking of a thumb became satisfying as a replacement for the absent breast rather than for the pleasure it provided (Fairbairn 1941).

American ego psychology seemed to develop at the expense of Freudian ideas even though it stemmed from them, moving away from the emphasis on the unconscious phantasy and instinctual drives of Freud’s early work. The ego’s position as defence against anxiety was broadened out through Anna Freud’s elaborations, with Hartmann (1939), to allow a link between nature and nurture, drive and relationship, rather than putting them in opposition (Erikson 1964). The ego provided a structure through which mental processes could be contained and given a sense of coherence. The self could be built up to persist over time and experience, a protective environment enabling the individual to develop a socially adapted self. The approach met the American grasp of a society that both reflected and created the individual, thus ameliorating the single rule of the drive.

The American ego transitioned from representations of perceptions of experience to something more solidly present from the start, growing from the baseline of sensation and memory available to the infant (Kernberg 1976) and used both defensively and creatively to establish a self-structure that facilitated whole-object relating over time, if all went well. More traditional Freudians and Kleinians found this frustratingly superficial as it seemed to circumvent the basics of the primitive body-ego.
The implied capacity for self-direction blended with the increased leaning towards the social and environmental impact on human development, exemplified by Karen Horney, whose emphasis on human potential and terminology of self-actualisation was foreign enough to the more traditional Freudian view to result in her expulsion from the New York Analytic Institute in 1941. For her, psychoanalysis was less about resolving childhood conflicts and more about a re-organisation of the self towards a direction of growth (explicitly rejected as a universal instinct by Freud (1920b)); pathology was an attempt to resolve conflicts arising from unmet need rather than from unconscious internal tensions. Freud’s aggressive drive was Horney’s conflict survival mechanism (Horney 1950). She refused the pessimism of human life as a constant struggle between instinctual satisfaction and civilisation, and put her faith in human creativity as a positive libidinal sublimate:

In most general terms, what we regard as a healthy striving toward self-realization for Freud was – and could be – only an expression of a narcissistic libido. (Horney 1950: 378)

This offered a possibility of control over self and circumstance and therefore over misery, which answered the feminist criticism that drive theory left nowhere for women to go other than victimhood (Rose 1989).

Little cited in the UK, Horney remains a significant figure in America. Her humanistic approach informed the human growth movement and remains relevant in the interpersonal school of psychoanalysis in particular. This difference in approach was to continue in the tension between the Freudian, Kleinian and Relational schools, clearly visible in the line that relational founder Stephen Mitchell drew between relational psychotherapy and drive theory, which was to become a conflict between British and American theorising about gender and sexuality (Mitchell 1984).

Critical of object relations for being stretched too widely and being reduced to the role of keeper at the gates of human warmth, Mitchell nevertheless saw it as the central focus of contemporary psychoanalysis (Greenberg and Mitchell 1983). He picked up
Guntrip’s (1968) way of thinking about object relations that placed relationship above drive, as distinct to seeing object relations as pre-oedipal and informing the drives. The drive-based unconscious was full of repressed impulses; the relational unconscious was the place of rejected images of self and others. Mitchell’s relational body was experienced through interaction, and shaped how experience was thought about. In classic Freudian theory relationship served drive and defence, and pathology was the response of the oedipal to drives and defences. In relational theory it was relationship with others that gave the basic patterning of the self. There was no pre-relational id. The object was not a subject of the drive. Object relatedness was primary. To simply move it into early infant life as a precursor to Oedipus was in effect ‘collapsing relational issues into the interaction between the mother and infant during the earliest months of life’ (Mitchell 1984: 480) – which linked treatment with regression. Mitchell argued that the analyst’s role is not to repair old wounds but to understand them in the light of the present.

This left British Kleinians and Freudsians with little foothold in the relational, even though it might be thought that there were good object relations bridges that could be built, as Lubbe (2008) had viewed Klein building bridges between libidinal drive and attachment. Kohut (1977) suggested that self-psychology could be complementary to drive theory, although he recognised the different directions they led to for technique as well as theory. Mitchell (1979) challenged this by saying that drive and relationship could not both be the basis for the development of the self; you cannot primarily both grow from and grow to. Generally theoretically inclusive, Mitchell drew a line he did not cross between drive and relationship:

A commitment to eclecticism can run the risk of avoiding a serious working through of the relation of basic concepts to each other in all their presuppositions and implications, obscuring important theoretical issues, distinctions and choices. (Mitchell 1979: 188)

He believed that present day psychoanalysis should be a revolution not an elaboration of Freud’s original ideas, emphasising not minimising the discontinuities, bringing them
into the light for discussion. The Freudian mind was built from sexual/aggressive impulses and their derivatives; the relational mind was built from the mind’s configurations of the interactions between self and others (Mitchell 1993).

Aside from this fundamental difference, Mitchell saw Relational theory as having the potential to link British Object Relations and the American Interpersonal approach (Mitchell 1995b). Essentialism was not to be eschewed as gender was too abstract if completely unhooked from the body; nevertheless the body was always mediated through relationship (Mitchell 1996a). He framed gender and sexuality as essential constructs: ‘…gender and sexuality are both entirely constructed, yet all human cultures, necessarily, construct ideas of the body, gender and sexuality’ (Mitchell 1996b: 56). Whether this was wanting to have his cake and eat it too was raised by Schwartz (1996) who questioned the need for essentialism which in his view was encapsulated in constructivism.

The Relational school of psychoanalysis has yet to gain much foothold in the UK where there is some feeling that it treats drive theory too simplistically. Gill (1995) suggested the either/or of drive/relational was an unnecessary choice, that the innate and the experiential provided useful counterpoints for each other. He was critical of Mitchell’s view of drive as tension reduction which limited it to very early Freud where gratification has no context, unlike the increasingly sophisticated later Freudian view of Oedipus as both concrete and metaphorical. Sugarman (1995) argued that drive and relationship could be complementary and that classical Freudian analysis was not limited to drives as motivators any more than it worked as a detective story of the past. It provided a way of understanding how external experiences were absorbed through internal constructs and had a place for both constitution and experience in the fashioning of the internal or unconscious.

In a transatlantic conversation, the Relational Dimen and the Jungian Samuels (2007) agreed that the personal, the political and the theoretical were all linked, Dimen asserting that ‘the Holy Grail of synthesis might better be regarded as a vanishing point that serves as orientation rather than as goal’ (Dimen 2007: 385). Psychoanalysis
described a narrow path for sexuality, put it into a structure, gave it language, but did not invent it; that, Dimen said, was already the work of patriarchy.

2.6 French psychoanalysis

French psychoanalysis stands somewhat separately from much of European psychoanalysis. Waintrater (2012) affirmed the need for defenders of the traditional psychoanalytic centres of the death drive and infantile sexuality, but was concerned that such defence could create an isolating fortress for French theorising, which in other ways had been so influential. It was more involved in philosophy than technique, evident in the strong influence of Foucault, Derrida and in particular Lacan. Foucault saw in Freud’s concentration on sexuality an imprint of the West turning to sex for answers, only to realise that is not where they are to be found. Freud’s theory of the unconscious allowed for new thinking about the Subject in Foucault’s writings (Davidson 2001), although Foucault’s sexuality was about constitution through discourse rather than prohibition through oedipal law (Foucault 1990, 2001). Lacanian thought was highly abstract and not much interested in social constructionism, object relations or interpersonal approaches. Where Foucault’s sexuality was constructed, Lacan’s was unknowable. French ‘otherness’ was not a person to be known but a condition of existence; consciousness and relationship were secondary aspects of life. Sexuality was that which related to the unconscious, to repression and phantasy, not that which was brought into being through relationship.

While Lacan is not synonymous with French psychoanalysis, his remains the most significant and lasting alternative perspective on gender and sexuality to come from the French schools and to affect British and American thinking. Lacan offered an analysis of sexuality that was a step removed from the body. He intended his interpretations to demonstrate Freud in his truest form, yet his views were also highly contentious in the analytic world, and presciently postmodern (Steintrager 2002). Where Freudians saw biology, Lacan saw metapsychology; language inevitably
separated the human from the rest of nature. Oedipus was transformed into a tale of the transition from the Imaginary to the Symbolic through the imposition of the paternal Law, the Name of the Father. Where Freud’s Oedipus told of a father who prevented oedipal catastrophe by placing himself between infant and mother, thus bringing order to an unordered libido, Lacan’s catastrophe was the refusal to enter the world through language, thus remaining in a state of false hope, in the Imaginary, where the self could be found in a return to the Other. Accepting language allowed entry into the world of the Symbolic, subject to the law that governed it. The symbolic was immediately removed from the imaginary; whatever hopes were entertained of re-entry into a state of primal unity were ruptured by the speech necessary to conceive of such hope, ‘the phallus stand(ing) for that moment of rupture’ (Rose 1982: 38). Lacan’s resolution was not relationship but the articulation of despair, and the capacity to live in the face of it. The fraudulence of the phallus was castration; what must be faced was the knowledge of the impossibility of the satisfaction of desire.

In the realm of the Imaginary, the closest referent Lacan had to an unconscious (Lacan 1946), the infant initially sought a reference point in the other around which to gather some pseudo-recognisable points of self-concept or ego. It was as if accessibility to the inside of the other actually existed, and the self could be found in it. This moved nothing forward but offered the hope of a return to coherence through cohabitation. The significance of the other was as a marker for the self, whether through identification or comparison. The infant’s challenge was to move from the Imaginary to the Symbolic, where it was the Otherness of the other that was the point, rather than the relationship with the other. To enter mental life necessitated separating desire from its object, or acknowledging that the object was in fact the self, an Imaginary pull towards a unified ego that remained in tension with the actual experience of fragmentation. Where object relations allocated to the mother’s body the projections that could otherwise enter the realm of the Symbolic, the Lacanian view allocated the mother’s body to the realm of the Imaginary, until mediated through language into the Symbolic. The mirror image was the framework for this (Lacan 1949), when the child saw the possibility and the illusion of wholeness before achieving its own independence, and began to gather accretions of self-image towards this through the
affirmative reflections of the other. The infant had recognised itself in something which was not as perceived, and built an ego from this: ‘The image in which we first recognise ourselves is a misrecognition’ (Rose 1982). The Other at this stage is a mirror-ego, with a use not unlike projective identification (Gibeault 2010b), an autonomy in ‘draft form’ (Bowie 1991: 22). Because the infant in this way perceived itself as whole, through this sequestering of the other into the self, Lacan (1949) saw deceit as written into the ego from the start. The ego is built on something that is not there; a very different concept from Winnicott’s mirroring role of the mother in which the infant received something of themselves that was understood and re-presented in an absorbable way.

Lacan distinguished need from desire, and desire from instinct. In Grosz’s clarification (Grosz 1990), need was related to the Real, the unsymbolised. It could be answered: food, warmth, shelter, basic community. Instinct too was related to this, the push and pull of the body for what sustained life. Demand was an expression of need in the realm of the imaginary, concretising the need in a person or thing. Desire, however, was ordered by the Symbolic. It was the wanting rather than the having that nurtured desire. Once articulated it was out of reach; the having not only closed down the desire, it brought the pain and disappointment of the loss of hope through its failure, which then must also be borne. Sex in this vein was an impossibility. As a desire for union it was doomed: the phallus sought by the woman would not be found, the phallic possession claimed by the man would be laid bare and empty. Desire was at heart the desire for the Other, and the Other was unavailable from the moment it was conceived of. Lacan’s jouissance, the pain and the pleasure, or that which ‘serves no purpose’ (Lacan 1975a: 3), which is the function of the phallus (Lacan 1975b), was the apparent but never realised consummation of sex. Jouissance was sought in the body; men and women sought it in sex but castration prevented it:

...there is no chance for a man to have jouissance of a woman’s body, otherwise stated, for him to make love, without castration..., in other words, without something that says no to the phallic function (Lacan 1975c: 71-2)
The phallic function is available to men and women, and it was not to be assumed that men possessed it because they possessed the penis – this was in fact the fallacy. Men and women could both signify the phallus without being it.

Lacan’s view of the Other went beyond the personal, and for this reason sexual connection was not about the search for a realisable intimacy, as in object relations, nor the seeking of pleasure, in a more conventional Freudian sense. Desire was unconnected to the object but rather searched in the object for the elusive Other, and was fuelled by its continual and unavoidable failure to find it.

Desire was that which kept everything moving in the transition towards symbolisation. An object of desire would indicate the possibility of fulfilment, whereas this was a chimera; the object was in fact a direction taken under the impetus of desire but never a destination. This perpetual loss was Lacan’s castration, imposed through the inhibition of the Law, engaged with as an inevitability. Freud’s polymorphous perversity was benignly organised into heterosexuality through the Oedipus complex; Lacan’s Imaginary is overwritten by the Symbolic, a valuing of order over chaos that resulted in a benign neurosis (Fink 1997).

It was essential to differentiate the phallus from the penis and to understand the penis as a marker for the phallus, as a marker for the difference that was maintained by (oedipal) Law:

In Lacan’s work, the phallus does not stand for the penis itself. It stands for the infant’s absolute and irreducible desire to be a part of the mother, to be what she most desires...for Lacan it comes to stand, even more generally, for the kind of desire that can never be satisfied.’ (Turkle 1978: 56)

Anatomical difference created the ‘imaginary confusion’ (Ragland-Sullivan 1989: 42) out of which phallic significance could arise; it belonged to neither male nor female but to the feature of difference that was then accorded a role in the ‘myths and fictions’
(Ragland-Sullivan 1989: 40) that comprised the slow build-up of the ego. The penis in other words was felt to be the phallus, but must not be mistaken for it.

Desire is not about establishing a relationship at the level of consciousness, but relating to the Other as external to self and symbolic of the relationship to the Law. For Lacan this included family, church, state, society, and their representatives through structures and symbols. The Symbolic was therefore inherently alienating; it offered a structure that pre-existed the individual, yet the individual must identify themselves, and be identified, in relation to it. Through this, the subject was constituted, not as an essential reality but as a person spoken of and able to speak in relation to the language that gave them voice. It was about limits and definitions rather than limitless recognition. The body was symbolised out if its biology and the father was the focus for this capacity as the one who stood between the mother and the infant. That is, the father took on the paternal function and inserted that which could be into that which the infant believed already was. This function for Lacan was equally available through the mother’s discourse which, if it took on the symbolic function, became by its nature paternal.

However, his frameworks do seem to rely on symbolic precision in a way that is almost physical. While for example Lacan translated castration into the realms of the Law, the translation was not in itself a challenge to the location of either Law or lack as the intrinsically male phallus. Within phallic imagery, the female genitals are about absence and are therefore less powerful symbolically than the masculine presence (Ragland-Sullivan 1986). Asserting that the phallus was not the penis, he nevertheless created the metaphor of the Father from the material of the father’s role as parent in that era. While gender is symbolic, the cultural specificity of the father and phallus as symbol was not addressed (Dimen 1995a), nor did Lacan provide an analysis of the patriarchy and hierarchy through which he structured the symbolic (Harris 1991a). The social does not necessarily reflect the natural but is symbolic of the sexual divide that is defined by the castration complex (Rusbridger 2007) but precedes it.
Dean and Lane (2001) critiqued Lacan for thinking in a heterosexual framework even though he viewed sexuality as linguistic and representational, as if, like Freud, he did not quite follow through on the implications of his understanding (Mitchell 1990). The signifier that released the phallus from the body should have provided potential for a non-patriarchal future, yet it did not (Grosz 1990). What about the place of the female counterpoint to the male register? Grosz suggested indifference:

Lacan asserts that the phallus is never a matter of indifference for women...But what if she is indifferent? This indifference itself may be the mark of her (sexual) difference, and trace her location elsewhere. (Grosz 1990: 192)

Instead of indifference, and critical that Lacan had simply replaced Freud’s phallocentrism with his own Name of the Father, French feminists worked to carve out a have rather than a have not place for women’s sexuality, which led to them being positioned later as essentialists in the face of postmodernism (Feher-Gurewich 2003). De Beauvoir (1949) urged equality within a recognition of difference, interrogating the values assigned to difference and opening the way for the body to be gendered and equal. Kristeva (1986) developed the idea of the ‘abject’, the unconscious disgust at the castrated body that placed the female as a representation of that which was rejected and oppressed, leaving the male Other in a position of denial, refusing identification with the abject female. Some oedipal structure was required to separate mother and daughter, and the role of the Father was to do this. Irigary (1990) offered competition to what she saw as Lacan’s phallocentrism through the superiority of the female genitals. She drew out how language was gendered prior to entry into discourse, leaving consciousness with no choice but to enter a pre-gendered existence (Whitford 1991). Lacanian extensions of the meanings in and arrivals at sexuality offered a range of thought that went beyond the mind/body split into a complexity of associations, attachments and meanings that constituted and related to any actual sexual activity:

‘The drive, which is neither natural not instinctual, links sexuality to the Other, so bringing its function into the field of representations’ (Ragland 2001: 102).
Sex from this position was taken up in relation to the fundamental lack, the impossible
desire at the centre of being, although Chasseguet-Smirgel (1964) commented on the
woman-as-lack proposition as a theoretical protection against the more anxiety-
provoking propositions of the all-good or all-bad mother. Gender necessarily preceded
sex because sexual difference was required for it – gender was identified by the other
not with the other. Sexual difference was represented by castration, for which Lacan
stressed phallus rather than penis to remove it from the body; masculinity thus
becoming a universal function:

The reason why castration exists is, perhaps, quite simply that desire...cannot
have been, cannot be, something we have, cannot be an organ we handle. (Lacan
2008: 42)

The penis stood in for the object that was lost not to the body, in Freud’s sense, but to
desire, the unattainable quest. In debate, Lacan used a questioner’s terminology to
refer to the relationship between husband and wife as a ‘double monologue’ (Lacan
2008: 55) in a memorable description of the failures of intercourse to fulfil desire.

Ragland (2001) summarised Lacan’s castration anxiety as a recognition of the fragile
nature of masculinity; penis envy is resistance against becoming purely ‘other’; there is
theoretically no biological predetermination of whether an individual takes up the
anxious (male) or the envious (female) position in relation to the phallus. Lacan’s
homosexuality was not a thing that existed any more than heterosexuality did -
nothing was natural, in that sense – all constructions of sexuality would ultimately fail,
and all were representations of something else. Sexual connection was a fantasy from
an unconscious phantasy which could not be fulfilled, the hope of a reconnection
through the phallus to the lost ‘Real’, represented by the mother (Birksted-Breen and
Flanders 2010). Yet the phallic imagery dominated:

‘Demand in itself bears on something other than the satisfactions it calls for. It is
demand for a presence or an absence’. (Lacan 1958: 579)
Homosexuality became from one perspective as much of a fantasy as heterosexuality, though more narcissistically orientated. From another, it had no representation for the interplay of presence and absence. As perversion was the refusal of difference, and gender was a ground for difference, homosexuality by its nature stood outside that ground.

2.7 Postmodernism, performativity and psychoanalysis

Freud was born into the Enlightenment inheritance of reason and Cartesian dualism. The second half of his life moved through the cultural experimentation of Dadaism, surrealism, cubism: the representation of how things were seen over what was seen (Woods 2009). Over the same period the modernist movement was gathering pace, burgeoning in the second half of the twentieth century in a Europe that was trying to piece itself together after the destruction of two world wars that had seriously challenged the notion of humanity as progressive and rational.

Definitions of modernism, and thus postmodernism (which as ‘post’ must bear some relation to its lineage) vary, but there are common themes. Modernism retained a critical concept of the self, acknowledging its fractured and constituted nature, but nevertheless believing in an internal coherence. Oedipus is a good example of the modernist analytic map of identity as both contingent and achievable. The self created narratives to connect events, and one difference between modernism and the postmodernism to come was the belief that such a narrative was possible (Malpas 2005). There is a coherence to the modernist self that pulls itself together amidst the multiplicity of the experiences and forces it encounters. Modernism assumed a transparency of the mind that aligned well with the work on core gender identity that was so much a part of the American developments of the 1950s and 1960s (Stoller 1968, Money and Tucker 1975); it was possible to become something, to achieve stability, through inner narratives.
Modernity searched for a principle of self-identity in an interiorized consciousness, which in becoming conscious of itself as conscious would then latch on to a monadic sameness that remained immune to the rancor of temporal becoming. (Schrag 1997: 53)

The traditional analytic self has been comfortable with this approach. The construction of the psyche (id, ego, super-ego) was treated as if real, and the forensic emphasis on childhood (Sass 1992) was suggestive of bedrock, of a starting point that becomes constitutive but remains unconscious.

Postmodernism moved away from this expectation of either internal unity or overarching metanarrative. It took the subject as constituted, but removed the requirement for coherent outcome; in social terms it removed the imperative for consensus. Not only was the self multiple, but it was constantly becoming, so did not reach a standpoint from which it could be reviewed. The postmodern self was a process rather than an essence and was understood moment-to-moment through what it said and what it did (Schrag 1997), while its speech and actions were always part of a community, never in isolation. The postmodern self therefore is neither unified not singular.

Postmodern thinking has made inroads into psychoanalysis as has queer theory, but it is a long way from the mainstream, particularly in the UK which holds to a more essentialist view of sexuality as transcendent of cultural variation, and has been suspicious of postmodernism on its own (Ryan 1997). The English social theorist Dollimore (1991) suggested that postmodernism minimised the complications dealt with by it modernist roots and was not as radically different as it claimed to be. It was also criticised for offering analysis without resolution; lives must be lived, after all, ‘as if’ sense can be made of them, in a sort of virtual faith (Sass 1992).

Keeping to a Freudian vision of oedipal truth, however, is not sustainable in postmodernity. Both Klein and object relations allowed a connection with the
instability and constant re-assembly of the postmodern position that encouraged Elliott and Frosh (1995) to be optimistic about psychoanalysis’ response to the postmodern, with which it shares a ‘fluidity of ... encounter with subjectivity’ (Elliott and Frosh 1995: 3). Grossman (2002) suggested that queer theory and psychoanalysis do share an understanding that things outside consciousness have a significance for identity, and that language and symbols shape and define experience.

How far this has taken the field is at least uneven. Many psychoanalytic schools may be some way from the relational analyst and queer theorist Goldner’s (2003) assertion that the phallic emphasis in Freud has been relegated to the dump drawer of evidence of homophobia and misogyny. For Goldner the key question about gender can be the use to which it is put; oedipal oppositions become a range of potential expressions of gender rather than cattle routes to the achievement of gender. Acknowledging gender and sexuality as ‘foundational categories of mind and culture’ (Goldner 2003: 135), she emphasised negotiation and expression of the cultural opportunities of gender that relate to but are not owned by the body. Gender as a multi-dimensional and shifting experience is core to a relational perspective, and relational work is perhaps the best current match with the postmodern.

Harris (2009) created a postmodern, relational version of chaos theory to review gender and sexuality. Suggesting gender as “softly assembled”, more wetware than hardware’ (Harris 2009: 160), she found a home for this in Freud’s work but expanded it, remarking on the many potential connections between desire and gender that by implication eclipsed the Oedipus complex’s claims to sole ownership. Without oedipal requirements of heterosexual complementarity, non-neurotic gendered and sexual identities were unhooked from the desire/identification opposition (Harris 1995). Gender and desire as experiences were set in a rich mix of interpersonal, social and cultural fields. Gender emerges; it is a complexly motivated process. It can serve integration or fragmentation, intimacy or distance. It includes identification but also projection and incorporation; there is always something it is not for everything that it is. Gender development is an individual, family and society affair.
After fifty years of postmodernism, some critics now suggest that it has had its day, and the next move is towards a more liveable framework (see López and Potter’s claims for critical realism). Its impact on psychoanalysis to date has been partial, but gender theorising that addresses analytic thinking has been particularly partial to it, for example in the work of Judith Butler. While postmodernism is critical of the view of language that sees it as representational (Gergen 1992), Butler went both in and beyond language and social constructionism in her influential work on gender and sexuality. Refuting the notion of an essence or core of gender, she questioned the necessity of a binary view of gender altogether, arguing that sex, gender and desire were independent of each other (Butler 1990). Gender became a concept of performance which of itself constituted the thing it enacted. There was no substance to gender beyond that which was attributed to it; it was the repetition of attribution that gave the appearance of substance; that is, it has the appearance of being natural. It was a ‘persistent impersonation that passes as real’ (Butler 1990: viii). Moreover, heterosexuality was implicated in this as an accepted working out of natural gender identity as it reinforced the binary notion of gender that rested on its persistent association with sex.

Butler’s perception of gender as performance is not to be confused with choice or subjectivity; the subject is constituted by their performance, which is itself a ritual created through the permissions and taboos of the surrounding culture (Butler 1993). This meant that gender was achieved out of loss, not least of same sex desire which, she argued, was foreclosed and converted into a melancholic gender identification; identity stood in for desire (Butler 1995). This reversed the Freudian timetable where gender identity shaped sexuality.

Layton (1997) suggested that Butler could be moved away from a Freudian object relations model of identity through a greater engagement with a feminist relational approach, in which norms were communicated in integration with the communicator. Butler in response said that there was a double act here, a ‘double sense of “subjection”: becoming subject and becoming subjected to a norm’ (Butler 1997: 519). To accept the subjectivity gained from recognition, the individual accepts the
normativity contained in the recognising look. Making and becoming subject(s) is in this sense an ambivalent process not resolved by relationality.

2.8 Reviewing Oedipus

Oedipus does appear to have a place in a more postmodern psychoanalysis, but it is not as a signifier of sexual or gendered identities. Izzard (1999) found that as the main carrier for analytic theories of gender and sexuality Oedipus obscured rather than clarified. She criticised its limitations as an account of sexual or gendered experience sited in a particular culture while not acknowledged as such. It retained its power because it continued to embody societal thoughts and values; simply jettisoning it would not alter the supports on which it rested. ‘What psychoanalysis needs to do next is open up new possibilities of thought and facilitate new mediations of different values and identities’ (Izzard 2002: 11).

Oedipus is of course interpreted through the lens of the theory being applied to it, and has been reinterpreted constantly over the years. The existentialist May (1964), for example, interpreted the moment of Oedipus’ awareness of his situation as the turning point for his salvation, knowledge compelling him to seek renewal. Ogden’s (2006) commentary on Loewald’s 1979 paper also demonstrated this. Loewald was known as a radical conservative analytic theoretician, and according to Ogden he took the core of the oedipal complex as a kind of individuation, the establishment of the individual against the authority of the parent; the ruthlessness is in the child, in the willingness to kill the necessary part of the parent to ensure their own survival. The main difference between Loewald and Freud was the former’s emphasis on the urge for freedom and autonomy as the driver of Oedipus against Freud’s sexual and aggressive urges. Loewald’s girl did not want to take mother’s place with father; she wanted to take parental authority as her own. Atonement came through the internalisation and therefore reincarnation of the parent as superego. It was atonement rather than castration anxiety that prevented murder and incest.
Fresh perspectives on Oedipus included negotiating exclusion and inclusion, and moving on from omnipotence and a two-person state. Davies (2003a) placed this as the move from incestuous to non-incestuous object relations, not in terms of sexual identities but in terms of relational capacities, moving away from a drive theory of sexuality towards a co-constructed reality that made analytic neutrality an illusion. Oedipus was not a once-for-all resolution nor a developmental stage but a dynamic that was repeated many times through life, starting from the perception of the other through the body that needed an acknowledgement of the other’s participation in this experience. The parent and the child were in Oedipus together, and Davies (1994) argued from this for an analytic openness about erotic countertransference that included some transparency with the client. Oedipal love remained trapped in the fantasy of perfect love, mutual adoration rather than real intimacy. Post-oedipal love does not require perfection: the parent has let go of the image of the perfect child and the child has let go of the idealised object and the omnipotent position (Davies 2003b). In this Davies also confirmed that Oedipus was a two way street: the parents must move on in order for the child to do so.

Oedipus is now often used as a metaphor for dynamics that do not rely on sexuality or gender to sustain them. For example the bond between Cameron and Clegg was analysed by Nicolson (2012) as an exclusive parental partnership that aroused anxiety and hostility from the electorate children. Quindeau (2013) reaffirmed Oedipus as framing limitation (belonging to one sex) and generational difference; heterosexuality and homosexuality come out of the oedipal mix of desire for the same/other parent, reworked many times particularly during adolescence, with its social restrictions on polymorphous perversity.

The American move towards the interpersonal supported an interpretation of Oedipus that leaned towards the cultural. Oedipus was an acceptance of regulation, a move from nature to society as a shaper of desire (Toews 1998). This allowed for an investigation into the underside of social relations, but critically through a reductionist, universalising and phallocentric monologue (Brunner 1998).
In the UK the influence of the Oedipus complex runs through all of the main analytic schools. Temperley (1993) reflected that Oedipus had been reviewed throughout the early days of psychoanalysis and that (largely feminist) critiques urging greater attention on mother-infant interactions were arguing with a mode of Oedipus no longer current. Future theorising needed to consider a place for women inside oedipal law rather than outside it, as both Klein and Lacan had (differently) considered.

Envy, rivalry and competition are all repeated human dynamics that can be sifted through an oedipal sieve and then resettled. The question this raises is how much the metaphor can be relied on independently of a re-examination of the story on which it rests. The oedipal resolution is arrived at through fear, envy, retaliation and renunciation because it is set in opposition, in choices of or/if: desire or identification; if male then not female. Through arrival at a binary solution peace is restored. Butler (1995) raised the cost of such peace in the heterosexual foreclosure on homosexual love, leaving heterosexuality is a state of permanent loss. The universality of Oedipus has been questioned (Langness 1993); it is rooted in a constellation of family life which may appear timeless but is actually anchored in specific cultural practices.

Reframing binary as tension rather than opposition offers options. Chapman (2013) confirmed that fathers and sons can be both rivals and allies, and that forbearance is a good alternative to retaliation in an oedipal situation, if the father can contain himself and not act out his own oedipal defeat on his son. Self-control rather than aggression is then offered as a model for conflict resolution.

In a recent roundtable discussion on female desire (Bergner et al 2012) there was a discussion on body narcissism and the body really being *seen* by the analyst and the parent. A comment was made by contributor Lieberman about the importance of the father’s admiration for the girl’s developing confidence in her body and her sexuality. This was assumed as a universal precept and captures the ordinariness of the heterosexual imposition in a panel highly aware of gender and sexuality issues, the point being not to negate a father’s admiration as important, but to observe the cross-
connection of sexuality to gender as deeply embedded in analytic thought. Heterosexual dominance shows in discourse, and this dominance loses the opportunity to allow what is considered mainstream to be revitalised by that which is not, and to ‘integrate the semantics of the margins into research, scholarship and practice’ (Smith, Shin and Officer 2012: 401).

2.9 Focus on gender: moving forward

This section reflects on the changing ways in which difference is being thought about and the meanings of this for thinking about gender. It also reviews the broader definitions that include relationship and culture as a part of gender.

2.9.1 Different kinds of difference

There was criticism in America of what in the UK was still staple fare: the focus on childhood as the origin of difficulties and the focus on gender as the greatest signifier of difference (Gagnon 1991). Yet Americans writers too were curious about the process as well as the meaning of gender difference. Kubie (1974) pondered over what he understood as the lifelong desire to be both sexes, which was itself quite acceptable provided at some point the reality principle kicked in and the impossibility of satisfaction in such desire was recognised. Boys wanted to be girls just as much as girls wanted to be boys, and this remained unresolved. Sex was a union that symbolised the hope of change – which was even worse in outcome for the homosexual. Gender is not the only platform for denial; children want to be adults and adults want to be children, and so on. But the struggle is a constant component of gender: ‘...we are always attempting in every moment and every act both to affirm and to deny our gender identities’ (Kubie 1974: 379). Thompson (2011) picked up a modern question still present from Kubie’s paper: why is gender alignment insisted on when so much psychic conflict is tolerated in other areas of life? Corbett (2011), a more postmodern,
relational analyst, critically wondered that Kubie took little social awareness into his theorising, retaining a more drive focussed concept of gendered identity which did not move far from the norm at base. This essentialist position was primed to support a view of transgender as an inability to come to terms with the difference between wanting and having. Layton (2011) concluded that Kubie, of his time, took psychoanalytic assumptions about gender and sex without seeing them as constructed and worked with an assumption of a natural base that has since been destabilised by the broader understanding of the relationship between culture and embodiment.

The way in which gender was being thought about was on the move. In contrast to the usual focus on over-close maternal relationships between sons and mothers, Kaftal (1991) pointed out that if gender was seen as other, then a male infant’s earliest experience of intimacy was of otherness, of being object rather than subject (Chodorow 1978). Boys were more often faced with difference. This sense of otherness persisted into a self-construct, and emotional vulnerability was consigned to the realm of the feminine. Girls took on the responsibility for connection and relatedness (Gilligan 1993); the girl’s separation from the mother became instead the task of maintaining connection with her (Taylor, Gilligan and Sullivan 1997). Heroic individualism persisted in the boy; when a male therapist was met in the consulting room, embodying male intimacy, it was too often explained away as homo-eroticism as if the sexual removed the intimate.

Fast, emphasising male and female as ‘coordinate developments’ (Fast 1991a: 329), suggested that what Freud saw as normal masculinity in men was actually a failure in development. Herek (2007) summarised research demonstrating that there was more hostility towards gay men than towards lesbians, and that the most negative group towards homosexual men were heterosexual men. It seemed that sexuality carried anxiety on behalf of gender; a fear of the feminine perhaps rather easily theorised as castration anxiety.

In the USA Harris, introducing a symposium on gender in 1991, identified the two big ideas of the time as the challenge to the idea of the female castration complex, and
the review of men’s castration anxiety to raise the significance of the mother, where it had previously been concentrated on the father. Gender needed to be thought about as both fixed and fluid; that is its paradox, and Harris (1991b) argued that Freud had a contribution to make. Harris’s gender identity was a ground for psychic work, not a thing in itself, and therefore open to analysis and impact.

Bringing a background in sociology as well as psychoanalysis, Benjamin’s work on identification and difference transformed the Freudian oedipal situation into one which could accommodate female experience from a feminist standpoint, outside of the norms of the Freudian blanket in which it was usually so snugly wrapped (Benjamin 1991). Recasting penis envy as an expression of the girl’s own desire, the girl’s identification with the father through meeting a positive response affirmed her sense of herself, and so recognition of self-in-other became part of object love. Recognition of self was won through identification with difference as well as sameness. Identification acknowledged the subjectivity of the other – there has to be an ‘other’ in order to want to be like them – so for boys too both identification with and love for the father can support separation, provided the father can respond to both without rejection. Benjamin was critical of the analytic collapse of subjects into objects without having given sufficient attention to how subjecthood was reached, which in her view was through a recognition of the subjectivity of the other, which then allowed for recognition by the other (Benjamin 1992a).

Benjamin was initially criticised for siting her views within a nuclear family context (Fast 1991b), although she pointed out that if the parental and societal roles were reversed then the mother would be representing difference not the father; the roles were representative not actual. What was actual was that parents had a relationship to the social constructs of male and female and this became a part of the child’s experience of gender as well as of the parents. Benjamin was also criticised by Schwartz (1992) for taking too much account of the Freudian centrality of penis envy, and he drew a picture of the penis in its vulnerable reality as a very poor phallus. Benjamin stuck to her critical guns (1992b) but was to do further revisions to her theory. Oedipus was inadequate as the only model of gender; it relied on a binary
concept that coded power issues and made difference into a concept of mutual exclusion rather than mutual recognition (Benjamin 1996). The supposition that desiring the wrong object threatened gender identity underlay homophobia, as heterosexuality was the only securely gendered outcome possible. If complementarity was removed as an ideal it left space for polymorphism to take its place with its relevance for all sexualities: gender difference was still in the picture but not as a pivot for opposition. Identification and desire, homo- and hetero-sexuality: none of these had to be as opposed as the oedipal picture presented. The homoerotics of identificatory love were directed at the self. Benjamin (1996: 32) referred to this as a ‘bridge’ to difference: first you find self in the other, then you recognise yourself as the subject of desire for the other. These are not exclusive. This holds good into the queer theory of the twenty-first century with its multiple identifications:

Resisting the split between identificatory love and object love, reconfiguring the meaning of subjects and objects, is part of resisting normativity and regulation in the name of producing something other. (Benjamin 2013: 13)

Celenza, in a commentary on Benjamin’s work, referred to ‘a binary that is not one’ (Celenza 2012: 271 italics in original), in the sense that polarities need not be exclusive, they can present a working tension.

2.9.2 Components of gender

The Relationalist Stephen Mitchell (2000) found in Benjamin’s work a bridge between the post-classical analytic emphasis on the maternal process and the interpersonal emphasis on the authentic encounter as core to the analytic experience. Analysts (and mothers) were persons not functions, offering the sameness of recognition from the standpoint of difference; in the separation is the meeting. Benjamin did not endorse a split as final as Mitchell’s between drive and relationship and held to the Hegelian hope that ideas emerge in dialectical tension, new with old. Her success in holding together the tension of gender rather than splitting it apart informed Dimen’s
argument (1991a) that gender is about difference rather than essence, and is coded as a highly individual experience; its centrality or marginality will depend on its meaning to the person. Dimen’s take on the space between male and female as transitional was critiqued by Juliet Mitchell (1991) who, from a UK Freudian and object relations position, took issue with the idea that one can be in a space containing both masculinity and femininity when they are brought into being by their difference, which is rooted in the body. The content of gender difference can vary but the fact of it cannot. Dimen (1991b) replied that it is self/other that is the ground of difference and sameness; gender is possessed by both self and other and so can be a place of transition. The interchange is a neat example of the different discourses in operation: the British Object Relations school with its drive base against the American Relational school with its object relations connection but no drive base. The latter is less theoretically concerned with aetiology and more with meaning (Magid 1993), which was certainly the focus of the self-psychology that dominated America for a time. Young-Bruehl (1996) credited American feminists with taking British Object Relations out of its drives-as-destiny origins and into a more socially aware position, placing hopes initially on changes to parenting practices as a solution to gender inequality. Dimen (1997) positioned Freud as telling a particular cultural story of Western sexuality.

Linguistic studies were also contributing to a reassessment of gender and were a significant component of queer theory, from the influence of Foucault to the growing postmodern movement. Hearing and speaking were influencers of identification:

...the concept of gender is itself fluid and insists on speaker agency and conscious use of language, revealing gender to be a process rather than a state. (Livia and Hall 1997)

Harris (2009) articulated gender and sexuality as multifaceted experience. This is a different concept from gender as held in the body; the body is rather a part of experience. Gender is not bedrock though it has to reckon with bedrock. It is individual but not only individual. Gender operates as an ‘attractor’ (Harris 2009: 171), pulling
towards itself polarities that require responses which can broaden or narrow its range. Too much vulnerability may result in an expansion of the concept of masculinity or a refreshed commitment to its narrowness. Galatzer-Levy (2014) picked up on Harris’s idea of gender pathways and noted how they quickly provided a stabilising effect; when a community recognises a gender marker it reinforces it as stable and so makes living under the marker less painful. In this way gender markers evolve and gender identities can evolve with them.

Coates (1997) demonstrated how knowledge of biology and child development can affect analytic thinking about genital difference and the organisation of gender. Girls, she wrote, do not show disappointment in their genitals, and children do not see genitals as the deciding factor in gender (girls wear dresses and that boy is wearing a dress so he is a girl) until four or five years, which may coincide with the period of oedipal resolution but also coincides with the cognitive capacity to allow exceptions to the rule (it is a boy even though he is wearing that dress). The expanded clinical options this knowledge provides for example in work with gender identity disorder behoves practitioners to move beyond overly simplistic analytic sequences of development and appreciate the ‘multiple pathways’ (Coates 1997: 46) traversed to arrive at gendered and sexual identities.

This newer thinking brought body, mind and culture together as formers of femininity. The body became a site for symbolising gender rather than its essential conveyer (Maguire and Dewey 2007). Gender was all about interpretation; it is not the gender-specific behaviour of the individual that is interpreted, but the gender assessment that is delivered on all behaviour (Hockley et al 2007).

Alongside this was also the question of how women in particular inhabit the materiality of the body. Orbach (2012) wrote about the difficulty for girls of internalising an erotic self that is missing or repressed in their mothers. She critiqued modern culture for its obsession with body perfection as if the body needed taming, as if the reality of the maternal combined with the sexual might just be overwhelming. If bodies are product, where does desire fit in? The body and the mind, traditionally
placed in opposition in questions of desire, could be more usefully explored as paradox, in Dimen’s postmodern representation. The body was both fact and idea (Dimen 2000), and desire arose from both. At a roundtable discussion reported by Bergner et al (2012) Dimen challenged the construction of female desire as inadequate and too binary-based that is, based on a heterosexual model of desire. She suggested that wanting in itself (whether of food, sex or work) is generally not within an account of femininity. Society’s construction of femininity and desire does not live outside of the body nor does the individual have the capacity to stand outside of that construction, though they can learn to observe it consciously. Changes in society mean that sexuality is read differently, and changing readings required a flexibility which available categories of homosexual and heterosexual were inadequate to meet. 

Political movements, the commercialisation of sex, the technological advances that separate reproduction from sex, the independent recognition of male and female sexuality so that ‘...the difference between the sexes is both losing importance and being solidified at the same time’ (Quindeau 2013: xi) – all these things challenged established notions of sexuality. Quindeau commented on the lack of coherence to the re-theorising of Freud and sexuality; everyone is asking questions but no-one is organising the answers. Links are missed. Her own conclusion was that dichotomy should be re-evaluated and less made of the differences between the sexes and more of the commonalities; as she put it, ‘...the poles are melting’ (Quindeau 2013: 272).

