Compassion and its Therapeutic

Role in Coping with Unexpected Life Events

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Compassion and its Therapeutic

Role in Coping with Unexpected Life Events

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All words spoken by participants are shown in *italics*

Where my words appear in dialogue they are prefaced by 'R' Researcher

SECTION A

Introduction to the Portfolio

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION TO THE PORTFOLIO

This section will present the three separate components of the portfolio and comment on the reasons for the choice of each and the links that connect them. The components of the Research Section B, and the Section C case studies are concerned with personal experiences of coming to terms with unexpected events in life. The Critical Literature Review in Section D considers Gilbert's Compassion-Focused Therapy and its development over twenty years in treating different psychological conditions. This leads to acknowledging compassion as a subtle presence linking the sections of the portfolio. I now comment on Sections B, C and D and outline my reasons for the choices made.

Doctoral Research
The Silent Spouse

A Pluralistic Narrative Analysis of Accounts from Heterosexual Spouses of Their
    Experiences of Being Left by their Partner for a Same-Sex Relationship.

Section B is presented as an original piece of research which was concerned to listen to the personally recounted stories and views of heterosexual partners who remained in the shadows, after their husbands, wives or partners had 'come out' to begin a new life with a same-sex partner. The experiences of the 'straight' husbands and wives who were left had been largely overlooked whereas the lesbian, gay or bisexual partners who left them had established support networks and received considerable media interest.   In 2010 I had been surprised that the partners left to cope, often raising their families alone, were not more visible.   Like many others, I had not given the matter serious thought until two clients were referred for counselling after their husbands had left them to live with same-sex partners.   It became clear many spouses left in these circumstances who were then recovering, had become tired of being ignored or hurt by thoughtless judgemental comments of others. The study aimed to explore how married heterosexual spouses discovered that their husband or wife's sexuality was different to what they had believed and what this meant to them.   It is a qualitative study that listened to the participants' stories in individual face-to-face unstructured interactive interviews (Corbin & Morse, 2003). In researching such a sensitive subject on university premises it was

important that the interviews should be friendly, respectful and non-hierarchical (Oakley, 1981) therefore the interview procedure gave participants considerable control over what they chose to talk about. The data was initially analysed by broad thematic methods and then by narrative methods, pluralistically, according to models developed by Labov (l972), Riessman (2008) and Becker (1999). This approach enabled a multi-perspective view to be achieved to develop a more holistic insight to participants' experiences. My role as researcher and audience was acknowledged as contributing to the co-constructed accounts. It is hoped that the findings may be useful to counselling psychologists, therapists and clinicians who are consulted in these situations. Alternatively, the stories may be used in training courses to promote awareness of the particular issues that most concerned the straight spouses. Throughout, descriptors 'straight' and 'heterosexual' are interchangeable.

Professional Practice

The two case studies in Section C concerned unexpected events set in different contexts. The clients had different preferences for the way therapy was conducted. All names are pseudonyms with personal details changed to protect confidentiality.

Case study 1

This concerns a 70 year old lady who had been struck by a protruding metal object on the side of a bus while waiting at the bus stop. Although her physical injuries resolved in a few weeks her fear of travelling on public transport lasted for months until her daughter urged her to request counselling. This case study was chosen because I had read how older people in Britain and in America are not always screened for trauma symptoms after an accident and frequently only their physical injuries are treated. Studies now confirm that some older people respond well to cognitive behavioural therapy, often better than younger people (Clapp & Beck 2012). However, unless people are aware of treatment being available, many would assume nothing further can be offered. I could visualise my mother at the same age and determined to do my best to help Sadie to regain her confidence to travel. For months she could not meet her friends, which had been a huge deprivation. She had become withdrawn, avoided venturing into the town and was afraid of seeing the bus

involved in the incident. This client responded well to cognitive behavioural approaches using a modified protocol (Blanchard & Hickling, 1997; 2004). A progressive hierarchy was used to confront her fears. I had been prepared to accompany her personally with some in vivo exposure but her daughter assisted by taking her mother on an intensive series of daily bus and train journeys to good effect. Imagery techniques were also employed to reduce a dread of seeing the particular bus. Within eight sessions Sadie was confidently using public transport and happy to feel her life had returned to normal. The therapeutic relationship was close and very natural. It was easy to understand why Sadie had so many friends. Sadie's situation had evoked a personal sense of compassion for her in me but later I wondered how many other elderly people may not be offered the psychological help they need.

Case study 2

Alice, a middle aged client with obsessive compulsive symptoms and perfectionism was blaming herself for her mother's unforeseen death. Her need to be certain of her responsibility for this had interrupted her grieving process.   Compassionate towards others, but self-critical, Alice had said she usually left her own needs to the last, because she did not feel that she was equally deserving. She presented with compulsive talking and ruminations neutralising intrusive thoughts. Pluralistic counselling (Cooper & McLeod, 2011) offered the client the control she requested and as trust strengthened a friendly and active therapeutic collaboration developed. CBT interventions were effectively introduced and Salkovskis' explanations and methods (2005) convinced Alice that other factors were involved and that she had over-estimated her responsibility. Alice responded well to a direct approach and chose to read relevant journal articles explaining her need for certainty. With practice Alice ignored the intrusive thoughts, improved her relationship with the family, and was able to complete mourning her mother (Machin, 2009). The therapeutic relationship was friendly and positive, and focused on Alice's expressed wish to understand. When therapy ended Alice said she may wish to return to explore some earlier concerns. If so, she may benefit from learning to be self-compassionate to counter her 'undeserving' feelings which reach back to earlier years (Neff, 2011).

The Critical Literature Review

Section D was the second section of the portfolio that I wrote following Section B, The Research element which demonstrated the beneficial influence compassion may have on both the person who offers it and the recipient. I examined a selection of Paul Gilbert's work written over twenty years on the benefits of compassion, as evidenced in the development of his Compassion-Focused Therapy, (CFT). Initially it was used successfully with patients who were highly self-critical or deep in shame, and unable to feel compassionate towards themselves, many having not received warmth and care during their earlier years. Gilbert adapted his cognitive behavioural approach to model warmth and acceptance during therapy, adopting a 'no fault' attitude towards these self-critical patients. Compassionate Mind Training (CMT) was later developed (Gilbert & Procter, 2006) which embodied the guiding principles. Gilbert's books and articles on CFT have extended his influence far beyond Britain and there is continuing interest worldwide with further innovative therapies incorporating compassion and effectively treating individuals or patient groups with different conditions. Further RCT trials are awaited while Gilbert's neurological explorations continue with possible future research applying compassionate approaches to LGBT populations and to children.

