

14<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the  
National HIV Nurses Association (NHIVNA)



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**Perpetual spirals of power and pleasure :**  
**Exploring the life experiences of gay**  
**men living long-term into the 21<sup>st</sup>**  
**century.**

## Methodological issues

### The 'insider' researcher

- ▣ Bolton, R. 1995 Tricks, friends, and lovers: erotic encounters in the field, in *Taboo: Sex, identity and erotic subjectivity in anthropological fieldwork*. Kulick, D. & Willson, M. (eds) London: Routledge. pp.140-167
- ▣ Rickard, W. 2003 Collaborating with sex workers in oral history. *Oral history review* 30 (1): 47-59
- ▣ Styles, J. Outsider/Insider: Researching gay baths. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 8 (2): 135-152

## The theoretical dimension

### Alex

- ▣ 'So, eventually I did leave the T. A. [Territorial Army] as well, eh, which was all part of it and at the same time obviously I- I contracted HIV, through one way o[r] another [...] Um, and I don't know whether every 10 years something important has to happen which ruins my life or so, because obviously 10 years before I had the breakup of the relationship in Germany. So I don't know whether I need something every 10 years to completely upset me (laughs).'
- (Appendix 1, p67)

## Plummer

- ▣ Plummer, K. 1995 *Telling Sexual Stories: Power, Change and Social Worlds*. London: Routledge.
- ▣ Plummer, K. 2001 *Documents of Life 2*, London: Sage.

## Denzin

- ▣ Denzin, N. 1989 *Interpretive Biography*. Beverley Hills: Sage Publications.

## Foucault

- ▣ Foucault, M. 1979 *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: an Introduction*. translated by Hurley, R. London: Penguin books.
- ▣ Foucault, M. 1985 *The History of Sexuality, Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure*. translated by Hurley, R. Harmondsworth: Penguin books.
- ▣ Foucault, M. 1980 *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-77*. ed. Gordon, C. Brighton: Harvester Press.

### *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: an Introduction*

- ▣ Power can allow itself to be 'invaded by the pleasure it is pursuing; and opposite it, power asserting itself in the pleasure of showing off, scandalising, or resisting [...] these attractions, these evasions, these circular incitements have traced around bodies and sexes, not boundaries to be crossed, but *perpetual spirals of power and pleasure*' (Foucault, 1979, p.45).

### *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: an Introduction*

- ▣ 'It is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together [...] we must not imagine the world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies' (Foucault, 1979, p.100).

### *Telling Sexual Stories: Power, Change and Social Worlds*

- ▣ 'as electricity is to the physical world, so power may be to the social world: it is the conduit through which much life gets enacted' (Plummer, 1995, p.26).

## Interconnection of power and sex



## Power in confessional discourse

### *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: an Introduction*

- ▣ 'It is no longer a question simply of saying what was done-the sexual act-and how it was done; but of reconstructing, in and around the act, the thoughts that recapitulated it, the obsessions that accompanied it, the images, desires, modulations, and quality of the pleasure that animated it. For the first time no doubt, a society has taken upon itself to solicit and hear the imparting of individual pleasures.' (Foucault, 1979, p.63)



## Conclusion

- oral history as confessional discourse
- The interconnection of power with sex
- Perpetual spirals of power and pleasure