2.10 Plural identities: gender, sexuality and race

The discourses about sexuality and gender contain parallels to the possibly even more difficult efforts to engage in a discourse of race. Psychoanalysis has assumed universal psychologies and people are expected to speak of their experiences in the language of the majority (Leary 1997). As research into racial differences had always resulted in white superiority (Somerville 2000), so research into homosexuality had always reported heterosexual superiority. Yet cultural diversity should teach how extremely situated psychologies are. Altman (2000) saw in psychoanalytic constructions of race
the effect of the Enlightenment binary of rational versus irrational: ‘...our concept of race emerges from dichotomized thinking’ (Altman 2000: 589), and in Foucauldian terms dichotomy provides the ground for hierarchy. Dimen (1997) recognised in Freud’s reference to a ‘dark continent’ of female sexuality (Freud 1926: 212) the unconscious racism in psychoanalysis that equates rationality with civilisation. She was later to emphasise the social formation of the interior mind, that ‘Culture saturates subjective experience’ (Dimen 2011: 4), and that subjectivity was not only mind and body but also culture and politics. Race, sexuality and gender faced shared struggles to find an analytic space between social construction and material reality. Sedgwick (2010) went further and pulled together colonialism, capitalism, racism, patriarchy and homophobia:

The systematic relatedness of these different forms of oppression – the ways in which they necessitated, generated and potentially supported one another – were both axiomatic for our theorists and also powerfully illuminated by their work. (Sedgwick 2010: 152)

Brooks (2012) described the base of empire from which different races are thought about, rather than with. This maintains the superior place of the thinker, Brooks argued, and this could be laid over the way in which psychoanalysis has thought about both women and homosexuality as other, and theorised from that position. How thinking is done shapes what is being thought. White psychoanalysis has had a colonial habit towards black clients and, outside of the constructivist approach, has been slow to pick up the intersections between race and gender and sexuality in terms of multiple and sometimes competing identities.

Saketopoulou described work with a ‘seriously ill, gender fluid inpatient biological boy’ (Saketopoulou 2011: 192) who wanted to grow his hair long and who was also Black American, in Saketopoulou’s contextualised terminology. Noting that psychoanalytic history with homosexuality may have left it overly-cautious in attributing distress to gender variance, this leaves a theory gap that individual clinicians do their best to negotiate. Her client’s wish to be a girl caused concern amongst the hospital staff who
tried to reinforce his masculine identifications. His gender longings were expressed through making wigs from paper; this was rejected by hospital staff until he construed them as dreadlocks, and in this masculinised guise he was allowed to wear them and then to grow and braid his hair. However, in the event he had his hair cut rather than growing it out. He explained this as a response to a staff member urging him to ‘keep it real’ and be a man. In context Saketopoulou read this as a statement as much about racial as gender identity; the dreadlocks had facilitated both, but if a choice had to be made then ‘for black boys racial identification trumps gender anytime’ (Saketopoulou 2011: 202 italics in original). This had lain unrecognised in the mix of concern with which the largely non-white staff had approached his gender variance. Endorsing it was akin to endorsing the historical legacy of black male emasculation. As studies of schoolboys in London described the indices of race, class and gender that were negotiated to form manageable masculinities (Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman 2002), so for this patient gender was not negotiable outside of race. Homosexuality was not a viable black identity, and gender was the sacrifice. Saketopoulou commented that ‘one category of difference can be cloaked in another’s garb’ (Saketopoulou 2011: 204); homosexuality has carried gender’s pain, and here gender carried the pain of race. Harris (2005) urged no separation between sex, race and class in the formation of subjectivities; in lived experience they all impact and interlock simultaneously.

Lacquer’s comments on gender could equally be made of race:

The fact that pain and injustice are gendered and correspond to corporeal signs of sex is precisely what gives importance to an account of the making of sex.

(Lacquer 1990: 16)

Psychoanalysis has been slow to address racial hatred and the hating it brings in return (White 2002), assuming the experience of being black is contained in the experience of being white – we are all the same under the skin:

What seems missing from the understanding of racial hating is an appreciation of the texture of being white in relation to the experience of racism. We are
used to thinking about what it is to be black. What is the experience of being white? (White 2002: 421)

Lousada analysed racism as a continuation of a fantasied existence of a perfectly aligned home, rejecting the intrusion of the stranger – possibly an oedipal motif of maintaining the illusion of the perfect dyad, the omnipotent control over borders. ‘People become nationalistic when they are afraid, that the only answer to the question, ‘who will protect me now’ becomes ‘my own people’’ (Lousada 2006: 97). Gender, sexuality, race: all express borders that are crammed with meaning and investment.

2.11 Psychoanalysis and homosexuality

The changes in attitudes to homosexuality owed much to the successful feminist movement of the 1970s, which looked to psychoanalytic theory to understand more about the personal side of its ‘the personal is political’ slogan. This was the basis of a long and continuing journey of cultural re-evaluation in psychoanalysis on both sides of the Atlantic. The UK literature concentrated more on revising Freudian ideas about Oedipus and penis envy (Mitchell 1990), the American on reconceptualising mothering (Chodorow 1978). In both countries the 1950s and 1960s saw changes in sexual behaviour that supported a platform for changes to sexual identities in the 1960s and 1970s, as political rights to sexual expression and identity began to be claimed (Casey et al 2004). Greater integration of the social and political with the psychotherapeutic gave feminism firmer ground in American psychoanalysis than it found in the UK, and this followed through with ideas on sexuality. Somewhere in this movement homosexuality found a foothold, again with the external (the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York, the 1957 Wolfenden report and the 1967 legalising of homosexuality in the UK, the 1973 removal of ego-syntonic homosexuality from DSM III) changing the internal:
This was the first time that a movement [feminism] that grew up outside of psychoanalysis gained influence within it and fundamentally changed it – the reality principle, as it were, triumphing. (Young-Bruehl and Dunbar 2009)

The difficulties of this political success should not be underestimated, and the changes within the American Psychoanalytic Association only happened under pressure, with gay activists disrupting meetings to mobilise the Association to support the depathologisation of homosexuality. In 1973 the Board of the Association agreed to support one resolution to remove homosexuality from the DSM and another to condemn discrimination – thus instantly effecting ‘the mass cure of 15 million gay people’ (Kameny 2009: 80).

This section outlines some ways in which subsequent new thinking has challenged the oedipal link between gender and sexuality. The tensions in the relationship between science and psychoanalysis are outlined in this area and some efforts to bring about different ways of approaching the subject are described.

2.11.1 Psychoanalysis and science

In the mainstream institutions the struggle to change was captured in a study by Friedman and Lilling (1996) designed to assess agreement or disagreement with a pathological model of homosexuality. Of eighty two psychoanalysts, the majority supported a health not illness model but at the same time held to aspects of the illness model when it came to dynamic understandings, usually related to causation, despite no scientific evidence for this. Friedman and Lilling concluded that this represented the position of the field as it moved from a pre-1980s pathology model into a post-1980s non-discriminatory model of homosexuality with no viable alternative analytic theories of aetiology to use. The analytic status quo was a commentary on things as they were perceived to be; cultural acceptance made analytic statements about aetiology unremarkable to those making them (Vaughan et al 2008). Freudian claims on science could stand up in the past, but advances in neuroscience and behavioural genetics
make such claims now seem out of date and out of place. Greater understanding of
subjectivity also makes an empirical, objective approach to psychoanalytic knowledge
now seem like a poor fit (Frosh 1987).

The splits between psychoanalysis and science are mirrored in the apparent resolution
of analysts to write about aetiology without reference to science, and scientists to
write about mental health without reference to psychodynamics. Friedman, whose
credentials include supporting the de-pathologising of homosexuality on the American
Psychiatric Association’s DSM III Advisory Committee, has acted as a passionate
advocate of mutually informed psychoanalysis and science, often on the ground of
gender and sexuality (Friedman 1988). Not a stranger to controversy, the conclusions
he reached about homosexuality were:

...directly opposed to those not only of most analysts, but specifically those of
Sandor Rado (founder of the institute where I trained), Charles Socarides, Irving
Bieber, Lionel Ovesey, and Abram Kardiner (colleagues and/or students of
Rado), my own analyst, and all my psychoanalytic teachers. (Friedman 2001:
1122)

He saw psychiatry’s severing of its ‘special relationship’ (Friedman 1977-78: 270) with
psychoanalysis in DSM III as part of the increasing search for medical cures for
psychiatric difficulties which were thereby largely reduced to their treatable
symptoms, leaving psychoanalysis to address less specific psychic pain. But
psychoanalysis also balked at science and some of this he put down to politics and the
legacy of the analytic position on homosexuality. For example, the difficulty in
discussing the link between atypical gender role behaviour in children and
homosexuality in adults was in part because homosexuality had for so long been
falsely characterised as a disorder of gender identity.

Friedman was clear that Oedipus was scientifically untenable and left no option for
homosexuality outside of pathology:
Modern American psychoanalysts do not view homosexuality as inherently pathological. Nevertheless...most American psychoanalysts continue to believe in the fundamental importance of the Oedipus complex in psychological functioning. The new ideas about homosexuality raise fundamental questions about the role of the Oedipus complex in development. (Friedman and Downey 2002: 97)

Friedman and Downey’s (1995) scientific perspective highlighted the advances in knowledge since Freud’s time. Psychological issues are affected by genes, constitution, brain functioning, culture; on this basis the centrality of Oedipus is more questionable than it was for Freud whose available concepts of infantile sexuality required Oedipus as their resolution. While Freud saw his interpretation of the Oedipus complex as explanation for the ubiquity of the myth, Goux (1993) suggested, in reverse, that the myth might explain the conflict, and this was why it excited Freud – but this did not make it universal.

Looking at evolutionary biology studies, Friedman reframed the universal incest wish as a result of disordered early attachment and Oedipus as a triangle of competitiveness and rivalry that was innate in boys and had no need of oedipal wishes to summon it. Oedipus may serve as a useful cognitive construct or a narrative view of development, but was not a fact (Friedman and Downey 2002). He emphasised the asymmetry of male and female (homo)sexuality, seeing female eroticism for example as having more plasticity and being more often linked to relational connection, whereas male sexuality was more firmly established earlier on and made more use of visual stimulation. With Downey, he accounted for this overall through ‘hardwiring’, starting with prenatal hormones, but also subject to cultural and social factors (Friedman and Downey 2008). Childhood experience supplemented and modified prenatal influences. The effect of pre-natal hormones on gender role behaviour articulated with gender identity and, more challengingly, sexual orientation, thus touching on the very oedipal link between gender and sexuality that had done so much harm.
Bringing science and psychoanalysis together remains no simple matter – there are different epistemologies, different languages, different functions and different interests, though the subject may be the same. Even where both agree that closer cooperation is beneficial their definitions of closer and cooperation can vary. The detached observational stance of science can be rejecting of the impassioned polemic of change even when both are working towards the same end (Friedman 2000). The practitioner can argue with precisely this raising up of objectivity as a privileging of one sort of knowledge and claiming ownership of a field that should be shared (Drescher 2000).

Fausto-Stirling (2000) suggested three principles for advancing investigations of how gender and sexuality come to be embodied. First is that nature and nurture are not to be divided; second, that every living thing is in a permanent state of change; third, that no single discipline will be enough on its own to bring understanding. She offered an image of Russian dolls for the bringing together of such knowledge. The innermost doll represents knowledge at the level of the cells within an organism; the dolls progress through this to the operation and development of the mind in the second smallest doll, to sociological and psychological (and here one might add psychoanalytical) thinking about the individual, to popular culture, literature, anthropology and sociology working on an institutional level to the final social and historical perspective of the outermost doll:

Assembling the smaller dolls into a single large one requires the integration of knowledge derived from very different levels of biological and sociological organization....We cannot understand [human sexuality] well unless we consider all of these components...[and] the limitations of knowledge obtained from working within a single discipline. (Fausto-Sterling 2000: 254-255)

Each doll is one way of knowing something. Assembling the dolls requires an integration of these ways of knowing, and each way of knowing has its place.
2.11.2 New thinking on sexual development

The work of Fonagy and Target (1996) contributed a new way of thinking about the development of mind during the oedipal period that also led to considerations of how parental response could affect sexual development. Pre-oedipal infants were working with what Fonagy and Target called ‘psychic equivalence’ (Fonagy and Target 1996: 218), where subjective experience filtered through unconscious processes constituted reality. Play was one method of testing the inner and the outer against each other and the parent supported this by not letting the pretend and the real overlap. The child, by four or five, was able themselves to distinguish between the two. The emphasis on the parental role moved from a more simple containment to providing a capacity to think about itself that the infant could internalise:

Our acceptance of a dialectical perspective of self-development shifts the traditional psychoanalytic emphasis from internalisation of the containing object to the internalisation of the thinking self from within the containing object. (Fonagy and Target 1996: 231)

Simple mirroring gives the infant back more of the same; the better response enables the infant to recognise a difference that is represented mentally as something other, a ‘representation of his internal state’ rather than a reflection of it (Target and Fonagy 1996: 475). With regards to sexuality, they referred to evidence that mothers tend to ignore or look away from moments of sexual excitement in boy and girl babies, leaving an unrepresented inner state that creates sexual arousal as an alien part of the self (Fonagy 2008) until there is opportunity to experience it with another in more adult terms. With homosexual children there will be further differences in the mirroring contour that will become part of an adult relationship pattern. This way of thinking about psychosexuality brought it back into a central position within psychoanalysis from which it seemed to have drifted with the limitations of drive theory and object relations. Fonagy saluted the ideas of French psychoanalysis and child observation studies (Stern 1985, Miller et al 1989) that led him to this new thinking. His 2008 paper was first delivered as an address to the American Psychoanalytic Association and was
referred to in its journal by Stein (2008) who agreed that sex is not just drive and object relations, nor does it centre on entering another person, which was Fonagy’s entry point of discussion. Stein’s questions implied this might be a male perspective, and the female experience of feeling the other inside rather than being inside the other might require another trope to capture it.

Fonagy’s work and his engagement with research was well received in the USA where, often outside the analytic camp, there was and still is pleading for a closer relationship between analysis and science (as for example the dialogue between Spurgas and Angel in 2013 over the origin of women’s desire). He viewed sexuality as of necessity having origins in biology; it could not be entirely relational (Fonagy 2008). He also viewed desire as shaped by the (non) response of the early object (Fonagy 2015), and Target (2007) affirmed the range of feelings that could get caught up in an erotic definition in the gap between their experience and their mirrored expression. Uncertainty, complexity and absence were thereby coded in to desire. While leaving open the possibility that the patterns of response and non-response between caregiver and infant may impact on what would have been called sexual orientation (in the sense of homosexuality and heterosexuality), Fonagy simultaneously emphasised the foolishness of seeking to reduce an arrangement of such complexity to definitions so heavily influenced by social norms. It may be possible to understand the formations of objects of desire but, integrating Lacan with developmental processes (with, as Fonagy acknowledged, the influence of Laplanche), it was impossible to know or tie down desire as a thing in itself. ‘It follows...that neither homosexuality nor heterosexuality are ‘normal’ and that neither can be an identity’ (Fonagy 2015: 133).

2.11.3 Challenging the status quo

(i) Is normality desirable?

By the 2000’s, clear criticisms of the homophobia in psychoanalysis were being made, even though by a minority (Dean and Lane 2001). Dissemination of new ideas was
facilitated by the growth of journals outside the analytic mainstream that were open to such publication. There was appetite for reaching beyond the rhetoric of equality and making use of difference to review, rather than disappear into, the status quo (Richardson 2004). Magee and Miller (1992) had argued that lesbian sexuality was being constructed from the heterosexual norm, and suggested too that lesbian sexuality was simply female sexuality, the corollary for which would be to see gay male sexuality as simply male sexuality. Lewes (1988), an American Freudian, proposed sixteen potential oedipal outcomes that could include homosexuality as normative, while also suggesting that gay male norms challenged the object relations emphasis on relationship (although whether the behaviours he was referring to would be best described as typically gay or typically male remains a question that he himself put). Despite his firm Freudian roots, Lewes found the oedipal explanation for female homosexuality unconvincing and gave more weight to disposition and genetics. The oedipal configuration was secondary to this. For men too biology had to be factored in to drive and desire; a combination of both at the phallic stage would confirm Oedipus while arguing that it had a place, not the only place, in sexual identity formation.

Lewes (2005) elaborated on the normative theme, arguing against the assimilation of gay male anarchy into relational conformity that seemed to be the price of its acceptance. Was the white picket fence what gay men really wanted or was it simply the admission price to a place in society? Psychoanalysis, he argued, should stand up for individual experience not homogenisation:

Psychoanalysis may be able to welcome homosexual people into its precincts only by transforming its image of homosexuals. The new image is more benign that the old gay Wandering Jew prowling the earth and seeking to subvert social and family institutions by seducing the children of the naïve and trusting...But the newly re-imagined type, the “analytic-compatible gay”, though a likeable enough fellow, is also a fictional stereotype. Wishing to outgrow his prowling sexuality, he seeks permanent ties and a stable, respected social position....Wishing to be accepted like everyone else, he is happy to be a happy citizen.... (Lewis 2005: 30)
Lewes (2001) was insistent on the value of the intrapersonal dynamic in psychoanalytic theory, his Freudian roots expressing frustration with approaches that limited themselves to the interpersonal and consciously relational.

(ii) Gender as the main carrier of difference

The emphasis on gender as the main carrier of difference limited the understanding of same-sex desire to its gender organisation (Drescher 2007), missing the possibility that subjective experiences of difference may be just as central to same sex desire and not limited to gender experience (Frommer 2000). If gender were not so significant a difference then neither would be the concept of sexuality organised by gender. Dean (2001) rejected the idea of gender as the most important indicator of difference, and suggested that it had given an unwarranted significance to homosexuality that then carried the category of sameness in an equally inappropriate way. It was the focus on self not on gender that was narcissistic, and homosexuality should be freed from carrying the burden of narcissism for heterosexuality. O’Carroll (2000) observed that all love was narcissistic at its Freudian root as it stemmed from the gratification of need; placing this entirely in the putative gender-narcissism of homosexuality was inaccurate. Narcissism is one example of the need for re-theorising homosexuality:

If one is a gay male, that [narcissistic] sexual behaviour would be with another male just as, if one is a straight male, that sexual behaviour would be with a female. But one is neither gay because he is narcissistic, not narcissistic because he is gay. He is narcissistic and gay, and the two have no more necessary causative or pathological link than would be presumed in someone who is narcissistic and straight. (Roughton 2002a: 95-6)

Drescher (2010a) noted additionally how simply out of date narcissistic interpretations of homosexuality were, drawing the characteristic into a table of stereotypes in theories of homosexuality that included gender confused, sick, immature, unsuccessful and asocial.
Psychoanalysis was substantially critiqued for providing no adequate theory for same sex desire (O’Connor 2001, Goldsmith 2001) and viewing it only in terms of aetiology. Moreover, desire cannot be theorised separately from culture (Magee and Miller 1997). What to do about this lacuna became a significant question. Was a new developmental theory that included a non-pathologising view of homosexuality the next step?

Auchincloss and Vaughan (2001) argued that this was simply not possible. Psychoanalytic theory as it stood did not have the capacity to take on the task; it was not designed to universalise from its particular, despite having done so. In the urge to arrive at an explanation for homosexuality, patient accounts of lesbian and gay relationships had often been read as accounts of origin rather than descriptors of relationship. Dynamics that could have been understood as contributing meaning to relationships (and arguably would have been understood that way had the relationships been heterosexual) were instead attached to theories of aetiology, as O’Connor and Ryan (1994) argued against McDougall’s construction of a theory of lesbian aetiology based on a small sample of her own patients (McDougall 1990). They criticised the generally inductive methodology of analytic theory development which ignored the balancing weights of selection and comparison with non-clinical populations in favour of individual case study collection. Such criticisms were later acknowledged by McDougall (2001). Fonagy (2006) was also critical of single case studies leading to generalised theories, as were Friedman and Lilling (1996) of the analytic habit of treating clinical reports as if they were research, dating back (perhaps more excusably) to Freud’s own confusion of ‘assertion, observation, inference and hypothesis’ (Friedman 1988: 55). Auchincloss and Vaughan (2001) criticised analytic theory for creating confusion in its allocation of homosexuality to gender, saying that this eliminated homosexuality as a category of its own. They suggested that normality was another confused category and not one which Freud was particularly keen to develop; in fact it was conformity that he often found at the root of psychological difficulties. The analytic question, they suggested, was not ‘are you homosexual or
heterosexual?’, but ‘why don’t you know who you are?’ (2001: 1166). This chimed with Goldberg’s urging that psychoanalysis should go back to its study of the individual:

If psychoanalysis can find its way back to the study of individual patients, it can readily offer an answer to the question of whether in a given case homosexuality is a manifestation of pathology. The fact of being homosexual is not, properly speaking, a psychoanalytic datum. Homosexuality cannot in itself be a province of pathology, any more than can any trait. Only in an individual person can we determine its meaning. (Goldberg 2001: 1114)

Drescher (2002) took the stance that the causes of sexual orientation are unknowable at this point and trying to account for them is not the business of psychoanalysis, with its history of pathology and immaturity which he read as ‘stories about the impact of homosexuality on the social order’ (Drescher 2002: 64). Of more use is to focus on the shared trauma of creating a liveable existence in the hostile homeland of homophobia (Drescher 2001).

(iv) Querying homosexuality as ‘other’

Clinically, the treatment of homosexuality as ‘other’ has an effect on the transference/countertransference that is surprisingly left unexamined, given its centrality to psychoanalysis. Leuzinger-Bohleber (2006) expressed hope that:

...heterosexual analysts are able to reflect on their countertransference fantasies and realities in order to be able to work productively with homosexual patients’ (Leuzinger-Bohleber 2006: 186)

Yet even in this statement there remains the clear demarcation of one from the other. This is the subject of theoretical struggle: how to make heterosexuality the object of analysis (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 1993)? Heterosexuality can be seen as inhabited without instruction, or at least without an awareness of instruction as it could also be said that all of culture is heterosexual instruction. This does not make heterosexuality
light or easy to carry; it makes its weight invisible, ‘The heavy freight of aspirations which the institution of heterosexuality bears’ (Hockley et al 2007: 17). The authors urge for heterosexuality to be pluralised, taken beyond the limits of sexual practices, through which it is interpreted. Heterosexuality is no more a monolith than gender categories, but there seems little appetite for interrogating it for its transgressive potential.

2.11.4 Sexual identity and postmodern thinking

Ryan (2002) challenged the notion of identity as an analytic word as it has no unconscious element. She reflected on Butler’s uses of identity as strategic and ontological: the former to create a viable existence arrived at through performance; the latter an impossible goal as there was nothing before something. Identity politics have a change function and the concentration on lesbian and gay identities in the therapeutic world coincided with wider activism that gave the categories a powerful but ultimately limiting significance. Ryan argued that analysts needed to engage with the personal and the political aspects of identity as that would be the experience of their patients, whether articulated as such or not.

Queer theory has applied itself to sexuality and gender in psychoanalysis (Dean 2013). Queer perspectives analyse knowledge through power and offer accounts of the structures that hold heteronormativity together as a societal structure not an individual experience. Sexuality is thus a political position and Oedipus from here can be understood as ‘a culturally constructed account of dominant Western bourgeois family (power) relations and values’ (Hodges 2010: 46). This takes analytic work away from searching for the causes of minority sexualities and focusses it on reconstructing them positively. Gay and lesbian identities are no longer about individual sexualities, although therapeutic responses treat them as if they are (Moon 2010).

The tenability of queer and postmodern thought within a phenomenological approach to clinical work has been questioned. Foucault’s positioning of sex as the bigger picture...
over individual desire; queer repositioning from a lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans focus to embracing of the non-normative (which Balick (2011) criticised as leading to an orthodoxy of its own); these can seem far away from the subjective experiences of identity brought into consulting rooms. The therapist is responding to the individual’s unique way of bringing their gender and sexuality together inside themselves and in relation to others and must be alert to its impact on their own ‘weltanschauung’ putting it in a ‘sort of reserve’ (Balick 2011: 25 italics in original) to allow the client’s experience to take the foreground and to notice and question how it is affected.

When Blechner reflected on the overall changes in thinking about sexuality he remarked on the breathtaking changes that he had witnessed:

‘Who would have thought that ...”declaring” one’s sexuality as gay or lesbian could be seen as old-fashioned, and that gender itself would become a questionable category?’ (Blechner 2009: xiii)

Mainstream analysis may not be quite there, but in 2012 the American Psychoanalytic Association hosted a panel discussion on gay male desires in the twenty first century, described by McNamara (2013), discussing the quality and variety of desire within the gay male experience rather than thinking about gay male sexuality as a single entity. The panel offered psychoanalytic understandings of patient presentations: lack of excitement in sex relating to a reduction in the taboo against it (Gilbert Cole); shame as impairing desire (Paul Lynch); Lynne Zeavin teased apart the role of environment and mind in relation to mental life and sexuality. Gary Grossman, in the Chair, underlined the unique differences in the ways that sexualities emerged and the low level of understanding that psychoanalysis currently has about this. It was an entirely different discussion and reportage from what was occurring twenty years previously, and was perhaps indicative of change occurring in a profession less than sure it was ready for it.
2.12 Understanding transgender

(i) Perversion and pathology

Transvestism as a ‘perversion’ of its own was first noted by Hirschfield in 1920 (Fenichel 1930) to effect a separation between effeminacy and homosexuality, and thereby to aid decriminalisation of the latter (Pfafflin 2006). As a perversion, it was related to a range of behaviours linked to sexual gratification (fetishism, exhibitionism, homosexuality) but Fenichel drew the distinction between wanting to dress like a woman and wanting to live as one. He suggested that for natal males transvestism in this fuller sense was an identification with the phallic woman; for natal women, it was more simply identifying with the male through phallic envy, and this became more accurately described as transsexuality. Such ideas arose from the same sources of information that had guided understandings of homosexuality and that were ripe for confusing the two. Limentani (1979) was later to use Freud’s Schreber case (Freud 1911), which interpreted a male fantasy of becoming a woman as an expression of homosexual anxiety, as a base for believing that transsexuality was a defence against homosexuality, a theory also put forward by Oppenheimer (1991).

Transsexuality, as it was known then, became more publicly visible following some high profile ‘sex change’ cases in the UK (Morris 1974) and the USA (Jorgensen 1967). Gherovici (2010) criticised the all too easy separation of sex and gender as a product of the medicalisation of the body into a surgically adjustable commodity, demonstrated in the response to transsexuality. Sex becomes a term for the body as the body becomes surgically adjustable, and she drew a parallel between Money’s use of medical technology to change the sexed body and Steinach’s surgeries: ‘they are all based on rigid gender roles and a dream of complementarity’ (Gherovici 2010: 140). Money’s research was based on children being treated because of intersex characteristics. Successful adaptation to the new gender role was monitored but not compared with the population – quite probably the majority – of people born with intersex characteristics who did not present for surgery but who may have made their
own adaption to a gendered life (Blackless et al 2000). Experiments with surgery began early in the 1900’s. These purported to address sexuality as well as gender through the transplant of reproductive parts (Freud 1905b) and, as time went by, an increasingly sophisticated, newly sexed physical body was capable of production. Money and Tucker's (1975) emphasis on the external factors that consolidated gender identity and Stoller’s (1985) emphasis on family dynamics all maintained an individualised structure of pathology and supported further surgical experimentation.

Stoller and Money were pioneers in the surgical and analytic treatment of transgender. They saw core gender identity as pre-oedipal and firm and arising primarily from environment and psychodynamics. This meant that children with Gender Identity Disorder (GID) – now referred to as Gender Dysphoria in DSM V (APA 2013) – must have had early biological, social or developmental circumstances affecting them prior to the establishment of a core gender identity at about three years. Coates (1990) examined this in terms of mother/son relationships, suggesting that in the cohort she studied, mothers with borderline, narcissistic or dependent attitudes created a separation/individuation dilemma for their sons leading to anxiety or depression that the boy resolved through identification with the lost object. In early years this does not seem the impossibility it later becomes – for a two year old, genitals are not the main codifier of gender: wearing a dress may indeed make you a girl. Nor did Coates suggest it was this simple, or that gender was a straightforward developmental issue. ‘GID in boys does not occur unless an unlikely number of biopsychodevelopmental factors interact during a critical and limited period of development’ (Coates 1990: 434). In looking at these more complex derivations of gender identity Coates drew a more subtle developmental line for GID which separated gender from sexual identity (Marantz and Coates 1991). A gendered solution in the child need not be a solution to a gendered difficulty in the parent (Coates 2006).

Transgender raised questions about sex and gender which were previously thought unnecessary because sex and gender had been seen as contiguous. It was the discordance brought by transgender that called for definition, and Stoller (1968) proposed sex as the fact of being male or female, gender identity as the internal sense
of such a fact, and gender role as the expression of this sense in a socially appropriate way. As gender was to such a significant extent culturally determined, through society and family, either in congruence or in tension with the drives, Stoller’s sex rested more on this than on the body, although biology also contributed. But while animals shared reflexes, instincts and sexual drives, humans additionally had fantasies and internal objects.

The inclusion of Gender Dysphoria in DSM V was an effort to depathologise it by indicating that gender variance in itself was not a mental disorder, while leaving the door open to access to medical and surgical care for those needing the support. Drescher (2010b) noted some similarities with the arguments about homosexuality in the debate about the place of a transgender diagnosis. Treatment of children was particularly contentious as the majority of children who meet the criteria for a gender diagnosis will not identify as transgender into adulthood, but rather will identify as gay. This is controversial in the lesbian and gay community because of past association of homosexuality with effeminacy, and in oedipal terms an identification with the mother. In addition the effects of reversal of pre-pubescent hormonal treatment are not yet studied well enough to know if there is any continuing impact (Drescher 2013).

Where gender confusion developed into a conviction of being the other sex, the language changed from confusion to psychosis and mutilation. Without linking it specifically to Oedipus, Greenson (1964) speculated that a firm gender identity required a sexual attraction to the opposite sex unless for a bisexual or ‘overt’ homosexual, who seemed to have no need for this link. Siomopoulos (1974) drew a distinction between having a ‘sense’ of being the other gender to having a ‘belief’ of belonging to the other gender. The use of the word ‘belief’ moves the ‘sense’ into the sphere of delusion and non-sense, and Siomopoulos judged transsexuality to be a thought disorder, a paranoid defence against homosexual impulses. The failure of psychoanalysis to effect a cure for homosexuality related to the intransigence of paranoia as a symptom rather than a non-pathological diagnosis of homosexuality.
A 1991 publication picked up on the potential effect of pre-natal hormones on the brain, suggesting that they ‘exert an effect on aspects of temperament but not on gender identity’ (Coates, Friedman and Wolfe 1991: 484), and that this may affect gender identity indirectly through changing the way in which the child related to the gender-expectant world, and the way in which the world related back. It noted the finding that the majority of boys with GID grew up to be gay adults; but most gay adult males did not grow up with gender identity disorder. This was echoed in Udry and Chantala’s (2006) study linking male effeminacy in adolescence with male homosexuality in adulthood. Within the already present conflation of identity and desire this led to rapid assumptions that effeminacy meant a biological link to homosexuality; this was however contested as too simplistic:

In our view, gender identity differentiation, erotic development, and erotic object crystallization reciprocally influence each other at multiple levels of organisation. We believe that conceptually to conflate gender identity, erotic development, and erotic object orientation, at this point in our understanding of these issues, will obscure the development of a differentiated conceptualization of this disorder and interfere with the scientific progress in this area of research. (Coates, Friedman and Wolfe 1991: 518)

Given the history of the analytic and scientific engagement with issues of gender and sexuality, the views of Coates, Friedman and others have met with criticism for reinforcing the idea of gender variance as pathology (Corbett 1996) although this has been contested for example by Friedman (1997) who pleaded for including biology as well as sociology and psychology in building gender theory. Underneath this as Corbett pointed out in response (Corbett 1997) was a clash of epistemologies to which he did not see a solution. The relationship between body and psyche finds a landing pad in transgender theory but it does not originate there.
(ii) Rethinking the body

Much of the concern about transgender identity is its apparent negation of bodily reality. The idea of being able to change gender through changing the body is viewed as delusional, and the focus on the body is viewed as an obstacle to thinking about the situation. The pressure for surgery, for acceptance, for social recognition are considered by some to be a pressure on the profession that impedes clear thinking both in and out of the consulting room (Chiland 2000). Transgender questions the materiality that is required for gender identity. Chiland defined a man as someone capable of penetrating a woman – which in her definition, a trans man was not. ‘How can an artificial penis be proof that one is a real man?’ (Chiland 2000: 27). Unlike Stoller, who understood male to female transgender to be linked to an overclose bond with the mother which the mother unconsciously wishes to continue (Stoller 1966) and the father is not present enough to disrupt (Stoller 1979), for Chiland the boy believed that he must identify with the mother to engage her love. This meant that gender dysphoria should be treatable through analysis, although she also believed that analytic business is to create understanding not change.

Chiland’s transsexuality was a fundamentally narcissistic disorder confirmed by the inability of the transgender patient to focus on anything other than bodily transformation. Transgender patients, in her description, treat symptoms are facts (‘I am a woman’), cannot free associate in a session and will not talk about their childhoods. Trusting neither the analyst not the analysis they will tell whatever story is necessary to achieve the desired aim of surgery, and so are not trustworthy themselves (Oppenheimer 1991). In this is an echo of the characterisation of homosexual patients in the 1940s and 50s as resistant to treatment and untrustworthy. The effects on the transference of a relationship in which the patient was reliant on the therapist for access to treatment was not considered until later (Ratigan 2006). Pfafflin (2006) was able to point out that if the psychoanalytic environment could not provide a safe and open space then of course the patient would not be able to use it to think undefensively and openly, and this ‘…led me to my hypothesis that transsexual symptoms are a creative defence mechanism’ (Pfafflin
He suggested that perhaps psychoanalysts were more likely to work with patients for whom transgender was an unresolved cause of pain.

Pfafflin’s meta-analysis of postoperative transsexuals evidenced in contrast the positive outweighing the negative particularly where there was good surgery and pre- and post-operative information, and where continuing support included psychotherapy. This is seldom the story told by psychoanalysis. Digging deeper, Saketopoulou (2014) argued that rather than transgender identity being a result of unconscious phantasy, it was the fantasy that came in to deal with the transgender identity. The well-worn rhetoric of being born in the wrong body attempts to account for transgender in a way that bypasses the reality of the body. While not being recognised by its owner, the body is nonetheless fully present. The psychic work lies not in recognition but in mourning, and not for the wrong body but for the hard evidence that materiality cannot be controlled. Saketopoulou’s analyst has the task of creating a space for symbolism between the body and the experience of the body; but analytic accounts of gender require it to line up next to the psyche without a gap between them. So the work of analysis with transgender is not to deny the body but rather ‘the body that one has needs to be known to the patient so that, when necessary, it may eventually be given up’ (Saketopoulou 2014a: 782 italics in original). This places psyche and materiality in dialogue with each other to ease the need for psychotic mechanisms that can otherwise develop from the need to keep them apart. As Dimen (2014) commented, when the body feels like bedrock, there is little point clinically in offering a deconstruction.

Lacan translated Freud’s bedrock as the insoluble desire of the girl to have the phallus and the boy to represent it, and subjectivity was constructed around this (Mitchell 1982). Difference, signified by gender difference, thus became a marker for mental health, leaving out the possibilities of indifference (Grosz 1990) or the exploration of sameness (Benjamin 1995) as equal markers. Gherovici’s (2010) Lacanian take on materiality brought a different perspective to transgendered identities. On the one hand, siting sex in the body was in fact immaterial; on the other, transgender brought materiality into focus. Gherovici was critical of the surgical approach which adopted
the language of democracy and choice as if the body was the source of sex, whereas it was gender that needed to be embodied and sex that needed to be symbolised, in a reversal of the current medical and social cant. In the hijacking of sexual difference in favour of sexual equality, the bending of gender to the social and sex to the biological will was, she suggested, a regressive step rather than an advance:

Money used medical technology to modify sex and affect gender, but his experiments revealed a belief in gender roles that are not far from those guiding Steinach’s “cures” of homosexuality by transplantation of testicles as they are all based on rigid gender roles and a dream of complementarity. (Gherovici 2010:140)

In this way gender was actually an indicator of language’s failure to signify sex, leaving open a conundrum addressed by transgender. Gherovici was critical that there is too much of the commodity in the approach to transgender that treats gender as a choice, independent from the body, a denial of something about sexual difference which must remain, even impossibly so, and in what remains after that is to be found Lacan’s Real. This was not some sense of physical absoluteness, or ultimate ideal, but an experience that could not find a place in language. The body as pure biology (Fink 1997), as an erotic zone, as a site of trauma, has an edge of the Real. Language was the medium that anchored culture (Bowie 1991) and allowed the individual to move from the Real into the realm of common life, to be human and not animal. The symbolic relation is the essence of being human. Gherovici suggested that the medical view of the penis as the decision point for the sexed body (the exact measurement required for an acceptable penis to define an infant as male) was accurate in the sense of its alignment with the Lacanian view of phallus as the introducer of difference; but the conclusion of surgical transformation missed precisely this point. It reduced sex to this point of the penis, rather than expanding it into the symbolic phallus. Gherovici’s own image of gender was a ripe fruit skin, ‘...outside, foreign, and in that sense, one may look for it not in the depths of psyche or the deep tissues but projected on the surface’ (Gherovici 2010: 247). But even in this light touch the tension remained between the
sexual difference that must be recognised in order to affirm the phallic position, and the phallus that was not dependent for its position on the ratification of the body.

Lemma (2012) considered transsexualities in the plural rather than the singular, to emphasise ‘the heterogeneity of pathways to, and of the functions of, a transsexual identity and the body modifications it can entail’ (Lemma 2012: 278). For some transsexuals, she suggested, the focus on surgery is a corrective hope to find a mirrored recognition in the eye of the beholder, to provide a salve for the pain of unrecognised incongruity earlier on. Where early incongruity is recognised and contained by another – where the experience of not feeling at home in the body is understood and thought about by the m/other, for example – it may become more tolerable and more amenable to thinking about by the individual.

Transgender can both support conventional gender and undermine it. In a sense it has marked the boundaries of the field in relation to gender and sexuality, at least to the extent that generalisation now seems inadequate and the binary too limiting (Bergner et al 2012). Focussed on the gender binary, Goldner (2011) noted that transgender either passed under it and got to the other side, or queered it to steer away from it. Trans gave opportunity to see gender into relief: ‘...by studying trans, the exception, we can see the action of gender normativity, the rule’ (Goldner 2011: 154). Goldner argued that it was not possible to examine the psychotic aspects of transgender until the madness of gender was cleared away. Transgender in this view was allied to homosexuality as a carrier for gender’s unwanted aspects. Its materiality offered a link to the bedrock that Freud offered as an anchor. When transgender was placed around the edges of gender it was possible to absorb it as exotic and offer it the kindness of strangers, as it would likely remain a stranger. Now, analysis feels it must participate in a folie à deux or be seen as discriminatory because there is as yet insufficient theorising of materiality to provide assistance: ‘the body’s materiality still exceeds our theoretical grasp’ (Goldner 2011: 155). Trans has become broader than transgender; transgendered individuals may or may not want to align their bodies with binary outcomes and Siebler (2012) argued against this being a necessary outcome; rather
than hormones and surgery, an acceptance of trans(gender) identities and bodies in unique presentations is enough in itself.

There has long been a greater tolerance of the softer edges of female masculinity that has allowed women to take on aspects of male behaviour that would not be accepted in reverse, although they are still held within well patrolled borders. Goldsmith (2001) suggested that society’s hatred of gay men, and gay men’s hatred of themselves, may have something to do with the wider hatred of the feminine and this may connect with the incomprehension of a man wanting to give up his penis.

For some, transgender is a site of ultimate separation of sexual from gender identity. Trans challenges the same split between desire and identification that pathologised homosexuality. If gay men are really female identified, why would a woman want to become a gay man as she could already be the woman a gay man presumably wanted to be (Bagemihl 1997)? It is not such a simple equation, nor is the expectation that transgendered people will want to identify as heterosexual post-transition. Brown (1988) pointed out the irony of a heterosexual transsexual being able to stay in the armed forces in the USA, whereas a homosexual natal man could not.

For others, transgender has been an emblem for homosexuality and belongs with it in terms of history and construction. From the days of Ulrich’s third sex, history has included gender variation under the sexuality banner, and sexuality has played with gender diversity in its display of itself. Devor (2002) saw the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries consolidating this mix of gender, sexuality and inversion, and to this day under biological explanations of homosexuality are found the expectations of a cross-gender link. Where sexuality is so much a part of proper gender, Devor argued, homosexuality itself can be seen as gender transgression.
2.13 Summary

Psychoanalytic theory is being challenged by changes in cultural and personal understandings and expectations in areas of gender and sexuality. How it meets these challenges is influenced by the theoretical breadth available to it, and what is considered to be contained under the rubric of psychoanalysis. Different models offer different ways forward and the field is not united. Transgender appears to be pushing at some of the same boundaries that were previously pushed by sexuality, and theory in all of these areas is still very much in development.

The next chapter will address these questions in relation to this particular piece of research.
Chapter Three - Methodology

This chapter will outline the research questions, the considerations regarding how to approach the question and the subsequent methodology chosen to address them.

3.1 Development of the research question

This research emerged from a Masters study that was based on a literature review documenting a trajectory of analytic thought about gender, sexuality and the Oedipus complex from Freud to the beginning of the twenty first century. Obviously not exhaustive, as the literature is copious, it nevertheless addressed broad themes evident across both time and to an extent place, taking European (largely British) and particularly later twentieth century American writings. The conclusion was that homophobia had been unwittingly incorporated into analytic understandings of gender and sexuality through the oedipal opposition of identification and desire, on which the successful development of sexual and gendered identities relied. The contradiction remaining at the end of the study related to the considerably more enlightened perspectives on gay and lesbian sexuality that had subsequently evolved in most analytic institutions set against the paucity of any redevelopment of this particular aspect of oedipal theory. The identification/desire interlock had been comprehensively critiqued by O’Connor and Ryan (1993), but had not been significantly re-theorised subsequently.

This led to a curiosity about how psychoanalysts now thought about gender and sexuality in relation to oedipal theory, if holding at the same time a non-pathologising view of homosexuality.

A new research question emerged:
What is the response of psychoanalytic theorists to the construction of gender identity and sexual identity in the Oedipus complex, and to what extent is this theoretically consistent with adopting a non-pathologising approach to homosexuality?

As the research progressed, a supplementary question was added:

What are the implications for psychoanalytic theorising about gender and sexuality?