My rationale for selecting studies for inclusion in the Critical Literature Review was to consider the development and employment of Gilbert's principles in work with individuals or groups, across multi-diagnostic cohorts and in a range of conditions, including eating disorders, smoking reduction, and his exploratory work linking future neurological explanations with different client groups.

Compassion is the theme linking the component parts

Compassion, an important resource in the practice of counselling psychology, is seen as a subtle recurring theme running throughout the portfolio, frequently imperceptible and discrete, at other times declarative; its presence links all the parts. I became aware that I had been studying people from different social minorities who may be overlooked: the heterosexual spouses whose partners leave them for same-sex relationships; older patients who are not offered psychological therapy, and self-

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critical clients who are unable to experience self-compassion. All could benefit from increased awareness of their needs. In the research study some straight participants who were left struggling to stabilise their own disrupted lives, given time could still empathise with their absent partner, showing care and concern for them in their new lives. Two participants offered support to husbands who experienced homophobia at work, while others encouraged their relatives not to take sides and to continue their contact. Some separated couples still meet regularly for family occasions, including divorced parents who amicably hosted their daughter's wedding. The case studies are a call for general awareness of hidden psychological need. One case points to the needs of single or older people who are unwell and lonely or possibly overlooked for therapy and company which can improve their quality of life. The second case study embodies an aspiration that by extending genuine warmth and acceptance to self-critical individuals and those who appear challenging, they may begin to view themselves more compassionately and increase their trust in others. The Critical Literature Review is based on a representative range of psychological conditions found in individuals and trans-diagnostic groups who have responded positively to Gilbert's Compassion Focused Therapy which harnesses human kindness to treatment. In the Epilogue on page 241 I summarise how the theme of compassion links and speaks to the different sections of the portfolio.

Personal Statement

This portfolio has been completed some twenty two years after being awarded the Post MSc Diploma in the Theory and Practice of Counselling Psychology in l996 and becoming chartered by the British Psychological Society in l997. In l996 I had been researching the use of the genogram in counselling until a work opportunity arose. In my home county I was one of the first counselling psychologists to be employed in a clinical NHS post and worked happily with my colleagues during those years. It was always my hope to complete the research element at a future date, even post retirement, so this portfolio represents a particularly meaningful journey in my life.

SECTION B

The Silent Spouse

A Pluralistic Narrative Analysis of Accounts from Heterosexual Spouses of Their Experiences of Being Left by their Partner for a Same-Sex Relationship.

Christine M. Paske

Supervised by Professor Nollaig A. Frost

SECTION B:　　　　　　**Abstract**

A Pluralistic Narrative Analysis of Accounts from Heterosexual Spouses of Their
Experiences of Being Left by their Partner for a Same-Sex Relationship.

Homosexuality within heterosexual marriages is an under researched topic. The little research there is has focused mainly on the experiences of the spouse who is homosexual and not on the heterosexual spouse who has to adjust to the ending of the marriage as they knew it. This qualitative study takes a cross-methods approach to explore the accounts of eleven heterosexual spouses in England who describe the experience and consequences of discovering that their partner's sexuality is different to what they had believed it to be when they married them.

Unstructured interactive interviews were held with the heterosexual participants, eight women and three men, whose partners had left to begin a same-sex relationship. Three Typologies of marriage were found on repeated examination of the transcripts (Murray, 2005). Pluralistic narrative methods were then used to analyse the texts using models developed by Labov, (1972), Riessman, (2008) and Becker, (1999). Using these models in combination offered views of the accounts of the experience from multiple perspectives and also enabled consideration of how the audience contributed to the co-construction of the narratives.

Findings showed that all the participants had been hurt or shocked on finding out and nine became depressed with three contemplating suicide. Participants expressed the need for specific and knowledgeable support services and increased public awareness, besides revision of the unfair grounds for divorce. Earlier American studies allowed some theoretical interpretation of the findings in this study, including understandings of experiences of mixed-orientation marriages, concerns of older spouses, perceptions of being deceived, used and/or disrespected and the euphoria of partners coming out. The implications of these findings for counsellors and clinicians include increased awareness of depression and suicide for spouses left behind; the difficulties they face in speaking about the experience to friends and family who understand divorce for other reasons, but not this one, and for therapy and support to take account of identity or integrity issues that may arise.

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CHAPTER 1   LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter will consider and critique research concerning the experiences of straight spouses who, after believing they had entered into heterosexual marriages, found out through discovery or by their partner's disclosure, that their husband or wife was gay, lesbian or bisexual and considering or already involved in a same-sex relationship. From this time onwards, the heterosexual wife or husband was perforce in a mixed-orientation marriage, often referred to as a MOM. With attention drawn to the growing phenomenon of mixed-orientation relationships, notably in America, research on this development is included. Limitations of this review are explained by the paucity of peer reviewed studies on the topic. Until the l980's the emphasis had been on men's perceptions and their accounts of 'coming out.' Women finding themselves in mixed orientation marriages had been largely ignored. The earliest literature I found concerning the straight spouses who remained was American. This was not readily accessible in the UK owing to a Local Government Act in l988, repealed in 2003, before the Civil Partnership Act was ratified in 2004. Between 2012 and 2017 I found no new studies on the topic until an Irish study in 2018.

1. Introduction

When homosexuality was decriminalised in the U.K. in l967 there was little prior research which specifically considered the position of a heterosexual spouse married to a gay, lesbian or bisexual person. Tripp (1975) drew attention to the wives in these marriages being ignored. Later, Nahas and Turley (1979) studied couples where straight wives married to homosexual husbands considered their marriage to be either traditional, or identified as being a "new couple." Much existing academic literature reports research that focuses on the experiences of men coming out as gay with far less published about their straight wives, the silent spouses that remain.