Theory building in general and postmodernism in particular does not require that research should result in a grand or unified theory; it would indeed be sceptical of such a result (Rosenau 1992). It allows evidence to lead to partialities and possibilities and this may be a result with this research; it is unlikely to lead to a coherent reforming of oedipal theory, but it may lead to the development of new theory, new critiques of existing theory or new questions on existing theory that are worthy of comment.

3.2 Approach to the research question

Following an extensive look at the research literature, the researcher decided to use interviews as the method for gathering data. The rationale for this will emerge in this discussion of methodology.

3.2.1 Quantitative or qualitative approach

McLeod (2003) noted that there is a question as to whether counselling is seen as coming under a scientific umbrella, allied to medicine and psychology, or whether it is more inter-disciplinary, drawing from the arts and humanities. Research into counselling and psychotherapy has grown beyond its roots in the schools of medicine
and psychology and this has led to a greater range of research methodologies, developing alongside the increase in qualitative methodologies in the social sciences generally. The researcher is faced initially with deciding between a quantitative and a qualitative approach, or a mixed methodology (McLeod 2003), and the driver for this decision is the research question and the sort of knowledge it requires.

A quantitative approach is associated with a more scientific quest requiring objectivity and measurement and relating to a positivist approach to knowledge. However, this research question does not seek to test a hypothesis, except in the most general sense of testing the researcher’s ‘hunch’ that something is up. The question has not reached a conclusion that needs testing, nor is it necessary to understand the concept of Oedipus better in order to clarify the question (de Vaus 1996), which could have led in a more quantitative direction. The concepts of gender and sexual identity are nowadays contentious, but while this is a sub-text that is part of the discussion and the literature review it is not the substance of the research. Nor is the exploration at this stage about cause or effect (for example, does the theory impact on the client?), although this may be part of the exploration of the theory. Experimental design is therefore redundant, and while surveys may be appropriate for compiling knowledge about current approaches to the Oedipus complex this information is largely available through the literature search.

A positivist approach centred on proving a hypothesis or testing an explanation would therefore not match a research aim that needs to focus on meaning rather than measure (Miller and Crabtree 1999a). Positivism rests on a view of the world as essentially real or present and does not in this instance sit well with the highly interpretive nature of analytic theory that is the subject of this research. It is not just the research question but the nature of the knowledge being investigated that leads to a post-positivist approach. The nature of the question therefore leads to a qualitative study.
3.2.2 The approach to knowledge

A qualitative paradigm is not simply about method but about a way of knowing the world. It recognises the ‘perceptual and representational frameworks [that] are virtual theories of the possible’ (Gubrium and Holstein 1997: vii). This complements a consideration of identity as something shifting and multiple as well or at the same time as something concrete and long lasting. This lends itself to a more interpretive approach in which there is no expectation of a completely value free space and this can be productively absorbed into the qualitative research paradigm. Quantitative research is less able to capture the range of ways of knowing that exist, even if it does offer a simpler certainly which can be beguiling (Smith 2005).

McLeod described the primary aim of qualitative research as ‘to develop an understanding of how the social world is constructed’ (2011: 3 italics in original). In this research, it is the participants’ conscious responses to a theoretical way of constructing gender and sexuality that is being understood, so not their direct experience of sex and gender, although this might come into their responses, and not a behind-the-scenes look at how their talk about sexuality and gender is constructed. Within this remit, the emphasis of the research question on thought rather than experience presents a challenge. However it is framed, qualitative research generally seeks to understand experience. The Hegelian notion (Singer 1997) of knowledge as that which appears to consciousness, is found through the senses and influenced by historical and cultural context, was developed on the back of the Kantian perspective of reality being made from the effect of perception on experience (Scruton 1997). Hegel’s notion of dialectic connects with the inter-relational process by which shared reality comes to be defined, with language as a forger as well as descriptor of reality and a non-neutral instrument of power (Foucault 1990). These influences can be found in the increasing questioning of reality that both broadened and went beyond the phenomenological perspective. Moustakis wrote of this as transcendental phenomenology, in which ‘perception of the reality of an object is dependent on the subject’ (Moustakis 1994: 27). ‘Essence’ – that which is perceived through the senses,
through consciousness – is not the same thing if ‘the essences of experience are the invariant meanings’ (Moustakis 1994: 51).

Asking about theory, however it is done, layers the researcher’s own theoretical perspective with the theoretical perspectives under scrutiny. This opens up the possibility of a research design that is paradigmatically inimical to the epistemological approach of a participant. This in itself is not uncommon, although it may have an impact on those willing to engage in the research depending on their view of its credibility; but it does pose questions about how to manage the data and its interpretation.

At the outset the researcher was aware of being drawn to postmodern perspectives on gender and sexuality and anticipated taking a postmodern position in relation to the data, further down the line from a post-positivist, critical realist position. In broad terms this means inhabiting a ‘context of doubt’ (Richardson and St Pierre 2005: 961) so that method, data and interpretation are all understood as partisan movements which can indeed form a picture but without the expectation that the picture remains stable. The research is co-owned and created between researcher and participant (Etherington 2001) and, perhaps in line with the postmodern perspective of there being no single point of existence for anything, this does not clash with allowing for the fact that the interviewees will all hold different ontological positions, and that some might well speak with a positivist, foundationalist position of grounded knowledge. Analysis has a mixed epistemology and moves from one foot to the other as the weight shifts from the relational to the essential and back again. This is perhaps fair as so much of its theorising around sexuality and gender is enmeshed in and understood through nineteenth-century models and clear alternatives have not yet come forth. This was implicit in the research question: is another universal theory the way forward? Is it a twenty-first century way of thinking? Psychoanalysis was itself a product of modernity, and the rational economics of the oedipal theory reflect an individualist, scientific way of knowing.
Queer theory is aligned with a postmodernist stance, and while this research is not
grounded in queer theory it does make use of some of the concepts of destabilising
accepted ideas and seeing things from other viewpoints (Plummer 2005). It cannot in
the end stay with the critical distance required from the subject as psychoanalysis
must ultimately relate its theory to the clinical work and so too must the research. This
anchor addresses some of the criticisms of a postmodern approach as consumed by
internality and creates the push necessary to insist that thoughts land somewhere,
however imperfectly, rather than remain in a permanent state of hover.

Postmodernism argues with the way in which more naïve realist qualitative rhetoric
privileges participant data as absolute in some manner, a direct representation that
stands as it is and must not be misappropriated or misrepresented by the researcher.
This realist approach can also be rather stultifying as imagination is corralled into a
search for truth (Guba and Lincoln 2005) in a way that mitigates against the spirit of
constructivist methodologies, and leaves out of the data whatever is left out of the
conversation, much as – in this instance – sexuality was left out of psychoanalytic
theorising until it started to be excavated by self-identified lesbian and gay
contributors (O’Connor and Ryan 1993, Isay 1996). Postmodernism is a summons to a
position from which interview data is experienced more as an approximate sequence
of mutual responses, what might be called misreadings or misinterpretations if that did
not imply that there was a correct reading and interpretation available somewhere.

Foucault drew attention to the implicit knowledge that surrounds formal knowledge
(Scheurich and McKenzie 2005), placing this at the heart of understanding sexuality,
formed as he saw it from the structures of power rather than the choices of
individuals. However, to articulate constant uncertainty, never foregrounding the
individual, is impossible, and the researcher, the participant and indeed the reader
accept approximation not as second best but more as an immersion in the contingent
strategy of communication. In this way the researcher’s task is not to get out of the
way, but to notice the way as clearly as possible, and then not to sweep detritus out of
the path but to draw attention to it as part of the picture, or more accurately the
snapshot.
This is a familiar dilemma. Denzin and Lincoln (2005a) summarised a chronology of qualitative research that moved from the confident traditional period of the early twentieth century to the ‘methodologically contested’ present, ‘Confronting the methodological backlash associated with “Bush science” and the evidence based social movement’ (Denzin and Lincoln 2005a: 20). Direct representation is accepted as impossible. Qualitative research loses the battle of objectivity and embraces the subjective with safeguards of transparency and reflexivity. And this is highly compatible with psychoanalysis, which embraces the indirectness of representation. Atkinson and Delamont suggested it is possible to stay true to the ‘*form*’ (Atkinson and Delamont 2005: 832 italics in original) of the phenomenon and this is a helpful way to consider a postmodern view of phenomenology.

Postmodern critiques risk reducing some of the complexity in qualitative approaches to a level of caricature, and cannot claim to be the only critic of positivist approaches. Naïve realism is seldom invoked now without qualification, and the place of the researcher is no longer out of sight in any interpretivist approach. A postmodern approach, while theoretically congruent with the researcher’s approach to the subject, leaves too few options methodologically for the research question, which is framed in a more idealist way, prepared to accept thoughts and beliefs as communicable entities. McLennan suggested that ‘Perhaps the ultimate contribution of postmodernism is simply to loosen up that sense of intellectual ‘completion’ and rigid mental-moral set that goes along with it’ (McLennan 1995: 23). Etherington (2004) saw complementarities between postmodernism and social constructionism as the one absorbed fragmentation and the impossibility of a grand, unifying narrative, and the other could be seen as part of the move towards recognising the value of many discourses.

A critical realist approach draws a distinction between transitive and intransitive objects of knowledge, that is, social knowledge dependent on the knower that surrounds the intransitive object that is unreliant on any knowing of it (Bhaskar 1998: 16). Bhaskar’s world existed independently from human cognition, but knowledge of it was only to be gained through such cognition. This stepped back from pure relativism
at the same time as stepping away from pure realism. Yet the research question focuses on analytic responses to the construction of sex and gender in the Oedipus complex, and as such accepts such responses as data to be worked with, treating transitive knowledge as real for the purposes of the investigation, even though the approach to sex and gender that underlies the responses may well be from a critical realist perspective. Struggles to find ways to square this circle continue, and the answer may require a re-appraisal of research on a much broader scale: ‘...we shuffle the paradigmatic furniture in the structure called research while largely leaving the underlying realist architecture untouched’ (Scheurich 1997).

This leads paradoxically to a realist epistemology, where the data will be accepted at face value, combined with a tacit postmodern acknowledgement that reality is based on what we think we know and not on what is known. The result of an analysis must present this as a situated, tentative knowledge that is of a particular moment and time – but is no less real for that. McLennan (1995) argued for methodological pluralism that can take in both epistemology and ontology. Relativists can be criticised for making relativity into another universal validity; realists can be criticised for holding to an absolutist view of knowledge that is in itself unprovable. Alternative ground lies in an acceptance of diverse realities or co-existent contradictions, depending on the primary framework. This is the approach taken by the researcher: the thematic analysis will treat data as empirical material and, using Alvesson’s (2002) terminology, craft a text from the results with acknowledgment of its situated subjectivity as a contribution as well as a caution.

3.3 Consideration of methods

The research begins with the concept of a theoretical anomaly in the oedipal complex, and it needs to gather and elaborate an understanding of analytic responses to the construction of gender and sexual identity in the oedipal complex and develop platforms that can take them forward. This leads away from a text based analysis and
towards an interview based approach using a methodology which seeks for meaning rather than cause – mirroring an analytic dilemma over the purpose of its own explorations, which veer between aetiology and meaning. Olesen described feminist ‘standpoint research’ (Olesen 2005: 243) that grasps the social nature of knowledge and challenges truth as illusion. This research may in the end result in many ‘standpoints’ as participants make their positions clear, and the task is to represent and account for these positions in the analysis.

Atkinson and Delamont (2005) reminded us that the type of data that is collected in itself shapes what can be collected from it. Interviews will describe what interviewees can describe about the topic. Originating in ethnography, with the intention of giving a voice to those otherwise unheard, interviewing can offer descriptive and analytic outcomes; people can be heard as speaking for themselves, or the listening of the researcher can form part of the understanding. Criticised by feminist researchers (Oakley 1981) as privileging the voice of the researcher by having the final say, reflexive strategies have contributed to addressing this interview problem as has greater ownership and transparency of the researcher voice (Holstein and Gubrium 1997). Postmodernism is critical of reflexivity and the idea of a self-knowledge that relates to a fixed idea of self. However, there is no requirement for the self to be thought of unambiguously nor for reflexivity to be seen as the single solution to subjectivity. Finlay argued that despite its limitations, ‘Through the use of reflexivity, subjectivity in research can be transformed from a problem to an opportunity’ (Finlay 2002: 531).

One question always present in any work on sexuality is the mutual recognition or otherwise of and between sexual minorities. Invisibility and assumption makes declaration of identity a permanent question, along with some suspicion of researcher involvement with minority group interests without such declaration (Izzard 2004). However, precisely what is being declared is more complicated as advancing equality has allowed for less rigid definitions of sexuality. McDonald (2013) highlighted the power dynamics that may be undisclosed if identities remain undisclosed. The disclosure of researcher sexual identity in this introduction was not available to the
participants unless they chose to ask for it (which one did) or already knew it (which one did) or a mutual disclosure happened in the course of the interview (which happened once – all three incidents being separate). This made the interviews neither better nor worse, but may have altered them, given the flexibility available in a semi-structured setting (Perry, Thurston and Green 2004).

Much of the interview approach relies on the quality and knowledge of the interviewees as they are key to the process. This research question is suited to the use of participants who are already engaged with the subject matter and have things to say about it, indeed may be experts. As a way of using expert participants in qualitative research the ‘Delphi Oracle’ method was considered. It allows for focussed and deep discussion within an iterative process that refines the initial findings. However, it also emphasises the consensus of the experts in terms of reaching a conclusion and this leaves out two aspects desired in this study. Firstly, the capacity for the researcher to interact freely with the findings and pose further questions and challenges as a result of them; and secondly, the ability to pay attention to the items which do not provoke consensus but do provoke further thought. Developments in this field have often been driven by provocation and it would not be helpful to rule it out as a significant factor for inclusion in the analysis. However, the Delphi technique does supply useful points of reflection regarding choosing experts and engaging participants that were taken into account (West 2011).

Both discourse analysis and conversation analysis would have provided perspectives on how the participants placed themselves in relation to the researcher, to the question, and to the task of responding to it. Discourse analysis is related more broadly to that which is included in the field of communication (Harre 1997), which is of itself viewed as a social event, that is, taking place within a shared framework of understandings and assumptions. The work of the analysis is to identity the components of the underlying framework active in each piece of communication, and this is read through the deconstruction of the interaction. Discourse analysis searches out the unspoken components of manifest meaning and through making them visible offers an enhanced understanding of the spoken word. Discourse analysis might for
example offer an understanding of how the terms ‘gender’ or ‘sexuality’ are mutually constructed in the conversation between participant and researcher, using language as a gateway that can reveal the structures behind it (Billig 1997). This would however have foregrounded the process of the interviews as the subject of the research, whereas the hope was to be able to examine the content, in acknowledgement of the imperfection of such a statement in the face of the situatedness of all content. It may additionally have been more difficult to recruit experts if the methodology overtly increased their vulnerability, as discourse analysis can do (Sherrard 1997), rather than valued their expertise.

Conversation analysis likewise would have facilitated a more suspicious approach that sought to look beneath the surface of the conversation, or rather, to look into it as a tool of illumination in itself. However, its emphasis on the participant themselves rather than their product, that is, focussing on the details of the speech rather than its content, the talk itself (Have 2007, Hutchby and Wooffitt 2009), would have produced a different type of learning to the theoretical focus of this research question. It could be interesting to provide for example a sociological understanding of the way in which psychoanalysts talk about gender and sexuality and this could still add knowledge to the field, but would not best facilitate this particular exploration.

Narrative research often tries to tell the stories normally not heard so that people speak for themselves rather than are spoken for. While this is not a narrative analysis, this is nevertheless relevant to setting up interviews with participants who may or may not see themselves as part of the field being studied. Although the frame is gender and sexuality, in the analytic context sexuality is usually only raised when it means homosexuality, and gender when it means female; the heterosexual male norm is rendered invisible. Participants therefore had a choice over how they positioned themselves in relation to the subject matter, as insiders or outsiders, and this positioning will be of relevance in interpreting the data. Narrative analysis emphasises the speaker’s construction of the story and is understood in relation to the context in which it is told. The researcher tries to grasp what is important to the narrator, who
will demonstrate complex identities (Chase 2005), in part in relation to the interview situation itself.

While grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) is designed to facilitate theory development out of data (Strauss and Corbin 1998), it suffers from a unitary approach to data, and more importantly it requires the research to have no preformed ideas in relation to the research question. However, in this instance the research question arose out of the researcher’s previous study and to set that aside would have been impossible and also potentially a loss. Having said this, grounded theory does set some helpful parameters for processing data including the idea of data collection and analysis happening simultaneously, acknowledging the continuing process of hypothesising, testing and refining that moves results beyond the merely descriptive into the potentially definitive (Charmaz 2005). Alvesson and Karreman (2011) have a useful perspective on the relationship between data and truth: ‘the interplay between theory and empirical material is more about seeing the latter as a source of inspiration and as a partner for critical dialogue’ (Alvesson and Karreman 2011: 14 italics in original). Data does not have an ultimate status but is in a critical partnership with theory building. Data can problematise theory – as one might say the de-pathologisation of homosexuality has problematised oedipal theory.

Given these considerations, the research question seemed best suited to a thematic analysis. This is a flexible approach that has been used as part of other methodologies, or as a methodology in itself, although not recognised as such until more recently. This gives it a flexibility that can be deceptively simple, and Willig warned against seeing it therefore as an ‘easy option’ (Willig 2013: 66). It is responsive to the research question and can work for realist, phenomenological or social constructionist epistemologies. Braun and Clarke presented a framework for thematic analysis that offered a clear methodology while confirming that ‘...thematic analysis can be a method that works both to reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of ‘reality’ ’ (Braun and Clarke 2006: 81).
The use of thematic analysis in this research will be primarily inductive. The research question is specific in opening an area up to query but does not provide an answer, or a hypothesis, for which evidence is sought. It rather opens up a space for consideration of perspectives, and in this way the analysis is more inductive, looking for material which addresses the question without knowing how it may do that. There will be no template analysis of the data. Deductive analysis is not irrelevant here though; it suits a theory-driven approach where the researcher’s interest is explicit and relevant literature has been more thoroughly engaged with prior to the analysis. This is likely to lead to closer consideration of some aspects of the data when making sense of it.

The themes are likely to be ‘semantic’ rather than ‘latent’ (Braun and Clarke 2006: 84) according to Braun and Clarke’s terminology, looking at and not beyond the data for themes, and moving from description to interpretation of data. In contrast, a latent approach looks for what underlies the data, for what is shaping what is said. Latent fits a more constructionist paradigm; semantic a more realist one. The participants were engaging with an expectation that the researcher would be analysing what they said for its content, even though the way some of them spoke made clear their theoretical position that talking, as all other attempts at communicating thought or experience, was at best an approximate reality; or perhaps better still, it was unhelpful to dwell on the concept of reality as too central.

Etherington (2004) emphasised the importance of reflexivity in addressing researcher subjectivity in qualitative research, calling for it to be foregrounded as a contributor not a detractor to the analysis. This is consistent with understanding data as highly situated, and Scheuerich (1997) affirmed that what the researcher brings with them is brought into each interpretive moment. West (2001) argued that heuristic inquiry provided a qualitative approach that engages with subjectivity and uses the researcher’s processes as an active part of the data.

Finding a position in relation to interpretation required negotiation of the researcher’s initial position in relation to data, the subsequent impact of doing the research and the ‘on the road’ learning from that, and a realistic appreciation of the limits of a single
project. There is no doubt that many methods of interpretation could have yielded interesting results, and more than one approach has informed the researcher. It is arguable that there is permission for the process of the research to be a valid factor in its outcome, and that a researcher needs to ‘...follow their nose and, after the fact, reconstruct their narrative on enquiry’ (Connelly and Clandinin 1990: 7).

3.4 Method

Deciding on a thematic analysis led to the task of devising the detailed research method, which follows here.

3.4.1 Interview Structure

The research question requires some digging below the surface, a collection of rich rather than broad data that will allow for deep exploration of a dilemma with people who have already devoted time to it. For this reason it was decided to interview experts in the field of gender, sexuality and psychoanalysis. The use of expert participants then requires an interview structure that makes the most of their expertise. Alvesson (2011) considered a less direct role for interview content in research that seeks to build theory, using it to ‘generate ideas, provide illustrations or to give correctives for theoretical ideas that do not seem useful to our understanding’ (Alvesson 2011: 137). He framed this as an analytic interview, in which the interviewee is asked to speak not of their experience but of their thoughts, and the questions are framed to make best use of this, ‘...to use more fully the knowledge and skills of those interviewed and enrol them less for descriptive than for analytical and theoretical work’ (Alvesson 2011: 140). This points away from standardised questions that tend to require least analysis and towards not an entirely open ended, given the clear focus of the research question, but a semi-structured interview process. This should be guided but not limited by the research question, acknowledging that importance may be
found in digression as much as in focus. Miller and Crabtree (1999a) suggest six open-ended questions as a good number, with prompts, probes and follow-ups to promote richness. Fontana and Fray make clear that interviewing is not a neutral event: ‘...interviewing...is inextricably and unavoidably historically, politically and contextually bound’ (Fontana and Fray 2005: 695). This does not negate the interview as a research tool, but rather recommends a pragmatic approach along the lines of Frankel’s (1999) emphasis on pragmatism in research methodology: try what looks like it will work, and judge the outcome by the effectiveness. Let the interview be what it is, and not what it cannot be.

Making the most of the participants becomes crucial, and consideration was given to the possibility of group interviews to enable them to discuss the research topic with each other rather than only with the researcher. This could broaden the discussion, introduce new ideas and challenges, and potentially get more buy-in through a more horizontal process (Kamberlis and Dimitriadis 2005). However, practicalities ruled this option out as the intention was to interview expert participants on both sides of the Atlantic and one whole group would be impossible, and one group in each country may have lost the greatest differences in approach. While benefits can include the stimulation of group discussion pushing the conversation further than an individual conversation would go and giving a richer texture to the data, conducting group interviews brings with it additional challenges of managing the group dynamic as well as the content (Fontana and Frey 2005). Political, theoretical and personal dynamics can be complex particularly in groups that may know each other at least by repute. Group participation also removes the option of anonymity that may be a factor in both a decision to take part and in the openness of responses in the interviews.

An alternative research strategy was devised in which the whole group could interact through a two stage individual interview process. Following the first set of interviews the researcher would write an anonymised summary paper of the themes emerging from the initial analysis and distribute this to all participants prior to a second interview, which would provide opportunity for discussion of this summary paper. This would give the participants virtual space to engage with each other’s thinking, albeit
filtered through the researcher, and it also gave the researcher opportunity to reflect on the first meetings and prepare a follow up interview in the light of these reflections. This would lay the groundwork for the second and more substantive interview which would be subject to a full analysis, and form the subject matter for the rest of the thesis. Within this framework individual interviews could be responsive to the known interests and approaches of the participants and build on ideas generated as the interviews progressed, so that the development of ideas was continually taken forward rather than waiting for a final unveiling. Returning to second round interviews is a recognised method that benefits in this instance not from comparison but from the development that can take place between the first and second set of interviews (see for example Tett 2000).

With this added commitment the participants echo some of the role of key informants (Miller and Crabtree 1999b): connecting the researcher to the wider field, they are involved in a longer term process with the research comparable to the listening/observing stage of the ethnographic tradition (Gilchrist and Williams 1999) and they provide a gateway to knowledge and culture. Their position as points of access to extant theory in the field therefore needs even more careful selection.

3.4.2 Recruitment of participants

This required consideration of the terms ‘psychoanalytic’ and ‘expert’.

The definition of psychoanalytic and psychoanalyst was broad and largely related to the self-definition of the participants. In the field these titles are politically contested and there are geographical differences in the politics. Whether the participants would all be recognised as analysts by some of the institutions that consider themselves to have ownership of the title is an open question.

In psychoanalysis, publication is an accepted way of sharing knowledge and a reasonable way to look for expertise. Publication provides some confirmation that the
author has peer respect and something of interest to say on the topic according to the norms of the profession. Publication also gives the researcher an opportunity to learn about participant views prior to interview and therefore be able to start in at a deeper level. Authorship evidences a wish to communicate ideas and an interest in theory development – important motivations for people who might give time to this research (Moustakis 1994). Being able to site the interviews in the wider context of the participants’ published perspectives facilitates a richer hermeneutics as greater understanding is available of the approach they have already taken to the subject.

A study of this nature is limited to a small number of participants. In practical terms it is important to avoid being overwhelmed by data; in epistemological terms the research is not seeking representativeness; this is seldom a qualitative claim, although Boyatzis (1998) does emphasise it. While the participants are therefore a carefully chosen sample, they are not representative of the whole field, although this is not a contradiction. As Mason commented:

Theoretical sampling is concerned with constructing a sample...which is meaningful theoretically, because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria which help to develop or test your theory and explanation. (Mason 1996: 93-4)

If those interviewed, as in this study, are authorities in an unrepresentative field the results are likely to have limitations, even if the participants are chosen also for their breadth of coverage. This is not about the sexual identity of participants, but the fact that to have reached an authoritative position they will often have been part of the institutions whose stance on issues of gender and sexuality has been historically conservative. The USA seems closer to merging the mainstream with the radical in this particular area, rather ironically given that the UK is further ahead in its equal rights legislation. The USA possesses greater numbers, diversity and resource than the UK field can match, and are a dominant force in the whole area of counselling and psychotherapy:
From a European perspective, the ‘CanAm’ [Canadian/American] literature can serve as a source of cues around emergent issues that will soon become significant in European context. (McLeod 2001: 115)

It was decided to aim to recruit twelve participants, each with interest and expertise in the topic of gender and sexuality in psychoanalysis evidenced by their relevant publication(s). They were mostly drawn from experts in the United Kingdom to broadly represent the British frontline, thinkers who lead or have led the field that is being examined. A smaller group was drawn from the United States; this was a more difficult selection as there is a greater amount of writing available. Participants were invited who again stood for what the researcher understood to be the frontline, albeit with a less certain knowledge of the American field. All participants were actively engaged in teaching, whether formally in academic settings or through lecturing or facilitating workshops and seminars.

Names were generated from scanning the literature for authors engaging significantly and positively with issues of gender and sexuality, and through asking interested colleagues for suggestions (West 2011). The researcher having some familiarity with the field helped in making critically informed choices: ‘Sampling in qualitative research is neither statistical nor purely personal: it is…theoretically grounded’ (Silverman 2005: 130). It was also a topic of discussion in the research supervision which particularly considered the possibility and desirability of attempting to engage psychoanalysts who may have retained a negative view of homosexuality, as their perspective could be helpful. In the end it was decided not to follow through on this partly because of the anticipated reluctance of such participants, and partly because the remit of the question was not to compare and contrast but to look forward to theory development.

Initial contact with each participant was made between December 2012 and May 2013. In total fourteen people were contacted and ten agreed to participate, six from the UK and four from the USA. Three said they were unable to give the time, and one did not respond. One participant was invited at the recommendation of another who had agreed. It was decided to stop at ten rather than continue inviting; time was
moving on, and there was much to be gained from those who had already agreed. It was intended that the USA participants should be in the minority.

Contact in each case was made by email, with a standard script that gave a brief outline of the research project and the commitment required coupled with a bespoke paragraph outlining what the researcher thought the individual uniquely brought to the research and why they hoped that they in particular would be a part of it, in some cases citing the colleagues that had recommended them. A balance was struck with the provision of some information about the researcher’s interests both for transparency and to increase persuasiveness (Rennie 2012). An example of this email is in Appendix 2.

Once participants had agreed to take part they were emailed a copy of the ‘Participant Information and Consent Form’ (see Appendix 3) for further information and invited to ask any questions. This was taken in hard copy to the first interview and signed in person.

Self-defined details of the final participants are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of Clinical Experience</th>
<th>Years of teaching experience</th>
<th>Years of supervising experience</th>
<th>Theoretical orientation within psychoanalysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Pluralistic Phenomenological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Omitted</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Kleinian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Age at</td>
<td>Age at</td>
<td>Age at</td>
<td>Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Information declined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Post-Jungian Relational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Object Relations Intersubjectivist Some Freudian influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Information declined</td>
<td>Information declined</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Relational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>Mid 60s</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Interpersonal Relational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Relational Interpersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Eclectic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4.3 First interviews

Invitations to the first interview were sent out from March 2013 and interviews were arranged between March and August 2013. The researcher offered to arrange a venue or to meet at the participants’ premises, according to their preference, and the times and dates of the interviews were likewise arranged to suit the convenience of the participants as far as possible. Nine interviews took place in the homes or offices of the participants, in the USA or the UK. The tenth participant was from the United States but was unable to be there during the week that fitted with the other three participants, and a meeting was instead arranged in a European city the participant was visiting, at a hotel venue arranged by the researcher.

3.4.4 Second interviews

Invitations to the second interview were sent out in August 2014. For the USA participants the last week of October was planned. However, due to the personal circumstances of one of the participants, this was brought forward to the first week of October 2014, having an impact on the formulation for the summary paper which therefore had its deadline brought forward too. The second transatlantic interview was offered to be either by skype or in person, depending on the participant’s preference. In the event one person had a clear preference for a face to face interview and this suited the researcher’s preference as well, and all interviews were held in the USA.

For the UK participants interview dates were suggested for October and in practice were held between October and December. All interviews in both countries were held at participants’ homes or offices, at their invitation.
3.4.5 Pilot Interviews

Two pilot interviews were set up, one early in the planning process and another three months prior to contacting the participants for the first time. The purpose was to test the interview questions and assess the chosen method against the research question, and to give the researcher a less formal rehearsal space for conducting one to one research interviews. Both pilot participants had interests in the field of gender, sexuality and psychoanalysis; one was previously known to the researcher and one was not.

There was consideration over whether to include a paper written previously by the researcher on the subject of gender, sexuality and psychoanalysis. The purpose was to be transparent about the researcher’s position and to conduct the interviews from a position of engagement with that; and to provide evidence to the participants that the researcher was serious and had some knowledge about the subject, thus hopefully increasing the chances of agreement to participate and eliciting a more in-depth conversation that could quickly come to the point of the research question.

However, the experience of using the paper in the first pilot interview was that it was rather burdensome to the participant and their relationship with the interviewer became akin to that of a reviewer. The focus ended up being too much on responding to the researcher’s perspective and the paper was not particularly helpful in eliciting a more free-flowing discussion of the participant’s own perspectives. For the researcher the paper was a distraction from concentrating on the interviewee.

The questions used, focussing in part on the paper, elicited more restrictive responses than intended, and were revised following the first pilot interview. A new set of questions were then tested on one of the research supervisors and amended again in the light of their responses.

A second pilot interview was then conducted without reference to the published paper and using the revised questions. The two experiences were contrasted. The second
pilot interview produced a more free-flowing conversation which was attuned to the participant’s interests and the absence of the paper as introduction to the conversation was not missed by the researcher. It was therefore decided to go ahead with this structure. The participants were free, should they so wish, to ask about the researcher’s perspective or indeed to search any publications prior to the meetings; if they did so, then anything raised became about the participants rather than the researcher, and so would be more straightforwardly part of the data.

The pilots also provided opportunity to test methods for transcription. For the first interview the researcher transcribed the data directly from the audio recording; for the second interview, the recording was sent to a professional transcription service. The experiences were compared. There was no apparent difference in the quality of the attention given to the data. The outsourced transcription required correction of both detail and meaning (for example ‘aetiology’ being mis-transcribed as ‘ideology’); this necessitated two close readings of the script while listening to the recording, giving ample opportunity to hear the tone and inflection omitted in the written product. Etherington (2004) noted that having an experience of transcription is helpful, but it is listening to the material that is the most important component for analysis. It was decided therefore to proceed using a transcription service, with each script receiving at least two audio reviews by the researcher. Exceptions were made when the nature of the discussion led to an ethical issue regarding sending the recording outside, and in these couple of instances the researcher did the transcription herself. For example the nature of the clinical work covered areas that could be considered perverse; although the transcription service was an academic one, where conversations were felt by the researcher to be open to misunderstanding or potentially alarming or disturbing to the transcriber, or where the client material was detailed, they were transcribed directly by the researcher.
3.4.6 Interview questions

These were developed as described above for the pilot interviews, and were also tested on the researcher’s subject supervisor who was a field expert themselves prior to use in the first set of interviews. The researcher was mindful that interviews attempting to access expertise must engage participants with this in mind.

Elites respond well to enquiries about broad areas of content and to a high proportion of intelligent, provocative, open-ended questions that allow them the freedom to use their knowledge and imagination….Elites often contribute insight and meaning to the interview process. (Marshall and Russman 1999: 114)

It seemed too obvious and restrictive to address the question of theory development directly so the intention became to create conditions in which discussion of theory would take place but the starting points could be determined by the participants, using the research question as backdrop rather than foreground. The difficulty was in eliciting these thoughts directly when the questions that might do this (what are your thoughts about the use of the oedipal complex in contemporary psychoanalysis? Is it possible to adopt a non-pathologising view of homosexuality in relation to the oedipal complex?) may address only a narrow conceptualisation of the oedipal complex, and indeed homosexuality, and its potential meanings to the participant.

In general the questions followed Alvesson’s concept of an ‘analytic’ interview (Alvesson 2011: 137) in which the respondent is asked to talk not so much about their experience of the research subject as their thoughts about it.

The questions for the first round of interviews were confirmed as follows:

1. What drew you to agree to be a participant in this study?
2. How did you develop an interest in thinking about this area?
3. Have you found oedipal thinking to be significant in this area of understanding?
4. There’s a lot of discussion going on about depathologising homosexuality. I’m interested to know what a ‘depathologising approach’ means to people.

5. I wonder whether different analytic cultures may have varying capacities and appetites for developing thinking in this area. I wonder if you have any thoughts about this?

6. Where do you go now if you want to develop your own thinking and practice in the area of gender and sexuality?

7. Do you think the analytic field needs to further develop its theory and practice in gender and sexuality? Where should it start?

8. Is there anything you would like to say that I haven’t asked you?

The questions for the second round of interviews were developed out of the themes arising from the first, and from a desire to bring the focus more closely onto the research question. They were determined as:

1. Could you recognise your contribution to the summary paper? I am interested in your responses to any aspect of the paper – is there anything that surprised you? Anything you want to take issue with? Does it leave you with any questions?

2. If you ‘reject’ oedipal theory – can you be specific about what is being rejected? What is the essence of Oedipus that is being rejected – and do other things previously incorporated into it still stand without it?

3. If you take an attitude of ‘rehabilitation’ towards oedipal theory, what do you think is at its heart that makes it still ‘oedipal’?

4. If identification and desire are not incompatible – if one can both identify with and desire the same gender – does this impact on the idea of gender balance, or complementarity, in relationships?

5. If oedipal theory is not the right link between sexual and gendered identities, is there another one? Or should they be theorised separately?

6. Are there some things put down to sexuality that are actually about gender?

7. There was criticism in the paper of the ‘liberal agenda’ – replacing ‘change’ with ‘acceptance’. Do you have any thoughts about this?
It was intended that each question should be covered in each interview, but not necessarily in the same order or in the same depth; the interview would follow the interests of the participants to get the most from their particular areas of expertise. Supplementary questions, comments and invitations to talk further were used to expand the interview.

3.4.7 Process of analysis

While this research is not a primarily phenomenological account, hermeneutics nevertheless plays a part in the data analysis. Hermeneutics has been seen as an attempt, by broadening and refining the data with contextual and historical understanding, to arrive at a real or true meaning (Moustakis 1994). However, it is now also seen as cognisant of the difficulty of finding an objective standpoint from which to assert a true position (Addison 1999). The fact that others find similar or different truths to the researcher makes them neither more nor less true in a relativist universe; expansion of understanding is more likely to lead towards a conclusion (Rennie 2000).

Applying a hermeneutic perspective to any qualitative data allows the component parts to inform the whole, and vice versa (Levitt et al 2015), particularly helpful in this two stage interview process. Prior to each interview the researcher had read at least some of the works authored by each participant. Following each interview at both stages the researcher made a note of the environment, the tone of the interview and anything immediately striking or memorable from the discussion. These were referred to before the process of data analysis began, to assist the researcher in situating themselves back in the interview situation.

Completed transcriptions were sent to the participants inviting comment and clarification. Some responded generously with further thoughts and responses, others made no comment. Some comments drew boundaries around clinical examples or phrases that did or could by implication identify others and asked for these not to be
used in any publication of data, although there was no bar to using the overall sense of what was being said. Others embellished or clarified their points, and some made reference to further reading that the researcher then followed up. None required alteration to their data.

In the first round of interviews there was one partial failure of the recording device which was not discovered until the end of the session, over half of which had been lost. The researcher immediately typed up what had been recorded together with a script from memory of what had not been recorded and sent it to the participant the same day. The participant responded within three days having made track changes on the document and appended three articles, one being their own, and a powerpoint presentation they used in teaching, all of which addressed areas that had been lost in the non-recording. These were used to inform the researcher, and the analysis was done on the document having accepted the track changes. For the second round of interviews a different recording device was used and there were no further issues.

Data analysis began during the course of the interviews rather than waiting for the end of them, in accordance with Miles and Huberman’s (1994) recommendation of early data analysis, weaving in the questions provoked by the data to feed the study as it continued.

(i) First round analysis

The transcripts from the first round of interviews were subject to a shortened thematic analysis. The intention had been to get to the point of interpreting the emerging themes, but the bringing forward of the interview dates meant that themes were overall reported rather than analysed. It is also possible that as losses in a thematic approach may include the ability to track ‘continuity and contradiction’ (Braun and Clarke 2006: 97) through each individual account some of the spark of individual accounts was reduced, although this seemed less relevant in the fuller second round analysis. This led to a somewhat flattened account that was presented to the participants as a ‘summary paper’. In retrospect it was not entirely unhelpful as it
meant that the second round interviews remained focused on what the participants had raised rather than on the researcher’s interpretations of this, while the flatness itself could be available for comment.

The summary paper forms Appendix 1 of this dissertation.

(ii) Second round analysis

The transcripts from the second round of interviews were subject to a full thematic analysis. Scripts were gone through line by line and data extracts were coded; this was repeated three times for each script. Gibbs (2007) cautioned against missing the wood for the trees by concentrating only on fragments of data; this is countered by codes being drawn together both within and between scripts as groupings emerged and these then being collected into broader themes. Having already recognised this as a situated process that makes use of rather than seeking to guard against researcher subjectivity, it is fully acknowledged that a different researcher, or indeed the same researcher at a different time, may have pulled together different themes, or similar themes but from a different perspective. Themes were pulled together, separated out and adjusted until they could be observed to have relevance across the entire data set. Themes from the first round of interviews were not added to this but taken as incorporated into it as they were so much a part of the awareness of both researcher and participant as a result of the summary paper and the focus of the interview questions. Several months were given to this process to allow necessary conscious and unconscious filtering of data (Miller and Crabtree 1999c, Borkan 1999) and a halt was called at the point where the reworking brought little new to the table. Boyatzis (1998) warned against waiting for a grand theme to emerge, as there are many times this may not happen. Key themes were measured against their relevance to the research question rather than on frequency or intensity of occurrence alone.

Fontana and Frey (2005) commented on the tension between postmodernism and thematic analysis. The former prefers ‘polyphonic’ interviews where the data is not joined up by analysis but by reporting on the multiplicity of responses and discussing
the problems in the process. While acknowledging this as an alternative approach, as
described earlier this methodology wanted to allow for the potential of some
meaningful gatherings between participant responses and through this the emergence
of notable themes, including a theme of disparity if that emerged.

3.4.8 Questions of reliability, validity and generalisability

The underlying question is whether qualitative research addresses these issues
through creating its own versions of quantitative solutions or whether it goes forward
on its own terms.

Generalisability is not a strength of small sample research; representative sampling is
not possible and conclusions relate to the specificity of the cohort. However,
depending on the research intention, general points can be made for further
discussion, and this research design does allow for that. Information richness in itself
does not lead to generalisability (Kuzel 1999).

The development of qualitative research out of the ubiquity of quantitative
approaches has left some tensions over questions of reliability and validity. One
approach has been to find paradigm-consistent ways of addressing the same issues, for
example ensuring multiple coders for the same data (Miles and Huberman 1994) and
creating tight and replicable processes for data analysis. This is not an approach taken
in this research, which may result in idiosyncratic categories that rely on the
researcher’s interpretation; yet when fully acknowledged this can be viewed as more
asset than encumbrance. A pragmatic view of truth as a perspective buoyed up by
consensus (Strauss and Corbin 1998) leads to the use of triangulation as evidence of
validity, something that Rennie (2000) criticised as pandering to positivism.

Others, while concurring that reliability remains relevant even if the social world is
unstable – after all, it is not infinitely so – question the traditional notion of validity
(Silverman 1993) as an inappropriate carry-over from the quantitative realm, linked to
a positivist approach that misses the point of qualitative data in which the context can be integral not extraneous. In this sense Silverman cited plausibility and credibility of the research claims as more significant than their validity – the proof is in the pudding. The two stage process of the interview method in this research offered participants an opportunity to influence the second round questions and also to challenge or expand on the researcher’s interpretation of the first round responses, arguably adding to the quality if not validity of the research (Gibbs 2007).

One transcript was read by another researcher and broad themes coincided with the researcher’s own analysis; this built confidence in the analysis. Thought was given to using a complementary group (Belle Brown 1999) to discuss one or two of the transcripts; in the end it was decided that this added more time than the research had to give and would add too much new data that could lose a focus on the research question. The precise nature of the question was linked clearly to the researcher’s own journey and remained best filtered through that provided there was openness from the start and during the process. Additionally, Silverman (2005) pointed out that triangulation through multiple methods can come from rather an empiricist approach and be at odds with a constructed view of reality where there is no single phenomenon being sought. In like fashion Frankel’s (1999) neat formulation of validity into the question of whether the reader could see the interpretation in the same way as the analyst does not require the reader to have come to the same conclusion en route, but to see how it would be possible to get there via the analyst’s route.

3.4.9 Ethics

The research was conducted under the auspices of the University of Leicester. The researcher is a member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and is bound by its ethical guidelines for researching counselling and psychotherapy (Bond 2004). This provided a framework for thinking through the ethical risks involved in the research, covering trustworthiness, managing risks, relationships with research participants and integrity. The University provided ethical approval for each stage of
the research process as required. The Participant Information and Consent Form clarified the purpose of the research, the commitment needed from the participant and the right to withdraw and information about the storage and protection of data. Informed consent is supported by researcher transparency and the information provided to participants is part of this. While most participants were invited independently, one was invited on the recommendation of another which may have then been more difficult to refuse (Peel et al 2006).

Qualitative research paradigms generally expect that the research will provide benefit to the community it is concerned with (Christians 2005). In Bishop’s (2005) critique of colonial assumptions in research on Maori peoples the community was the subject of research from the outside that was based on the pathologising of the community. The implication for this research is that it must be accountable to the participants but also to the pathologised lesbian and gay subjects that lie beyond its direct reach, through researcher transparency and in this instance the researcher’s own place in both groups. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) referred to the underlying qualitative paradigm of democracy that concerns itself with fighting prejudice. The research is expecting to be in the best interests of clients through facilitating the questioning of theory that has traditionally done a disservice to the non-pathologising of homosexuality, and this has potentially limited an understanding of all sexualities.

The researcher is often seen as being in the position of power (Bond 2004). Expert participants to a degree reverse this dynamic as they are sought precisely because they have greater knowledge and experience than the researcher, which leads to a complex dynamic in the interview situation. These participants do not carry the vulnerability of groups who are unfamiliar with academic processes or who generally have little voice for their experiences. However, they do agree to expose their thinking in a relatively unstructured environment and be open to whatever that might bring, which is a position of some vulnerability and a level of trust is placed in the researcher.

Once the research has moved on to interpretation, being in control of the data analysis permits the researcher to draw conclusions that the participants may not concur with.
Alvesson (2011) suggested that the researcher make as clear as possible the setting of the interview, how it came about, the interview itself as a constituted moment: in other words to demonstrate the bigger picture within which the words were spoken and then interpreted. This is limited by the degree to which transparency might conflict with anonymity, and safeguarding anonymity has taken priority in this research. With experts in a small field there is a challenge to providing anonymity beyond the simple non-attribution of names. People’s perspectives may be identifiable through their previous writings and this was acknowledged by at least one participant. ‘Deductive disclosure’ (Bond 2004: 10) is a risk that is not entirely avoidable with participants with views already known through publication.

Transparency as a solution also depends on the reader having patience to take into account and consider the full context; and in reality what they have access to is the researcher’s digest of context. While Rennie affirmed that ‘...the interpretation always belongs to the interpreter’ (Rennie 2000: 494), there is no means to ensure this is always taken on board by the reader. In this sense there is a considerable element of trust in the research process. Willig stated:

...we cannot attempt to understand something without transforming it at the same time. This means that power enters into the process of interpretation, as the person has the power to shape what becomes known about another person’s experience. (Willig 2012: 45)

The researcher must therefore use their subjectivity with awareness and remain in touch with the context in which the data is gained and analysed. A reflexive approach encourages participant feedback as a kind of accountability to the participants, and the two stage interview process of this research facilitated feedback at the halfway stage, although not in the final analysis.

Where participants gave clinical examples of their work these were initially either generalised or changed from the original context so that they would not be identifiable. Where participants asked that no clinical material be shared this was
accepted, and for consistency this was extended to no direct clinical details at all being repeated.

3.5 Summary

It was decided that a qualitative approach using a two-stage interview process of expert participants, the data from which was subject to a thematic analysis, would suit the nature and purpose of the research question. The following chapter offers the analysis of the second set of interviews.
Chapter Four – Analysis of Data

This chapter describes the results of a thematic analysis of the data from the second set of interviews, analysed as described in Chapter Three. It begins with a reminder of the interview questions and process and a researcher account of differences noticed between the first and second set of interviews.

4.1 Introduction and Research Questions

This chapter offers an analysis of the second set of interviews. These built on the knowledge of the first set for the interviewees as well as the interviewer, as the former had been given the thematic summary of the first interviews as preparation for the second. This of course shaped the second round analysis, as preconceptions were built in to the process; this was done openly and as an intentional part of the research process, with the awareness of all participating.

The questions in the second round were responsive to the results of the initial interviews, and were not prepared before those results had been digested. They deliberately focussed more on theory development to try to sharpen the focus of the responses. While the first question was always asked first, the others followed the conversations and were asked more or less directly depending on need. The researcher’s task was to ensure that all were addressed during the course of the interview, but not necessarily in order or using this phraseology.

1. Could you recognise your contribution to the summary paper? I am interested in your responses to any aspect of the paper – is there anything that surprised you? Anything you want to take issue with? Does it leave you with any questions?
2. If you ‘reject’ oedipal theory – can you be specific about what is being rejected? What is the essence of Oedipus that is being rejected – and do other things previously incorporated into it still stand without it?

3. If you take an attitude of ‘rehabilitation’ towards oedipal theory, what do you think is at its heart that makes it still ‘oedipal’?

4. If identification and desire are not incompatible – if one can both identify with and desire the same gender – does this impact on the idea of gender balance, or complementarity, in relationships?

5. If oedipal theory is not the right link between sexual and gendered identities, is there another one? Or should they be theorised separately?

6. Are there some things put down to sexuality that are actually about gender?

7. There was criticism in the paper of the ‘liberal agenda’ – replacing ‘change’ with ‘acceptance’. Do you have any thoughts about this?

As the questions were more focused around theory, so was the analysis. Where themes were repeated from the first round but yielded nothing new, they have been put to one side. Where themes were enhanced and developed, they have been included.

Abbreviations are used in the same way as in Chapter Four.

4.2 Differences between the first and second round experiences

Informal notes written immediately after each interview allowed for comparison in the researcher experience of the interviews. This was not reflected on directly by participants in the interviews, but sometimes their indirect comments did make reference to the repeat nature of the experience.

In the first set of interviews there had been several concerns voiced about what would be reported from what was said, particularly around clinical material or criticisms of
organisations or individuals. This was significantly lessened in the second round as participants had read the first paper and therefore had first-hand knowledge of the reporting. There were no more direct questions about the other participants or about anonymity, although one participant recognised the smallness of the field and the inevitability of crossover:

So there are as you know, at this point, you know a lot about this I’m sure.
There are a certain number of analysts here....who think about these things and we are either in supervision with each other or in consultation with each other. So there’s a lot of exchange of ideas. (2/07 273)

There was perhaps a greater level of trust and it was possible to ‘get down to business’, as it were, demonstrated in the fact that the interviews generally started more quickly with fewer preliminaries, and despite the gap there was a sense of taking up from where it had been left.

While the first set was overall rather pessimistic in tone, participants airing their struggles and frustrations and their own particular strategies for survival and creativity, the tone of the second set was altogether more optimistic and resilient, identifying a greater receptivity to change in analytic institutions and a burgeoning literature amongst a younger generation of writers that was finding its footholds in more mainstream thinking. There was also some pulling back from the criticism of institutions and feelings of isolation, as if seeing these in print made them feel exaggerated, or open to misinterpretation.

There was further discussion of what sat behind the theory, and it became clear that theory and its origins could not be separated. In the analysis these perspectives fell out not as discreet themes, but more as background/foreground, sometimes coming into focus separately and sometimes together.

In general, participants expressed a sense of mild anti-climax about the summary paper. This may have been highlighted by the researcher’s own mention of a certain
dampening down of individuality in the collective nature of the analysis. The way in which this was expressed in the second interviews reflected the individuality and culture of the participants. Some were encouraging and focused more on the positives:

I mean I think there was something that was said at the beginning that somehow when you make the summary, you lose the particular voices. So things get kind of amalgamated. But I think that...there are a couple of things that were interesting to me. (2/09 40)

Yes, I skimmed through it when you sent it to me. I found it very interesting and I skimmed it again this morning. (2/08 23)

But I thought it was kind of interesting at the same time. It wasn’t like what’s this thing (negative sound)? It was actually I think we’re all very thoughtful people. (2/04, 882)

One participant expressed a great deal of frustration with the summary paper, and this was a springboard into discussion for a considerable part of the interview. They experienced the findings as boring, inward looking and parochial:

But it seemed to me that this was ghetto publishing, this is only interesting to psychoanalysts and psychoanalysis. (2/05 81)

The participant was critical of the limited voices apparent in the paper, that there seemed to be little mentioned outside of the psychoanalytic field and that its concerns would be of no interest to anyone outside of that field.

For two participants the paper contributed something to their own perspectives; they would have been less likely in their roles to come across this thinking so it may have been more challenging:
So actually I found it quite thought provoking in a way that is potentially helpful, consciousness-raising, if you like. (2/03 40)

I think the research that you’re doing, and the synopsis of your results, has helped me reflect on that even more. (2/02 60)

One participant reflected on the potential for further thinking to be generated by the research:

Just the fact of doing interviews with you like this makes everybody presumably think about it more. That might generate something. (2/01 1108)

4.3 Building theory

It was more clearly stated in this second round that analytic theory on its own was not sufficient to address the complexities of gender and sexuality. Criticisms of analytic insularity followed on from the first round and the theme of how and what to share was developed. Of particular interest was the analytic relationship with science and with other therapeutic disciplines.

4.3.1 Psychoanalytic theory is incomplete if not integrated with other knowledge

This was a shared view of all the participants. Rigidity and narrowness of thinking were criticised as inimical to a responsive clinical approach to patients. ‘Other knowledge’ included science and developmental psychology; therapeutic approaches other than psychoanalytic; schools within psychoanalysis other than the proponent’s own school; and academia, for example queer theory. A relationship between psychoanalysis and science was seen as desirable by all, but to varying degrees. As it was mentioned most often it is given additional attention below.
There was a level of cynicism over how genuine expressed wishes were for interdisciplinary collaboration:

You know presently, the attempts to marry neuroscience and psychoanalysis are really based on the idea that the two disciplines should be married when the neuroscientist agrees with the analyst. But actually if there were fundamental observations that necessitated paradigm rethinking, the analytic community is not particularly enthusiastic about that, not willing to devote resources and serious study to that. (2/10 571)

Participants brought psychoanalysis back to clinical work repeatedly. Far from being a limitation to interdisciplinary work it gave it a focus, calling the information in and making particular demands of it that were different to something purely academic. One participant recounted a discussion in a largely academic audience on the subject of transgender:

There was this question about the body and somebody said, ‘But why does the body have to reflect gender? And why can’t we de-link that and…?’ And of course, that’s a very valid point. But I was also saying that as a clinician when I sit with a five-year-old who says ‘I hate my penis’, we’re not going to have a conversation about how it’s okay to have a penis and still be a girl. Like she is distressed about her penis and the lived reality of the body cannot - in a way, clinical work keeps us honest. (2/07 296)

This same participant valued the nature of academic discussion very much as it enabled a different space for thinking that could broaden clinical thinking:

I also am very helped in thinking with academics...their minds can go to places that are not as constrained as ours are and that is very interesting...Or maybe they’re constrained in different ways, in ways that because they’re not constrained along similar lines that we are, I can see the breadth of that. (2/07 279)
One participant articulated what was the majority view:

My view of psychoanalysis has always been that it is far from being a single theory or a unified theory or that it should be... Now, I think we should have a really informed relationship to science. And we should know as much as is known about neuropsychology and neurophysiology and hormones and all of those things which are feeding into notions about gender and identity and transsexualism and all of those things. I mean, the more that they can cast light on these sort of areas, the more we should know about. (2/03 183)

Psychoanalysis has no settled relationship with academia or science. The histories of this were different in the USA and the UK. The former had started with a closer relationship with science and one view was that this was an inheritance squandered; that by taking their place for granted psychoanalytic institutions had not nurtured their relationship with the medical institutions and it was now lost, along with the power and influence attached to it. One participant put it particularly starkly:

The analogy might be made between that and the damage done to a child by an abusive and neglectful mother. So the child, if the damage is long enough and severe enough during child development, maybe a lot of it can’t be reversed. And what happened is that the analysts were essentially escorted out of medical schools. Non-psychiatrists are not the people that legislatures turn to. They turn to psychiatrists for mental health policies. And now there are hardly, there are no analysts in positions of power in American psychiatry and that’s the problem. (2/10 1126)

The same participant was challenging of psychoanalysis’ relationship to academia, suggesting that it has been based on the idea of protection and exclusion from Freud’s original establishment of an inner circle. Rather than grow out of this with maturity the profession had continued to protect itself from perceived corruption:
The analysts as a group have never fully accepted academic conventions for epistemology or for research, or they have also not fully accepted the need for research. They have not fully accepted as a group the need to do serious interdisciplinary thinking. Individual analysts have been exceptional. And they have been present even at the most classical Freudian rigid period of analysis, analytic thought. But they’ve never dominated the field and they’ve never really been bounded in such a way that a group of them could form an entity or a unit to work with groups from other areas, like social scientists. (2/10 64)

This participant went on to suggest that where new ideas were voiced they tended to be deeply criticised and gave the examples of Bowlby, and Masters and Johnson, respectively within and outside of analysis. This reflected similar conversations in the first round about the poor reception of Winnicott in the USA. Even where analytic training was located in Universities and hospitals the implication was that it never fully integrated nor took on board the academic and research standards available to it.

The UK commentary focused more on medicalisation as an unhelpful analytic connection, bringing with it models of health and sickness that limited thinking about pathology:

...the medicalisation of psychoanalysis meant that it took on board the psychiatric habit of mind in relation to sexuality. There’s pathology and there’s normality. There’s perversion and there’s healthy. And so on. And that, obviously, is rapidly changing. (2/05 62)

The same participant expressed deep frustration with the narrowness of the analytic boundary, emphasising how much there was to be learned from other forms of psychotherapy.
4.3.2 Differences within psychoanalysis are paid more attention than differences outside them

A negative theme emerged indicating how difficult it was for psychoanalysts to look outwards and embrace different ways of thinking, even across different analytic fields let alone across broader perspectives. Groups within psychoanalysis protected their own boundaries. Some mixed theory groups had seemed more about convincing others rather than really listening:

So you have a Freudian, you have a self-psychologist, you have an interpersonalist, maybe you’d have a Jungian. There would be some three or four people...But it didn’t really feel that there was a real interest in... actually exchanging ideas. (2/08 113)

Other group experiences demonstrated more positive attempts to understand different perspectives, across disciplines not just therapeutic theories:

So there’s an analyst, there’s a cultural studies person, there’s usually a performance studies person. And sometimes...the analyst presents some clinical material. And then everybody says what they think, and it doesn’t matter that they’re not clinicians. And it’s so generative; and people miss each other. There’s such hunger for this discussion, and it’s striking, like people miss each other. (2/07 397)

Within the group of participants there were criticisms of insularity relating to groups that others belonged to, not unlike the mutual criticism in the first round of interviews between the UK and USA about not reading each other’s materials. This was addressed by one participant reflecting on a cross theoretical event they had attended where significant energy had been expended on anxieties about working together:
And I just thought really, how much energy we waste on these rather sad assumptions that we make about each other’s positions, you know. Rather than really having a dialogue. (2/03 54)

Another participant expressed considerable frustration with and criticism of the narrowness of analytic thinking, and indeed with the narrowness of the concerns represented in the Summary Paper:

Who gives a shit whether someone is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, a psychodynamic psychotherapist, or a psychoanalyst? And...who gives a shit whether someone is a Jungian psychoanalyst, a Lacanian psychoanalyst, a Relational psychoanalyst, a classic psychoanalyst, a Kleinian, an object-relational, a self-psychological? These are tiny, tiny sects in a tiny, tiny sub discipline of I’m not quite sure what. Mental health practice? Healing practice? Whatever term you want to use. Mumbo jumbo...I think a good therapist cannot fail to learn from psychoanalysis. But why would anybody want to be a psychoanalyst now? There’s so much other good stuff out there. (2/05 215)

This captures the frustration that the inward-lookingness of psychoanalysis had led to missed opportunities and to missing the point, which was how to help the patient.

4.3.3 Agents of change

Psychoanalytic institutions guard the gates more than they open the doors.

(i) The role of training organisations
Following on from the first round, there was a sense that training institutions on the whole prepared their trainees to work within the shafts of specialised knowledge rather than to explore outside of it. There was some sympathy for this:
I think it’s really tricky. Because if somebody really held out against the model, how could you confer a qualification on them that communicates to the public that this person is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist or whatever? But I’m very aware, having been involved with training, that the moment someone qualifies, the glasses through which they’re viewed changes. So, people who are mavericks in one way or another may suddenly be seen to be bringing something refreshing and interesting. Whereas, up until the point of qualification they’re holding out against really taking on the model. (02/03 968)

This raised the power of the training organisation to define behaviour as ‘maverick’ or ‘refreshing’ depending on the context rather than the content. Most often participants who trained in less conventional institutions reported greater encouragement towards critical thinking as part of the training, and in fact found the capacity to hold a critique one of the most valuable things they came away with; this was also evidenced in the first round of interviews. The reverse was also true; more conventional trainings tended to encourage conformity. This left qualifying analysts in the odd position of having nothing to say when it came to heterosexuality; all the training has gone on sexual otherness:

So when I met my patients that did have heterosexual issues, I had had no real training in it. And it felt like me going back to my pre-analysis state of mind, which was much more in a way politically aware and open-minded than my analytic training and my own analysis had been. I became a little bit part of an elite, top of the oedipus complex sort of way of looking at things. And I rediscovered my old self a bit, working with people who were different. (2/02 730)

This indicated a legacy of conformity from training at some cost to independent thinking. The ‘maverick’ has to be so inclined on entry and must be willing to maintain that more risky position all the way through. The seduction of elitism offered undeniable rewards to those able and prepared to embrace it, possibly unconsciously at the time of the choice being made.
Institutional politics were of course a part of this. Discussions of hierarchy and privilege were a significant part of the discourse amongst the UK participants, and the US participants commented that the UK hierarchy seemed more bound up with history and class than it was in the USA, although there was also mention of a growing class divide in America. In the UK, the system of statutory regulation in the States was viewed as more meritocratic, giving no single Institute a hold over jobs and titles. This did not deny the existence of smaller circles of privilege, particularly through the historical connection between psychoanalysis and medicine in the States which linked medical treatment clinics with analytic institutes. In the UK by contrast there were comparisons with the class system of handed down privilege in the control some of the central institutions had over access to resources:

But it is to do with the hierarchy. I remember going to a conference in Italy, gosh it must’ve been about - was it 20 years ago? It could be as much as 20 years ago. And people there saying to me, there were women from different countries, that the XXXX in this country is much more elitist, closed off, than in other countries; like the woman who was saying this was German. And I didn’t know anything about it really. Because at the XX we did have some teachers who were from the XXXX; but we didn’t have anything to do with them really. So I didn’t really know that I would be totally despised by them.

I think the other thing is though that XXXX has really institutionalised all of that, that sort of contempt for organisations that sort of don’t toe the line. Although of course that is slightly changing. What I did find out soon after that conference in Italy was that there were jobs going at hospitals which would never be advertised publicly. They’d be advertised on the XXXX notice board or somewhere else. (2/06 762)
The word ‘despise’ is striking, originating in the Latin, ‘to look down on’ and indicating the complete absence of esteem or worth coming from a position of power.

The situation was remarked on as changing but this was work in progress rather than accomplished. Analytic credibility required demonstration of allegiance to orthodox texts:

And it’s all to do with illegitimacy. I think it’s all to do with this feels like an illegitimate field or whatever; not illegitimate, but feels like you’ve got to play the canon in order to say anything. (2/04 164)

Religious and moral terminology peppered the interviews in relation to the institution of psychoanalysis. The opposite of ‘pure’ psychoanalysis was ‘heretical’ (2/08 520); ‘psychoanalytic ecumenism’ referred to cross-theoretical conversations (2/08 105); the self-referential arguments were compared to the Church of England Synod (2/05 214). Considering theory as creed addressed an aspect of the difficulty of change, that it makes psychoanalysis mortal:

...you want psychoanalysis to be better than it ever can be. And that is actually a religious problem. (2/05 268)

Several participants commented on the methods of disseminating psychoanalytic knowledge as unhelpful to the broadening out of theoretical perspectives. One issue was that analysts were seen to read within the discipline rather than with and around it. Even within the discipline, the growth in published journals made it possible to stay within ever narrower confines and be relatively untroubled by alternative views. The picture was of a conservative structure that leaned towards its own members and it was quite a strategic task to get beyond this:

I think there’s a structural problem within the field, that people say some very important things but nobody reads it and it doesn’t really filter up to the top. (2/08 52)
This participant emphasised the need to be strategic to get minority views heard; to advance new thinking in psychoanalysis is a political and well as a clinical and academic endeavour.

There was no systematic way of recording when views had changed. The influential psychoanalyst Joyce McDougall was given as an example, creating a generalised pathology from a small sample of lesbian patients in a paper that was first published in 1964 and treated to many republications since. McDougall’s views altered over time but it was not until 2001 that she published on this change of mind, 36 years later:

Now, you don’t see...so that’s the problem, you know? You have this enormous accumulation of stuff and so, if you’re a student of psychoanalysis, you really can’t know from, there’s nobody taking any responsibility for synthesis of where we are, you know? ....But now, who is going to sort of help the next generation sort through all that stuff? (2/08 336)

This was part of acknowledging that some things had changed, but also a comment on the difficulty for those new to psychoanalysis to develop a perspective on what they were learning.

On the positive side there was a view that things were opening up. Even traditional training institutions were inviting people from different theoretical orientations to deliver course content, and were inviting and publishing papers that challenged prevailing norms. There is no way of knowing from this research how widespread this is, and views on this differed, but the fact that it was happening at all was seen as noteworthy:

So I think that the...partially because there’s gay marriage, there’s an awful lot going on in the US that is about normalising. Gay parents, transgender, all of that. So I don’t think it’s just in pockets of progressive institutes. I think it’s very ubiquitous. (2/09 79)
Ironically, greater lesbian and gay equality in the external world may have reduced interest in re-theorising. The equality mantra had of necessity been one of ‘no difference’, so courses inviting students to examine their attitudes to sexual difference now drew fewer people:

People assume they know things that they don’t know. Why do I have to have special training to treat my gay patients? I treat my gay patients just like I treat my straight patients. Admirable, but it reflects a lack of understanding that maybe there’s something you need to know about your gay patients that’s a little bit different than your straight patients, not in pathological way but in a cultural way. So, that is a problem. (2/08 368)

In summary, psychoanalytic knowledge needed to be enriched through interaction with broader ways of thinking and understanding both within and without the analytic field. For much of psychoanalytic history this had been a struggle, with analytic Institutions and trainings structured to reward conformity. However bridges have been and were being built and this remained work in progress.

4.3.4 The building blocks of theory are personal

Many participants related their own experiences as having considerable impact on the process and content of their thinking and what they thought about. This extended to the personal experiences of other analytic theorists, including Freud. One participant commented that Oedipus arose not from infant observation but from an adult overlay onto the patient’s accounts of childhood experiences, and this overlay came from the analyst’s own experiences and expectations, as much as anywhere:

Freud’s views about the Oedipus complex essentially never changed during his whole career. From 1895 ‘til his death. And his idea was that the Oedipus complex, castration anxiety and penis envy were the biological bedrocks. That was an adult down on idea that didn’t come from child observation. That came
from his own personal experience and from an uncanny insight he had into the play Oedipus Rex, which was incredibly brilliant and uncanny but nonetheless not necessarily true. (2/10 148)

And again:

Jung said ‘every psychology is a personal confession’— and he refers to the personal equation, which is a big thing in science... Subjectivity in theory making is fascinating. (2/05 994)

The question is the position one takes in relation to this subjectivity, which is partly a paradigmatic question in relation to how each participant viewed the nature of theory and of knowledge. Perhaps because of the nature of the field there was an openness to accepting the effect of the personal on the theoretical without feeling that this devalued it; theory still stood as something that could be thought about, however it was arrived at:

But I suppose that is where being, if you like, I don't know about scientific but objective as opposed to people's more subjective histories or whatever. You know, because it's not in a way really a contradiction, we all have our personal histories of how we got somewhere, but we're also capable to varying degrees of thinking about something from another point of view or not only from our own point of view. (2/01 946)

4.3.5 The moral basis of theory development

Morality in theory building was raised in the first round of interviews as a challenge to the position of analytic neutrality, suggesting that moral positioning is inevitably a part of any considered perspective. One participant described their moral framework of ‘intention’ to support a changed attitude to homosexuality:
My viewpoint now has moved to the intention. The intention behind any relationship rather than the shape of the person they’re intending towards. (2/02 377)

They then used this to find a foothold in relation to thinking about transgender and transgressive sexual behaviours, although quickly came up against its limitations:

In the States now you have transgender analysts. Now is that the new boundary I’m setting my stall on, saying not beyond here? Then we’d probably end up with sadomasochistic analysts and all that sort of stuff. As you say, there has to be a line drawn in the sand somewhere, otherwise... There is a line to be drawn somewhere. Why? I suppose because it’s the intention thing. The intention toward oneself and others is what’s really a guiding principle, rather than what shape we are. So if I had somebody who said ‘Look, I’m very interested in sadism, sadomasochism, and I want to be an analyst’, I’d say ‘Don’t you think your way of thinking might interfere with some of the tenderness and containment...’ And they’d say ‘We specialise in tenderness and containment’, you see. (2/02 569)

Another participant reflected on the complexity of moral standpoints. Trying to pass them on to the patient and maintain the neutral stance was really a chimera. Analysts take positions on behaviour:

But I think also one needs the patient’s consent, implicit consent, for the things that they think warrant exploration and the things that they take as givens. And that’ll be different for different people... Yeah. I think if the patient thought their homosexuality was a given, I would work with that as a given. If the patient thought their paedophilia was a given, I would assume that it's something that could be unravelled (laughter). Because I think they’re qualitatively different, you know. I think that paedophilia is transgressive and that homosexuality isn't.
[Interviewer: So, at some point, there’s a decision, a sort of moral approach?]

Yeah, there is. One has to have a stand I think about this. (2/03 584)

The risk with this of course is that morality is informed by many factors that are not made explicit, so homosexuality has been seen as transgressive, and trans intention is very open to interpretation.

4.4 Oedipal theory

4.4.1 The purpose of analytic theory

Views on the value of Oedipus as a core psychoanalytic theory varied and raised questions about the purpose that analytic theory was there to serve. Was it there to explain or describe? To address meaning or cause?

I tend to think of psychoanalysis as a method of investigation more than - I'm not so keen on it as a developmental theory, even though clearly it can say something. It is one method of investigation amongst many others and it provides you with a particular way of sort of trying to unpack things and look at things and see how things might be able to change. But I wouldn't give it -- well clearly I wouldn't give it the kind of universalising status that it certainly used to have. I don't really know what people now think. (2/01 689)

The ‘universalising status’ was questioned repeatedly in relation to oedipal theory specifically and also in relation to the analytic approach more generally. With its focus on the individual, how could or should it speak generically? While something might be true for one person, this did not mean it was true for all. There were cultural variations to be taken into account. Theoretical extrapolation from personal experience had its limits:
To speak theoretically is to generalise so much. That’s my struggle with speaking theoretically about classes of people... And I think it’s hard to do without it clinically in some instances. (2/07 358)

There is cross cultural variation in the general oedipal area (2/05 458)

I think the classical Oedipus complex, male retaliation for sexual desire for the opposite sex, and all that - that does exist in some people. It’s just that it’s not a general theory that can explain anything that specific as a general rule. (2/10 341)

Commitment to oedipal theory varied. One participant felt it remained integral to their being a psychoanalyst:

And the Oedipus complex is still central, I think, to my thinking (2/02 71)

While another rejected such centrality:

I think I’d stand on that you absolutely can’t sustain Oedipus as a universal aspect of development or a core, the core without which there is no psychoanalysis, which I have heard an analyst say. (2/01 376)

There was some correlation between a purposive view of oedipal theory and the engagement to re-theorising it. As a static theory belonging to the past it was dead; whether it deserved rebirth was the question.

4.4.2 Oedipus is relevant if you work at it

Oedipal theory needed updating. The challenges of this fell into four broad areas.
(i) Could Oedipus be applied in its current form?

The concreteness of oedipal theory mitigated against its literal application:

I think that part of the reason that the Oedipus complex has been so completely dismissed is because it has been talked about in such concrete terms, really concrete terms, in terms of real mothers and fathers. And it doesn’t seem to me that there’s been any real alternative to that. (2/06 648)

Yet creating non-literal interpretations that translated oedipal structures in the internal world was problematic: how to distinguish fact from fiction?

But a lot of families don’t come in triangular structures. So are you going to make the argument that some analysts would, like in particular Kleinians, that there’s an internal parental couple even if the child has been raised by just one person? Is there? I don’t know. (2/04 148)

Freud’s observations had been based in the external world and oedipal theory was a response to clinical observation. Inference came from observation. It was almost sneaky to render Oedipus invisible by hiding it completely in the psyche; how could one argue against it then?

(ii) Was it right to hold Oedipus to a developmental timeline?

Part of the literalness was the allocation of age and stage to Oedipus:

I think the sort of classic notion of the Oedipus complex just comes too late, really. And that most of the time, one’s working with earlier experience or more primitive fantasies about relationships and object relationships...I think that rage, persecution or primitive terrors are reactive. They are a reaction to
being unheld, not contained. Left in very early infancy, basically... Not that I think one should sidestep destructiveness and things when you encounter them. But I don't see them as primary. (2/03 307)

The same participant went on to comment:

You know, I’ve seen patients who are sort of clinical, Kleinian type patients who appear to have destructiveness and boiler house pumping around their system. But every single one of them has been deprived or traumatised. (2/03 332)

The impact of trauma was picked up by another participant; for the classical Oedipal complex to have traction it required a relatively smooth pathway in terms of identity in the preceding years:

All I would say really is that I think the oedipal theory of various kinds can be useful, what’s been written around it can be useful if you have a client whose first few years were okay, or okay enough, but who had serious problems that start from the age of three, four, five. (2/06 307)

Around this lies a consciousness of the kind of purity implied in a classical account of Oedipus. Perhaps Freud’s discovery of infantile sexuality had of necessity cleared the ground of competitors so that it could be viewed unimpeded; but once the undergrowth grew back, clinicians needed to help patients negotiate the whole environment as it was. The ‘first few years’ were rich territory, the accretions of which were unavoidably brought into the following years. A more flexible timeline allows better for this:

It (Oedipus) doesn’t happen in one moment, it happens like in multiple moments that aggregate into a constellation. But I don’t think that necessarily happens at two or at four. (2/07 765)
The concept of the oedipal theory as a stage of life, a mechanism for explaining sexual differentiation set in a particular family constellation, was in tension with a less literal approach where these things stood for something but were not limited to or by them.

(iii) Could Oedipus interact with new knowledge?

Following on from timelines, the need to take account of new knowledge and new ways of thinking was a shared and repeated theme, more usually focussed on knowledge about attachment and the impact of early relationships on gender identity:

But I think one of the counterpoints to the notion of the Oedipal complex or Oedipal pre-occupation is that there’s much more interest in pre-Oedipal life currently. I mean, since the 60s or 70s I would say. That the interest in early experience, the interest in infant experience, in dyadic, you know the first relationship is pretty powerful. And in some ways, that’s shifted a lot of interest away from middle childhood, adolescence. (2/09 264)

Faced with the vast difference of modern family life, reproductive technologies, childcare arrangements, and much greater knowledge of broad cultural differences in definitions of family, oedipal theory needed to be broadened and sited in a much wider, less linear context.

Scientific advances were also used as examples of new knowledge that had to be negotiated. One participant considered the effect of pre-natal hormones on the brain, putting sexual differentiation upstream of Oedipus. While this did not negate oedipal theory, it meant it must be re-thought:

...sexual differentiation theory would suggest that the two sexes are on different developmental lines from embryology - embryological times - prenatally and then post-natally. And the differences concern empathy, verbal fluency and also the tendency towards violence. And the tendency towards violence is of immense importance in modern public health theory and
thinking. Oedipal theory, however, with its focus on intergenerational conflicts about dominance, aggression and retaliation, can be folded into that in such a way as to be integrated and make sense. Both theories are viable but Freud’s theory has to be modified. (2/10 198)

This offered an integration of two paradigms with dominance granted to the more scientific evidence base, while still valuing the analytic knowledge base.

(iv) What is the focus of oedipal theory?

One question was what to do with sex and gender. Some had already decentralised this:

I’d never really thought about the Oedipus complex. Or I would say that I have thought about it in a particular way, which is not about gender. (2/03 94)

There was scope for playing with the rigidity of sexuality and gender to loosen the literality of the oedipal grip. One heterosexual participant described a teasing counter-transferential play with the possibility of homo-eroticism in the consulting room:

One sort of enjoys playing with these feelings and thoughts, and eventually the rigidness of Oedipus begins to give way to something slightly less gendered. Oedipus could be two women or two men. (2/02 282)

But I think it’s more the internal couple, how the two people, whatever gender they might happen to be, relate to one another, rather than the gender issue. (2/02 71)

It was probably not enough, however, to simply de-gender Oedipus and believe it would thereby be universally applicable:
One of the papers at that conference, the one I do have a copy of somewhere is.... She says that, she talks in terms of a creative oedipal couple which could be two women. But then what is a creative couple really? (2/06 652)

And I...I don’t think I’d think any differently about Oedipal conflicts in relation to the same sex parent with the other sex parent as the third, as the opposite sex parent with the same sex parent as the third. Now, is that just woolly liberalism or is it a sort of fluidity of thinking that gender really, really doesn’t structure my thinking? I don’t know. (2/03 110)

If Oedipus is formed around a particular notion of family that has coupledom at its centre, extending the notion of the couple is in itself insufficient to expand the theory. Oedipal discourse is about creativity and difference wrapped around heterosexuality which then becomes both a reification and an emblem of difference. One participant wrapped gender and difference into a complementary relationship in describing his own experience:

Without women in my life, if I had to live in a world of just men, whether gay or not – I think women for me, the creativity of sort of being a different - has made a huge difference. But one then projects this on to everybody else. (2/02 292)

However, this by implication left same sex pairings struggling to symbolise their own creativity, and literalised difference into gender. The experience is real but the account of it may be more situated in gender norms and expectations than is being accounted for. The same participant subsequently recognised difference in same sex relationships, discussing a film representation of a lesbian couple:

That’s right. If you look at the couple that they played there, there’s a huge amount of difference between them as people. It’s the cloning bit. If people become too cloned, then there’s a narcissistic element to that. But that can
happen in heterosexual relationships too... It becomes wonderfully complicated. (2/02 302)

There were rich ideas about the different directions that oedipal theory could take if expanded to meet modern challenges. Several participants played with the idea of reworking oedipal theory without its traditional gender and sexuality expectations and felt this would yield interesting results:

In the way it’s used, you know, let’s say in a Freudian text, where it is always about same sex identification, opposite sex desire. So you’ve got the Oedipal story placed within a conventional family structure. But you can extract it from that without too much trouble. And you know, many interesting things would be different and some things wouldn’t be, like hierarchy and power difference and generational difference. (2/09 339)

Where oedipal theory was seen as relevant it was to a greater or lesser extent applying a revised version that took into account the critiques of Oedipus as a story of its time. It fell to the ‘rehabilitators’ of the first round interviews, with varying degrees of determination, to find in Oedipus something for everyone:

I would actually want something, to have some placeholder to talk about sexuality, triangularity, power and generational difference... (Oedipus) has carried a lot of work. It’s been the organising frame for a lot of thinking about sexuality and about power. And generational differences. (2/09 293)

But actually, for me, it’s about generational difference, it’s about triangulation, things that you mentioned. I think it’s also about a challenge to omnipotence. But I would add a fourth thing which is it is about deferred gratification. You can’t actually have what you want now. One has to wait. (2/03 106)

I think -- well the triangular bit as opposed to dyadic and having to cope with the parents as some kind of a couple. And getting involved in, or rather
identifications with perhaps each of the parental couple that are different and produce a dynamic for the child that may or may not be difficult. And different both positive and negative and unconscious identifications. (2/01 387)

Well, I suppose the thinking about symbolisation tends to be quite linked with the Oedipus complex. It’s kind of at, or the depressive position, which is another way of looking at the Oedipus complex (2/06 378)

The ‘placeholder’ notion indicated that while an oedipal explanation was not necessarily the answer, the oedipal question remained important. The focus of the story changes, from gender to generation, but the central theme of boundaries and a sense of creating psychic order remains. This enlarged oedipal theory addresses triangulation, the move from dyadic to triadic relationships; omnipotence; deferred gratification; the capacity to symbolise; the process of identification; exclusion and limitation; power. These things need not be tied into a particular story of sexuality or gender but they are transmitted through the relationship with the parents, who bring culture into their embodied relationship with the child:

…the Oedipus complex as a transmitter of culture: where you’re told no, where you’re told this is what goes and this is what doesn’t go and this is what you might lose. (2/07 757)

Gender and sexuality in this view become part of the ground in the relationship with culture mediated through the parents, or more accurately the parental environment. It is the negotiation of culture and not the gender or sexuality that is specific, although gender and sexuality are one part of the field of negotiation:

But I think that there is something about exclusion, about being told ‘no, you’re outside of this’ which is structuralising in an important way whether you’re boy or girl or whatever you are, whoever it is that you’re attracted to. I think that the ‘you’re outside of this’ is an important introduction of the limits of
omnipotence. And that has to be negotiated in sexuality and gender. (2/07 767)

The question remains as to whether after this transposition to different registers the subject matter remains truly in the oedipal range or whether it has morphed into something now more accurately described through another trope.

4.4.3 There are better stories to tell

Those who had least enthusiasm for updating or enlarging oedipal theory saw it as an outdated narrative that had been made redundant by the new knowledge that came after it. It was seldom used or thought about by some clinicians:

That really the story, the Oedipal story is not – it isn’t one that would occur for me with most people. 04/119

...when I first got your letter about this project I said to a friend of mine who’s been a psychotherapist for at least 35 years, I asked her what she thought about the usefulness of the – and she’s heterosexual – about the usefulness of the Oedipus complex. She said she never thought about it. And when I asked her what she did think about she said childhood trauma .... I think that is partly true for me. I don’t think about it with certain clients at all, but I do think about it obviously a bit more than she does. (2/06 546)

New knowledge required different ways of thinking and an oedipal ‘placeholder’ was not a requirement for any of them:

But this is a theory, you know. This is not an actual structure. This is something that, have I ever worked with a patient where the Oedipal narrative became the dominant presenting theme? Yes. But it doesn’t seem to me any more compelling to make that the central discussion of the work than when I have
patients who sound very Kleinian, patients who come in, split object relations, projection of anxiety into multiply fragmented persecutors. These ideas are all very interesting and they actually seem to appear clinically and you can make the interpretation along the lines of a particular school. But it’s just a story, you know. I think of them all as stories... Why should any narrative be given greater presence than another? When I hear this in, you know, should the literary canon, should we elevate certain novels and certain forms of literature over others? I believe yes we should, because some stories are better than others. But I don’t find the Oedipus story so much better than some of the other stories. (2/08 417)

These participants raised the question of why things should continue to be placed in an oedipal framework if the reworking of them had long taken them out of it. When was it actually a question of moving on?

‘We’re not in Newtonian physics’ (2/04 160)

4.4.4 Ways forward with Oedipus

For most, the way in which oedipal theory was currently being critiqued, questioned and reframed was good and should be continued. The challenge to universality, the potential to enlarge on what was useful, was better than attempting to completely re-write a theory:

I mean, a lot of the critique has taken the form of critiquing the absoluteness or the fundamental nature or the universal nature of what theory there is. So a lot of the re-workings of it are to expand it in various ways. I suppose at the moment that feels good enough to me. (2/01 470)

Despite the account of homosexuality, there were kernels of truth in Oedipus that could still contribute to analytic theorising:
Oh, well it’s an unremittingly negative account of relations between people of the same sex. OK? And I think that’s not a bad observation. It’s not necessarily always true or always going to be true. But as an observation of how men in particular relate to one another, which is that they are always trying to kill one other, on the whole, and the only way they love one another is illegally, at least until quite recently... So Oedipus is a correct observation. (2/05 503)

But I don’t see this as an explanatory theory, really. (2/03 183)

The last sentence referred back to psychoanalysis not being at heart about causality, but about meaning, and oedipal theory could contribute to meaning. The multiplicity of meanings was a challenge thrown at the idea of universal theorising – one participant (2/05) remarked that it was difficult enough to talk in generalisations simply for the purpose of the interview, let alone beyond it. There was tension between the desire for some sort of universal structure and the ability to respond freely to each individual. Sometimes this reflected an anxiety about where letting go completely might lead:

While keeping the old ordinance survey map though. The one inch to the mile maps. Because I think you can use those still, I think they still have an important function. (2/02 506)

I like a frame even if I have to say that the frame doesn’t work. I don’t like the Oedipus frame because I don’t think it’s necessary for me, okay? I like a frame but what I don’t like is everything to be Bauhaus. I want it to have lots of texture and complication. (2/04 451)

4.5 Some rethinking of gender and sexuality

The relationship between sex and gender without the oedipal link was a subject that elicited interest in the participants. For some it loosened the ties to the point where
they were no longer required; for others it sparked thinking afresh about what gender and sexuality did in fact have to do with each other. Some of this depended on the perspective taken on gender, whether it was for example an entity, a composition, a structure or an experience. Is gender gendered, and does it matter? What gender and sexuality were understood to mean, how they were experienced and structured and their relationship to other aspects of identity came out in the discussions.

4.5.1 There are different and changing understandings of gender and sexuality

Psychoanalysis was founded on a modernist perspective and continued to be underpinned by it in relation to sex and gender.