1.1 The historical and cultural context

Following the Gay Liberation Movement in New York in 1969 and in the U.K. in 1970 many men came out as homosexual or bisexual in America and Britain, causing

concern to their wives and families who looked for knowledgeable counselling and support services which were not then established. Little attention was paid to the straight wives left by their gay or bisexual husbands until the subject was addressed by Buxton (1981) and Gochros (1982:1985). Later Grever, (2001); Kaye, (2011) and others published studies.   These publications and studies responded to the public need for information and accessible literature as demonstrated by popular accounts for lay audiences such as Nigel Nicolson's 1973 biography of the unusual marriage of his parents, Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson. This was later followed by "Constance: The Tragic and Scandalous life of Mrs Oscar Wilde" (Moyle, 2012). During the intervening years academic research on heterogeneous mixed-orientation marriages began. I found all the early studies on straight partners being left for same sex relationships and then on mixed orientation marriages, originated in America. In Britain Section 28 of a Local Government Act l988 forbidding public promotion of homosexuality as an acceptable alternative, remained in force until 2003, which may account for this gap in UK studies. A subsequent gap followed until an Irish study was published (Daly, MacNeela & Sarmak (2018).

1.2 Searching the literature

My literature search focused on the experiences of heterosexual men or women who had been in a heterosexual marriage until their spouse disclosed or they found out their partner had been in a same sex relationship or was contemplating this. Inclusion criteria: Peer reviewed studies of women and men who had been in a heterosexual marriage for at least five years before discovering their spouse was of a different sexual orientation and involved in or contemplating a same-sex relationship. Exclusion criteria: Accounts of the experience of men and women who had 'come out' leaving their heterosexual marriages. There were already many such accounts, but I was particularly interested to understand the experience of the remaining, mainly unheard, straight spouse.   Employing a variety of search engines and data bases with alerts I examined the literature from 1974 to 2018 on the experience of having a partner who reveals their sexual preference for same-sex relationships, having been in a heterosexual marriage for some years. Databases interrogated included EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, Science Direct and PsycINFO besides Journals published by Wiley and Taylor & Francis using terms like

Homosexual husbands, Bisexual married men, Lesbian wives. The Journal of Homosexuality, Journal of Bisexuality and Journal of GLBT Family Studies and the Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy were some of the more productive sources. In common with Gochros (1982) I found a dearth of early literature about the wives of homosexual or bisexual husbands. Gochros' comprehensive thesis of 1982 on wives who discovered their husbands were not heterosexual, intended to inform social work practice, was a useful source of references. Increased public interest in this subject was then explored in studies by Buxton, (1991;1994; 2001; 2004a; 2004b; 2005; 2006; 2012). Hays & Samuels, (1989) and books were published by Gochros (1989) and Buxton (1991, 1994), Grever, (2001), Kaye, (2011) and other American researchers and writers for public information. A twenty year review of empirical studies by Hernandez, Schwenke & Wilson, (2011) also yielded a few references. Literature in the l970's had mainly concerned men and treatments like aversion therapy to cure homosexuality until ten years later 'coming out' stories of men were published. Initial searches in scholarly publications and peer reviewed journals of mainstream marriage or counselling and family issues proved not to be natural repositories for articles about the straight spouses who remained after their partners had left although the phenomenon of mixed orientation marriage (MOM) or mixed orientation relationships (MOR) was gaining recognition in America. This was observed also by Clark & Serovich, (1997). Social work journals and psychology journals were then searched, of which The Journal of Homosexuality, The Journal of Bisexuality and The Journal of LGBT Family Studies were more productive sources.

With growing public interest between l996 and 2010 Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) topics more than doubled in reputable journals. Since then 'grey' anecdotal literature has circulated in magazines and non-academic articles, mainly by women telling stories of being abandoned or left. For the past seven years there had been no fruitful searches centred on the subject of the present study. One month before submission I discovered a peer reviewed academic study set in the cultural context of Ireland and have added it to update the literature section. The study of Daly, MacNeela & Sarmak, (2018) analyses the stories of nine heterosexual women whose husbands come out as gay, using IPA, (Smith, J.A. 2011). This study is discussed in sub-section 1.6.4 page 42 to maintain chronological order of the publications, with comments on other current topics.

1.2.1 Mixed orientation marriage

Mixed-orientation marriage (MOM) refers to marriages of a heterosexual partner with a spouse of a different sexual orientation. It appears more frequently referenced in America (Boss, 2006; Buxton, 2001, 2004, 2012; Kort, 2005; Corley & Kort, 2006; Hernandez et al., 2007; Jordal, 2011; Kays & Yarhouse, 2010; Schwartz, 2012; Zimmerman, 2013). Seventeen years ago, most mixed-orientation couples were reported to have separated or divorced either shortly after disclosure or within about three years (Buxton, 2001). It is now known some have lasted longer owing to the strength of the bonding, honesty and open communication (Buxton, 2004, 2012). Later studies report mean marriage durations of 14 and 20 years (Jordal, 2011; Zimmerman, 2013). The phenomenon of mixed-orientation marriage has been acknowledged and researched in America since the 1980's but has received less attention in Britain where it was an unfamiliar concept, and in certain African and Asian countries where it is punishable. In Britain, Section 28 of a Local Government Act of 1988 forbade local authorities to *intentionally* promote homosexuality by publishing or teaching in state schools its acceptability or as an alternative family relationship. Libraries and publishers then withheld such literature until the Act was repealed in 2003, having been overtaken by legislation. In America more mixed-orientation couples now remain married by mutual agreement, having suitably tailored their relationships. Furthermore mixed-orientation marriage agreements may be considered as alternatives to divorce with trained counsellors assisting committed couples to negotiate mutual contracts based on openness and honesty to continue their redefined marriages (Kays & Yarhouse, 2010; Kays, Yarhouse & Ripley, 2014).

1.2.2 The growth of GLB Literature

A review of Gay Lesbian and Bisexual (GLB) related psychological literature published between 1967 and 1974 sorted 139 research articles into categories of: Assessment, Causes, Adjustment, Attitudes and Special Topics (Morin, 1977). 73% of articles had focused on homosexuality as psychopathology which future research would challenge. A second review (Clark & Serovich, 1997) showed that 29% of published studies focused on the dynamics of GLB relationships, with 17%

concerned with treatments to change or cure homosexuality. Hartwell, Serovich, Grafsky & Kerr (2012), extended previous research concerning GLB topics in the same journals from 1996 to 2010. The degree of change calculated in GLB articles published in Couple and Family Therapy journals from 1997 to 2009 more than doubled. Proposed research topics concerned GLB mental health, supervision and new types of family life with training of clinicians to understand GLB lives to avoid harm (Long, 1996). The American Couple and Family Therapy Association revoked their former views about homosexuality only when national policy recognised diversity and legalised same-sex marriage in 2015. In Britain the Civil Partnership Act was passed in 2004 and in 2014 same-sex marriage became legal in England and Wales.