(i) Gender as innate

As a significant aspect of gender this was emphasised by just two participants, but it stood out because it is a more contentious way to think about gender and not in tune with the political climate. Sometimes innateness was expressed as observation rather than knowledge, in the way of observations made so ubiquitously that their justification is no longer felt to be required:

I’ve got two dogs at the moment, a labrador and a cocker spaniel, both males... And they’re wrestling all the time. Whereas a friend of ours has got a male and a female dog who just have a completely different sort of relationship. It is hormonal, all that sort of stuff. (2/02 673)

This is easy to link to the rough and tumble element of boys’ play so often cited as different from girls’ play and was raised by the participant in relation to boys needing physical play with their fathers more they observed that girls did. ‘It’s hormonal’ stood for a general attribution to that which was innate, and ‘all that sort of stuff’ to a presumption of common understanding of the expression of innateness in behaviour. Boys needed to play rough and girls did not. Of course, these facts are not free from
their inferences, and appeal to a concept of the natural that belies the rhetoric behind it.

The other participants focused more on formal scientific investigation of gender difference. For this purpose gender was referred to with great specificity, care being taken over definitions of sex and gender, or the need to be precise over such definitions:

There are investigators, including myself, that don’t really distinguish between sex and gender. I don’t believe that sex is biologically determined and gender is psychosocially learned. I don’t think it’s a helpful way of looking at the field. Rather, it’s more helpful to identify your parameters, that is chromosomal sex, internal hormonal sex, internal genitalia, and external genitalia, sex of announcement, sex of assignment and the internal perception of the gender identity. (2/10 269)

To talk about hormones from this standpoint would then not be reducing gender to hormones but involving hormones in one aspect of being gendered. The difficulty in gaining acceptance for a view that took innate differences into account was by this participant deemed to be caused by political pressure, understandable as a response to the:

...sexism (that) is almost like epidemic, pandemic, huge throughout the world and psychoanalysis has been sexist. (2/10 455)

But herein, they pointed out, lay a conundrum. Sexism can turn its hand to any argument. If women and men are emphasised as the same and therefore equal, then:

...it’s appropriate to talk about everything in terms of the male prototype. That’s common in the field. You know that in the history of the field that all women could be thought of as being just added to the subtype of what we’re talking about. (2/10 460)
If men and women are acknowledged as different, then difference will be cast in a negative light and pressed into the service of sexism, so difference becomes dangerous territory. The difficulty was, according to this participant, that the evidence of science does push gender into the territory of difference: men and women are asymmetrical:

The two sexes are definitely asymmetrical. I’m not presenting that as a theory. And in saying that I, you know my own view is that it’s appropriate to make a demand on the psychoanalytic community to be more sophisticated about similarity and difference than it has been. (2/10 442)

Scientifically, asymmetry is neutral; ideologically, it quickly becomes valenced. But the notion is important because it points to something that cannot be completely accounted for by social and relational constructs of gender, although it can be pressed into their service, and this will come up again in consideration of transgender. A more precise approach to the language of sex and gender can contribute to being able to use terms like ‘innate’ with less opportunity for this to spill over into other categories and other idioms.

(ii) Gender as social and relational

It is possible that the nature of the research tended to recruit participants whose knowledge of feminism had informed their interest and therefore their motivation in writing about gender issues in psychoanalysis, and gender as social construction was widely mentioned. Family environments were a dominant force in the transmission of social constructs of gender:

Well, gender is attached to the social expressions in the individual, so it’s in the psyche. And then it’s moulded in the body because you learn how to walk like a girl or a boy, don’t you? You’re held like a girl or a boy. I mean I don’t need to know the gender to tell you whether that child is a girl or a boy, the biological sex. I can tell you by the way the person’s holding them and relating to them. (2/04 610)
This was by no means restricted to the parents:

I think it's true that psychoanalysis has tended to ignore the contribution of other sources of gender identity, maybe a third party is involved in rearing of a child of various kinds: aunts, nannies, grandmothers and also the identifications that happen at puberty, peer group stuff... I think all of that has to be put in the mix, definitely. (2/01 480)

With this sense of gender being mediated through social relationship from the first breath, there was no way round it:

So that’s in the relationship. It’s in the projected... So we can’t not do gender, that’s the problem. (2/04 615)

And yet the politics of analytic discussion were now different – feminist critique was not leading the way:

...it’s not that there aren’t people doing ideological critique, but it isn’t a prominent part of psychoanalytic theory or gender theory or queer theory. So that’s an interesting shift that there’s a sort of de-politicising of critical discourse. (2/07 775)

A weakness of the social constructionist view is that it stands aside from the body, understandable in reaction to overwhelming physical determinism, but limiting when responding to a call for a new articulation of sex and gender. And in psychoanalysis, transgender is making such calls. A purely social and relational perspective leaves insufficient foothold to integrate the body as both inscribed and inscriber.

(iii) Gender as individually constructed

This shift of emphasis built on rather than stepped away from gender as a social construct, using a postmodern paradigm of gender as fluid but not free. The individual
plays their part in building their gender identity, but theirs is not the only part being played. The crossover between the social and the individual happens already in the space before thought:

If we think of normative gender as itself being preserved, kept in place, kept within bounds by dissociation and splitting, as ever since mothers say to their girls, ‘Don’t sit like that. Sit like a girl. Don’t do this. Don’t do that.’ So, already, by the time you develop into a coherently gendered female, you’re doing a lot of work even though it’s unconscious to keep things out. (2/07 848)

Do attachment experiences produce certain qualities that might have to do with your comfort with closeness, anxiety levels, toleration of separations, and so on? And those might have a gendered meaning or a sexual meaning. Or they might not. (2/09 729)

Social gender looks more to these external building blocks. Internal construction looks more to what give the individual a meaningful sense of their gender. This can be in relation to traditional masculinity and femininity, or in relation to sexuality:

So, I think that gender is not just identity. It’s also pleasure. People take a lot of pleasure in how they put their gender together. (2/07 845)

I mean I think there’s also, I think a lot of variation in both gender and sexuality in terms of the density and intensity of the experience. I think there are people for whom gender is not so prominent. It’s not missing but it doesn’t have the charge. There are other people for whom it’s very powerfully defining and carries an enormous amount of meaning. (2/09 707)

This is an experience of gender that emphasises internal vectors and does not allocate specific weighting to gendered identity. The experience may be influenced by the individual interactions of infancy but are not allocated value. It can be as well to sit lightly on gender as it can be to be immersed in it.
(iv) Gender and sexual identity as a matrix

Gender as such a significant factor to identity, and as a stand-alone factor, was challenged. Not only were there other factors in identity that were equally or more significant, such as race and class, but they were all interrelated: ethnicity would affect experience of gender, as would class. This was not raised explicitly by the majority of participants but where it was there was energy and passion, and it was often implicit in mention of the political sphere:

I guess what I would argue is that what gender and sexuality need to, what needs to happen is that this needs to be embedded in other variables like race and class. And that in a certain way it’s already a political choice to just talk about gender and sexuality as opposed to the other forms of identity that cross and interact in a very powerful way. And we don’t yet have tools to do that very well. And that’s in a certain sense been a distortion, to be so focused just on gender and sexuality. Which is in the whole field. I mean it’s built into its origins, the origins of psychoanalysis, those were the variables of interests. Things like class position, or ethnicity, or religious identity, or any of those things just haven’t had the same sort of heft in our thinking. (2/09 838)

So I would say that I think the future is other kinds of variables, from class, from mental illness, from degrees of disturbance, race, cultural phenomena (2/09 860)

But I’d also be thinking about class position and....The whole thing comes in. It’s all in there for me and it’s all delivered through that intimate relationship. That’s the thing. (2/04 845)

One UK participant believed the American relational school to have been a facilitating influence:
I think that's been hugely influential across the board, not just on homosexuality but on race and class even. (2/01 268)

All identities were initially communicated through early relationship. If the transmission of culture was a function of Oedipus then it was no longer a tale primarily of sex and gender; does this make Oedipus untrue to its roots, or are the roots growing to feed a broader canopy?

4.5.2 Gender as complementary

Complementary gender is the depiction of two sexes as halves of a whole, complementing each other. It logically extends from an oedipal narrative that concludes in heterosexuality. Whether gender differences are understood as innate or constructed it brings them together in a balancing partnership that serves to reconcile gender difference within a dominant framework of heterosexuality.

Some participants made room for complementarity as description if not definition. Cogently theorised in a Jungian framework as the parallel, though not identical, idea of contrasexuality, it has become a general cultural discourse. It is not essential in the sense of being tied to something considered ‘real’, but it has been an essential way of bringing gender difference together under one roof. Complementarity enables gender mixing or bridging to be expressed in a mutually understood format:

...if we don’t take what Jung said as definitions of the deep unchanging structure of the psyche, but as really deep, psychologically inflected depictions of what’s going on, then they are really fascinating. That men have an unconscious feminine anima bit. Of course they don’t. Structurally they don’t. I don’t have anything in here [tapping head] – all right? ...But I do behave as if I do. And it has to be there because in the world I was born into there are two very clear genders. So the only way my ‘feminine’ bit can come out is via something like an anima. (2/05 518)
This approach enables an ‘as if’ perspective on complementarity, where it is understood that use of the terms ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ is a compromise formation:

Because contrasexuality, like homosexuality, is an allegation. Listen, many of the people you interviewed will tell you there is no homosexuality, there is no heterosexuality. There is just sexuality. She goes where she wants to go. I think this position is very pragmatic, and useful, but it exists in relation to the more traditionally recognised binary. (2/05 551)

Complementarity is a pragmatic position in the context of an overwhelming gender and sexuality binary. Even where participants did not personally find it a useful way of thinking, indeed would be actively challenging of it, they nevertheless accepted it was a way of thinking that patients might wish to work with:

I suppose I'm saying I don't think it's terribly useful. But that doesn't mean that other people might not think of their own relationship in those terms. And if they do then, you know, that's important, obviously. (2/01 598)

Sometimes it was seen as more likely to be useful to a heterosexual couple; for a same sex couple it was more of an outsider’s position:

Well, I mean, you can work with various straight patients for whom these are re-embedded ways of thinking about life and so, yeah. The problem is if you grow up not fitting exactly into that, then you have a...you’re like a Jewish person around Christmas time, you know. Like looking at all the pretty lights but how come you don’t have a Christmas tree in your house? It’s sort of a...you know, it’s the outsider’s view. You’re in but you’re not quite entirely in and so, if your own narrative doesn’t fit in, then it’s off-putting and sometimes, it’s oppressive. But if it fits you, you know, it’s great. It’s very comforting, complementarity. (2/08 580)
In this light, complementarity is a question of clinical sensitivity, working within the patient’s framework. In other lights, complementarity could be gender neutral, a functional way of using shared social norms and expectations of gender to describe relationships of any gender mix.

One participant considered gender complementarity in terms of same sex parenting: did roles just naturally fall through gender into those usually labelled maternal and paternal, or was there something more to them, so even same sex couples would fall into them? Reflecting on gay couples they had observed with children, they commented:

And in a certain way, complementarities of ways of handling each other and the child have evolved. And I’m not sure how to think about that in the sense of, is this that there’ll be a spread of the parent, that provides... I mean, are these sort of things that will get divided up among people in a very particular way? [...] I would say there are some role divisions, some complementarity in who handles what aspect of parenting. So there you don’t have gender as polarising...but you have something about, whether it’s temperament or character, and whether there are these two phenomena that go into the care of children. I don’t know exactly how to think about it because it’s – You don’t know what’s being maybe hidden in that that appears to be gender neutral or gender agnostic but may not be. (2/09 416)

Complementarities do not need to be located in gender specifics. But they may be. In gay or lesbian parenting lies a question as to whether childrearing brings out a particular balance of behaviours and attitudes than can, or cannot, be ascribed to gender. And if so ascribed, is it gender as innate or constructed that is solicited? Does childrearing present a prospect of ‘natural’ that can illuminate gender?

More generally complementarity was seen as too attached to gender stereotypes and conditions of binary thinking to be theoretically helpful. Talking about the use of
masculine and feminine to describe attributes of same sex relationships one participant said:

I think the trouble is, you know, these terms are so freighted and so loaded that actually it’s not neutral in any way at all to say that. And though there might be a certain truth perhaps, you’ve probably got to find other ways of going about it if you’re a therapist in order not to produce problematic sort of reactions.

(2/01 581)

How much currency complementarity still had was questioned:

Well, it doesn’t carry as a whole anymore, does it, because society’s changing.

(2/04 693)

There was some thought that any rigid notion of gender and sexuality was unlikely to carry much universality – there is just too much fluidity and variation for a static analysis. If heterosexuality was less dominant, complementarity becomes a less compelling resolution:

I think, you know, we see so much variation in terms of who people and their partners are at different moments in relationships that that sort of rigid characterisation wouldn’t feel very appropriate, really. (2/03 739)

It might be better to change the focus entirely and look at other questions that could address the tension of the binary in a different way:

The really interesting thing for the modern thinker and clinician is not ‘Is there just sexuality?’, or ‘Do we pay attention to the object of sexuality?’ – homo, or hetero, or bi, or whatever it happens to be. That’s not so interesting. But holding in mind the tension between it matters who you have sex with, and it doesn’t matter who you have sex with. That’s a really interesting tension. (2/05 556)
A parallel for gender might be whether it matters that experience should be recognisably gendered, or whether it doesn’t matter.

4.5.3 Re-theorising gender and sexuality

The research question implied, and the first round interviews confirmed, that the oedipal link between sexuality and gender was no longer accepted at face value, with its assertion of opposition between identification and desire. The question arose of what then was the relationship between sexuality and gender, if there is one?

Well, the historical problem was the conflation of gender and sexuality. That’s a historic problem. So that if you look at all the early theories like, even going back to Ulrich, it’s all about the notion that there’s a binary. And therefore, if you feel attracted to men, you must have something womanly in you because attraction to men is a womanly trait and therefore, you’re an urning, you know. And Freud does the same thing... So that’s the problem with this effort at explanation because it only allows for two genders to explain all of the wide range of human behaviours. Now, what’s the problem? Well, one problem is that who you’re attracted to doesn’t necessarily tell you anything about whether you identify as male or female, in reality, without the imposition of extra, of an analytic theory on the person. (2/08 664)

What then was the link between sexuality and gender at all, if it was not an oedipal one?

I’m beginning to think they’re not necessarily linked at all. The choice of object, the choice of the gender of the object and one’s own gender may not be as related as I thought it was. (2/02 646)

Generally, participants did think about them together, but complexly, redeveloping the concepts of both:
You know the main themes that come out if you’re seriously studying or interested in sexuality in human beings, is the diversity and complexity of the rules; and ambiguity. And it’s very, very difficult to come up with specific, you know with really specific clear differences between groups. So that sophisticated interviewing will reveal that there are many people in whom the constructs are certainly intermittently related in some way. And some in whom they don’t seem to be. And we have to learn from what’s out there, and to think about it. (2/10 320)

For some gender and sexuality remained in close relationship, but it could be a struggle to find a non-heteronormative way of speaking about this. There are no known pathways for translating new thinking about gender and sexuality in the language of traditional analytic theory:

I think the thing is that if you’re dealing with old-fashioned – no, that’s not the right word. If - I can translate what I think into Kleinian theory, attachment theory, borderline theory, this theory, right? That’s not difficult. That’s easy. This stuff, we don’t have the mechanism for talking about it. (2/04 905)

More traditional analytic ways of thinking do not provide easy routes for considering new perspectives on gender and sexuality and can put analysts at a disadvantage when trying to reach a less heteronormative position. One participant described a clinical situation in which they were trying not to impose heterosexuality on a patient:

But if I don’t actually impose on it the heterosexual blueprint, then she can find her own way with it. Although the fact that she’s sitting in a room with somebody who she probably – she probably does pick up I’m a heterosexual analyst, you can tell just by people’s rooms. Somebody came into my room once and said ‘This is such a masculine room’. I thought the plants and things were quite feminine!
[Interviewer: Do you think a masculine room may still be a gay man’s room?]

Yes, well, it could. You see, I – it’s quite interesting, that. Because I’ve got a colleague who’s gay, and I’d say his room is very gay. It’s much tidier than mine for a start off! (Laughter). But that’s ridiculous, obviously, because a lot of heterosexuals are extremely tidy and fastidious. (2/02 522)

In recounting this, O2 immediately inserts oedipal heterosexuality into this interpretation of how people will know whether he is gay or straight by the ‘masculinity’ of the room he works in. He then laughs at the ridiculousness of it, but is nevertheless caught in it.

This vignette pulls together a sort of partnership that homo- and hetero-sexuality have been placed in over the years, cemented in oedipal complementarity but not limited to it. In the same way that masculinity and sexuality were aligned above, lesbian and gay relationships share the commentary of heterosexuality. Participants had observed patients communicating concerns about gender through concerns about object choice:

I’ve had clients who have had a lot of conflict about their sexual orientation and maybe opt for, say a woman might opt for being heterosexual because she doesn’t feel very womanly and it’s just too threatening to have a relationship with another woman for one reason or another. (2/06 499)

This was echoed in discussions of transgender that was observed sometimes to substitute gender for sexuality:

...for some people, being transgender is a solution to a problem about sexual orientation. That actually if you can’t bear to admit you’re homosexual, you change gender. And then, you can have a heterosexual relationship... It’s not my direct personal experience, but that of colleagues working with a small proportion of people with transgender issues, where it seems to be more about
sexual orientation that can't be tolerated. Well, then coming from a culture
where it's absolutely abhorred... (2/03 834)

However, transgender was also seen to confound oedipal oppositions and
identifications as sexual identities did not necessarily conform with transgendered
identities, even though at one point a correct sexual gender alignment had been
considered a confirmation of a successful transition. From some perspectives this
argues for a separation between gender and sexuality:

I mean, [there are] so many permutations here, of somebody who is in the
middle of gender reassignment with an ongoing relationship with a particular
partner. And what gender did they start as? And what gender are they ending
up with? And what gender did the partner think that they were getting
engaged with? And how do they feel about the change? Where there are so
many possibilities, one has to think about them separately, actually. (2/03 699)

Equally, it was an argument for no universal theory linking the two but the possibility
of personal meanings:

How that works it seems to me is very variable. I think the transgender
arrangements and communities indicate that. That there are same sex, and
opposite sex, where many different transformations underpin it. And how you
think about that and what it means isn’t immediately obvious. (2/09 737)

The repeated theme of oedipal opposition was clearly challenged:

Well, for me the implication is simply that they are not dichotomous in the way
that was put, and that the intersections of gender and sexuality are so much
more complex and intertwining. And I think gender may be more tied to
sexuality for some people than for others. I don’t see it as a general, that you
can have a general statement about it in that way because for some people
their sexuality supports and defines their gender or is structured by it much more than for other people, I think. (2/01 511)

I think the classical Oedipus complex, male retaliation for sexual desire for the opposite sex, and all that - that does exist in some people. It’s just that it’s not a general theory that can explain anything that specific as a general rule. (2/10 340)

Further away from the oedipal equation, the more individually constructed view of sexual identity understood it not as limited to homo/heterosexuality but as a qualitative descriptor that included but was not restricted to object choice:

‘It’s more about people’s sense of themselves as a sexual being. As a whole integrated person that integrates sexuality.’ (2/03 770)

Their identities would be caught up in their sexuality and their gender but I’m not sure I’d call it their sexual identity because that’s too fixed in this modern world. I just think that’s too fixed. I think if you work with young people you just know that’s not what they’re thinking about sexually. (2/04 260)

This lifts sexuality out of the oedipal counterpoints of gender and desire and softens the distinction to make it less oppositional. The comment about how young people think now underlines the contingent nature of explanatory theories that rely on observation and interpretation. From here, sexual behaviours articulate with gender identity as mutually reinforcing or distancing experiences, the interrelationship being consciously and unconsciously constructed by the individual:

The distinction between sexuality and gender has always felt dubious to me. (2/07 701)

I mean they may be overlapping rather than completely co-terminus. There may be ways that they aren’t, don’t collapse into each other but that they’re an
aspect of, they’re integrated in some way but in a complicated way, it seems to me is still worth talking about, to the degree that either sexual practices or gender experiences has some charge for the person living in that way. (2/09 692)

Gender may be taken up within a partnership as one vector of sexuality, with different significance depending on personal history. Gender identity becomes part of a personal matrix, built or enacted within and from the social constructs available; not individual in the sense of free-floating, but in the sense of infinitely variable in personal meanings. Sexuality likewise has the possibility of endorsing a particular sense of gender, with sexual behaviour enacting gender. A heteronormative thread can quickly weave itself back by requisitioning the language of butch and femme. This regressive tendency is what makes it possible, as was pointed out, to ask the question whether a butch/femme relationship is ‘a hetero way of doing homosexuality?’ (2/07 867). The question comes from a place that was then challenged by the participant because it only allowed for an answer that reinforced a binary starting point for desire. To link gender to sexuality while avoiding heteronormativity requires developing a different sort of discourse:

And of course, depending on who it’s coming from, it’s coming through different assumptions but is the idea that if...that a homoerotic relationship has to be about sameness or that if difference gets coded along gender lines then of course it’s again about heterosexuality. There’s something that feels dismissive about that. Because, this is actually a more succinct way of putting it, a masculine woman is not like a man. (2/07 871)

Theorising gender and sexuality together brings with it a twist on binary gender that construes it as lazy thinking when it comes to finding an articulation between sex and gender. If they are to do with each other, and sexuality is being argued as more fluid, then gender fluidity is a question on the map too.
4.6 Transgender

Transgender was an unexpected focus. It was not structured into the questions yet came up in each interview, providing a challenge to ways of thinking about gender and to some extent sexuality. All participants were interested, and some were more vocal than others, and this is evidenced in the comments which came from a small number of participants who articulated concerns echoed by all. Transgender raised the question about what it means to be a woman or a man.

4.6.1 Transgender is the next big challenge

Transgender was repeatedly seen as the next big challenge to psychotherapy. This was an area of identifiable difference between the participants from the USA and the UK, the former being overall more positive about the challenges and the new thinking that came with them.

Some puzzlement was expressed over why transgender was becoming a much more visible issue; what was happening to bring this about now?

But then you have to say so both it’s going on so wildly - what is that? Is that...? Is it all these transitional...? Is it the political climate of women and men? What the hell is it? The proportion...Because we don’t come from a culture where that happens. We don’t come from Thai ladyboys or third sexes.

(2/04 530)

There was broad divergence in participants’ interest, comfort and approach to working with transgendered patients, and to thinking about the work. For some it was a substantial part of their clinical practice; others may have had only one patient, or none. What was shared was a commitment to finding a way to be both helpful and genuine, although views on what that would look like differed. Even when it was hard
to understand what was going on, or to feel positive about it, accepting the place the client was at was agreed as the only starting point, however difficult:

    Look, if I had to I’d get there. Because I know myself well enough; I might not go for something, and then I can manage it... I don’t have a couple of patients who are in that position, in which case I would. (2/04 798)

    I mean I completely accept the experience. (2/01 641)

    If you’ve got a person who says ‘I’m going to kill myself if I can’t change my gender’, then you know you have to work within the parameters they’re setting up. (2/02 431)

There was a divide between the American participants who were overall more comfortable and informed about transgender, and the British participants who expressed more unease with and concern about it. This latter did not correlate to any particular theoretical background or allegiance and included traditional and contemporary Kleinian, Freudian and feminist approaches. The three more experienced American participants had relational and/or interpersonal understandings as part of their theoretical grasp.

4.6.2  **Transgender as a challenge to thinking about gender**

Transgender as a category is complex but was largely understood in these interviews as the identification with a gender that was not the one assigned at birth. Some participants who had worked more in the field also called on trans as queer, as a state of reworking as well as crossing gender, as both more and less material, and as highly individualised as well as highly contextualised. There were two particular challenges to thinking that transgender raised for people:
The essence of gender identity

Transgender was a conundrum that posed but did not answer questions about the nature of gender identity. For some it emphasised the individual nature of gender identity over general theories:

I don’t know. I think it’s very complicated and I think you could start making all these generalisations about it. Psychoanalytic theory is full of generalisations, isn’t it, and theories sort of fit everything.

[Interviewer: It sounds like you’re saying something about that’s not always helpful.]

No. I mean I think somebody like Stoller - his theories are often very interesting. But no, I don’t think it’s the same for everybody in fact. (2/06 293)

For some, it raised questions about gender identity but provided no comprehensible answers – it just didn’t make sense. It called on opposing paradigms:

[Interviewer: I think in talking to people that has been most challenging when talking about transgender.]

Absolutely. Oh my God. Completely. Because it’s the materiality of changing….Where’s the play? The concretisation is so interesting to me because that seems to foreclose the very thing that’s on the table. (2/04 485)

There was a struggle to articulate what the essence of gender actually was, while being uncomfortable with the idea that it could be easily circumvented, as it seemed the idea of transgender suggested:

There are a lot of psychotic people who enact their anxieties about internal issues with gender on their bodies and I find that quite complex. There are some people who are employed now to help people refashion their bodies and
become a different gender. I don’t think one does, but...I would say it’s far more complicated to become a woman than just changing your physical characteristics. But then there’s that brain stuff. I don’t know. Maybe they are, they’ve got a feminine brain in a masculine body. (2/02 317)

The ‘brain stuff’ referred to recent research published on the feminisation of the brain brought about by pre-natal hormones, which to this participant raised the possibility of a physical cause for transgender feelings. This argument was easier to manage as it still located gender in the body, and in this case the body was explicity misaligned against itself rather than in opposition to the psyche. The body as anchor for gender, even when gender was viewed as socially constructed, was a repeated theme: it was quite possible to conceive of gender being crossed in the psyche, but not in the body:

Often they decide to remain a feminine person with a – and leave their bodies alone. Which feels to me success. Because it’s a – trying to help them to think about it at a psychic level. Does it really require them changing their bodies fundamentally? It’s a better choice, I think. Because it’s not what shape you are at the end of the day. It’s psychically and spiritually and whatever.

[Interviewer: Mmm. If the person wanted to identify as female – had a male body and wanted to identify as female – and not change the body – that would feel more manageable, or more...]

Well, more manageable for me. Because I think that to think you can become a woman by changing your body around - I think you become a eunuch, in a way. You cannot become a woman, I don’t think. (2/02 399)

Along with this allusion to castration, transgender was mentioned as a somatic expression of psychotic anxieties. It summoned comparisons to cryogenics and to body integrity identity disorder in order to describe how bizarre and delusional the idea of changing genders could seem. It made as much sense to consider crossing species as it did to cross gender. This was said with awareness of how old fashioned and illiberal
the statements could appear, but they were present and part of the participants’ thinking.

On the other hand this sense of things being out of place, insoluble, was an opportunity for discovery about gender as a whole:

And I was thinking actually, that’s what’s interesting about this, that trans is not just about trans. And I think that’s what, that’s why it’s become so fascinating to think about, that we’re not just talking about a small ‘n’ size of people saying, ‘How many people are there really?’ First of all, who knows how many? But even with that, it raises a lot of interesting things to think about in terms of all genders. (2/07 583)

From this position the reification of gender back to the body, and trans to a psychotic solution, was ‘dangerous’ (2/07 823) and lost the opportunity for further thinking about gender.

(ii) The challenge of working outside of a binary gender construct

Gender transition is in itself not a challenge to the idea of binary gender. It might question how a binary gender identity is to be found, how the mind relates to the body, but it accepts the concept of two distinct genders and two bodies in which gender resides. The mathematics does not fundamentally change. This is not the case with a broader trans perspective which, sited in queer theory, does question and subvert binary gender identities. Whether transgender is described as being in the wrong body or wanting to become the other gender, it presents a clear concept. Having the ‘wrong’ body oddly challenged gender less fundamentally than having a body that crossed both male and female boundaries:

I don’t have a way to think about wanting a penis and breasts. I do not have a way to think about the concrete nature of that. (2/04 499)
The only thing I’m really clear about was when we were talking about trans is I’ve got the difficulty with the literal changing of the body. I just have a difficulty with it. Not so much from one to the other, although that’s probably because I’ve got used to it. It’s the mix and matching. (2/04 749)

The literalness of the body seems to get into the literalness of the thinking. One answer was to pack gender back into the realm of the psyche – get the internalisation right, and the body will sort itself out:

Like I was talking to somebody recently and he was saying, ‘Well, my boy really wants to be a girl.’ And I said, why don’t you just make all those activities into things that boys do rather than talk about them as activities like, you shouldn’t do that because those are girls things, and talk to his teacher about all of that stuff. At that very simple level, like, well, why shouldn’t he be into needlework or into this or into whatever? I mean for god’s sake it’s only a century since we put boys in pink. What the hell is…? What’s the bounce over into the concrete as opposed to the expanding the definition of a boy? But you’ve got to do that very early on and presumably you’ve got to not treat that kid like it’s the wrong gender. (2/04 520)

There is not the mechanism to think about this phenomena in a way that makes sense of a social constructionist approach to gender coupled with a broadly relational approach to therapy. Why is it necessary to site gender in the body when so much of its identity is expressed through activity that is not limited to any one body? Why is it easy, even commendable, to behave in ways that confound gender stereotypes yet confusing to need to enact this on the body? How can the body be critiqued as a site for the social inscription of gender while at the same time being considered as something that speaks for itself?

It was talking about, what’s the importance of matter? Does matter matter in and of itself, because the feminist critique has been ‘no’, matter is always pre-discursively decided on. And then patients come in and say ‘I went on
hormones and something changed.’ And can we just ascribe that to culture? Maybe we can, maybe we can’t. I think that there’s something that we haven’t yet figured out about that yet. (2/07 312)

4.6.3 Psychoanalytic theory is not helping

Transgender, the perfect example where psychoanalysts have no preparation or concept from their own literature about what to make of the transgender person. You don’t really have anything explanatory.

[7 lines omitted]

They know nothing about treating transgender people but they’ve taken on the case, you know? And they have all these, they don’t read outside the psychoanalytic literature to inform themselves. They’re just going to use the tools that they were trained in and try to make them work with something that might require them to do a little bit of work that’s different than their usual work. That, I think, happens in our field all the time. (2/08 190)

While it may be true that there is no preparation it is perhaps not the case that there is no theory; rather the theory that there is relies on an oedipal version of gender and sexuality that can only see transgender as pathological. Gender identity arises out of identification so gender problems require a psychological solution, unless a physical cause can be found that overrides them. Otherwise, the therapist must look for the psychic function of the physical change and rely on interpretation to resolve the internal dilemma. A particular history can make it possible to judge a wish to transition as an act of castration, or identification with the mother, for example, which could then be analysed:

The transgender seems to me much more a relationship towards their own body. For me, it’s an act of oedipal relationship quite often on their own
bodies. Their attitude towards what gender they are, and what are the changes, has usually got a huge ramification of their early history. But that might be again reifying something that, you know, because it makes me feel more comfortable. (2/02 595)

This participant, while holding quite a traditional view of gender identity, also acknowledged that it is a view that makes the holder of it comfortable, and this is something to be borne in mind. The sort of alternative that made sense to this participant was a more physical cause of transgender, the science relating to pre-natal hormones and brain differences:

All sorts of research coming out that suggests that these things may be literally more concrete reality than we think they are. It is extremely complicated...Psychoanalysis used to blame mothers for having Down’s Syndrome babies, because there was aggression in the womb, and all that sort of stuff. That’s why I’ve had to become more open minded. I don’t want to be seen as somebody who uses theory to reify my patients, really. (2/02 44)

The analytic emphasis on gender as a necessary marker of difference, the acceptance of which moves the individual out of an omnipotent monologue into a more reconciled dialogue, leads to the concept of transgender as a delusional state of wanting to have it all, to be something that is simply not an option, using the body to address the psyche:

‘I’ve been born in the wrong body’ – it seems a bit of an odd idea. There are people in America who want to be trans-species – that feels mad. (2/02 434)

It’s the same thing as people being.... To me it’s like people doing - whatever is it...cryo?...Cryogenics is the same. Or being a trans human where you think, ‘Well, if I think it, it should happen.’ (2/04 770)
But analytic theory serves practitioners poorly in finding other ways to articulate this, and frustration about theoretical limitations was evident in the interviews. There simply was not a way to start thinking about transgender that helped without in itself causing more problems. It was notable that postmodern thinking came across as best equipped to address transgender without yet having a sufficient platform in psychoanalysis to take a majority of practitioners with it. One participant noted how transgender raised a more fundamental question of identity by implication:

Well it’s obviously got to be a challenge to the thing that I might call ‘me’, right? (2/02 789)

Another participant noted that the fact of transgendered clients presenting themselves at therapist’s doors did not in itself enable good theory to be created:

And yet, what I think is complicated is that that doesn’t necessarily translate to having a theory about how to understand transgender or how to work with transgender. (2/07 172)

Transgender was after all comparatively new to mainstream psychoanalysis, and not much was yet known, certainly not enough for clear theories to have developed. People wanted to find ways forward and did not want to be seen as prejudiced, but it was simply too soon to be able to conclude:

I think that there is the anxiety of being called transphobic now in the way that it used to be about being called homophobic. People now register that as an accusation. But on the other hand, I don’t think that we’ve done yet enough work to be able to speak about trans from a theoretical perspective, not just from a trans positive perspective. (2/07 184)
4.7 – Final reflection

The second set of interviews built on some of the themes from the first set to draw a more rounded picture. The need to integrate psychoanalytic theory with other disciplines; to make overt the morality embedded in its teachings; to understand identity differently, so that gender and sexuality were not isolated concepts but part of the wider sweep of social, personal, cultural identities; this was part of the conversation about reconsidering Oedipus. Transgender again took a more central position than had been expected at the start, and this will be part of the discussion in Chapter Six.
Chapter Five – Discussion and conclusions

This chapter will discuss the methodology used for the research and the limitations of the study. It will also discuss the contribution of this research to psychoanalytic thought on gender and sexuality in the Oedipus complex and potential directions for further research and thought. It will address itself to the data in relation to the research question rather than as a summary of the entire set, which is already captured in the analysis.

The original research question was:

What is the response of psychoanalytic theorists to the construction of gender identity and sexual identity in the Oedipus complex, and to what extent is this theoretically consistent with adopting a non-pathologising approach to homosexuality?

To which a supplementary question was added in response to the direction of the interviews in round one:

What are the implications for psychoanalytic theorising about gender and sexuality?

The questions are not repeated here but can be found together in Chapter Three, and again in the beginnings of Chapter Four and Appendix 1 in relation to each set of interviews.
5.1 Introduction

The two stage interview process yielded different results and this is evident in a comparison of the two summaries, the more descriptive summary from round one and the fuller analysis from round two. This chapter draws on the similarities and differences between the two rounds to provide a perspective on the whole findings and their relationship to the research question. In accord with the encouragement afforded by Alvesson and Karreman (2011) that surprises should have a place in qualitative analysis, observations of what was experienced as surprising in the transcripts will receive comment. Surprises can reveal a gap between theory and data and so rely on the researcher as a resource in terms of bringing theory to the data. Different researchers would no doubt bring different resources and in a larger research project these could be effectively combined. Nevertheless, reflexivity in research does allow for individual interpretation provided it is transparent and visibly anchored in the data and the literature. Alvesson and Karreman further suggested that empirical material might be viewed as a ‘critical dialogue partner’ (Alvesson and Karreman 2011: 13), something to inspire conversation rather than provide evidence. This is a helpful comment for the discussion in which the researcher is actively dialoguing with the material and reaching their conclusion, rather than the only conclusion.

Much participant comment cautioned against generalising from the particular, and this is something also to be cautioned against in the discussion. The purpose of the interviews was to consider views from the field, not to provide a comprehensive map or to reach agreements that could represent the field. The choice to interview participants on both sides of the Atlantic additionally led to an interest in the participants themselves on views from ‘across the pond’. While inappropriate as a generalisation of difference into ‘the’ American or ‘the’ British view, there is appropriate and fruitful reflection to be had on possible meanings of the cultural differences observed by the researcher and by the participants. Again taking the researcher as resource into account, such comment may provoke questions and possible directions of travel for further consideration and future research.
5.2 Review of methodology

The methodology achieved its aim of bringing the thoughts of experts to bear on the research question. This brief review concentrates first on the participants and then on the limitations of the study.

5.2.1 Reflection on the participants

The first round of interviews acted as an introduction, physically between researcher and participant and also between the participant and the experience of the research, both inside their own minds and between their thoughts and the researcher’s. Perhaps because it was clearly the first of two meetings there was a sense of the first interview as a warm-up, a loosening of intellectual muscle and a negotiation of turf and process. While the responsibility for adjustment lay with the researcher, the participants as experts were used to speaking out. The American participants on the whole were more confident but less personally revealing, sharing what was in likelihood already known about them but tailored to this specific conversation. The male British participants generally demonstrated greater verbal confidence than the female British contributors who on occasion expressed greater hesitation or diffidence about their expertise in the first round, but not in the second.

The questions asked in the first round invited a personal orientation to the research. The first question – ‘what drew you to agree to be part of this research?’ – was intended to give an opportunity for the participant to site themselves in relation to the research and the researcher, and also to their position in relation to the profession of psychoanalysis, if they so chose. It was the most personal of the planned questions, although some of the interviews proceeded to take more personal turns than others. It did tend to act as a predictor for the nature of the conversation that followed, not just in what was said but in how it was said. The questions asked in the second round invited a greater focus on theory. The tenor of the interviews was less personal but
also more relaxed; not so much people being themselves, but being familiar with the role and being able to repeat it with less effort.

Alvesson (2002) drew attention to the setting and process of the interviews, affected by both the relationship between participant and interviewer, and by the wider patterns of discourse to which both are subject. Interviews are ‘inherently shaky’ (Alvesson 2002: 126) and knowing this should guide the interpretation. In the light of this the two stages worked well, giving time for familiarity and progress as outlined above and a slightly deeper knowledge of the participants as interviewees, as well as a significantly deeper interrogation of the subject matter.

Despite the restrictions of such a small number, the choice of participants remained relevant to the study. Participants’ theoretical backgrounds were often multiple as their level of experience meant they had developed and sometimes undergone more than one training and had followed different tracks of interest over the years. When asked to self-identify their theoretical orientation within psychoanalysis (see 3.4.2) they named pluralist, phenomenological, Kleinian, independent, post-Jungian, relational, object relations, intersubjectivist, Freudian (or with some Freudian influence), interpersonal and eclectic approaches. One participant declined to define their theoretical approach. In addition, during the interviews, contemporary Freudian, social object relations, feminist, Marxist, ego psychology, cognitive analytic, social constructionist, postmodernist and empiricist approaches were mentioned. This was no doubt in part because the participants had mostly led long analytic lives and had experience of growing and broadening their knowledge and practice over the years, having the scope to embrace and learn from as well as reject other orientations. It also reflected the connections between approaches which were linked by history, politics and geography as well as theory.

Some (a minority) had trained in associations that were members of the International Psychoanalytical Association; others had different professional associations but still called themselves psychoanalysts; others did not call themselves psychoanalysts but preferred for example psychoanalytic psychotherapists. All were content to answer the
description of being a psychoanalyst or psychoanalytic practitioner, as described in the initial email and the participant information sheet. This indicates the relative heterogeneity of the group that gathered under this title. This was noted with some surprise and possibly concern by one participant. When asked in the second interview whether he recognised his contribution in the summary paper following the first interviews, which was the moment when the views of the participants became known to each other, he replied:

I did. I mean, it’s complicated for me because I’m coming from probably the most, erm, orthodox position, I suppose, as a psychoanalyst, who’s partly becoming more and more open minded because of the patients that I see. (2/02 19)

‘Complicated’ seemed to refer to feeling himself on the outer edge of the group, an orthodox outrider taking a greater risk as a result. It may be that his expectation was of a greater number of more orthodox participants given the psychoanalytic framework of the research. Some participants had lived relatively mainstream professional lives – although their publications had inevitably made them controversial - while others described themselves as mavericks or outsiders. Some belonged to associations that already had an outsider identity and so had a good fit within that context, and would not have seen this as ‘outside’.

Participant 10 elaborated on his declaration of theoretical approach. Calling himself simply ‘eclectic’, he clarified in an email communication:

I do realise that many psychoanalysts, probably most, consider themselves “Jungians” or “Freudians” etc etc. I have concluded that none of the popular conceptual models in psychoanalysis is adequate but combinations of models fit best with clinical needs. These combinations vary across spectra of psychopathology and coping/resilience.
Another participant (07) declined to state their age and gender: ‘I understand the position you are in regarding demographics. Here is the information I feel I can respond to’. They had a clear relational perspective and looked at gender and identity from a postmodern position of fluidity and self-definition. This would make what would otherwise seem a simple statement of gender definition quite problematic.

As the historical and political significance of title and allegiance and demographic detail became clearer to the researcher over the course of the research, so did the implications of what was a demonstrably broader grouping than had been originally understood, including some schools that would not in usual circumstances be in conversation with each other, despite shared concerns about sexuality and gender. It was to be expected that participants would be critical of the current state of theorising in this area of psychoanalysis, but it was clear that they were unlikely to reach a shared view of the theoretical problems or the way forward, given the different epistemologies. It was difficult for the researcher to fairly and equally engage with all of the theoretical arguments as the range of approaches was so great, and the small number of participants meant that they could not be considered ‘representative’ of their particular groupings. Their contributions are therefore best seen as indicative, that is, as pointing towards anomalies and surprises that went further than the contradictions and challenges that could have been expected. They would all be expected to disagree with a traditional or classical approach; it was the detail of how they did this with particular reference to each other that held the promise. The manifest content was from necessity the basis for the analysis: it was a thematic analysis that accepted data as data. The discussion however allows space to approach the material as a ‘critical dialogue partner’ (Alvesson and Karreman 2011: 119) that facilitated the finding of surprises and breakdowns in understanding, and it is these disjunctures that can become points of discovery.
5.2.2 Reflection on the methodology

All research raises further questions about method as well as content. This research has wrestled with the tension of accepting data in a realist sense while simultaneously absorbing an often social constructionist or postmodern viewpoint from the participants which would encourage a greater complication of data. As referred to in Chapter Three, this is a methodological compromise made with the benefit of open acknowledgement, understanding the researcher’s analysis as one particular turn of a vastly more complex Rubik’s cube of possible commentaries. Partial and changeable knowledge is, however, arguably still useful and no less real than any of the concepts of sexuality, gender and identity contained within this research. As Richards stated:

To sit looking at descriptions of data, like a cat at a mouse hole, will never produce a theory. Theories (and, indeed, the hunches, ideas, themes from which they are made) are constructed by researchers. (Richards 2005: 128)

Thematic analysis offers the most flexible response to the question of ontology (Willig 2013) and has remained a good choice for this particular research. The researcher has chosen to focus on the manifest meanings of the interviews but thematic analysis allows for the possibility of more latent meanings to co-exist. Thematic analysis does not demand anything particular of the research and openly relies on the researcher’s interpretations of the material.

While reflexivity is acknowledged in the study and the researcher’s position was outlined in Chapter One, the study was not designed as a primarily reflexive piece of work and the reader has limited access to the material behind the interpretations. To have foregrounded the researcher more would have been at the cost of the space given to the experts’ views which were accorded greater value in the research design; nevertheless, this is a potential restriction for the reader in reaching their own conclusions about the findings.
This opaqueness was also found in the interaction between the participants and the researcher. The decision not to share the researcher’s paper with participants prior to the first meeting undoubtedly allowed the development of a more open frame of reference for the interviewees. Moreover, its sharing in the first pilot interview had led to an uncomfortable feeling of scholarly review rather than mutual engagement. However, it also meant that the first set of interviews were less theoretically focussed and the participants were conversing on a topic that was politically contentious without knowing a great deal about the approach of the researcher. This may have prevented more traditional analysts from taking part in the project, although receipt of the paper may have had the same effect. Researcher transparency is always a vexed question in terms of how it can best serve the interests of the research.

The open structure of the thematic analysis did not push the participants on points of apparent disagreement or agreement that emerged following the first set of interviews. A more closely structured second interview may have presented more opportunities for this, for example on the theme of integration across schools and disciplines. However, this may have meant that the fuller discussions on transgender were curtailed; losses and gains are always in balance. The lack of generalisability from the study is a frustration and a limitation. It remains inappropriate to infer ‘a’ or ‘the’ way forward from this research. However, as one of the clear critiques participants made of psychoanalysis was its over-willingness to generalise from the particular, this is a frustration best lived with.

The selection of participants was influenced by the knowledge of the field possessed by the researcher at the time. The differences of approach contained under the umbrella of psychoanalysis became clearer as the research progressed and would now facilitate a more deliberate selection of representation across consciously chosen schools. The comparatively low number of participants from more traditional institutions in both the UK and the USA limited understanding of the most conservative tradition with regard to homosexuality and Oedipus. While the advantage of including the less traditional schools included greater contact with thinking taking place closer to the margins, it was at the cost of some awareness of how this thinking was received by
the mainstream. The heterogeneity certainly offered variety of perspective but perhaps lacked the depth that might have been available from two compare and contrast groups with greater homogeneity in each.

5.3 Oedipus

The conclusions around Oedipus were comparatively straightforward and not necessarily new to the field, but they have not been pulled together in this particular way before.

5.3.1 Thinking about theory

Theory was discussed as something arising from the personal, professional and academic cultures available to each individual interviewee. The first round questions drew participants towards a reflection of their own interest in this area which was invariably personal as well as professional. They also addressed the situated-ness of Freud and his followers, drawing attention to the specific time and place that surrounded the development of the Oedipus complex. Oedipus was then as much an account of the times in which it was developed as an account of universal development, leaving the question of whether changing times still left it with a role to play. It was interesting to note that for some participants their analytic practice seldom called on oedipal theory.

There was a shared doubt that psychoanalysis on its own was sufficient to provide complete developmental theories, and a shift in perspective that understood gender and to an extent sexuality to be more individually compiled. This was part of the challenge to the role of psychoanalysis in theorising cause as opposed to meaning. It can be questioned whether it is possible to remain completely focussed on the meaning to the individual without speculating on cause, especially as clients as well as
therapists ask ‘why?’, and extrapolation is hard to avoid. But if psychoanalysis wants to contribute to cause it must know its place, and know that it cannot be the sole owner of developmental theory.

Having some idea of how things come to be was voiced as needing a basic map, something to contain thinking within recognisable boundaries so that deviant pathways did not go entirely into the wilderness. Damasio (2012) asserted that mental maps were essential tools for the management of complex lives. ‘The human brain is a born cartographer’ (Damasio 2012: 64), beginning with mapping the body and working outwards in interaction with its environment. Location matters. Yet there is also something concerning about this if the material from which the sex and gender map was formed was built from oedipal reference points that were included as terrain rather than located as keys. Moss described the problem concisely: ‘A map fosters the belief that we have transformed a disciplinary ‘judgement’ into a neutral ‘reading’” (Moss 2015: 187).

The notion of a map hides the intention that some desires should not be part of the terrain; the mapped interpretation hides the morality behind the geography. Drescher (2007) suggested that the word ‘natural’ itself was a reference to something that was culturally valued. For Freud, this was genital heterosexuality. For object relationists, it may be sustained attachments. The point is that natural is a subjective category and the unnatural is always negotiated. So for example the Darwinian view of nature supported Freud by providing an evolutionary imperative for heterosexual dominance and thus the ground for the oedipal interpretation of sexual development, while this same interpretation provided precisely the ground that unsettled notions of heterosexuality as normative (Dimen 1995a). There is morality in the view that intention should be the measure of relationship, that there is a transgressive difference between paedophilia and homosexuality, that core gender identity is a sign of mental health. The hidden constituents of the framework were cited as a problem for psychoanalysis in relation to sexuality.
Another strand that emerged across several interviews was the identification of what had happened to gay and lesbian men and women in psychoanalysis, whether in treatment, training or practice, as trauma, with the implication that there was now a post-traumatic period of recovery to move through. With few or no visible gay or lesbian analysts, and with most analysts only having contact with homosexuality through their clinical work, it had been difficult to challenge homophobia from within. Ellis (1994) attempted to survey admissions policies of psychoanalytic trainings in the UK as well as the experiences of lesbian and gay applicants. She found that the most positive organisations viewed homosexuality as no particular problem but a pathology like any other; the assessment of the individual would determine whether it affected the personal qualities required for training. Underlying this was a confused liberalism not helped by the Kleinian orthodoxy underpinning so many trainings. Subsequent studies of graduates of counselling and therapy trainings confirmed the inadequate preparation they experienced in relation to working with lesbian and gay clients (Grove 2009) and the inappropriate role of the client in providing the learning through clinical practice (Owen-Pugh and Baines 2013).

The impact of trauma would impact on theory development, as one response to it is to attempt to naturalise and become an unobtrusive part of the dominant group; this passivity quiets precisely those intellects that might otherwise have the most pertinent things to say. It also contributes to understanding why much new theory is developed outside of mainstream psychoanalysis.

5.3.2 Oedipus: a framework for the future

To see Oedipus as a scaffold for the future that could be relevant to the revised position of homosexuality required negotiation of a perspective, shared by all participants at some point although more completely by some than others, that a single unifying theory for the development of sexual and gendered identities was not the way forward. This was partly in response to the increased understanding of pre-oedipal life as rich and full of interpersonal dynamics, including the internalisation of
gendered aspects of self and other. It was also partly in response to the growing scientific knowledge about sexed and gendered development, pre-natal hormones being the most frequently mentioned aspect of this. If Oedipus had previously stood alone and sphinx-like at the crossroads of sexual and gendered development, it now had company. There were different views about how to take Oedipus forward and these fell into three positions.

Firstly, that the fundamental structure of Oedipus could stand in a neutral space in relationship to gender. The players could be moved around and the dynamics remain the same: two women parenting a child would need to and be able to negotiate inclusion and exclusion, the move from a two to a three person relationship, just as a man and a woman would do. The fundamentals were gender-free, and the fundamentals remained important.

Secondly, that Oedipus was an iterative dynamic, returned to over the course of a lifetime, with many different variations possible. The richness and impact of pre-oedipal life can be brought within the scope of oedipal theory rather than set against it. Oedipus can be brought forward into earlier stages, as Klein had done, but not as a developmental stage framed in time. The oedipal dynamic was not limited to or necessarily framed by a timeline and did not have to be an all-or-nothing moment in settling identity. Its dynamic remained important, however, and was not to be discarded.

Thirdly, that the material of most relevance in Oedipus did not relate to the development of sexual or gendered identities; they were not an essential aspect of the theory. Oedipus was fundamentally about boundaries and remains the best framework to contain this. The frame remains but the content changes, so that it now captures generational difference, omnipotence, deferred gratification, inclusion/exclusion and so on. Although these things could be spoken about on their own ground, Oedipus provided an existing framework that could still hold them and it could profitably continue to do so.
5.3.3 Oedipus: to be dismantled

While it was possible to think of ways to develop Oedipus as mentioned above, the view of those who thought it belonged to the past was that this really made it into something beyond what it was intended to be, supporting a centrality that was no longer merited. Oedipus centred on an account of gendered and sexual identities. If it provided a point of reference for thinking about omnipotence and generational boundaries then that was interesting but did not mean that oedipal theory had ownership of these thoughts. They could stand for themselves and did not need propping up. Oedipus was not free from the accretions of its past, and inevitably brought them into updated interpretations. It was time to let it go.

Clinically, it may be that some patients would choose to frame their own experiences in an oedipal way; its cultural references in relation to sex and gender were still current and an individual may well express a same sex desire using a cross gender framework, for example. This should be listened to and worked with as any other clinical account would be. But it was one story amongst many and it did not mean that the clinician, or the patient, should believe it.

5.3.4 Oedipal conclusions

The question of whether or not to keep Oedipus is of course rhetorical; it is there, a part of history, and as the participants commented there is no formal method of updating psychoanalytic theory to remove it. But in terms of its future, while there was no conclusion on this there was an overall (though not unanimous) feeling that the current situation of critiquing, reformulating, enlarging and taking or leaving oedipal theory was the right direction in which to be heading.

On reflection, an interesting part of this in relation to the research question was the overall absence of interest on the part of the participants in the specifics of the research question. The contentiousness of Oedipus seemed neutralised by the non-
pathologisation of homosexuality. Some had seldom considered Oedipus in the light of gender definition, and their use of it in practice was limited except (and even including) in the wider context of boundaries, despite the centrality if the oedipal account to the analytic ‘canon’. This calls to mind Spezzano’s (2004) warning against believing that there is such a thing as a unified concept of psychoanalysis:

...there is psychoanalysis as it exists in the collective mind of practicing analysts (ordinary, everyday, doable psychoanalysis) and there is analysis in the psychoanalytic literature (a collective version of the analyst's ego ideal). (Spezzano 2004: 193-4)

Oedipus in the literature organises desire through gender differentiation. Gender sameness as an organiser of desire can be theorised as a variant on differentiation or can be cause for re-evaluating the organisational groundrules. Should sex (in the sense of the body) not be the primary organiser of desire, then the place of the body also becomes a question in desire and identity, and this is a disruption of Oedipus.

This points in the direction of transgender issues in this research, and these are discussed next.

5.4 Transgender

Transgender generated a livelier response than homosexuality in the interviews, and was seen as the new homosexuality in terms of the latest challenge to be faced by psychoanalysis.

Freud sought to explain how a state of social and evolutionary coherence could be arrived at when it originated from a place in which desire had no restraint. The oedipal resolution relied on a concept of the body as a stable object around which desire could be fixed. Transgender unsettled this concept. It unsettled the relationship between
body and mind and created a conundrum in which they were required to simultaneously need and not need each other. Psychoanalysis seemed unprepared to meet this challenge and most problematically seemed unaware of its unpreparedness.

5.4.1 Transgender – repeating the pattern

The emergence of transgender as a significant area of discussion was not expected, and yet it came in to every interview at some point. With hindsight it might have been anticipated that trans would indeed be relevant to discussions about sexuality and gender. The surprise was in some of the voiced areas of struggle with transgender, where participants were trying not to resort to the liberal discourse of acceptance, but had insufficient structure to help them think beyond it. These comments are summarised below.

(i) Transgender denies the material reality of sexual difference and enters a psychotic zone of believing it is possible to have it all, to be omnipotent rather than come to terms with the limitations of existence.
(ii) Surgery is the acting out on the body of a psychic difficulty, possibly an oedipal one.
(iii) It is more possible to accept the situation of someone who has always felt they were in the ‘wrong body’ and has a lifelong conviction about this, than someone who wants to partially transition.
(iv) It is easier to accept and support the concept of transgender if it can be seen that there is a physical cause, for example a feminisation of the brain due to pre-natal hormones.
(v) Psychoanalysis can offer help with the psychological difficulties that underpin gender identity disturbances. The difficulties, and therefore the disturbances, may be amenable to treatment.
(vi) Gender identity problems may be a solution to sexual identity issues.
(vii) A person identifying as transgender may continue to have some identifications with the other gender but these can be overcome sufficiently to allow for an identification with the same gender to succeed.
(viii) There is some confusion over transgender and transvestism.
(ix) Transgender is very destabilising to the way of thinking about gender – it makes no sense of it
(x) It would be inappropriate to accept transgendered people into training at this stage – where would the line be drawn?

It is possible to place these statements in parallel to the types of comments made about homosexuality in the past. These comments were not made by any of the participants, but the parallels occurred to the researcher on reflection.

(i) Homosexuality denies the material reality of sexual difference. It enters a psychotic zone of believing it is possible to be a woman with a penis, or a man without one, rather than facing the fact of the gender we were born with.
(ii) Homosexual behaviour is the acting out in the body of a psychic difficulty, probably and oedipal one.
(iii) It more possible to accept the situation of someone who has always felt they were homosexual and has a lifelong conviction about this, than someone who describes themselves as bisexual.
(iv) It is easier to accept and support the concept of homosexuality if it can be seen that there is a physical cause, for example a feminisation of the brain due to pre-natal hormones.
(v) Psychoanalysis can offer help with the psychological difficulties that underpin homosexuality. The difficulties, and therefore the sexuality, may be amenable to treatment.
(vi) Sexual identity problems may be a solution to gender identity issues
(vii) A person identifying as homosexual may continue to experience some same sex desires, but these can be overcome sufficiently to allow for heterosexual relationships to succeed.
(viii) There is some confusion over homosexuality and transvestism
(ix) Homosexuality is very destabilising to the way of thinking about gender – it makes no sense of it
(x) It would be inappropriate to accept homosexual people into training at this stage – where would the line be drawn?

These particular frameworks of concern around transgender were raised by a minority of participants, and were by no means a strong theme. Interestingly, this minority did not necessarily equate to the most conservative training or theoretical allegiance, which might have been expected. They did have however have limited experience of working with trans patients, which is probably true for the majority of theoreticians and practitioners. In all cases there was an overall commitment to an acceptance of the individual transgendered person, and in all cases there was a positive acceptance of homosexuality as a non-pathological human sexuality.

The analytic acceptance of homosexuality seems to have provided little theoretical platform from which to understand transgender. If homosexuality was accepted as non-pathological, then working backwards through the oedipal trajectory could have led to a questioning of the assumed complementarity between male and female that made it logical for a cross gender identity to lead to a same sex attraction, the logic of which allowed heterosexuality – and duality – to remain the organiser of desire. Behind this lay the Cartesian inheritance of mind and body: the body was a reality that the mind made something of, and gender difference was one of the non-negotiable realities that was defined by the body and reacted to by the mind. As homosexuality called into question gender difference as the bedrock of desire, transgender complicated the site of that difference between the co-locations of body and mind. By accepting homosexuality as non-pathological yet leaving the theorising of sex and gender unmoved by this acceptance, psychoanalysis perhaps missed an opportunity to prevent parallel theoretical problems recurring at the next hurdle of transgender.

The American participants overall had more experience of working with transgender: three of the four had worked at some depth with trans/gendered patients. These three participants, while having primarily analytic trainings and analyses, were also influenced by feminist, interpersonal and relational approaches, more strongly in the latter two than the UK participants, and with greater reference to postmodern
understandings. This seemed to have given a platform that meant the same questions about transgender were not raised, possibly because the theorising from the body was already subject to understanding the body less as a thing in itself and more as part of a relational experience.

This situation points the discussion towards revisiting analytic aspects of gender, sexuality and identity. It became clear that the meanings of sex and gender had changed over time and that this change had political connotations. The politics are embedded in the language and therefore any discussion about sex and gender is by its nature political. This leads to some complications in conversations on the topic.

5.5 Revisiting gender, sexuality and identity

5.5.1 Gender, politics and the body

Psychoanalysis had developed in a period of modernism. The body was an anchor for the psyche rather than the vessel that floated it; Freud’s bedrock, the source of the ego. The body was a fact, not a question. Feminists critiqued not the materiality of the body but the interpretation of its materiality, forcing a gap between fact and fiction, body and narrative that illuminated the contribution of perception and relationship to the constituting of the body. There was however a contradiction in feminist theory over time, pointed out by Dimen (1995b, 1997), that left gender as a conundrum. In the tradition of first wave feminism, women were portrayed as intrinsically different to men, the argument being for a recognition and value to be placed on that difference. In the second wave, women were part of a dual gender system that was spatial and temporal, the argument being for analysis and deconstruction to reveal the power dynamics of the system’s origins. The body was both an isolate and a partner; the mind likewise. Both approaches conceived of male and female in a cross-referential relationship, confirming an inevitable heterosexual framework:
As in all psychoanalytic theories of development, females become women, males become men, and the dance of their development is a heterosexual pairing.

(Dimen 1995b: 312)

The inevitable contradiction was something Dimen preferred to see as a postmodern opportunity to dialogue between woman as immutable category and woman as discourse, or put another way, what women are against what they want.

The female body was initially understood in analytic theory through the first wave tradition: its counter-active role to the male body, its receptivity, its capacity for generativity through pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding (Deutsch 1925, 1930, Horney 1926, Jones 1927). These were iconic images, linking the female body to the male, facilitating the oedipal interpretation of the body’s sex as complementary, to be reflected in the complementarity of the psyche. With the body having long been a site for gender oppression, and the female body in the Oedipus complex being necessarily the site of diminished merit, second wave feminist thinking in post war psychoanalysis had increasingly separated gender from the body so its construction could be seen in purer relief. The liberal humanism which had brought women the vote was no challenge to androcentric assumptions of Western discourse (Gergen 1992, Hekman 1990). Hekman argued that feminism should take advantage of postmodernism (which some of it went on to do) as it could benefit from postmodernism’s challenge to the binary, while postmodernism could benefit from a more conscious awareness of gender. Until then, the sex of the body remained the domain of science which perforce placed science in opposition to the equality agenda, embedded in a history in which absolute difference had served inequality. There was no platform for neutral dialogue about gender difference.

In the interviews, the scientific view foregrounded the effect of the body on the experience of being sexed, particularly the effect of prenatal hormones on early development of sexed characteristics. The asymmetry of sex was emphasised, the greater aggressive qualities of testosterone for example, and the pattern of greater violence amongst men in adult life. The participant voicing this most clearly was at
pains to underline the neutrality of the scientific position as without ideology or political rhetoric. Of course this is questionable from outside a scientific discourse, and postmodernism would counter that nothing is outside rhetoric and ideology; but for the purposes of this research the point of note is the awareness of the difficulty of thinking of fact without ideology. When Glaser and Frosh (1988) for example published on possible reasons for the empirical links between masculinity and sexual abuse, taking into account the fact that most abuse is committed by men, this was rapidly interpreted by the press as an equation between all men and abuse – ‘that all men are potential abusers’ (Frosh 1994: 3). While Glaser and Frosh were talking about what masculinity makes of men, the dominant political discourse framed a different and accusatory conversation from the same material. The difference was that one side owned the ideology while the other reported it as fact.

Feminist social constructionist voices had been loudest in demanding that psychoanalysis review its theoretical position on women, on minorities, its assumptions of universality based on narrow observation and broad inference. Material which seemed to threaten these gains could not be welcomed with open arms, even though minds might be curious. Testosterone threatened more than male aggression; it opened the back door to the essentialist position that had done such harm. Early feminists had tried to reclaim the body for women, embracing its reproductive qualities, searching for a female definition of womanhood rather than one that was a phallic rebound. However, phallic dominance made the female body ever a comparator to the male one, reflecting the social standing of women in society. The eventual post-war rise in social standing was supported by and also supported feminism, which then turned its attention to psychoanalysis (Eichenbaum and Orbach 1985; Mitchell 1986, 1990) in the hope of understanding why women continued to act in ways that repeated their powerlessness and dependence: why not grasp freedom? This political engagement took hold and became both critical and committed. It built on the work of Stoller and Money that framed the difference between sex and gender in such a way that sex resided rather uncritically in the body and gender became what was made of sex, in the individual and in society. Masculinity, femininity, complementarity, all became a discourse written on rather than by the body. Bodies
were different but equal and their specificity was no longer the centre of the argument. Should it return under the guise of asymmetry, concern about regressive theorising accompanied it. Difference was political, and feminism was caught in the middle.

Butler (1990, 2004) provided a challenge to the reliance of feminist analysis on the body as the location of gender (gender was mutable but assumed an immutable body as its resting place). By making the body the deciding factor in whether men were men and women were women, and separating out the expression of the meaning of sex into the category of gender, feminism painted itself into the impossible corner of representing all women as a unitary category. Assuming that the body itself was the most significant unifying factor, rather than the meanings attributed to the body, or even the body as only one aspect of sex rather than the defining aspect, has left feminism, and feminist informed psychoanalysis, with fewer resources to discuss transgender.

While politically representation is a necessity, Butler thought it might be better to find an argument that did not rest on the ground of essentialism, pragmatically recognising that liveable lives required identity, but equally that some categories of identity made individual lives unliveable. Norms and conventions could therefore be in the service of life, or in opposition to it. By securing gender in the body, and securing the body as the anchor for gender, there was little way of understanding transgender except as an appropriation or an aberration. The impossibility of gaining a sex simply through surgery is created by the initial reliance on the body as the crucible of gender. Whereas to consider the body itself as sited within a cultural frame transforms the issue of ownership without negating its significance.
5.5.2 Complementarity

Heterosexuality as the outcome of gendered identity rested on the oedipal opposition of identification and desire. The implications for the link between sexuality and gender evoked interest in the participants and a variety of views.

The traditional link that accorded with Oedipus was complementarity. While Lacan perhaps uniquely combined an emphasis on the acknowledgement of sexual difference with a certainty that such difference was not complementary in structure, calling it instead ‘combinatory’ (Lacan 1964: 150), this was unusual. It was difficult to know whether describing relational behaviour in terms of gender could ever stand outside of heterosexual normativity. The use of ‘butch-femme’ for example overlays heterosexuality onto lesbian relationships, without allowing a distinctness to female butchness that is not limited to masculinity. On the other hand, accounting for butchness through the notion of masculinity configures it as part of being female, and femininity and masculinity do not then need to belong to specific bodies (Butler 2004).

The alternatives to complementarity came from the postmodern standpoint that built on sex and gender as personal constructs. While significant in these interviews, it is important to note that not all queer theorists espouse a postmodern approach to identity and some would rather address a specific queer identity coming from strong antecedents, a historical continuum to which the present is attached (Norton 1997). In such a view the notion of flexibility trivialises identity by reducing it to a signifier, ‘rather like a baseball cap’ (Norton 1997: 34). However, in the context of complementarity, viewing identity as individually created (although not from limitless resources) allowed individuals to link gender and sexuality in ways that had meaning for their own lives. From this perspective the question of whether or not, and how, gender and sexuality were to be theorised together without the oedipal join became a question addressed to the individual. For some there was a positive correlation between sexuality and gender. A particular inhabitation of femininity, for example, would be wrapped up with a way of inhabiting a sexual self, of feeling sexual. For others, there would be less significance to gender as an experience related to
sexuality, the latter being more strongly affected by other aspects of identity, such as race or class. Purposefully sidestepping causation, this approach addressed psychoanalysis as a discovery of individual meaning. The question of whether there is a link between sexuality and gender is then a non-question as it is too general to be answered by such an individualised approach.

For some participants the complications illuminated by transgender led away from links between gender and sexuality and towards separation of the two. If a transman could be lesbian prior to transition and heterosexual afterwards without adjusting his object of desire, such labels were clearly linked to the social constructs surrounding sex and gender rather than to a consistent theory of a gendered and sexual self.

Overall, the idea of complementarity was seen as so loaded with stereotypical features of gender and positioned within such a stable notion of gender as to be very out of date. A different theoretical discourse would be needed to link gender to sexuality without heteronormativity. In the interviews this was resolved through individualising their cross referencing and accepting the discourse around complementarity as a language to describe not a fact but a situation in its context. Complementarity effectively articulated both the expression and the silencing of gender as it formalised the inability of either gender to speak fully for itself.

5.5.3 Identity

Although it was the purpose of this research to focus on sexual and gendered identities, one theme was the concentration of psychoanalytic thought into these areas with less mention of other signifiers of identity such as race and class. Roudinesco, in relation to Lacan, had stated ‘...access to identity always presupposes a relationship to others mediated by the law’ (Roudinesco 2014: 38), drawing attention to the cultural and mediated nature of identity which by its nature must include factors outside the individual. Frosh had melded psychoanalysis and sociological studies to integrate what they had to offer, examining people’s experience in culture
to raise the ‘fragility of the racialized (and...masculinised) identity’ (Frosh 2002: 62) which relied on violent projection into the other to sustain itself. The analytic discourse about identity has remained unusually untouched by the broadening understanding of the concept particularly in the fields of sociology, history and philosophy (Dollimore 1991, Ryan 2006, Weeks 1989). While the former concentrated on issues of class in psychotherapy, the latter suggested ways of understanding identity that emphasised the temporal and the functional, away from the reducible Darwinian link that, together with the social imperative, drove a naturalistic view of heterosexuality. While Freud was no simple biologist he did create a progressive developmental path that was influenced by the biological as well as the social, and left it open to essentialism. While Freudian identity arose from myriad compositions of unconscious drives and defences, it did share a concept of eventual consistency that sat in parallel with the interpersonal view of identity which, through a very different route, nevertheless formed a comparatively stable outcome.

Postmodernism was not the first challenge to this. Lacan had emphasised the impossibility of a coherent subject, whose construction through language was the focus of the analytic endeavour (Mitchell 1982). Culturally specific, Lacanian thought exemplifies how different philosophies support different theories of identity. Lacanian gender is always contingent; the only certainty is the necessity of gender, as its division is the function of the phallus, the imposition of Law. But postmodernism allowed for a strength and necessity in identity that did not undermine its passing and inconclusive nature. The relationalist Mitchell had wrestled with the question of how authenticity could be achieved when the relational self was never without context, and reached for a self that was defined in and over time rather than space, discoverable through its actions and movements rather than in stasis (Mitchell 1992).

From this perspective the usual mantra of a spectrum of identity is an insufficient container as it remains a two dimensional organisation in a multi-dimensional world. Weeks (2003) embraced the paradoxes of identity as returning sexuality to the human scale of context and accident while also returning to the human level the capacity to effect change on identity: ‘...to say that something is a historical fiction is not to
denigrate it’ (Weeks 2003: 129). This is somewhat distant from the more traditional analytic approach to identity that has now accepted homosexuality as a viable option but has not altered the concepts of stability and finitude on which the idea of such an option rests. It is possible that drive theory was claimed by the more naturalised view of sex which emphasised behaviour as the definer of sexuality (Simon 2003) in a way that went beyond Freud’s intentions but remained in the fabric of later analytic thinking about both sex and gender. The isolation that could see concepts of identity so unaffected by the transformation of postmodern thinking that statements of ‘the homosexual’ remained unremarkable explains to some extent the unpreparedness of much of the analytic field for the arrival of transgender. Trans, with its simultaneous disruption and confirmation of the body as anchor, slipped into the space left between empiricism and social constructionism in relation to gendered identity. In response to this, traditional psychoanalysis neither raised the anchor nor sailed the ship but threw a grappling iron further on to the rocky shoreline. The analogy holds good for homosexuality too, which in a parallel way was held to confound the natural, evolutionary fit of male and female. Theory prioritised the natural and Oedipus is a prime example of a logical and mechanically perfect construction that could explain the way things were in terms of the way they were. In a sense, gender and sexuality triangulated each other, providing evidence of their naturalness through the identity/desire cross-lock. Undo that, and grappling irons and anchors would be of little use.

If the division between sex and gender rested on an assumed stability of the body as the centre of identity, this was brought into question by transgender. The modernist handle of gender as a mental identity and sex as a physical one left nowhere to go in terms of understanding something which implacably contradicted this and joined gender with sex, just as the oedipal barrier between identification and desire left nowhere for homosexuality to go apart from into the aberrations. Individualising transgender, like individualising homosexuality, left aberration as an option, while the discourse of acceptance could evoke kindness and tolerance but left psychoanalysis none the wiser.
On the other side of this is the question of whether something so very much in the minority should really have such a significant impact on understanding identity, sexuality or gender. Perhaps theory would be distorted rather than enlarged as a result. One participant remarked that intersex was an important but minority condition and the baseline remained the majority of people being born into anatomically similar sexed bodies. Intersex should not therefore be extrapolated into having an effect on the majority. On the other hand, intersex offers an opportunity to refocus on assumptions about sexual identity that may have become invisible through their ubiquity, including the morality or value base behind the assumptions. It also allows for consideration of the body as complexly gendered, a varied composition of chromosomes, hormones and internal/external physical characteristics.

The traditional treatment for intersex, when the apparent discrepancy has been visible at birth, has been to allocate a birth gender and then support that with surgery as necessary, on the basis that a clear gender identity is required to facilitate a stable, recognisable self and a liveable life. More recently the intersex movement has criticised this on the basis that an intersexed individual is already fully human and if bodies do not always appear on clear binary gender lines then the lines are at fault and not the bodies. Butler (2004) pointed out that this agenda of opposing interference can seem to clash with the transgender agenda of being able to choose surgery, but that underneath lies a shared critique of the birth body as having ownership of gender. At the same time, she laid out the complications of gendered self-determination being available only through a society that would support it: 'In this sense, individual agency is bound up with social critique and social transformation' (Butler 2004: 7).

Homosexuality, too, appears to be an experience for a relatively small part of the population; transgender even smaller. Yet, as one participant commented, how do we know how many transgendered, or indeed homosexual, people there really are, and does the question itself not rely on definitions that prescribe the answers in a way that accords with what already is believed? The Kinsey (Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin 1948) report into human sexual behaviour was known to extend the numbers identified as homosexuals when it extended the definitions of homosexuality.
More significant than numbers is the question this poses of what it means to be human. Psychoanalysis since object relations has emphasised the role of recognition of self by another as a shaper of identity. Butler (2004) argued from a philosophical perspective that intelligibility is essential to a liveable life, that a person must be recognisable to another person in order to exist to themselves. The opposite of recognition is negation and not only places the individual in a position outside of the society in which they must live but also in a position in which they cannot authenticate themselves. To deny such authentication through creating circumstances in which a life becomes unintelligible is a human injustice. Requiring a ‘coherent’ (Butler 2004: 58) gender is therefore an injustice when people are unable to adhere to it. In Butler’s view the requirement for a firm identity in itself becomes an injustice, and this raises the bar for realising the impact of any theory which requires that identity be fixed.

5.5.4 Identity and the equality agenda

Trans as a broader movement has required a revised purchase on the term ‘identity’. In its earlier days transgender was present in a way that reinforced the gender binary through its split between the mind and the body; resolution lay in realigning them and the debate was over whether to achieve this through the mind or the body. In the feminist social constructionist view, which had answered the call of gender inequality and made gender infinitely flexible as a state of mind, the resolution was to be found in the mind, in the expansion of what it could mean to be male or female. If the resolution was found in the body, the social constructionism addressing gender as distinct from sex became problematic as it separated the material from the psychic but in the opposite direction. The body trumped, opening the spectre again of gender inequality that has been overcome with a narrative of sameness rather than difference. Trans risked the feminist point of gender as a social construct that had been the main weapon to fight discrimination and inequality for women. It also challenged the biological, innate view of sexual identity that had been the main weapon (until more recently with the input of queer theory) of fighting discrimination and equality in sexuality. Unable to sit on the single seats of either the mind or the
body, where is there to go? Trans revealed the political role of identity, and this contrasted with the core gender identity assumed by traditional psychoanalysis. The closer participants’ orientations were to the sense of a core, fixed gender, the more of a challenge transgender posed in terms of finding a theoretical understanding outside of pathology with which to grasp it.

Butler (2004) commented on the transition in the twenty-first century of ‘gender’ to ‘gender identity’ (Butler 2004: 6), thus moving it into the political arena of cross-gender identities. While ‘sex’ has become ‘gender’, ‘identity’ has become politicised. She was not alone in noting this:

Rather than a lesbian and gay movement, we now have an LGBTQ movement, a coalition unified somewhat precariously by its distance from and resistance to the heterosexual norm. (Dean and Lane 2001: 6)

LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) is joined not by common orientation but by a common position in relation to what is perceived to be a majority external and pressurising force. The inclusion of transgender in what began as a coalition based on sexuality causes some difficulty for lesbian and gay individuals whose gender identity is as core to them as their sexual identity. Butler (2004) addressed feminist concerns over transgender colonising sexual difference by siting gender difference in its historical context, in which understandings and meanings of gender shift over time. The gender in trans is no longer what it used to be. She placed gender as a way of ‘culturally configuring’ the body (Butler 2004: 9), and so it is not only gender as attribute that is open to question, but also sex as physical that can no longer be taken for granted; the body itself is configured in culture and even natal sex is not a natural sex. Butler’s position references a postmodern paradigm that will be discussed shortly in relation to psychoanalysis.
5.6 Revisiting theory

Theory as subjective was clearly articulated and has already been mentioned. Theory can be considered as observation impacted on by subjectivity (Cooper 1996). The transatlantic differences in theory indicated the differences in the subjectivities that formed them, and thereby pointed to some of the difficulties in finding a sufficiently common language and ideology through which to share understandings of gender and sexuality.

5.6.1 Drive theory and relational theory

From the interviews emerged an awareness of the sense of disappointed or aggrieved distance between the British and the American sides, and a more detailed understanding of the limitations of the crossover in awareness and ideas. There was a general view amongst the UK participants that the Americans were considerably further ahead in their thinking about gender and sexuality. The different analytic traditions of both countries, particularly post-war, have been described in Chapter Two. The difference was evident in the interviews, with participants referencing different authors and influences.

The most marked difference in relation to the research question was the remaining attachment to drive theory in the UK and the greater use made by the American participants of the relational approach, not adhered to by all, but known to all and used at least in part by most. The one American dissenter was grounded in an empirical approach that was in disagreement with some of the more postmodern tendencies of relational theory. The impact of this for the research is not so much a reflection on transcultural difference as an observation of where those differences might command different conversations about sexuality and gender.
Familiar to the UK participants, relational had a different and not always predictable place. A participant with a strong Kleinian perspective ventured that relational was the way forward, albeit under a different guise:

Oh, it is. It’s where I’m going. I work that way. I always say the patient’s analysis is a two way process, and their analysis of me is as important...Yeah. Well I think that’s where we’re all moving, we’re all moving to that.

[Interviewer: Even in the Institute, do you think?]
I think there are a lot of people who would say – they wouldn’t call it ‘relational’. They would call it ‘mutual’. (2/02 168)

Despite this, it is hard to see where the impact of the relational perspective is to be demonstrated in more Freudian or Kleinian psychoanalysis, and how much ‘mutual’ really covers it. Appropriation of the mutuality of a relational approach without grasping the theoretical challenges that may be implicit in it is, however, unsurprising given the participants’ comments about the inconsistencies and vagaries of theory making.

Much of the writing in the USA that challenges sexuality and gender in psychoanalysis comes out of the relational school, which is also more enthusiastically in conversation with the postmodern and queer worlds. The founding relationalist Stephen Mitchell wrote of what he saw as the mutual exclusivity of drive theory and relational theory, discussed in the literature review of this document, and this may account for some of the barriers between the two. Object relations can be seen as a natural lead-in to relational thinking but Mitchell (1984) differentiated between object relations that saw itself as adding to drive theory, in which he included Kernberg, Modell and Levinson; and object relations that left drive theory behind, in which he included Guntrip, Sullivan, Fairbairn and Bowlby. His objection to the former was that the mechanism for holding on to drive theory was to place relational needs as pre-drive, pre-Oedipal – a ‘developmental tilt’ (Mitchell 1984: 474). This necessarily made their appearance in later life regressive, which he believed meant that the whole analytic enterprise was
about repairing early deprivation through the ameliorating environment of the analysis. Deeper came to mean earlier. If infant-mother relationships were satisfactory then the conflict was taken out of drive; need and satisfaction were matched. Individuals would progress smoothly through the Oedipal stage because they brought no conflict into it. If things were resolved early enough the pattern was set for life.

Mitchell objected to this reduction of relational conflict to the essentially infantile. At the heart of his relational theory was the assertion, allied with object relations, that the prime motive in life is the seeking of relationship. It is not only infantile nor is it sequential. Analysis provided not a corrective experience but a new one that offered the client an opportunity to move out from their bound position into a freer and more open place of possibility. This was an iterative movement; relationship was a need throughout life and even the most satisfactory childhood did not stop new dynamics emerging and new work being done not just on old patterns but on the patterns that constantly formed and reformed in relation to them. In 1998 Mitchell followed this up in the fifth John Bowlby Memorial lecture with a more optimistic account of the analytic take-up of relational ideas, but attributed it to the releasing grip of drive theory on traditional thinking. He also wrote that ‘Freudian drive theory always remained, necessarily, a kind of object relations theory’ (Mitchell 1998: 178) in respect of the early seduction theory, which was sited in actual rather than phantasy relationships. But relational theory never took up with drives, and drive theory has never been satisfied by relational because it seems too much to ignore the body and its powerful, instinctual urges that appear to be independent of relational experiences. Drives are about needs not wishes, but desire links the two.

It is possible that neuroscience will confirm more complex answers and at present these seem to lead in the direction of the mind making itself out of the body and its interactions with the environment on various levels:

The grand symphonic piece that is consciousness encompasses the foundational contributions of the brain stem, forever hitched to the body, and the wider-than-the-sky imagery created in the cooperation of cerebral cortex
and subcortical structures, all harmoniously stitched together, in ceaseless forward motion, interruptible only by sleep, anaesthesia, brain dysfunction or death. (Damasio 2012: 24-5)

The most primitive impulse of the body is part of the most sophisticated of mind-maps, just as Damasio’s ‘genomic unconscious’ (2012: 278) has something, but not everything, to do with sexuality. If relational theory pushes drives away it may miss something about the visceral nature of need, the urgency and aggression that overrides concern for or even perception of the other. If drive theory misses out relationship as just as primal a need as food, it is then required to explain the transition from need to desire, as Aisenstein and Moss (2015) for example found it necessary to suggest a solution through the employment of the masochistic pleasure of delayed gratification. Bringing drive and relationship closer together suggests that the experience of food is also an experience of feeding; that they are not in fact separate and their togetherness is not a transition. There is potentially an uncomfortable mixing of paradigms between drive and attachment, yet while theorists like Mitchell made a choice, others like Target saw possibilities in both:

The links made by Freud and others between early emotional development and the drives are quite compatible with an extended mode which places attachment as a foundation for later development, and I would argue recognises the search for predictable attachment as a primary biological drive throughout human life. (Target 2015: 44)

This offers a way out of the cruder nature/nurture debate, milk or breast, need or desire; to find a way to say ‘both’ seems to be the pragmatic approach of many practitioners, even though the theory for such an assertion may lag behind:

I think that rage, persecution or primitive terrors are reactive. They are a reaction to being unheld, not contained. Left in very early infancy, really.
[Interviewer: So, pretty much down to what happens from the moment of birth.]

Yeah. Not that I think one should sidestep destructiveness and things when you encounter them. But I don’t see them as primary. So, there’s a massive amount that’s helpful in Kleinian theory. And there’s a massive amount to be learned from skilled Kleinians who I have great respect for clinically. But I don’t buy that idea, basically.

This articulates the divide between a view of aggression as an innate drive that has a place in the mind prior to experience, demanding expression, the shape of which is subject to individual phantasy and defence; and aggression as an innate capacity that can be evoked by circumstances and then becomes organised into the self, dependent on those individual experiences (Mitchell 1993).

Gill (1983) noted that in order to conclude whether psychoanalysis was fundamentally a model of person or of process – of relationship or energy discharge – a prior conclusion was required regarding the philosophical standpoint supporting the theory, in Gill’s instance whether analysis was a hermeneutic discipline or a natural science. This called forth the same question of the relationship between body and mind that has been the focus of much of the struggle in the participants’ discussions over transgender.

This either/or perspective, also held by Mitchell (1992), characterised drive theory as finding depth in getting down to basics of the id, and the id as the primitive base of Freudian personhood. But by limiting the drive to instincts and needs such an approach arguably misses some of the subtlety that Freud was striving towards in his characterisation of the id. It was indeed the ruling factor against, or alongside, which the ego strove to exert an influence. But it was formed ‘first and foremost’, as is well noted (Freud 1923a), from the sensations experienced on the surface of the body, a ‘mental projection of the surface of the body’, (Freud 1923a: 26). From the start the body is the single route available to the infant to experience its environment, and the
mental apparatus, or ego, or self, develops from this. The first experience of relationship is conducted through the body, and drive theory of itself does not exclude the relational aspect of this the surface ego. Freud’s drives are perhaps not as unmediated as Mitchell asserted.

5.6.2 Drive theory, relational theory and sex

A UK participant made the point that it is a common complaint that the relational school is seen as not relating to drive theory and therefore not relating to sex, and this can be found reflected in the literature. Drive is the UK language for sex and without it the field has been at a loss. With it, the conversation has stayed within oedipal bounds, as Oedipus has been the main contend as the regulator of sex. While Mitchell’s (1995b, 1998) characterisation of British object relations is somehow frustrating in its conventionality, his was not the only assertion of its pull towards the maternal. Green (1995) notably refuted the breast as a sufficient container for adult sexuality and reasserted the life-giving role of pleasure in a way that could be interpreted to imply support for Mitchell’s insistence that post-infancy development does not always lead back to Oedipus. Green of course was strongly influenced by Lacan, and while the Lacanian influence was to be found on both sides of the Atlantic it did not emerge as a mediator between drive and relationship, although in different guises it addressed both. Harris articulated the failure of Lacan’s reworking of Oedipus to provide an equal place for women that stood up to scrutiny. Even if the place of woman as Other referred to the realm of the symbolic, it coincided with social and political reality so precisely that it could not be free of them:

Lacan ... initially sought to recuperate Freud's notion of a complex and fragmentary sexuality but ends in a position that displaces women, conflates them with the place of the Other, and mystifies social power by a reified treatment of language's relation to subjectivity. (Harris 1991b: 204)
Lacan’s drive, according to Ragland (2001), was representational, as was indeed sexuality, its function being organised around lack and loss. Nevertheless, it was rooted in difference, or at least:

...engendered by difference (although) its primary meaning consists in the desire to reduce difference, the attempt to find the identical in the other, to produce the identical from the other. (Roussillon 2010: 528)

Rousillon referred this back to the integration of origins in the primal scene and wrapped generational difference and sexual difference together, and thus the difference between adult and child sexuality. He noted that Green was a stronger proponent of drive as nature than other French analysts who might conceive of it more in object relationship terms. From a Lacanian perspective, linking drive to object provided the possibility of discourse (Gibeault 2010a) – the body became a way to talk about the drive behind it - and it was the discourse that held the significance rather than the body (Gibeault 2010b). These strands create the space required for mediation.