1.2.3 Women in mixed-orientation marriages

A twenty-year review carried out by Hernandez, Schwenke & Wilson (2011) discussed fifteen articles about the experiences of straight spouses published in eight peer-reviewed journals. It included those of Gochros (1982), Wolf, (1982), Hays and Samuels (1989), Hernandez and Wilson (2007), and Buxton (2000; 2001; 2004a; 2004b; 2012). Articles concerning the experience of the married gay or lesbian partner were outside the focus of the present study. This review drew my attention to American studies in the 1980's when the Gay Liberation Movement had gathered momentum, which focused on the experience of wives married to gay or bisexual men and the wives' perceptions and reactions to this change. These studies have enabled interesting comparisons with the present study, carried out in the U.K. concerning the straight spouse, female or male over thirty years later, and allows me to take account of prevailing cultural differences.

1.2.4 Heterosexual Women married to homosexual men

A report based on observations made by Drs Lawrence J. Hatterer and Myra Hatterer, (1974) examined treatment aiming to change the sexual orientation of homosexual men with the use of aversion therapy. The Hatterers found that the behaviour and attitude of one married partner inevitably initiated a reaction from the other. If a husband's treatment to reverse his homosexuality was to succeed it was

important to understand the wife and the marital dynamics that could undermine it. (Hatterer & Hatterer, 1974). In the study five wives were treated individually by Dr Myra Hatterer and were also treated by both doctors in conjoint co-therapy. Twelve wives of other homosexual patients being treated were also interviewed. Dr Myra Hatterer observed certain shared characteristics and family histories of the women. The wives lacked confidence in their sex appeal to men and described their fathers as over-controlling, narcissistic and having possible bisexual attributes. Their mothers were seen as victims of the marriage with daughters competing with sons. Most wives had chosen homosexual partners and were described as passive-aggressive women who tolerated long periods of sexual deprivation and were in denial of their husbands' emotional distance, absences and homosexual activity. Three case studies were outlined. These women had married gentle, sensitive men, different to their fathers, but eventually the husbands' narcissism and denial of their wives' needs caused difficulties. Hatterer reasoned the wives had probably chosen husbands whose behaviour revived their unconscious hostility to men. *"The men defeminised their wives and the women emasculated their husbands."* (Hatterer, 1974; 277). When the husband attempted to change his sexual orientation, the wife feeling threatened, would then undermine his therapy. Hatterer believed that until the wife's issues were resolved, the couple's interactions leading to the husband's homosexual behaviour would persist and undermine his treatment (Hatterer, 1974). In his critique of Hatterer's article, Skolnikoff stated that the unconscious motivation for these women having relationships with homosexuals could be considered *adaptive* in real life, supported by positive reasons (Skolnikoff, 1974). He agreed that the dynamics should be explained so the women understood the roots of any unconscious hostility in order to improve both partners' sense of their sexual identity. This treatment was still happening in the 1970's when homosexual clients sought help to change their orientation. Hatterer's opinion relied on three case histories with certain similarities, based on Freudian theory which Popper had criticised because it was immune to refutation and not falsifiable (Popper, 1959). Hatterer generalised her opinion which fitted her expectations. The other 14 women interviewed may have been very different, but their details were not published. Skolnikoff's critique raises questions concerning the rigour in the methodology employed. However, Hatterer's stereotypical assumptions about straight wives being passive-aggressive, neurotic and homophobic, continued to resonate, as

participants reported in 1982 feeling stigmatised by others, including therapists and their own husbands (Gochros, 1982).

1.2.5 Alternative views: Gochros, (1982) Tripp, (1975). Nahas & Turley (l979)

Gochros argued that such stereotypes were unjustified and upon examining a sample of 103 women, noted little to distinguish them from other groups of similarly educated women (Gochros, 1982). Tripp had been critical of psychoanalysis and stated the relevant strengths of the wife's role in bringing support and comfort to the marriage had been minimised or ignored.   Current literature had concentrated on treatment to alter homosexuality whereas Tripp believed a patient's marriage to a partner he cared about could be considered *'highly significant'* (Tripp, 1975:238).

In 'The New Couple' a study of women in relationships with gay men, Nahas & Turley (1979) had not found any shared personality characteristics, and agreed with Tripp that the women had been largely overlooked. They noted that the aim of many therapists for their homosexual patients was heterosexual marriage, while not addressing potential future difficulties. They expressed concern that the risks and comforts of the spouses of homosexuals were not mentioned and the prolific literature devoted to changing homosexuality included nothing in support of the wives.   Nahas & Turley, (1979) found a typology of three couples: Traditional couples, women in marginal relationships and the 'newer couples.' Most women in the traditional couples had a limited knowledge of homosexuality, some believing it was curable. Women in marginal or platonic friendships appreciated gay men's company. Women in the 'newer couples' made successful marriages but understood their husbands might still engage in homosexual behaviour.   Homosexuality prevented the traditional couples regarding themselves as 'normal' while the new couples focused on achieving mutual compatibility (Nahas & Turley, 1979).

1.2.6 Marriages in which the husbands were assumed to be bisexual

Wolf studied 26 couples in stable heterosexual marriages in which *homosexual expression* by the husband still occurred (Wolf, 1982).   Applying an adapted questionnaire based on the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid, (Klein, Sepekoff, & Wolf,

1985), these researchers found that raised levels of income and education, good communication, early disclosure of homosexual behaviour, continued sexual relations within the marriage and participation in psychotherapy all contributed to perceived satisfaction of women in the marriage (Wolf, 1982). Contrary to Hatterer, (1974) and in agreement with Gochros, (1982), Wolf saw these women as unique, sharing few personal attributes, although most set high personal standards. He concluded the wives had limited their hopes for sexual fulfilment in order to maintain their marriages, which the couples valued for their good relationships. Well educated women with financial resources expressed greater satisfaction, possibly owing to their increased independence. According to Wolf the couples were sexually attracted to each other and satisfied. Communication was open and if the wives also had extra marital relationships, these supported the marriage. Wolf assumed that these husbands were bisexual because they enjoyed normal heterosexual marriages to an extent, but at times had sexual contact with men. He considered that following disclosure of homosexual behaviour, the husband should be the wife's main support. Conjoint therapy was recommended by Wolf (1982) besides individual therapy, open communication and understanding of the husband's sexual orientation to facilitate the relationship. In these earlier studies (Wolf, 1982; Gochros, 1982), the husbands were assumed to be bisexual.

1.2.7 Methods used in earlier studies

Detailed questionnaires were employed by Hays and Samuels, (1989) to explore heterosexual women's perceptions of their marriages to bisexual or homosexual men with whom they had children. The researchers wrote narrative accounts of the combined responses. Gochros, (1982) had used multiple methods, semi-structured interviews, standardised scales and grounded theory in her wide-ranging dissertation. This included an exploration of Crisis Theory (Golan, 1978) as applied to the participants. Gochros included relevant interview extracts and commented on the limitations of the study, but none of these researchers included reflexive comments on their personal input or influence on their research or addressed ethical considerations. Consequently, the reader is not given a sense of the researcher's position or contribution towards the final result. Their views are not owned or revealed which leaves a gap for this to be addressed.

1.3 Hays and Samuels' Study (1989)

This study aimed to explore heterosexual women's perceptions of their marriages to bisexual or homosexual men. A 27 page questionnaire was administered to 21 heterosexual women recruited who were or had been married to bisexual or homosexual men and had borne their children. This explored the participants' experiences as wives and mothers to understand why the women had entered into heterogeneous marriages and what differentiated them from women who marry heterosexual men. The researchers considered their study unique in wanting to identify the perceptions and feelings of the participants in response to their questions (Hays & Samuels, l989). As Wolf, (l982) had found, most were first born children. 42% of participants were graduates or held post graduate degrees and most were unaware their husband was not heterosexual, but there was still little public knowledge about sexuality. Data was intended to generate hypotheses for future testing. Responses were grouped and presented in a narrative.

1.3.1 The Findings of Hays and Samuels, (1989)

Findings confirmed those of Gochros, the most significant factors of disclosure being the content and the context in which it took place, including how committed the husband remained (Gochros, 1982). Marriages that survived disclosure were based on attributes like openness and honesty as found by Buxton, (2004). Twelve said their husbands shared many attributes of heterosexual men, like being caring, good looking with sex appeal, intelligence and humour, besides supporting women's rights and eight believed they were more sensitive and less macho (Hays and Samuels, 1989). None married to cure their husband's sexuality and most married for love, expecting a monogamous marriage. Three wives who had known about their husband's sexuality had expected their behaviour to change after marriage. Husbands who initially denied their sexuality eventually disclosed this and other husbands were found out in various ways. Most wives had noticed clues but wanted to repair the marriage, until they learned their husbands had also formed emotional relationships with men which increased their grief. The truth had relieved some wives, but others were confused, hurt and angry. Wives who had not been told

before marriage were most shocked and emotional. All except one husband hoped their marriages would continue. Ten wives who were unaware before marriage, would not have married if they had known, but eight remained uncertain. The wives complained of lack of communication, sexual deprivation, mood swings, physical withdrawal, rejection and abuse. Following disclosure the wives questioned themselves and with reduced self-esteem, felt devastated. Hays and Samuels' study gave a comprehensive overview of wide ranging responses to detailed questionnaires at a distance with the results written up in a narrative. Face-to-face interviews were not undertaken, so observation of the participants' demeanour, emotionality and body language were unavailable; in addition the researchers' input, influence and reflexivity remained unaddressed. The key findings were that most participants found homosexuality was not predictable. Their husbands shared similar attributes to heterosexual men and additionally supported women's rights. Twelve husbands in Hays and Samuels' study had not told their wives when they first knew they were not heterosexual and six discovered their sexuality after marriage. All the husbands except one wanted to return to the marriage. Most wives had hoped to repair the marriage until they learned of their husbands' emotional attachment which intensified their grief, reduced their mood and led to questioning themselves about whether they might be at fault. Those for whom disclosure was an unexpected shock, felt most hurt and emotional. Twelve wives felt shame and stigma related to others' perceptions of them, having married a gay man. Some women needed to repeatedly tell their story to accept reality and many feared being abandoned by their husbands. The two surviving marriages in Hays and Samuels' study were based on openness and honesty and the husbands' firm commitment, as shown by Buxton (2004). Ten wives reported their extra-marital heterosexual relationships were more satisfying. Thereafter the wives focused on the effects on their children. When old enough most children were told about their father's sexuality by one parent or both p.95-6. Unfortunately some parents delayed telling their children, who were then told by others and were teased or bullied in school. Four mothers with older children believed they had problems relating to the opposite sex owing to their father's sexuality p.96. Generally mothers were firmly opposed to daughters marrying non-heterosexual men as a result of their own experiences. The questionnaires were not formally analysed and results were generalised. The researchers did not meet the participants to gather impressions of them. Ethical considerations and confidentiality

were not addressed nor were the limitations of the study discussed, its trustworthiness or reflexivity of the researchers and their input.

1.4 The conclusions of Jean Schaar Gochros, (l982)

In an unpublished doctoral dissertation by Gochros, an early implication is that the men were bisexual *'to some degree homosexual'* (Gochros, l982:23). Gochros aimed for insight into how the women had felt upon discovering their spouses' extramarital behaviour, the problems they had faced and what had helped them, in order to help to advance social work practice. The research questions concerned the immediate, interim and long-term consequences of disclosure of some degree of homosexual interest and the consequences for wives' self-esteem, general happiness, marital and sexual satisfaction, besides the determining factors, from the wives' perspective. An in-depth examination of case studies was planned for which 33 women from five American states were recruited. Although 70 more women responded later, the study focused on the consequences of such a disclosure on the 33 wives' self-esteem, general happiness, marital and sexual satisfaction and the influencing factors relevant to social work practice (Gochros, 1982). Most previous publications had focused on the men's position, giving little information about their wives.