At a seminar at the UK Tavistock and Portman Clinic, Webber (2012) made a plea that perversion presupposed a questionable moral or natural purpose to sex, usually interpreted as reproduction or intimacy. He argued instead that sexual pleasure was always the sum of its parts, not a part waiting to be summoned; the purposes of sex are as many as the parts each encounter is composed of. Desire is a subjective feeling. It need not serve anything, and so perversion also has no reference point, no master. This view was countered in the same seminar by Morgan (2012) who argued for a concept of perversion as a sexualised defence, mapping it on to Freud’s sexual and aggressive drives together with Klein’s unconscious phantasy and object relations. Perversion, he suggested, is necessary to grasp the less sexy attributes of sex, which does require some idea of teleology, that sex should lead towards some things and away from others in order to be non-perverse. While striving for a change in the content of perversion – sex does not have to lead towards heterosex – Morgan relied on the classical link between sex and progress that had made homosexuality
unavoidably perverse as by its nature it was unable to complete the developmental sequencing of Oedipus (Bergmann 2002). Drive does not allow for sex to float as freely as it might, and the point is that new ideas about sexuality and gender appear to be flourishing more without its anchor. While object relations theorists are accused of reducing everything to mothers and babies, relational theorists seem to have plenty of language in which to talk about sex, or eroticism.

The interviews therefore pointed to three influences: a British object relations school that brought Oedipus forward into infancy but in so doing was seen as diverting it away from the raw sexuality of the drives; a more strongly drive-inclusive Kleinian object relations that brought the primal scene into the earliest relational image and accorded with a more traditional Oedipal position; and a relational school open to postmodern influence that questioned the relevance of Oedipus as it questioned the relevance of drives. It did however have a language for sex and for sexuality because adult relationships were not required to be formed from infant dust.

The writings that addresses transgender, sexuality, gender and identity in a new way appear to emerge most prolifically from fields in some way engage with a postmodern influence, of which the relational approach is one, which may mean that finding a rapprochement takes on a new importance. There may be something of professional protectionism implicated in the difficulties with this as the more traditional institutions, which equate to the more drive-based ones through their strong Freudian and Kleinian connections, seem apt to dismiss those outside that field as not truly psychoanalytic, while the newer and New World approaches have little incentive or need to wait for these institutions to come alongside. Mitchell’s unhappiness that drive was equated with depth (1979) may refer to a somewhat bygone view of drive, but what does remain is a dearth of alternative discourse around nature that would allow it a less determinist profile in the realm of gender and sexuality.
5.6.3 Postmodernism, psychoanalysis and identity

If the relational approach, which seems to facilitate a different sort of thinking around sex and gender, is held at a distance from the more traditional Freudian and Kleinian approaches, then postmodern thinking too is not an easy bedfellow with psychoanalysis, nor with science, with which psychoanalysis aspires to share concepts of truth. This unease may be a barrier to developing new theories about Oedipus because postmodern thinking is so related to reviewing issues of identity.

For science, and for psychoanalysis, there is the possibility of fact, even though fact is something that more can always be known about. For postmodernism, fact is perspective: knowledge cannot escape the person who knows it (Corbett 1997). Scientific language is about knowledge and data and proof; but proof is a difficult concept to apply to Oedipus. Postmodern language is about chaos and contingency; the postmodern project in itself has been viewed as ‘precariously ungrounded’ (Eagleton 1996: 133), leaving it prey to both radical and conservative ideologies. The postmodern relationalist Corbett placed science as a culturally privileged discourse that does not own its own belief systems, and that needs the disturbance of postmodernism; the disturbance reveals its undisclosed power. The psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Friedman criticised the same Corbett with some frustration for not engaging with scientific evidence, biology or behaviour and instead sidestepping it with criticism. Both were passionate about psychoanalysis and sexuality but provide an example of how difficult it is to find shared ground from such different epistemologies. Schwartz (1996) suggested that science may be placed in closer alliance with art through conceiving of it as one way of understanding rather than the way of understanding – but this may be a position more amenable to artists than scientists.

Postmodernism goes further than social constructionism which might see the exposure of power as clarifying truth – and Freud was no stranger to uncovering the wishful illusion that could pass for truth (Bell 2009). Postmodernism focuses on truth as a masquerade for power; it logically takes away the possibility of generalisation because all views are valid in a ‘democracy of truth’ (Bell 2009: 333). Bell’s conclusion was that
while pragmatism is not enough to win the day in terms of theory – it is not true just because it works – and evidence is hard to find (Grunbaum 1984), postmodernism falls short too as it takes an omnipotent stance in relation to truth. Just because you say something is not there does not mean it is not there, however attractive the prospect of escaping limitation:

(Postmodernism’s) celebration of plurality, fluidity and limitlessness reveals an omnipotent system freed from the constraints of reality, a world where claims can never (by definition) be right, and so can never be wrong. (Bell 2009: 344)

This was also a concern of the queer theorist Wilchins (2004) who pointed out the potential Eurocentrism of the postmodern embrace of individuality and difference against the more social and community orientated goals of other cultures.

Psychoanalytic realism can admit complexity but not total relativity. This echoes the analytic struggles with transgender voiced in the interviews: that it attempts to escape limitation. The body is there, it cannot be wished into being not there or different to what it is; to which a postmodern response may be to ask how it can be known what it is. Harris (2009) theorised the struggle as the resistance of gender to full expression:

The struggles to be and live gender in all of us, most powerfully articulated in transgender and intersex experience, open to more understanding if we see in these gendered “constructions” the impossibility of fully inhabiting a gender position, the limits on representation and rationality. (Harris 2009: 210)

The thought then goes into the struggle with gender expression rather than the focus being on the transgendered (or whoever) person’s struggle with their gender expression.
5.6.4 The role and remit of psychoanalytic institutions

All of the participants espoused a non-pathologising approach to homosexuality although many would not put it in this way. Perhaps it is clearer to state that no participant considered homosexuality of itself to be an indicator of pathology any more than heterosexuality of itself could be such an indicator. How they made theoretical sense of this position varied, in part according to what they considered to be under the rubric of ‘psychoanalysis’. Each participant would have included themselves within it to an extent, but would not necessarily have considered each other in the same light. Some would also have been bothered by this while for others it was a matter of little interest. The situation appears to be that ownership of psychoanalysis is a matter of claim and allegiance, and also of politics, in the sense of the beliefs underpinning theories of personal change.

The internal politics of psychoanalysis and its application to wider political questions in many ways come together in its consideration of the purposes and techniques of therapy, the area of psychoanalysis’ specific practice. (Frosh 1987: 13)

Claims that came from the centre were not in themselves sufficient to make participants feel bound by them. The International Psychoanalytical Association may see itself and be seen by some as at the holder of desired standards for the analytic world (Richards and Sandler 1993, Raeburn 2013), but to other practitioners it was seen as an increasingly remote and even irrelevant institution. The differing views as to what was included in psychoanalysis mirrored external uncertainties about definitions (Tuckett 2001) that made any coherent assessment of what psychoanalysis did and thought an impossible task.

What was clear was that adhering to an equality agenda in terms of homosexuality had not translated into real institutional change. This was the situation bemoaned by Mitchell (1976) in the context of feminism; that equal rights were only the beginning and would not result in change to the dominant group until the principle of harm to
one being harm to all became an experience rather than a theory. No change would occur unless heterosexuality felt itself impacted on by homophobia.

The role of the more traditional professional associations came across as largely restrictive and protective. On reading the transcripts after the final interviews a minority of participants expressed concern that they may have said too much, and were reassured that no institutions would be identified. This was most strongly felt when individuals were inside the criticised institutions, in the same vein as family dirty linen not being washed in public. Generally the more traditional trainings were thought to restrict freedom of thought, requiring evidence of conformity in trainees and structured to reward it. Teaching was directed towards maintaining standards that bore too little relationship to the actual clinical practice of the trainees (Kernberg 2000). However, it was striking that each participant voiced loyalty to their own training association; even when critical, there was an attachment to something that had been and was still valued, and that presumably had imparted some sense of value to the participant.

Past the training stage, criticisms were levelled at the Professional Associations for being inward looking and absorbed with internal dynamics. This was in opposition to the frequent emphasis on the need for integration in learning, across schools within psychoanalysis and with disciplines outside of it, particularly science. Frustration with the lack of a system for progressing theory rather than just expanding it was clear and not unique (Tuckett 1998), although there may have been some idealising of other disciplines in the more scientific areas where Schwartz (1996) maintained it was still age, death and a new generation that, even in science, eventually enabled change to take hold. There was also frustration that the Associations did not lead on change and yet the edge of a double standard at times, as strongly held radical opinions could be as exclusionary as traditional conservative ones.

Institutional hierarchies were dealt with by subversion; people found alternative homes and there was a view that as more traditional psychoanalysis refused to venture outside its own walls it was gradually losing its power and influence. This was
greeted with a mixture of regret, schadenfreude and frustration. There were some
expressions of hope as participants found evidence of more open thinking expressed in
the extension of invitations to share alternative viewpoints through publications and
conferences, but it was difficult to know if this reflected a change in the centre or at
the edges. Where alternative homes had grown to have status of their own, for
example through academia, there was more optimism about traditional
psychoanalysis; confidence may have increased as dependence decreased.

5.7 Reflections and further considerations

Tempting as it is to make general statements from a small sample, the whole history of
psychoanalysis in relation to sexuality demonstrates the dangers of doing this and it
would be ironic if this research was to fall into the same trap. What is available,
though, are some springboards for further thinking, and possibly a reframing of the
research question in the light of the knowledge gained to position it more
appropriately for further learning.

Under Oedipus, homosexuality was treated as a differentiation issue: gender
alignment accorded with sexual alignment and homosexuality was the result of
discord. This has now been debunked: homosexuality is no longer accounted for as a
gender identity difficulty, although it may align with differences in gender expression
and adherence. The debunking, however, has not backtracked into reviewing the
psychoanalytic understandings given to sexual differentiation. It was rehabilitated
simply through the liberal strategy of acceptance and this was questioned by
participants, including those for whom it had been a tool. Compassionate acceptance
as a strategy for approaching transgender should therefore also raise a warning bell as
insufficient for theory if not for empathy.

The impact of the different directions that the theoretical approaches represented had
taken was reflected in the ideas of the participants over the course of the research. In
the circumstances of those interviewed, the difference between the more drive-based theories and the more interpersonal, relational approaches became prominent when considering the oedipal legacy. Generally speaking, the tradition of drive theory aligned with greater difficulty in trying to re-theorise around sex and gender. It anchored identity in the body, and the anchor dragged. This is of course a viewpoint; others might say the anchor secured. The interpersonal/relational tradition theorised gender and sexuality from a more social constructionist base with a discursive view of identity, the body entering the discussion but not as a full stop. Anchorage was found not in the physical so much as in the embrace of the dialectic, the internal conflict that was ‘the rock on which psychoanalysis is built’ (Dimen 1995: 317). Of course this reflects the twenty-first century zeitgeist of identity theory so there is no coincidence in its ability to map well onto transgender concerns as currently expressed. However, this expression has grown up from an unarguably liberated political reality for sexed and gendered lives that has provided this capacity to reject the previous articulations with their dead-end into pathology.

The question of what to do with Oedipus must include a question of how to relate to these differences in approach. Where relational theory was more integral to the participants’ theory-building, the counter-intuitive freedom and enthusiasm to view Oedipus as a framework with creative possibilities was notable. There was some baggage that it did not seem to carry, connecting with an epistemology in which ‘knowing’ required less finality. When Sedgwick (1991b) drew the options between a view of homosexuality as a transition between genders (which might be an oedipal view) and as a separatist urge, her point was that there was currently no way to know which of the two was correct, ‘…no epistemological grounding now exists from which to do so’ (Sedgwick 1991: 2). This too was a point made by participants—psychoanalysis does not have the knowledge base to address the issues that Oedipus addresses, nor has it put itself in a position to contribute its way of knowing into a bigger, better informed developmental picture.

Lacan of course uncoupled drive from the body and put it firmly in the grip of language. Instinct could only be answered at the level of the Imaginary; desire had to
be articulated in order to search for satisfaction, and this immediately brought it into
the realm of the Symbolic (Dean 2003). Desire was therefore not driven by instinct, or
biology, but by language, and any sexual orientation was part of the same attempt to
bring drive into a shape that could seek, if not gain, satisfaction in the Imaginary. The
phallic was removed from the realm of the physical; its absence was symbolic of loss,
not causative. Oedipus becomes a route to signifying earlier and previously
unarticulated loss (Luepnitz 2003) that was marked by but not limited to gender.

Yet this promise of liberation proved limited. While Lacan’s phallus was richly symbolic
and not intended as literal, it was attuned to a reinterpretation of Freud that
supported the essential oedipal position of loss and lack as the central dilemma, and
this had originated in the interpretation of castration as a bodily fear. Gyler (2010)
noted how, despite the acceptance that oedipal theory gave a poor account of women
(and homosexuality), this had not resulted in any changes to mainstream theorising.
Had the vagina, for example, been truly recognised as an equal sexual organ, the
oedipal outcome of a ‘desire based on absence’ (Gyler 2010: 34) would have been
overturned. Oedipus as an outcome of drive remained a theory based in the male
body, and Lacan’s reinterpretation of Oedipus was intrinsically linked with this. The
phallus pointed backwards to the more fundamental lack that pervaded existence,
while at the same time being used as evidence for it. Without an accompanying
analysis on the discourse of power in the constitution of that concept of loss, the
opportunity to reframe it was missed, for example absence of the breast or womb as
release from intrusion or confinement. Loss became the anticipatory phallic structure,
staying true to Freud but equally not advancing beyond him. While the Lacanian take
on sex might have provided a third way forward, it has not done so.

It seems possible that relationship and drive need not be so far apart. Framing
relationship as a need towards and from which human beings are driven allows it to
connect with the elements of ruthlessness and part object relating that are significant
aspects of the experience of otherness, while bringing the place of recognition into a
central relationship with sex. Whether this would help to untangle the oedipal knot is
hard to say, but the current situation seems not to be working. The irony of the
emphatic analytic valuation of intercourse as a model for discourse is not lost in the
current stand-off where bringing a little recognition of sameness to the table may bear
more fruit.

Oedipus relies on sexual differentiation as the basis for psychic development and the
organisation of the libido. Its mechanism to facilitate this development is to oppose
identification and desire. The research question queried this opposition and the data
pointed in the direction of querying the uses to which psychoanalysis has put the
opposition. This is what the emergence of the transgender theme has highlighted. If it
is possible to be asking the same questions of transgender as were asked of
homosexuality, and to be giving the same answers, this points to a similarity between
the two in the problems they raise for psychoanalysis. The danger is to obscure this by
seeking to find the similarities in the categories themselves rather than in the analytic
theory within which they are sited. Transgender is not directly about sexuality; in fact
it was seen by some participants as a clear indicator of the separation of sexuality from
gender. It is about the meaning of sexual difference, and about what it means to
challenge it. In some senses transgender is clearer than anything else on the
importance of differentiation; in other ways it makes it matter less than anything else.

The influence of the traditional psychoanalytic institutions on theory development
appears to be shrinking. Important to their members, their influence in other areas has
waned. Relational thinking is in the ascendancy in the area of sex and gender, possibly
because of the room it has for postmodern viewpoints that welcome a less definite
approach to gender. It seems to have something of the zeitgeist about it, where
traditional psychoanalysis is speaking an older language. There was a shared sense
amongst the participants of psychoanalysis still having something important to offer, if
it could clear the detritus out of the way.

I have high hopes with the analytic community in the future. Why? I’m not
exactly sure (laughter), but that the real reason is not its fumbling and
bumbling organisational screw-ups, which are legion. But rather the fact that
the original observations were on to something very, very important. And I
just don’t think it’s going to go away. I just think people have to reorganise themselves and rethink, and ultimately, there will be a bubble or two and they will. (2/10 721)

Certainly, things cannot be left as they are. The liberal approach of acceptance, the adopted model of traditional psychoanalysis, was thoroughly critiqued as insufficient, and it had added nothing to theory. As Ratigan (2011) said, it was equivalent to ‘accepting us all as gay heterosexuals’.

The participant data allowed for both rejecting and rehabilitating oedipal theory. Participants spoke of Oedipus being a framework to support concepts of generational difference, of boundaries, of managing exclusion and the concept of the other. What then makes it still oedipal? All of these things could be spoken about without reference to Oedipus, although it has been the route through which they have been articulated. The question is really whether it should continue in this position.

As time has gone by, broader themes have certainly been identified within the Oedipus story, the nub of which is boundary between self and other. But Oedipus has a sticky legacy still evident in some quarters, and an oppositional view of difference that, even when unhooked from gender, provides a limited template. Allowing Oedipus to represent difference, whether of generation or any other boundary, allies difference with gender and sexuality, and all of this with a resolution born of envy, fear, conflict and loss. Oedipus stands as a guard against the madness of omnipotence, the fear of merger and powerlessness, and these are the terms then applied to analytic understandings of homosexuality in the past and transgender in the present. They, rather than omnipotence, become the oedipal problem and the focus of resolution.

Di Ceglie (2012) provided a reminder that it may be the environment that needs to bear the loss of omnipotence rather than the transsexual or the homosexual person. With reference to a trans child, he wrote:
It may require for the parent or caregiver, the mourning of an image or expectation of the child as different from what he/she is and in some cases, moving away from a binary view of the two genders. (Di Ceglie 2012: 291)

Equally so for the parent of the gay or lesbian child, as described honestly by one participant:

The quick question is, if you had a gay child would you, would it matter? Of course it wouldn’t, you’d love them as much as...But if you’re a heterosexual, married couple you’d be slightly disappointed, if we’re honest. It wouldn’t make much difference at all I think in relation to one’s love for one’s child. But there’d be some disappointment that the parental couple for some reason wasn’t seen as something that they wanted to identify with. (2/02 193)

And there can be losses too for the trans and lesbian/gay individual. There is something in here of knowing the body as something over which there has not been control, and being able to think about this as part of truly recognising the self. This is part of recognising the transition for what it is: ‘the new body is always in the wake of a body that once was’ (Lemma 2013: 285), the ‘wake’ also referencing the mourning that is implied in the process. However, the new body remains something over which there is no absolute control, and Lemma connects this with the ‘painful reality’ (Lemma 2013: 285) of having the genital but not its function so that procreation is impossible in the new body.

However, this can bring a defensive response if it plays into the trope of heterosexual completeness. One of the participants addressed this by suggesting that in accruing a gender identity everyone gives something up:

But this idea of like not giving something up which very traditional psychoanalysis has been used as ‘Oh, the pervert does not want to give something up’... I think that that has been, that that rhetoric has been abused; but I don’t think that it’s irrelevant. I don’t think that trans people
are not wanting to give something up but I do think that as part of congealing a gender, whatever that gender is, however polymorphous it may be, something has to be given up. (2/07 773)

Trans argues for the complication of difference. Gender can be the subject of an omnipotent grab through trans and other means, but it does not have a monopoly on difference. The participants emphasised the location of identity in multiple sources of which gender was but one. Race, class, religion, age were all contenders of equal or greater importance. Is looking at black skin and white skin in families of mixed heritage less significant a difference than looking at bodies with penises and bodies with labia in families with boys and girls? This research has not been directed at answering these questions but it is legitimate to reflect on how and why gender has been tagged as the prime definer and deliverer of difference and by implication identity.

It has been challenged. As Dimen (1995a) indicated, replacing biology with object relations as the trump card in the origin of desire merely reverses the problem and makes a pseudo-nature out of attachment. Homosexuality may indeed be as ‘natural’, biologically, as heterosexuality; but while the discourse surrounding Nature doubles with the rhetoric of the natural, giving equal biological status to both will not solve the problem of what constitutes normality.
Chapter Six – Final Conclusions

6.1 Future directions

This research set out to discover more about how psychoanalytic experts thought about the Oedipus complex in relation to gender and sexuality through interviews that were subjected to a thematic analysis. The analysis offered both positive and negative responses to oedipal theory, with some participants feeling it should continue to be a part of the way forward and others who thought it should not. The negative view was linked to the opposition of identification and desire that placed homosexuality in a position of developmental inferiority. This partnered with the reliance on the acceptance of sexual difference as pivotal to the negotiation of vital developmental milestones including the management of boundaries, the move from dyadic to triadic relationships, the relaxation of the need for omnipotent control, and the acceptance of limitation. Freud centred these dynamics around sexual difference as both sexes negotiated the possession of or non-possession of the penis, which subsequently became symbolic of gain and loss in a broader way.

Some participants felt that Oedipus needed to remain anchored in the body without being limited to it; others that oedipal themes were relevant but their home in the body was unnecessary; others that without the body the theory was so far from Oedipus it no longer needed that nomenclature. The place of the body became particularly significant with the discussions of transgender which became a notable theme in the analysis, not least because it raised questions for some participants which had parallels to the questions which in the past have been raised in relation to homosexuality.

Greater confidence in new theorising around genders and sexualities appeared to come from the schools more open to relational theorising which were also by their
nature less committed to drive theory. Drive theory gave a primacy to the body as sexed, and relationship fell out of this; for the relational school the body was primarily relationship seeking, and sex may be said to fall out of that. Or, as Harris (2009) succinctly put it, gender as formed from the body or gender as formed from attachment. Bedrock was not a requirement. Yet this might leave the place of the body uncertainly incorporated into theory.

Challenging to traditional psychoanalysis, these were not new concepts in other disciplines. One participant remarked, of giving an interdisciplinary talk on trans,

I was talking about how psychoanalysis has traditionally treated the body as bedrock. People were like, ‘Aren’t we over that yet?’ (2/07 140)

It is difficult to be ‘over that’ when so much has been built on it.

How does this relate to homosexuality? A non-pathological view of homosexuality breaks the barrier between identification and desire; gender differentiation is no longer the organiser of desire. This gives opportunity to re-theorise desire which in its objects has always been more complex than the reproductive drive could account for. It may also contribute to re-theorising gender, freed up from its complementary role.

‘Core’ gender implies bedrock. Queer questioning complicates this to the point where the body itself is questioned as sexed. Sex is no longer obvious as its meanings become transparent; ‘it’s a boy’ becomes a complex citation, a promise of intent. And gender is not alone. Participants argued for the inclusion of race, class, disability, mental state – a host of identifiers into which gender and sexuality should be ‘folded’ (2/09 765), indivisibly. What then of the configuration of desire? Participants all wished for studies of sexuality to be inclusive, no longer focussed on aberration or exception but on inclusion. This put heterosexuality under the microscope too.
This research has highlighted the absence of a thorough review of the Oedipus complex following the greater acceptance of homosexuality as a non-deviant and non-pathological sexual identity. Where such review is taking place, it tends to be outside of the more mainstream or traditional analytic institutions and is often not counted by them as significant. There are some signs of this changing, however, and some participants felt there was cause for optimism. There was a clear desire on the part of the participants for increased integration between different theoretical approaches and disciplines, yet less apparent engagement with it than this would imply.

It may be that transgender now articulates the unresolved divide between drive and relationship, nature and nurture, previously implanted into homosexuality, and unresolved in psychoanalytic theorising about sexuality, sex and gender to this day. Acceptance of homosexuality has rested itself on top of this structure, leaving the underlying strata in place to underpin transgender and raise the same questions again.

The research direction concludes, therefore, that the non-pathologisation of homosexuality should have led to changes in mainstream psychoanalytic theorising around sexuality, gender and Oedipus, and as yet it has not done so. The direction should be towards a closer interrogation of drive theory, and this may include the opening of doors in the direction of relational theory in more traditional contexts. This is no easy task as there is some difference in their premise about what constitutes identity and desire, but in this tension may lie some fruitful work. It is a specific part of what was a wider call for more interdisciplinary working within and beyond analytic schools. The indications were that this would be a difficult undertaking as analytic identities and attachments to theory were clearly personal as well as professional. Everyone would have to give a little.

**6.2 Future research**

There are many directions in which this research could go.
Lacewing (2013) pointed out that analytic evidence is usually clinical data; one way to extend conclusions beyond the specific case is to engage with non-psychoanalytic approaches that could bring additional perspectives to interpreting clinical data. Variety of evidence and alternative interpretations of data all contribute to broadening conclusions. Further research is needed to explore what might facilitate greater coordination and discussion of theory development across both different schools of psychoanalysis and different disciplines relating to sexuality and gender.

Examination of the way in which gender and sexuality are thought about – the assumptions behind the theory – may contribute to this. Following Willig’s (2013) affirmation of methodological pluralism, the data from participants in other similar studies could be used to complement this study. A more phenomenological approach to interpretation could consider how individual theoreticians talk about gender and sexuality, and this would provide a contribution to understanding analytic thinking in this area. Equally, a social constructionist approach could consider the language available to discuss these concepts and so raise the discussion beyond the individual. Thus discourse and conversation analysis could yield rich results on how the concepts of gender and sexuality are used in psychoanalysis and this could ease some of the apparent confusion between them.

The Delphi Oracle technique was discounted because agreement was not being sought as an outcome. However, it is possible that in a follow up study it could be used to pursue more emphatically the wish of all participants for psychoanalysis to improve integration across schools and disciplines while having only limited success in achieving this as a profession. By providing a structure in which participants would have an overt agenda of considering consensus, some of the disagreements could be pursued more rigorously and with greater focus to clarify sticking points against as well as platforms for agreement. More usually used pragmatically for the development of practice guidelines (Bloor and Wood 2006), there seems little to prevent the Delphi technique being used to focus on the possibilities of theoretical consensus.
Finally, focusing on what actually happens in the consulting rooms of analytically informed practitioners could be achieved through the use of interpersonal process recall (McLeod 2011), were it possible to have access to recorded sessions, which in itself would be a challenge. But this might put some flesh on the bones of theory and bring a practice element in to ground the discussions and bring the client more clearly into the picture.

The advice contained in this research directs further study away from the development of an alternative psychoanalytic theory of the construction of gendered and sexual identity. What is more possible is an analytic contribution to broader knowledge in the area based on the meanings of sexuality, gender and identity in the lives of clients. While analysis has seemed unable to restrain itself from making aetiology out of meaning, it may find a better place for itself when contributing from its position of strength, removing the burden of extrapolation and replacing it with the opportunities of cooperation.
Appendix 1 – Summary paper of first round interview responses

1.1 Introduction

This paper was provided to the participants as a distillation of their responses to the first set of interviews prior to engaging with the second set. It fulfilled the purpose of enabling them to respond to the thinking of the whole group while retaining anonymity and making the project feasible, as described in Chapter Three. While they can be read separately, a reading of the second interviews benefits from familiarity with the first.

The content presented in this chapter is as it was presented to the participants; the format is adjusted to accommodate its placing within the thesis. The completion of the paper was unavoidably curtailed due to bringing the interview dates for the second round of interviews forward as a result of illness on the part of one of the participants. This necessitated stopping work earlier than anticipated and this was a drawback as it presented the participants with a less succinct and ‘punchy’ paper than might otherwise have been the case. On the other hand, the inconclusiveness and more open-handed result may have offered more space for participants to respond to a less pre-digested account of each other’s material.

The questions forming the basis for the interviews were structured to provide a starting point for talking about the research questions. They were:

1. What drew you to agree to be a participant in this study?
2. How did you develop an interest in thinking about this area?
3. Have you found oedipal thinking to be significant in this area of understanding?
4. There’s a lot of discussion going on about depathologising homosexuality. I’m interested to know what a ‘depathologising approach’ means to people.
5. I wonder whether different analytic cultures may have varying capacities and appetites for developing thinking in this area. I wonder if you have any thoughts about this?

6. Where do you go now if you want to develop your own thinking and practice in the area of gender and sexuality?

7. Do you think the analytic field needs to further develop its theory and practice in gender and sexuality? Where should it start?

8. Is there anything you would like to say that I haven’t asked you?

The analysis was grouped under the two overarching themes of process and content. The former contextualised theory building by referencing the personal, professional and clinical considerations that had affected the participants, including the role of psychoanalytic institutions and associations. The latter brought forward the theoretical positions of the participants and the views held by them on gender, sexuality and oedipal theory as demonstrated in the interviews.

What follows now is the paper provided to the participants following the first and prior to the second set of interviews. Some abbreviations were used: ‘1/09 471’ to indicate the first interview with the ninth participant, line 471; a short series of dots ... to indicate a brief pause in the conversation; square brackets around the dots [...] to indicate some words omitted; xxx is used to replace names of individuals or institutions. The same abbreviations are used in Chapter Five.

1.2 Participant Paper: Gender, Sexuality and Psychoanalysis – summary of first round interview responses

1.2.1 Introduction and research questions

The original research design was built around two questions:
What is the response of psychoanalytic theorists to the construction of gender identity and sexual identity in the oedipal complex? And:
To what extent is this theoretically consistent with adopting a non-pathologising approach to homosexuality?

(i) Interview participants

This paper is based on research conversations with ten psychoanalytically oriented practitioners and theorists. All have a stated interest in the field of gender and sexuality, demonstrated by publication. All are currently in clinical practice, whether as supervisors or therapists or both, and many are engaged in teaching and lecturing. The participants are not known to each other as participants in this project, although each knew that they were part of a group of experts being interviewed for a research project into gender, sexuality and psychoanalysis.

The participants described themselves in terms of background and training as variously, and in combination, constructionist, phenomenological, political, Jungian, Kleinian, cognitive analytic, Freudian, independent, feminist, structuralist, relational, social object relational, historical, postmodern, developmental psychologist, activist, scientific, academic, psychoanalytic, psychodynamic and pragmatic. No surprise that their discourses clashed, collided, slid, divided and also connected, elided and converged.

These backgrounds formed blueprints for later analytic approaches. For example the feminist consciousness-raising experiences of the 1970s and 80s established talking-as-investigation – a blueprint for a phenomenological therapeutic standpoint; medical training provided a scientific standpoint that nurtured a leaning to the empirical in evaluating the theoretical evidence for practice.

Notable in each interview was the personal engagement of each interviewee with the subject matter. Each expert had somehow stood out against the norm, whatever that
was, and had been moved to do so by personal and professional experiences, in a field where professional experience cannot but be personal. This had not been without cost, and many had experienced a deep sense of isolation at times. Some spoke of where they had found company – in what they read, their clinical environments, their political homes, their friends and their colleagues, their family, their analysis – for comradeship, like-mindedness and learning. It was thought that some of the ‘stridency’ that meant people were cold shouldered by more conventional places would not have been necessary had the same places been more willing to engage in discussion rather than pulling the drawbridge up.

(ii) Interview process

Each interview followed the same framework and developed in response to the interviewee’s interests and expertise. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and subjected to a thematic analysis. By reading this paper, which reflects some of the findings, and having opportunity to respond to it, each interviewee will contribute to a further iteration of the process, having opportunity to develop if not a dialogue then a group of responsive monologues that will continue to inform the research.

Each participant can only be fully understood by hearing the interviews within the context of the life that led up to them, and even then it is being heard in translation. It is presumptuous to say ‘X said this or that’ as if the meaning of this or that to X is precisely known either to X or to another. What follows here is unavoidably a digest of the interviewer’s experience and understanding of the interviewees. This is nevertheless useful – all communication is after all approximate – but needs to be acknowledged.

Perhaps as a result of this, an effect of the thematic analysis (a methodology that to a degree emphasises commonality) has oddly been to dampen down the individual zest of the interviews, as if reducing them not to a concentrate, or a pile of nuggets, but to a lower common denominator. This paper allows therefore for the single comment, the unique question, the minority view that was the spice of the interviews to have its
voice too. The themes in themselves do not imply unanimity, but there was a collective grouping around them.

The research questions were elaborated in the interviews into two themes that can be broadly described as the process and the content of analytic theorising around gender, sexuality and identity, and the analysis follows these themes.

1.2.2 The process of analytic theorising around gender, sexuality and identity: creating change

(i) Obstacles to change

Participants described the importance of having the personal conditions in which it was possible to think freely and to be open about one’s thinking. This required a balance between enough ‘company’, in the sense of people to think with (personally or through their writings) to experience oneself as belonging, at least in some sense; and sufficient independence from this company not to feel constrained or owned by it. Independence was constrained by dependence – on the approval of trainings, on professional associations for licensing/registration and professional standing, on patients for livelihood. Being ‘economically less anxious’ was significant:

I would say I’m a much better analyst now because I don’t have to worry about my mortgage anymore. (1/02 426)

Being able to think freely was associated with being a better practitioner as well as a better theoretician. Trainings were criticised for producing graduates eager to demonstrate knowledge of core texts and practices, whereas what was most valuable was developing a critical, questioning approach. Needing to think that you were doing the ‘right’ thing could block openness to what the patient might be trying to communicate in favour of fitting what they said to known theories. A critical approach was essential for theory development.
Freedom to think was necessary but not sufficient to create theoretical change, and there was considerable reflection on what else was needed. Obstacles and facilitations came to the fore.

The liberal stance of equality that permeated the equal opportunities statements of the professional bodies was felt to have exchanged ‘change’ for ‘acceptance’, although it was this liberal middle that was itself most open to change:

It’s the liberal middle of psychotherapists who want to do something that’s a bit different but actually don’t know how to do it. (1/01 866)

Change required a further step:

I had to work through what I thought was a liberal attitude towards the world, symbolising how actually reactionary I was. (1/02 318)

This ‘working through’ had proved a challenging process, but was also invigorating. Theoretical change required emotional work.

While the presence of openly gay and lesbian practitioners within psychoanalytic institutions had made a difference to theory development, it was questioned why that difference had not been greater. Gay and lesbian people did not seem to be leading theoretical change and frustration with this was expressed particularly by those who had decided to stand out. However, minority politics were also recognised, internal divisions, the propriety of appearing to plead your own cause, being seen as biased, and residual fears of speaking out:

In the mainstream there’s a great fear of standing up and being counted, of revealing your difference in a very overt and assertive way; and of being guilty of special pleading or pleading your own cause. This you mustn’t do. This is not the English way. It’s OK to plead somebody else’s cause, as I do. It’s not OK to plead your own cause. (1/05 895)
The traumatic legacy of oppression also takes time to work through, and returning to the ‘freedom of thought’ requirement of ‘belonging’ it is questionable whether gay and lesbian practitioners in mainstream organisations yet feel themselves to be on more than probation. The heterosexual world may profess readiness to move on, but the homosexual world may be taking a little longer to recover.

Excluding difference from trainings had rebuffed challenge and change, protecting an idea of purity in psychoanalysis. This was not limited to the exclusion of lesbian and gay trainees:

> When I went to my interview with [training institution], one woman there said I should be doing social work not therapy, because I was talking about my interests in sort of making psychoanalysis more inclusive, and class stuff. (1/01 243)

Yet the increasing isolation of psychoanalysis was mentioned many times as a significant problem. It was strongly felt that psychoanalysis must interact with other disciplines and therapies. Psychoanalysis, science and social psychology all needed to work together. There were several voiced frustrations that psychoanalytic theory was poorly articulated with a scientific discourse.

This insularity was replicated within the psychoanalytic world, with little cross-fertilisation between analytic schools. The relational school was mentioned as an exception in establishing links across analytic schools of thought. But the relational school was not recognised by the traditional schools as being analytic, so had little effect on them.

There was puzzlement over the reluctance to cross fertilise; a rather ironic reluctance given the analytic emphasis on the image of intercourse as a foundation for growth. This left individual therapists with the challenge of putting the pieces together.
However, despite this desire for working across borders, there was recognition within the participants of some of the difficulties of this. Mixing paradigms, for example scientific with postmodern, where there was little shared literature or background from which to develop mutually understood conversations, was difficult:

If something really challenged models, paradigms, what it means is that when you’re posing new ideas, you’re threatening the identifications of the people that are reading the ideas. (1/10 607)

Perhaps incoherence was inevitable. Individual theories are shared in small ways but there is no system for bringing them together, for rejecting outdated ones and agreeing new ones – psychoanalysis does not operate on a scientific model:

Lacking a credible way of discarding beliefs and theories that have outlived their potential usefulness, the field as a whole tolerates psychotherapists who have contradictory beliefs about behaviour, fuzzy ideas about treatment and whose enthusiasm outweighs either their effectiveness or their credibility. (1/10 16)

Theories develop in ‘parallel tracks, shrinking parallel tracks’ (1/08) and may not converge. This was considered a loss not because a single unified theory was desirable but because a more mixed diet would be likely to provide sounder growth.

(ii) Facilitations of change

Personal impact created change: being open to influence by gay/lesbian teachers, colleagues, patients; senior people coming out, or speaking out against prejudice; listening to what was going on at the margins, not sticking to the safe middle ground. Being responsive to patients was a significant factor. Analysis should be a two way learning process, even if not as easy as it sounds:
It’s always in the transference, interpret the transference. But that always
assumes you know what it is. Rather than enjoying the uncertainty of two
people putting their heads together and seeing where it ends up. (1/02 606)

This requires confidence as well as skill, to think freely and to feel steady enough to
improvise:

In music there’s an element where you take off and you leave behind all the
structures which is obviously very enjoyable to the musicians though not so
enjoyable to the audience. And there’s something about that which I’ve got to
in my own work with my patients. I’m enjoying that. I’m not so defended, I
think. (1/02 241)

Age and experience could contribute the confidence to generate change. There was
comment on the orthodoxy of trainees, and the freedom of age to be less invested. On
the other hand, some participants commented on the role their children had in
challenging them, as they brought new generational norms into view in areas of
gender and sexuality.

Looking at things differently, turning questions on their head was useful – for example
looking at heterosexuality as the strange thing in the room:

To me one of the mysteries for females is heterosexuality...Well, how the hell
does that happen? (1/04 637)

Or seeing in heterosexuality the things attributed to homosexuality: heterosexual male
promiscuity as the model for gay male behaviour, for example, although promiscuity in
gay men is treated as an issue of sexuality rather than gender:

(Heterosexuality is) a queerdom of the majority; it’s an invisible queerdom...
(1/05 94)
(iii) The role of professional associations

There was a difference in tone between the UK and USA participants regarding professional associations. Both countries had their elite institutions, but in the UK their power was commented on as being reinforced by the impact of class on hierarchy: to belong was a ‘major experience’ (1/02 297). The associations were carriers of the profession’s identity, its visible markers, and individuals made compromises to belong, for expediency and also because they believed in the institutions and the work they represented. In the USA there seemed more alternatives, a greater confidence that significant influence could be had outside of these rather anachronistic institutions. Europe to the Americans felt rather more ‘dark ages’. Despite historic exclusionary policies towards openly gay or lesbian candidates there had always been gay and lesbian members in many of these institutions on both sides of the Atlantic, including those in positions of power and influence. This was handled with a version of the ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy, in the context of which Isay’s (1996) coming out in America had been a landmark occasion.

In general the older professional institutions were commented on as troubled places with waning power and influence which was being taken up instead by other more agile and permeable analytic organisations or individuals. While traditional psychoanalysis could be said to punch above its weight, the general feeling was that its influence was slipping:

You don’t actually need to belong to these archaic Institutes, value can be achieved outside of them, and in fact they are making themselves redundant through their isolation. (1/08 20)

Society politics in both countries were seen as rife and rather macho. ‘Group think’ was referred to as they headed together in the wrong direction under the impetus of their own momentum:
I feel very invested in the field even though they often strike, the field strikes me as a group of lemmings heading over a cliff and you are standing in front of them trying to stop them and they are going to drag you over with them. (1/08 82)

Associations seemed absorbed in their own rivalries and unable to see the bigger challenges facing them. Cooperating on theory development was not facilitated under these conditions. Some felt the British, even the Europeans, barely read outside of their own cohorts; others from the UK believed the Americans to be more insular. This was not unique to psychoanalysis; academic science also has its subgroups and factions. But it does not help theory development:

The more conventional psychoanalytic organisations haven’t really kept themselves informed of what is being ... written in other less conventional organisations. In fact I think they think that what is written by themselves and their peers are the only things to read and so while what they write might be interesting, it doesn’t benefit from a wide range of thinking on the issue. (1/06 721)

Professional associations weren’t seen as the bodies to produce change. They were weighted with a history of sexism, patriarchy and class prejudice that to a large extent continued, no matter what ‘politically correct’ statements were being made. Professional politics had to be reckoned with, like it or not. Some people did talk more warmly about their particular analytic societies and these were generally smaller, more left-field and open than the descriptors above.

(iv) The role of professional trainings

In the UK the influence of Higher Education in analytic training seems less; only a small minority are accommodated in Universities. In the USA more trainings seem to be situated in academia, with the implication of greater academic rigour; although the size of America means that there are many trainings also operating in private
institutions. In both countries trainings had past or present links with health services although this was shrinking, as was the Freudian influence within analytic Institutes. Recruitment to analytic trainings was reported as falling in the UK:

Some of these Freudian Institutes are now quite small. They don’t necessarily have the influence that they once did. (1/09 387)

Reflecting on their own trainings, participants did not feel the focus on gender and sexuality had been particularly present or, where present, useful, although it was thought that things may have improved since then:

OK, they weren’t positively homophobic, but it was a vacuum, really. (1/01 97)
I do not think either of them [supervisors] would have concretely pathologised homosexuality. But with my lesbian clients, they each asked this question which is, “What do they do?” (1/06 221)

Trainings were seen as crucial for shaping thinking. What participants had found useful were trainings that developed a critical approach to theory. This left them in a good position to ask questions about gender and sexuality, not just during training but as a general clinical approach. In contrast, oedipal dogma learned early would continue to colour the lens through which gender and sexuality were clinically viewed.