1.4.1 Disclosure being a process

Gochros conceptualised disclosure as a process rather than a single event, often involving multiple events spaced over years which eventually make sense. Disclosure was perceived by the wives according to the content and context, with the initial disclosure often making the most impact. Many wives found the actual disclosure of homosexuality was not as shocking as its content and the context in which it occurred. Gochros postulated both positive and negative constellations of disclosure which could be understood as representing a betrayal, or alternatively as a confirmation of trust, depending on a husband's commitment and sensitivity to his wife's feelings. If husbands had withdrawn sexually and emotionally, the wives felt isolated, with many experiencing an identity and integrity crisis. Wives reported dysfunctional behaviour, risk-taking, excessive eating and drinking or self-

medicating, which affected their functioning at work and caused weight gain Gochros (1982). However most wives believed they had felt less distress than if their husband had left them for a woman. *'They could not blame themselves for not being men, yet felt punished for being women'* (Gochros, 1982:102). Some worried they might have masculine attributes or had married owing to neurosis, according to Hatterer (1974). Religious couples wanting to remain married, feared censure from their church while others experienced cognitive dissonance facing the choice of remaining married or rejecting sin.

1.4.2 American wives experienced stigma and sexism

A surprising finding Gochros reported in a subsequent follow up study was that after disclosure the stigma attached to the bisexual husband reduced, but was often transferred to the wife whose friends, therapists, the gay community and husband tended to assume was passive-aggressive, neurotic or homophobic (Gochros, 1985). These assumptions caused the wives' self-esteem to plummet and 27 of the 33 participants became moderately depressed with 13 of them being suicidal at one point. These women believed their depth of depression and suicidal intentions had been overlooked and referrals for therapy should have been sooner. Most wives viewed their husbands positively and were not critical of homosexuality itself. Instead they criticised post-disclosure 'sexism' and the hurtful 'Liberation Ethic' behaviour of the gay community. Wives also criticised the sexism and homophobia some encountered in the helping professions. Reports were heard of clinicians and therapists falsely claiming expertise and counsellors lacking empathy, some of whom turned the wife into '*the problem*' (Gochros, 1982:163). Attitudes of some gay male therapists towards women were also criticised by Duffey (2006). Routine heterosexual marital counselling ignored straight wives' unique sense of stigma. *'Wives' main concerns were stigma, monogamy, trust and loss, not homosexuality itself'* (Gochros, 1982:163). In the l980's American women had to 'shop around' for appropriate support and counselling. Gochros concluded social work services and a peer support system led by professionals were urgently required.

1.4.3 Gochros' participants were crisis-prone

By 1986 effective counselling was becoming more available in America. Consultants from the Hawaii School of Social Work appraised the validity and reliability of the data gathered by Gochros and concluded limitations present were similar to those in any small study including a small biased sample, lack of uniformity in questions and answers and potential bias in self-reports and analysis of subjective data which questioned its validity and generalisability (Gochros, 1982). Gochros found the situation of the straight wives in her study to be crisis-prone, owing to the isolation, stigma, loss and cognitive confusion they experienced with no reliable support system. Content analysis was used (Bussis et al, 1977) and Crisis Theory (Golan, 1978) interpreted the analysis in a study using mixed methods. An important finding for health care providers was the unrecognised depth of depression, with 50% of participants being at risk of suicide. Gochros did not report how participants told their accounts, nor did she include reflections of her own influence, during interviews, leaving space for this to be explored. Reflexivity, power issues between researcher and participants besides ethical implications when addressing sensitive topics could also be addressed in future research.

1.4.4 A guide for partners in mixed-orientation marriages

Gochros' findings became a timely common-sense guide for heterosexual spouses discovering their husband or wife was gay or bisexual and the basis for her book 'When Husbands come out of the Closet' (Gochros, 1989). The book addressed theories of sexuality, reasons for marrying, the shock of finding out, coping with the consequences, telling others, seeking peer support or counselling, making sense of the emotional impact and supports the findings with short extracts from interviews. This became 'a bible' for some straight wives struggling to cope. In his foreword Diamond, (1989) pointed out that some of Gochros' underlying themes were controversial at the time because in the book bisexuality and extra-marital sex were not condemned. Women were comforted to learn they were not alone and often expressed the wish to talk to a knowledgeable peer. Gochros aimed to end intolerance and to promote greater understanding of couples who attempted to meet their needs in a changing social climate. *'Contemporary therapists seldom judge*

success by whether they can save a marriage. Now they aim to help people turn their marriages into a supportive, mutually satisfying framework for individual growth and fulfilment' (Gochros, 1982:11).

1.4.5 Ambiguous loss in mixed-orientation marriage

Hernandez & Wilson, (2007) considered whether mixed-orientation marriages represented a type of ambiguous loss, according to Boss, (1999) and recruited five heterosexual women who were members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church who had been married to gay men, to examine their experiences from this perspective. Ambiguous loss is a state in which there is no known ending signifying closure. Two types of ambiguous loss are described by Boss (2006). One concerns someone who is physically absent but psychologically present. A second type is when someone is physically present yet psychologically absent, which applied to the distanced husbands (Boss, 1999:7). Such a loss defies resolution and becomes frozen and liable to lead to complicated grief. Boss states that in order to detach from the absent person, people need clarification in loss to comprehend it, otherwise the lack of resolution in ambiguous loss affects health and resilience (Boss, 2006). The wives in the 2007 study were aware of sexual or emotional dissonance with their husbands and had initially feared they may be to blame. The truth relieved them despite concerns remaining about their community's perceptions of them, and possible effects on their children. They questioned how their identity had changed in relation to their faith. Further distress resulted from knowing separation and divorce were unacceptable in their church, wasting their sexuality (Hernandez and Wilson, 2007:191).   A mixed methodology was employed in the study. The wives wrote narratives in response to the following questions: What impact did your marriage have on your emotional well-being? How was the decision made to end the marriage? What or whom was most helpful during the time the marriage was ending?

1.4.6 Analysis and waves of grief

Open coding (Flick, 1995), then axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) showed a wave-like pattern of grief moving progressively forwards and back. Eight waves

were named according to eight narrative themes starting with Initial Awareness, continuing through Despair, Spirituality and finally, Moving on (Hernandez and Wilson, 2007:187). The couples expressed empathy and mutual love, however the wives had tolerated infrequent sex, prolonged rejection and criticism and felt confused and vulnerable. They supported their husbands for three further years while adjusting to their loss, then redefined themselves and left. The researchers concluded these women's marriages lasted longer than other mixed-orientation marriages owing to their religious beliefs. The small sample size of five in Hernandez and Wilson's study used a mixed methods approach. Personal interviews were not held but set questions were answered. Participant interaction, significant body language, emotionality and reflexivity were not addressed leaving a place for this in a co-constructed production by participants and researchers.

1.5 Longer lasting mixed-orientation marriages

Later research testifies to longer lasting mixed-orientation marriages (Jordal, 2011; Zimmerman, 2013). Jordal (2011) studied fourteen married couples, seven bisexual men and seven bisexual women, who came out to their heterosexual spouses some years after marrying showing that these couples do not invariably divorce. The average marriage lasted 14.5 years with the bisexual spouse coming out after a mean of 7.9 years. The research focused on the negotiation processes around three constructs (a) sexual identity: (b) gender identity, and (c) marital commitment. Dyadic Skype interviews generated a grounded theory of the identity and commitment negotiation processes between mixed-orientation married couples. The findings revealed two sexual identity trajectories: Bisexual men and women who identify before marriage and re-emerge within marriage; or bisexual individuals who do not identify before marriage but later emerge from within marriage. Two gender identity processes were also reported, gender non-conformity and deliberate gender conformity. Two negotiation processes around marital commitment were found: Closed marital commitment defined as monogamous, and Open marital commitment with four subtypes. Implications for research and clinical practice were discussed. Jordal draws attention to the different sexual identity trajectories that couples may reveal, suggesting that therapists should be prepared for different combinations of gender and sexuality to be presented and the importance of clinicians and researchers

being well informed.   The study showed that some mixed orientation relationships last longer than was generally expected. Jordal concludes that mixed orientation couples who intend to remain married are doing so regardless of whether their monogamous marriage is maintained or opened up.   However, findings or explanations for the survival of such marriages are not given and the study ends without resolution leaving work to be explored in future.

Zimmerman (2013) studied thirteen couples, women married to gay men in long term mixed-orientation relationships averaging 22 years and the factors maintaining them. Many questions explored were similar to those studied by Buxton (2001) but the interview method differed. Conducted on Skype or by 'phone the couples were interviewed together and then individually to understand their reasons for their long-lasting marriages ranging from two to forty-six years. Questions focused on the relationship history and reasons for marrying. Social exchange theory was applied and Johnson's (l999) model of commitment which includes personal, moral and structural components. Findings confirmed contributory factors which maintain long term relationships are a high level of personal commitment, open communication and adaptability (Zimmerman, 2013). The participants' responses are described but not those of the researcher although Zimmerman reflects on his subjective stance which afforded 'insider' insight, and comments on trustworthiness and the limitations imposed by a restricted sample, adding his belief that if the findings of qualitative research cannot be generalised, they ought to be transferable.

1.6 Research of Amity P. Buxton

Since 1980 Buxton has published many scholarly papers besides texts for general reading in support of partners, both female and male, who face marriage breakdown owing to their spouse being of a different sexual orientation. Her writing initially focused on heterosexual wives who discovered their husbands were gay (Buxton, 1981). The stages a couple may encounter after disclosure are described in "Paths and Pitfalls: 'How Heterosexual Spouses Cope When their Husbands or Wives Come out' (Buxton, 2004). The founder of the Straight Spouse Network (SSN) Buxton has published in peer reviewed journals besides writing informative texts supporting those who discover their partner or spouse is of a different sexual

orientation. Like Gochros she aimed to inform and support straight spouses who felt isolated after disclosure, not knowing where to seek help. Buxton's publications reflected societal change and broader perceptions of sexuality over time. Studies of straight and bisexual partners in mixed-orientation marriages followed (Buxton, 2001;2004). In 'A Family Matter' (2005), Buxton researched the effects on families when a spouse comes out as gay, lesbian or bisexual. Further along the continuum of sexuality the study 'When the Wives Come Out' (Buxton, 2012) gave straight husbands an opportunity to respond.

1.6.1 Heterosexual partners married to a bisexual husband or a bisexual wife

Conservative estimates in 2001 were that at least 1-2 million gay, lesbian and bisexual people in the USA are, or were once married and this phenomenon has continued to grow (Buxton, 2001). Two formal research studies were published: 'Writing Our Own Script: How Bisexual Men and Their Heterosexual Wives Maintain Their Marriage After Disclosure' (Buxton, 2000:164). The methodology and analysis in both studies is formally stated. In the study of (2001) a convenience sample of 56 bisexual husbands and 51 heterosexual wives in 89 marriages was recruited alongside a comparison group. Responses to a survey questionnaire were compared with those of 32 self-identified gay married men and 28 heterosexual wives of gay men aged from twenty to seventy years. Buxton aimed to reveal the process by which bisexual men and heterosexual wives of bisexual men redefined their marriages after disclosure. The design is described as *'qualitative combining a phenomenological approach with a survey questionnaire'* (Buxton, 2000:164). Four open-ended questions were analysed by content: What three coping strategies were most helpful? What circumstances supported continuing the marriage? What external circumstances interfered with staying married? What advice would a participant give another couple after one of the spouses came out? Content analysis was applied with similar responses to each question being grouped, tallied and ranked by their frequency. Two further analyses were carried out: 1) Comparisons and contrasts between the responses of the four spouse samples. 2) Analysis of factors most frequently mentioned by each sample. The largest numbers of all spouse samples found honesty, communication, peer support, therapy and taking time, all helpful. The bisexual men and heterosexual wives of bisexual men also

depended on the husbands' empathy and the wives' flexibility. Findings showed the importance of couples' mutual co-operation in maintaining a satisfying post-disclosure marriage. Honesty and communication were reconfirmed plus three new factors: 1) Taking time. 2) An interaction of mutual levels including sexual, cognitive, verbal and emotional aspects. 3) Working together over time the couple deconstructed traditional concepts of marriage and dichotomous views of sexual orientation to reconstruct the marriage. Most of this data was gathered by Buxton and others over two years examining surveys. The findings are generalised, but the method cannot explore the complexity of individual understandings of experience that might be examined when a smaller sample is personally interviewed which suggests a case-centred approach might be adopted.