There was concern about the narrowness of reading lists. There were few extra-psychoanalytic or scientific texts. All too often trainings required students to show they had learnt what the training taught, rather than learning to think analytically. Supervisors could act as reinforcers of orthodoxy as did the notion of ‘submitting’ to a training analysis. Participants commented on the positive impact of supervisors who were interested in and open to new thinking about gender and sexuality even when not particularly expert in their own thinking – it was the openness that was important.
Clinical experience had often provided most food for thought about gender and sexuality, and greater theoretical depth had been achieved after the training, with freedom to read broadly and learn from people outside of the trainings.

While trainings now all formally admitted gay and lesbian candidates, the sort of experience gay and lesbian people would have on orthodox trainings was queried:

I think if you were a member of a sexual minority and you went to one of these non-discriminatory trainings you’d probably, you’d have a hard time. You’d learn things about yourself that you would not feel represented you nor were indeed ideas motivated by warmth and respect. And that’s awful. (1/05 872)

If a trainee is taught theories of gender or sexuality in which they do not recognise their own experience, they are left without a place to find themselves reflected in the analytic eye. The experience of selfhood must be sought, sometimes covertly, outside of the course:

So in a way, I was luckier than the generation who wanted to go into therapy or got interested in psychoanalysis later because they swallowed the psychoanalytic canon and then had to make it feminist in a way. Whereas we thought, “Oh, fuck that canon! Let’s see what there is that we can find here. Who’s saying something that we can identify or understand?” (1/04 157)

It wasn’t necessarily about direct discrimination in the trainings so much as how the analytic literature is prejudiced against anything except heterosexuality:

I didn’t hear anything in my training that pathologised homosexuality but I was aware of it. Now, how was I aware of it? I just think that there was explicit prejudice against anything but heterosexuality in the psychoanalytic literature. (6/205)
Paradoxically, the acceptance of gay and lesbian candidates onto trainings possibly took the pressure off change, as if there was no longer a problem. As candidates can now choose trainings that will give them a better experience, they no longer have to act as the irritating grains of sand in the oyster of the more mainstream institutions that arguably need it most.

1.2.3 The content of analytic theorising around gender, sexuality and identity – background

Comments approached theory indirectly and directly, described here as background and foreground.

(i) Theoretical backgrounds

It became clear that the theoretical backgrounds of the participants profoundly influenced their responses to the questions; there was a far broader gathering under the rubric of ‘psychoanalytic theorists’ than was anticipated:

The different theories have different starting assumptions and as a result they come up with different kinds of conclusions, they have different views of what constitutes human nature. (1/08 188)

Some starting assumptions were clearly articulated, and some in greater specificity than others:

- Phenomenological

Phenomenology should ‘trump’ theory – the practitioner must learn from the patient:

Well, I think it’s all just led to my having a certain approach to psychotherapy. So it’s all there as a kind of background and you know influences how I see
clients and supervision. But basically you know when somebody comes to see me for the first time or when a supervisee tells me about their clients, I am listening, you know, just – I don’t have any theories in mind. (1/06 160)

This approach was referred to as being on the patient’s side, which by one participant was set in opposition to the typical stance of British psychoanalysis:

They [the relational school] were kind of on the side of the patient, if you want to put it that way, which I don’t think British psychoanalysis ever was. (1/04 312)

The practitioner must also listen to themselves and think about what actually comes into their mind:

You can’t hold on to your theory in the face of unconscious truth. (1/02 251)

A phenomenological approach sometimes went together with pragmatism, which is part of American history and culture, and was valued by the participants above theoretical purity. It was present in the eclecticism of some of the phenomenological approach. What works to make people feel better is what matters. Psychoanalysis serves people, not vice versa. This was a democratising discourse of partnership and working together with the patient:

For some people, speculating what’s in the black box of the unconscious is their interest in life. It’s not my interest in life because it’s sort of like I don’t see the purpose, you know. It’s not, I mean, I see that some people like philosophy, you know, but not me. I like, you know, treating people and making them feel better...interpersonal has a very American pragmatic aspect to it, you know. (1/08 192)
A question left by the phenomenological approach is how does the practitioner think about this while also working with a constructionist or even postmodern standpoint? How is data accepted as data while simultaneously being viewed as contingent?

- Empirical

Several participants voiced a longing for something like a scientific paradigm that would allow psychoanalytic theorising to become more than a collection of individual, unprovable hypotheses. This was not a wish for science to take over, but for a partnership:

[In science] the different belief systems have to test themselves against each other and ultimately one is right and one is wrong and then everybody falls in line. But not in psychoanalysis. (1/08 351)

Those with a scientific leaning felt the absence of a cohort in the psychoanalytic community to speak up for science; only some individuals took a stand. And yet science was seen by more than one participant as helpful in understanding behaviour, and behaviour was an underemphasised aspect of psychological life. It was sexual behaviour that caused controversy, not just sexual thought or feeling. But connecting behaviour closely to materiality, to hormones and genes, could seem like incompatible reductionism in contrast to its farthest pole, postmodernism:

The way postmodernism is experienced and expressed, perhaps in an overly simplified way, is that different narratives are all privileged. And actually different narratives should not be all privileged. Actually, when it comes to thinking about aetiology, thinking about aetiology it seems to me is, really belongs to the school of British empiricism which is cause-effect science, scientific validation studies, that kind of thing. And there psychoanalysts have something terribly important to offer which is...take off their hats as clinicians, give up their roles as possessive of specialised, of super-important privileged knowledge, join teams, they’re the only people that really know people in the
depth that we do...But we have to give up our outdated theories. Of which, the way the Oedipus complex has been conceptualised and applied is one of them. (1/10 461)

A postmodern view still had to negotiate the body:

You can have the same body materiality but in different contexts it means different things. In different families, it means different things. In terms of you throw in envy and you throw in intergenerational relationships it gets getting infinitely more complex. So, that’s on the one hand. On the other hand, bodies do things. And they do things against our consent sometimes. And hormones do things... (1/07 552)

Working together was an ideal:

I’m someone who really believes that it’s the responsibility of therapists to consume relevant information and not make decisions about psychopathology and normalcy and all kinds of big decisions unless they are better informed than they were and science goes into the mix. That’s not to say that psychoanalysis is a science or anything like that, you know, there’s different ideas. (1/10 251)

- Liberal

A liberal approach was expressed in positive ways: live and let live, quality of relationship is more important than gender, homosexuality is simply not being so much of an issue now, things have moved on. It was also expressed in negative ways: it presents no challenge to theory, it creates breadth but no depth, it individualises issues and loses what is collective and structural.
- Postmodern

As a radical view of sex and gender, allied with queer theory and the destabilising of categories that underlay gender and sexuality orthodoxies, thus freeing up space for new thinking not reliant on old categories, postmodernism was valued. As inimical to a scientific view in terms of building cumulative knowledge, as philosophically rather than clinically focused and not contributing to developmental theory, it was devalued by participants.

- Feminist

Mentioned by several contributors as an influential perspective, feminism had links with the relational approach which also recognised power as something to be engaged with. Feminism democratised psychoanalysis and was seen as an under-acknowledged influence on modern object relations and gender identity theories.

It is difficult to bring all of these approaches together. It was noted that it is no longer possible to write something that everyone will even read, let alone agree with:

There is nobody who speaks to everybody in the field. (1/08 105)

Theory was also employed functionally by the therapist. It was felt by some to manage the anxiety or intimacy of the analytic space, and to provide ballast, containing practitioner anxiety:

You’re holding somebody’s life in your hand with them. You need to have a lot of ballast and the ballast is the theory that holds you. You don’t want to question it. I don’t think most people want to question it. So they don’t, you know. (1/04 900)
(ii) Approaches to theorising homosexuality

Freedom to write in general in the USA was related by some to a less reverential approach to a psychoanalytic ‘canon’:

Whereas [in the UK] there’s a, there is the canon. And then, you know, every time you write anything you’ve got to relate to the canon. Well I mean, you know, that’s just not the way it’s done in America. (1/04 288)

Heterosexuality still seemed to have a great importance in UK/European psychoanalysis. One participant stated:

But it does feel that the sort of gender and sexuality matters are still in a pretty old fashioned, primarily old fashioned situation. Any time I’ve had supervision with English analysts, it feels like I’m in a kind of grid in which gender and sexuality operate in these rather conventional circumstances. (1/09 489)

Despite the more recent changes of attitude and policy towards homosexuality, there has been little commensurate re-theorising about it. But if psychoanalysis does not think homosexuality is pathology any more – what does it think?

In terms of my personal psychoanalytic and scholarly experience, it was applied oedipal theory that after all led to so much of the confusion about homosexuality...It is not only unacceptable to move quietly on – it is (in my view, of course) potentially destructive. (1/10 24)

It is easier now to see how traditional analytic theories towards homosexuality were built on unconscious defences and unacknowledged homophobia. Without theoretical change this will still permeate thinking in contradiction to stated attitudes, and this is a confusing position for practitioner and patient alike:
I don’t think that the issue of homosexuality is now sorted because we don’t have an alternative shared theoretical understanding. (1/03 1024)

Some felt that removing overt discrimination had left the field clear for some different thinking to emerge:

I sort of think we’ve cleared away some of the sort of legacy of prejudice about homosexuality. Now maybe is the time to have a really open debate about how we think and formulate and make sense of those sorts of issues. (1/03 1011)

This is not about developing a new unified theory of homosexuality; no participant thought this was the solution, and in fact could be building new theory on the shaky foundations of a universalist approach:

I don’t think you need another psychoanalytic theory of homosexuality or lesbian development or whatever. (1/01 406)

It was more about trying to see how not pathologising homosexuality made things different:

I’m not interested in having a theory of identity as such, as much as understanding in any given interaction how identity notions are used by both parties. (1/01 390)

Problematising what had been considered normal, putting heterosexuality up for examination, treating it rather than homosexuality as the strange object – these were all seen as ways forward, opening up options for thinking about categories that were otherwise effectively closed down. When attention is directed to the unusual, a fuller understanding of the commonplace can be missed:
Some experiences are harder to notice as being experiences. Like being white, for example. Or being straight. Until something happens and you’re...because when you’re other, you’re already in difference. (1/07 1417)

(iii) Liberality and morality

Do the same relational rules apply irrespective of gender? For some, saying ‘it’s the relationship that matters’ was not a sufficient response:

But “if they love each other it’s fine with me”. You know, this drives me nuts because it, it used to be called “repressive tolerance”. And I can’t stand it...it’s...how these liberally minded people inadvertently stop progress. (1/05 1076)

This ‘we’re all the same’ approach was seen to undermine behaviour being taken seriously as an analytic (and scientific) concern; it assumed that current heterosexual rules are the best ones; and it did no work on homophobia, which does not just disappear:

I just had to sort of lose my prejudice...Where does it go? (1/02 202)

For others, looking at relationships was a legitimate unifying position. Gender differences did not significantly alter relational needs:

Actually the quality of people’s relationships is much more important than the gender of their partners. (1/03 94)

Epistemology engages morality. Is it better to know, or to value uncertainty? To persist with an imperfect theoretical approach or to engage with the patient in a boat that feels rudderless? Can one ethically inhabit a state of not knowing, or indeed of knowing when analytic knowledge is built up in this rather haphazard and individualised way?
Of course, how you explore things has morality coded into it. (1/07 1265)

Each participant had an implicit moral standpoint that informed their thinking about sexuality and gender. Valuing relationality, intent, individual choice, object constancy, consent: none of these values are simple. Consent for example is a complicated concept when thinking about unconscious motivation; relationality and object constancy are established heteronormative values; definitions of cruelty vary and are complicated by issues of consent; individual choice runs up against impact.

Morality brings the purpose of psychoanalysis into question. Is it there to impersonally interpret, to face a person with themselves? Were some things just too difficult to hear without taking a stance? Does claiming a purely interpretive approach disguise the values informing the interpretations? It was pointed out that psychoanalysis ‘polices’ sex and gender differently from other identities:

Vanilla sexuality and heterosexuality do not have to account for themselves. (1/07 1345)

Several of the UK participants commented that issues of sexuality seemed to provoke quite primitive and anxious responses in practitioners:

[The] things that make people, therapists, most anxious about homosexuality are lesbians having children, and casual sex, males and casual sex. Absolutely, people stop being able to think. (1/01 1387)

1.2.4 The content of analytic theorising around gender, sexuality and identity – foreground

Looking at things differently was essential for creating change:
What I mean is if you’re thinking through an oedipal lens, then heterosexuality fixes gender. So, you successfully resolve the Oedipus complex, and then move on to be a normal girl, a normal straight girl, and so forth. So, in that sense, it offers a way of thinking sex and gender together. I’m not sure it’s a good way, or if it’s a good way for everyone. But it does offer something. And I think that’s its seduction, theoretically speaking. (1/07 224)

The ‘seduction’ of Oedipus is an interesting concept. To find an anchor for sexuality, or for gender, may be psychologically desirable and reassuring; if it is not thought about oedipally, what are the alternatives? It has been mooted already that sexuality carries some of gender’s baggage: promiscuity as a gay rather than a male issue; the search for sameness as a lesbian rather than a female issue. In more postmodern language, perhaps queer can illuminate gender as well as sexuality.

It was clear that there was no appetite for a unified psychoanalytic theory for the development of homosexuality, whether through Oedipus or any other route. Analytic theory building was made for the individual and the small group rather than the universal. The analytic focus on the aetiology of homosexuality was strongly questioned. Aetiology is not psychodynamics; meaning is not causation:

There is much epistemological confusion within psychoanalysis about what analysts are actually doing. I believe all they are doing is finding the meanings of homosexuality in their conversations but they think they are discovering the ‘causes’ of homosexuality. (1/08 72)

It all goes back to the question, do we need to explain how someone has become homosexual or not?....I don’t think you can really generalise, there are so many different ways of becoming lesbian or gay....just as we don’t on the whole ask why someone is heterosexual. (1/01 433)
There are all sorts of different pathways to being a reasonably well-adjusted adult and we should entertain the possibility that all sorts of configurations will be good enough. (1/03 928)

Within the area of meaning rather than causation there was considerable confidence in analytic ways of thinking and the specialist knowledge that the psychoanalytic approach could bring to bear.

In terms of the Oedipus complex, options were divided between rehabilitation and rejection.

(i) Oedipal theory rehabilitated

I think a lot of people find (Oedipus) to be an obsolete category. I think it’s salvageable. (1/07 886)

The talk about oedipal rehabilitation looked at it as a non-universal theory that could have local impact and be of broad interest as a way of thinking about things, rather than as a detailed account of development. Oedipus could be framed without its normative overtones:

One can think about [the oedipal complex] without it being a moral, hierarchical perspective...It doesn’t have to be that way. Maybe the unconscious allows for difference, you know, and that’s really interesting. ...I mean, am I interested in women because of my unrequited longings for my mother? Probably! (1/02 487)

The Oedipal family does not have to remain literally anchored in heterosexuality. Oedipal themes can be applied to all sorts of family constellations. It challenges omnipotence; sets generational boundaries; the framework it provides for thinking about the move from the two to the three person relationship works without having to attach gender to the differences. It can be thought about as an account of the
evolution and organisation of human experiences, of power, sexuality, and
generations. It is the adherence to traditional norms, rather than Oedipal ideas
themselves, that are problematic:

> Whether I use the word oedipal or not, you want to know something about
> sexuality and power. And in that sense you are in a domain that I think most
> people will recognise as oedipal. (1/09 132)

The relational approach reshapes Oedipus into a two way process; the child is affected
by the parents, but the parents also respond to the child’s projections. So too with
culture – this inhabits the child through the parents, who become the child’s entry into
culture. If culture and race are carried in families then they too must be part of an
oedipal picture:

> To me what’s important about the Oedipus complex is that it...helps me
> understand how what is out there, comes in here. And how culture becomes an
> intrapsychic object. And that to me has been very useful precisely because I
> found it hard to think psychoanalysis and the unconscious together with the
> outside. (1/07 891)

In postmodern terms Oedipus can be ‘queered’, rather than having to stop at the limits
of the classical oedipal complex. The question can be recast: not how can Oedipal
theory rethink homosexuality, but how can broader experiences be allowed to rebuild
Oedipal theory?

(ii) Oedipal theory rejected

Soundly rejected as a universal theory of gendered and sexual development, Oedipus
is simply not a sufficient explanation for sexuality or gender. If its non-universality is
accepted its importance diminishes:
All of the people [analysts] that I’d spoken to were very influenced by the universal acceptance of the role of the Oedipus complex in development, which has been a huge problem in our field. Because the Oedipus complex you know has been reduced, simplified, not understood, and I think Freud’s ideas about it weren’t exactly on target either. And, you know, it’s a developmental idea that’s of some interest but certainly doesn’t organise behaviour the way the analytic groups at the time thought, and many do today too. (1/10 232)

Just because something could be explained by oedipal theory didn’t make it the right explanation.

There was some feeling that oedipal theory was more closely clung to in the UK, perhaps because there was less alternative thinking available:

…[In the UK] everything is subject to the Oedipus complex, everything is subject to certain developmental experiences, which is not the way that Americans think of it. (1/07 44)

Oedipus, like many theories, was answering the questions of its time. It explained sexuality and gender; it explained perversions; it explained child abuse, because it was there and those things needed explaining. While understanding has developed since then Oedipus has not moved on, and it ties the field down to outdated ideas:

We have to give up our outdated theories. Of which, the way the Oedipus complex has been conceptualised and applied is one of them. (1/10 463)

Some participants commented on the oedipal conflation of gender with sexuality, noting that it put homosexuality on the back foot. In this view it is inevitably detrimental to homosexuality as it is theorised as a developmental arrest. It simply is heteronormative, and cannot be rehabilitated out of this. The things that are useful – the move into the external world, the three person relationship - are all relevant but remain so without Oedipus and need no attachment to this theory.
1.2.5 Concepts of identity, gender and sexuality

(i) Identity

Identity was seen as richly textured and far from a simple yes/no.

The segregation of gender and sexuality from other markers of identity like race and class was questioned. American participants were more outspoken about this, possibly because of the interpersonal and relational embrace of the social and cultural with the intrapersonal:

[Gender and sexuality] has to be folded in to some other phenomenon like race and class. And so, I think to the degree that if there’s kind of an evolution in thinking about gender and sexuality, it might be to think about this in terms of culture, in terms of cultures and mobilities, migration. In terms of how does class become registered and sort of bodily life in gendered phenomena? And where does race, you know, enter the picture? So that the more complex models for your identities are seen in much more variegated ways. (1/09 765)

Identity’s functionality was noted, that identity was not a thing in itself but is arrived at in relation to political and cultural positions. If these were not made overt then politics and culture could be disguised as identity – for example the ‘born gay’ argument may have been scientific but it was also political. Identity is a field on which other stories are written.

The rigidity accorded to gender and sexual identity in psychoanalysis may draw to itself clients and trainees who may be looking for certainty in identity. But sexuality and gender categories may just not be that strong or significant as entities as they are made out to be – the strength is accorded to them, rather than born from them.

If identities are created in part through shared discourses, then standing outside of discourse undoes identities, or creates subversive ones. Achievable identities include compromises in order to share a discourse:
(People) find themselves in a discourse where their sexuality is rendered as pathological and ...there don’t seem to be any options for a kind of valid life really. (1/01 283)

When identities are formed under oppression they take on the characteristics of oppression, which can then be misinterpreted as pathology.

The experience of needing a clear identity can change. Identities may be demanded more at some times than at others, both from society and individuals. Younger people will have a different need of identity than older people. ‘Being a lesbian’ forty years ago meant something different to ‘being a lesbian’ today. Identity is not entirely in a person’s control; it requires recognition, and the recognition (or not) also shapes it. People do things with other people’s identities; ‘you’re a lesbian’ claims certain contextual ways of seeing a person, whether or not that accords with how the person sees themselves.

(ii) Gender

This presented as themes around gender difference, the body and transgender, and each are addressed in turn.

Firstly, gender difference. Scientific studies presented some interesting challenges: the genders have different attitudes to sex and love; the relationship between sex and love is different in the genders; there are genetic and hormonal components to sexual difference. These were not felt to negate the importance of psychodynamics for understanding how this is lived out in the individual.

Science called for work on gender differences in other areas too:

I am very much interested in developing these to the next level, which involves...the effects of sexual differentiation on morality, on altruism, on
nurturance, on love, on heroism and on violence, and also on psychopathology.

(1/10 573)

Viewpoints that were not specifically scientific also picked up on the ‘we’re different’ theme, and some ran it together with complementarity as a resolution:

You get two men together, you get double the problem. Because it’s women that help men...women ground men. (1/02 85)

Some participants felt that gender and sexuality were linked and should be theorised together, and found complementarity to be a helpful descriptive concept towards this. Gender certainty could be linked to gender flexibility: femininity in a man can be a sign of balance not confusion. This balance is sought in relationships, across partnerships, of whatever gender. The content of gender balance is contextual; gender is a useful category for the containment of a range of behaviours, and the precise allocation of behaviour to category fluctuates with time and circumstance. It presents the question of whether this allocation could be made to categories other than gender.

Others felt that gender and sexuality were not linked, and that sexuality had become the repository for some of gender’s troubles. Gay men challenged traditional signifiers of male identity, and if the option of seeing them as less male was removed, then the other option must be to re-evaluate masculinity. Gender was not the only similarity/difference category, or even the biggest. Its significance for some suggested that it stood in for or carried the weight of ‘difference’ as a category rather than only in relation to itself.

The role of identification in becoming gender-secure was updated from an oedipal caricature of masculine father and feminine mother to a more complex range of identifications which do not need to be with the parent at all, although the gender might remain significant:
I don’t think that mothers and fathers are necessarily the most important in terms of identification. (1/06 321)

Identification may relate to the place of the person identified with in the parent’s mind – so an uncle may be more relevant than a father, for example. Identification with the opposite sexed parent need not be gender confusion if different gender attributes can be allowed in both sexes.

Secondly, the body. It was hard to express the materiality of gender without putting it in opposition to the construction or performativity of gender. To see gender as entirely performative was expressed as a frustrating denial of a reality that was anticipated in relation to the body. Experience in the consulting room for some had brought little evidence of gender as fluid, and certainly not as a choice, which seemed oversimplistic. The body was both crucial and elusive, and the reflections of the place of the body in gender identity reflected this tension:

I’m glad you’re bringing up the body because it’s so crucial. And it, to me, also it’s so elusive because I have – I struggle with this idea of the body’s materiality as fixed because the body’s materiality already has meanings inscribed in it.

(1/07 545)

The gender difference of how the body is owned was raised as affecting gender identity. The difference in language and expectation relating to male and female bodies and sexual behaviours meant that for girls sex is performance, with the male gaze as the camera lens. How could heterosexual identity be separated from gender when girls are separated from their experience of their bodies? If your desire is not your own, neither is your sexuality.

Other ways were mentioned in which men and women experienced their bodies differently. Examples were of women’s body clocks being linked to their ability to have children; men have a greater capacity for eternal adolescence because their procreative abilities do not cut off in the same way.
The join between body and mind was looked upon as a psychological task. The body’s physical presence, its limitations and possibilities, have to be encountered by the mind. The mind does not control the body; but nor is the body ever free of meaning.

Thirdly, transgender. Transgender presented a particular challenge to the mind/body join. While wanting gender to be a complex discussion, transgender patients could bring it down to a yes/no in terms of the body, and practitioners had to find a response to this:

I think it [transgender] seems that there is more than just fantasy, and more than just wish fulfilment. But I think that there’s also something about, having just said that I don’t believe in body materiality, that there’s also something about body materiality. It feels important. (1/07 569)

There was a general feeling that transgender now had the place that gender and sexuality had twenty years ago, in terms of challenging psychoanalysis. This ranged from trying to understand and offer helpful and non-judgemental therapy to adult and child patients, to thinking through admitting transgendered candidates into analytic trainings:

I think transgender issues...All of that feels to me much more complicated, more of a minefield than the issue of sexual orientation actually...I think it is the next step. (1/03 565)

Participants noted that voicing thoughts about transgender often brought strong reactions. Some felt that the level of activism about transgender made clear thinking more difficult. Analytic thinking about transgender certainly did not seem dispassionate:

I think that trans phenomena, they, they challenge so much the idea that we know something about gender, that either you’re gonna let yourself get carried in to that, and try to reflect about it from within. Or you’re going to dig your
heels into the ground and say, “No, I’m not going there. I know what this is about.” (1/07 721)

There was some excitement at the opportunities that transgender theorising might bring. It is on the edges of experience while also changing the centre of understanding gender. It has something to say about sexuality, pushing on the intersection between sexuality and gender. It takes sex and gender out of their rather conventional psychoanalytic heterosexual gridlock, unfixing them from familiar compass points. In a way it brings clarity to sexuality – its relationship to gender is illuminated by being able to see how changing gender can destabilise it. There are opportunities for learning. What defines gender? What defines sexuality?

There was also consideration of transgender as problematic:

One bit of me says one’s biological body is a given, and that’s part of coming to terms with reality. (1/03 623)

Is it omnipotent to believe that gender can be changed if the body is changed? Can the material resolve the psychological? Should the whole agenda of rescripting the body be challenged – is transgender on a spectrum with gender-based cosmetic surgery, making the body correspond to a gender identity that cannot but be home to social and relational influences? Or perhaps there is biology involved here that is not yet understood.

The possibility of there being pathological elements in transgender was not ruled out. For some this was more in the sense of pathology as something that can always be a part of the way individuals negotiate identity, and for others it was more towards transgender being in itself somewhat delusional.

In transgender the weight of gender is placed on the body – condensed down into a small space with a large meaning. The question of aetiology when addressed to it
tends to be purposive, as it was with homosexuality, which can make it quite unanalytical:

Because this question of – do we help people go on with their lives in this way? Or do we try to change it? – keeps us from asking, “What does this mean?” And it’s very hard to ask “What does this mean?” without immediately falling into what does it mean so that once you understand what it means the person doesn’t have to do it anymore. (1/07 462)

(iii) Sexuality

The clearing out of overt discrimination opened the door to broader theorising about sexuality for participants. It was noted that sexuality as identity could change throughout life and some people never ‘concluded’. It can be experienced as chance, choice, circumstantial, fixed through time and practice and influenced by what was available as a liveable life at the time - not like something fixed at four years old as a correlation of gender. Some people may never ‘decide’ – identity does not have to be measured by its fixedness. On the other hand some people do indeed experience their sexual identity as immutable. Into this comes the question of bisexuality, which one participant mooted as less an attraction to both genders than a moving between, back and forth. This lightens the gender load of attraction, and went together with an emphasis on the relational aspect of desire:

The notion of sexual orientation thinks of sexuality as not occurring within a relationship. So, you look to the world knowing what kind of person you’re looking for before you meet them...If we are thinking relationally, which I am, like what do these categories mean? (1/07 757)

There was a question about the role of biology, noting that there were gender differences in trends in sexual identity. For example men tended to have a more fixed level of visual erotic fantasy that was less open to change; women tended to have erotic feelings more aroused by deep relationships. Women were also more likely to
experience change in their sexual identities, for example engaging in lesbian relationships after having had stable heterosexual ones.

The psychoanalytic perspective on sexual identity as a universal phenomenon rather shut down on the diversity in sexual orientation:

If you look at the entire population of... non-heterosexual males and females what you’re, what you see is a lot of diversity. It’s not a phenomenon. It’s not a unitary phenomenon. And in women it’s much less unitary than in men. And it can’t be conceptualised in simplistic terms. (1/10 396)

Taking heterosexuality as the norm and theorising homosexuality as a difference from the norm, even if variant rather than deviant, was strongly questioned. There was an opportunity here, in re-theorising homosexuality, to question heterosexuality too, not just in relation to homosexuality but in its own right and for its own sake:

I’m not saying that it’s theoretically impossible to problematise heterosexuality....But (it’s) always done from the perspective of a liberatory impulse with regard to homosexuality or sexual minority stuff. So what you do is you relativise heterosexuality for a purpose other than the salvation of heterosexuality. (1/05 73)

Talking from within a gay relationship the experience is always of something to be explained. This is not so with heterosexuality – yet something is lost in this, something about heterosexuality is left unexplored. And unless heterosexuality is explored with the same interest as homosexuality, the deeper questions of meaning will be missed. Sexuality was not necessarily or only about sex:

There are many social-political dimensions that co-symbolise with sex. In other words, if you’re talking about sex, you’re also going to be talking about society, politics, power; you just can’t avoid it. (1/05 7)
The shape of sexuality is responsive to the shape of society, politics, power; conservative eras could produce radical sexual alternatives. It was suggested that the current analytic atmosphere was conservative and that sexuality in the consulting room was little talked about, being laden with anxiety. The secrecy of this was criticised – it led to an ‘as if’ position rather than analysts really grasping the sexuality that faces them in the clients that they see. With homosexuality, where homophobia can lead to a double denial, this led to even greater obscurity of truth and misinterpretation of outcome.

Transference, countertransference and homophobia were repeatedly raised as clinical issues. One of the losses of absorbing homosexuality into the mainstream was the loss of the opportunity to understand homophobia:

Homophobia is the great unexplored subject...I think that people just need to learn more about homophobia in order to work well with lesbians and gay men. (1/01 697)

Such learning was repeatedly described as being facilitated by close and undefended engagement with patients. Transference and countertransference can be very misunderstood if the analyst is not alive to their own homophobia. If for example they cannot hold and recognise the erotic transference without requiring in their own countertransference a heterosexual outcome – relying on attributing their homosexual erotic response to the feminine aspect, or being the mother in the transference, or somesuch – then homophobia is contributing to pushing intimacy and men always into the feminine and not actually facing what it is that the homosexual client faces the therapist with. The quality of eroticism in the transference can be missed because homophobia shuts the therapist’s eyes to it. Or it may be over-simplified and handled crudely because of a reluctance in the therapist to fully inhabit their own erotic countertransference.

While theory is important, in practice the clinician is more than the sum of their theories. Theory is no good if it is just words – it has to be put into practice to be
meaningful. Queer theory and gay identity theory can only take you so far in the consulting room. But so too sometimes can Freud:

As far as Oedipus goes – it’s a very hard concept to operationalise. (1/10 750)

1.2.6 Final Reflection

It would seem that the passion and the expertise to develop analytic thinking about gender and sexuality exists and is available and already deeply engaged with. Having knocked and beaten on the door of the major institutions it has worked its way round, under and over them and is taking the best theorising away from them. More could be done to bring the thinking together and perhaps this offers at least a small opportunity for that to happen.
Dear

I am writing to ask if you will consider contributing to a research project into gender, sexuality and psychoanalysis. As a subject, it has reached a certain point of focus in contemporary psychoanalysis in the UK, and I am seeking to explore this further through a PhD study with the University of Leicester.

I am familiar with some of your extensive work in this area, which I have found tremendously interesting and helpful, and this has led me to write to you. [This paragraph was then tailored to each individual].

My aim is to contribute to psychoanalytic theory development through talking with experts in the field. I propose to have an initial conversation with twelve British and American psychoanalysts, of whom I hope you will be one, to explore their thinking around the construction of gender identity and sexual identity in psychoanalysis with particular reference to the Oedipus complex.

To enable some of the essence of these conversations to be shared I will write a paper based on a thematic analysis of them, circulate this paper to the respondents, and follow this with a second interview in which there is opportunity for reflective discussion. The idea is to follow the themes in each interview that are of interest to you; it will be loosely structured but not prescriptive. Whether to be identifiable or anonymous is entirely the choice of each participant.

Your commitment would be to these two individual interviews, and to reading the paper inbetween. Although my interest has led me in particular directions of thinking I have no preconceptions or desires as to where these conversations will lead. I intend that the experience should be worthwhile for each participant by engaging in this
virtual round table reflective process which allows for personal and collective
development of thinking, as well as enabling me to develop my own theoretical
analysis.

I do hope you will consider taking part. The initial interviews will be arranged at a time
and place to suit you, sometime between February and July 2013; the second
interviews are scheduled to be between June and October 2014. I attach fuller
participant information and details of consent which I will be happy to discuss with you
if you are willing to take this further.

I very much look forward to hearing from you.

With good wishes,

Nicola Barden.
Appendix 3

Participant Information and Consent Form – Individual Interviews

Study Title: Sexual and gendered identity in psychoanalysis

You are being invited to take part in this research study. This form provides information about why the research is being done and what it would involve for you, and provides an opportunity for you to ask for further clarification on any points before deciding whether you are willing to commit to participating. I am undertaking this research as part of a University of Leicester PhD study.

Purpose of the study

The study will test the need for theory development in the psychoanalytic approach to sexual and gendered identity in relation to Oedipal theory. I am particularly interested in exploring the responses of analytic practitioners who have an evidenced interest/expertise in this area. The research hopes to contribute to further theory building.

You have been invited to be part of this study because of your expertise in the field of gender and sexuality in psychoanalysis, evidenced by your publications in this area. Participation is entirely voluntary. If you agree to take part, you will have an opportunity to discuss this information sheet with me in more detail. I will then ask you to sign a consent form, so that you know exactly what you are agreeing to.

Taking part – the commitment

Taking part will require a commitment to meet with me twice over the course of the study, once in 2013 and once in 2014, either face to face or by skype, according to your
preference. Each meeting will last about one hour and will be audio-recorded. No preparation is required for the first meeting; for the second, you will receive a paper in advance which will pull together themes from all the first round interviews, and this will be the stimulus for the second round of conversations (see below).

After both meetings I will transcribe the interviews from the recordings. These will be sent to you so that you can agree them as accurate and make any necessary clarifications. This includes checking that you are content for any illustrative case material to become part of the data. The purpose of both recordings and transcriptions is to subject them to a thematic analysis.

It is important that you can commit to both interviews as this will give you an opportunity to respond to the overall themes from all the interviews, and this is a vital part of the theory building. This iterative process will result in a further and final theoretical paper that will form part of the thesis.

**Expenses and payments**

As I will be coming to a location convenient to yourself to conduct the interviews, or they will take place on skype, there will be no expenses incurred by you, except that you give freely of your time.

At our meeting I will ask you to sign a written consent form. You are free at any point to withdraw your consent, for either or both interviews, up until the time that the data are analysed for each one.

**Possible disadvantages and risks of taking part**

Talking about theoretical ideas can often be interesting and enjoyable. Occasionally it may raise something that is upsetting or more difficult to process, as it can require discussion of a more personal nature to explain the background to a particular
position. You may want to be aware of your support systems and have a little space for reflection immediately after the interviews.

**Possible benefits of taking part**

The research is designed to increase knowledge about psychoanalytic theory that may be of help to psychoanalytic/dynamic practitioners and therefore their clients. The results, while not being of immediate direct benefit to you, may contribute to the overall development of the profession. You may find it positive to contribute towards such changes.

**Confidentiality**

I, of course, know your identity. The choice as to whether you prefer to be named as part of the research or to be anonymous lies with you. All information sourced from your interview will be anonymised and contain no identifiable material in the report or in any subsequent publications arising from the study. Your words may be quoted directly but any identifying details will be removed. However, you may wish to be acknowledged as having been part of the project and to have contributed your thinking to the work, and I would be very happy to do this. The role of participants in the research project will be acknowledged in any publication, by name if you give your permission, and where appropriate, there will be consideration of joint authorship. The audio recording of your interview will be stored on a password protected computer and on an encrypted memory stick until it is transcribed and the transcription agreed by you, after which it will be destroyed/wiped. All other hard and electronic copy of the data will be retained for a minimum of 6 years, in accordance with the University of Leicester’s Research Code of Conduct (2008). The data will be coded by number, with a reference list linking number to name stored separately in a locked filing cabinet. The data may be used in further publications by the researcher and will be accessible to myself and my academic supervisors.

This study has Research Ethics Committee approval from the University of Leicester.
Leaving the study

If you choose to withdraw from the study at any point before the data are analyzed (this will be at two points for the two interviews) then the transcript of the interview will be destroyed along with the audio recording and there will be no further involvement with the research, with no repercussions to you. Once the data reaches analysis it will not be possible to withdraw from that stage of the research as it will have become part of a wider thematic analysis and is not identifiable as a single source.

Any further issues

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should speak to the researcher (Nicola Barden 02392 843466) or to their supervisor (Sue Wheeler, University of Leicester Institute of Lifelong Learning sw103@le.ac.uk), who will do their best to answer your questions. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this through the Chair of the University Research Committee, who can be contacted through Sue Wheeler (who is also Director of the Doctoral Programme at ILL).

Results of the research

The study will result in a PhD dissertation. It may subsequently be published in relevant professional journals. No report or publication will identify you in any way, except to acknowledge your participation in the research project, as mentioned above, by name if you agree, with consideration of joint authorship where appropriate.

Organisation and funding of the research

This research is being organised through the Institute of Lifelong Learning, University of Leicester, as part of a PhD. The researcher has been awarded a grant towards the cost of the PhD through the ILL.
Ethical review

This study has completed an Ethics Review at the University of Leicester.

Further information and contact details

If you have any questions about the project, or participating in it, you can contact the researcher directly on 02392 843466, or by emailing nicola.barden@port.ac.uk
Informed Consent Form

Study Title: Sexuality and gender in psychoanalysis

Name of Researcher: Nicola Barden

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, up to the point when the data is analysed for each interview

3. I understand that this study has the approval of the University of Leicester Research Ethics Committee

4. I agree to be interviewed, and give my permission for the interviews to be audio recorded and transcribed

5. I understand that my name will not be included on the transcript of the interview or any published report except in acknowledgement if I agree, or by joint publication if appropriate and agreed with me
6. Any quotes used in the final report and subsequent publications will be anonymised, having had identifying information removed

7. I have been informed how the data will be stored, archived and destroyed, and I understand who will have access to it

8. I understand how to raise a concern and make a complaint

9. I agree to take part in the above study

Name of Participant (CAPITALS):

Signature: Date:

Name of Person securing consent (CAPITALS): NICOLA BARDEN

Signature: Date
Appendix 4

Brief example of a transcript of an interview with the first stage of analysis.

S1 = Researcher
S2 = Participant
*Italics* = meaning units

Extract approximately two thirds of the way through the second interview.

S1: I want to make sure I understood you right. So if you’re describing a lesbian relationship you might say, ‘Well, that’s quite a masculine way that that pair have of going about things.’

S2: No, I wouldn’t necessarily say the pair would. I was talking about a heterosexual relationship where the man is basically a woman. He’s the carer, he looks after, he’s self-effacing, he’s midwife to the activities of the other.

*Women traditionally look after others before themselves*

*A man in this sense can be ‘the woman’ in a relationship*

She’s also self-effacing. They’re kind of self-effacing so I think they have a lesbian relationship.

*Cross gender roles can be described in terms of sexuality*

Sexually they have a lesbian relationship - they don't have intercourse, they have.... But they look to all intent and purposes like a heterosexual relationship; but it’s not heterosexual one way and it is in another. I mean I’m being too crude about it, it’s not....

*It is difficult to talk about gendered behaviour with subtlety*
S1: I know. Yeah. So that’s really looking at it in a very constructed way. So if you’re saying they’re in a lesbian relationship....

S2: Well, the man doesn’t want to be the upfront person or the...you know?  
*Men traditionally have the ‘up front’ role in a heterosexual relationship*

S1: Yeah. So that’s a way of describing something.

S2: Yeah. Or you could look at a lesbian or a two women relationship where one woman has to pay the whole time. What’s that about?  
*Women can take the male role in a lesbian relationship*

That’s not nothing to do with equality, which was kind of how we formulated lesbianism.  
*Feminism wrongly thought about lesbianism as to do with equality*

It tells you lesbianism is no more to do with equality than heterosexuality is. It’s not an advance.  
*Lesbianism is not an advance for women in the equality stakes*

So it’s not two parts of the thing, it’s just it might be any kind of admixture of anything.  
*It is not about complementarity – partnerships can be weighted towards the masculine or feminine irrespective of gender*

S1: Okay (laughter).

S2: Doesn’t help us!

S1: Well, no. But I’m just trying to...it’s just helpful to me to hear how you think about these things. That’s what I’m really trying to get to because I think it’s really difficult stuff to think about.

S2: I just don’t want to reduce what is to what isn’t. The only thing I’m really clear about
Much is unclear in relation to gender and sexuality was, when we were talking about trans, is, I’ve got the difficulty with the literal changing of the body.

The materiality of trans is the problem
I just have a difficulty with it. Not so much from one to the other, although that’s probably because I’ve got used to it.

Changing genders is an easier concept than being of both genders, materially.

Familiarity with an idea breeds acceptance
It’s the mix and matching.

Mixing gender is harder to comprehend than switching gender

S1: I’m a bit curious as to what it is about that that really sticks with you.

S2: I don’t know. Probably it’s a challenge. It’s wanting everything.

Mixing gender is like wanting everything
I don’t know what it is. There’s no mourning in there. There’s no loss. And I suppose one of the tasks of being a human being is you have to have a loss.

Mixing gender does not include mourning or loss

Dealing with loss is part of being human
I mean that is part of what life is, is to realise your parents weren’t ideal and they did what they could and they were probably pretty incompetent.

Dealing with loss is part of dealing with disappointment over imperfect parents
And that doesn’t mean you have to be full of hate for your own needs inside of you, right?

Because you don’t get what you want doesn’t mean that what you want or need is wrong
So that’s one of kind of loss of idealisation. Like who’s the baddie there? It’s not the parent and it’s not you.

Mourning makes you accept no-one’s perfect
That’s part of what you have to deal with as you grow up, and you have losses when you grow up.

Growing up means dealing with loss

[Note: Meaning units were then clustered into categories and from there into themes.]
References


321


Grove, J. (2009) ‘How competent are trainees and newly qualified counsellors to work with lesbian, gay and bisexual clients and what do they perceive as their most effective learning experiences?’ Counselling and Psychotherapy Research 9(2): 78-85.