1.6.2 Works in Progress

Buxton's later study: Works in Progress: How Mixed-Orientation Couples Maintain Their Marriages After the Wives Come out (2004) states that it is *'primarily qualitative but includes sufficient quantitative work to reveal patterns of experience'* (Buxton, 2004:62)   Buxton states that one third of known post-disclosure couples attempt to remain married and about half succeed for about three years, (which has since increased).   This study considers strategies, supports and deterrents in lasting marriages of 40 bisexual wives, 47 lesbian wives, 27 heterosexual husbands of bisexual women and 22 husbands of lesbian women. The aims of the study were to illuminate characteristics of spouses in bisexual or lesbian-heterosexual marriages, to provide real-life examples from which to understand the process by which the spouses redefined their relationship.   Self-reports were examined against a cumulative database from 7,000 spouses in the United States and fifteen foreign countries since 1986. Questionnaires repeated those detailed in the (2000) study concerning coping strategies, helpful circumstances and external negative factors, and advice for another couple when a spouse comes out. Analysis was applied in four steps. Content analysis: Reports were grouped into clusters of similar content and frequency of mention ranked. Comparison of clusters of answers followed. Comparison and contrast of proportions of respondents in the four samples. Finally, results were compared with those cited in the previous (2000) study of bisexual / gay-heterosexual marriages. The findings again cited good communication and

honesty, counselling and peer support, love and intimacy as coping strategies. Children, family life, friends and finances were maintaining circumstances. Unhelpful issues were social expectations, criticism of family of origin and negativity from the gay community. Many lesbian friends were lost when a wife came out as bisexual, revealing the exclusivity of some gay and lesbian communities. Although Buxton states they are *qualitative* studies they appear to employ mixed methods. The two studies above combined phenomenological and quantitative analysis. In this large-scale study (2004) the data is gathered by Buxton through survey questionnaires, augmented by various data from Buxton's previous records, so both primary data and historical secondary data are used. Self-reports were examined against a cumulative database since 1986 to account for change over time. The exclusivity of some gay and lesbian communities was a new finding. Participants were not met or interviewed to record the researcher's impressions or personal input, nor are reflexivity or validity addressed.

1.6.3 Straight husbands whose wives come out

Buxton's research advanced along the sexual continuum to address the experience of men. Straight Husbands Whose Wives Come Out as Lesbian or Bisexual: Men's Voices Challenge the *'Masculinity Myth'* (Buxton, 2012). Buxton intended to fill a gap in the literature. Her stated aim was to help the mainly American husbands understand more aspects of their struggle and to develop tools for healing and growth. Self-reports of 183 heterosexual husbands aged between 20 and 70 whose wives came out as lesbian or bisexual, were examined. The study aimed to identify the husbands' feelings, issues, coping strategies and multi-dimensional personal growth. A phenomenological approach was adopted using four different data sets, without a prior hypothesis. The database consisted of mainly secondary data, up to 10 years old. Only the 32 personal structured stories were current primary data. Content analysis applied to categories in four areas of participants' post-disclosure experience: feelings, major issues, coping strategies and dimensions of personal growth. Within the four data sets the number of men who reported in each thematic category was counted and percentages calculated representing the proportion within each set. These key elements were identified by Buxton following disclosure of straight spouses, based on her 25 years' research (Buxton 1994:2004a). Findings

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described the emotional turmoil men experienced when their marriages were threatened. Buxton interpreted a marked difference between general perceptions of how men typically cope when faced with a crisis, and the reactions the participants reported. Many men expressed strong feelings, openly described their emotions, weeping and seeking help. They then dealt with the reality, assumed responsibility for the well-being of their children and support of their wives and wanted to repair the marital relationship. Sex was one dimension among many with intimacy as central. Buxton aimed to show the stereotypical male persona was no longer valid. Under pressure the men coped using problem-solving, eventually finding stability. Concern for their children revealed hidden strengths and they managed issues and emotions wisely. Buxton observed that more wives who came out had already established a same-sex relationship than the husbands who came out. A wife's disclosure to her straight husband was thought to have been greatly intensified if she had also introduced her female partner. Buxton proposed a holistic multi-dimensional view supported by secondary data up to 10 years old, from various sources, gathered at different times and by different means, possibly allowing intervening variables to enter. My view was that only the 32 personal structured accounts responding to the same questionnaire could be considered primary data. Combining findings of both primary data with historical secondary sources diluted the current findings; for example, the 32 participants' highest percentages for their current feelings of anger and fearfulness were considerably reduced when averaged with the historical secondary data.

1.6.4 Recent research literature update March 2019

Daly, S.C., MacNeela, P. and Sarmak, M. (2018).The Female Spouse:
A process of separation when a husband comes out as gay.

Shortly prior to submission of this portfolio I read the above study set in the cultural context of Ireland. For the previous seven years I had not been alerted to any academic articles on the same topic. The stories of nine heterosexual women whose husbands came out as gay were analysed by IPA, according to Smith, J. (2011). Accounts of loss, anger, spousal empathy and societal prejudice were reported and distress when the experience was minimised by others owing to the sexual

orientation of their husband. Reactions and emotions of the participants were reported who were aged between 51 and 62 years and had been married from 15 to 35 years. Separation following disclosure ranged from 2 to 29 years with two women separating after six months. The main themes were 1. Commitment to lifelong marriage in the cultural context of Catholicism. 2. Being partially married/partially separated with subordinate themes of loss, anger and empathy, fear of stigma and adjusting the marital script. Theme 3, living apart, recognising the end of the marriage, self-integration, and moving on separately. The first author, a psychologist, transcribed the interviews and the second and third authors contributed to the analysis. The interest of the researchers in the subject was acknowledged but their personal reflexivity about the impact of the participants' stories on them was not included. Many references were the same as those quoted in the present English study. In common with most earlier American studies Daly et al looked specifically at only female spouses and not at husbands whose wives had come out.

Daly et al (2015) had previously published: When Parents Separate and one parent comes out as LGB. This study interviewed 8 adult boys and 7 adult girls aged from 18 to 30. Adapted grounded theory analysed the results. Some participants anticipated both parental separation and a mother or a father disclosing their changed sexual orientation. This research aimed to help clinicians and educators to understand the familial stress involved and to respond sensitively.

1.7 Possible gaps in the research

Since 2011 I had envisaged a contemporary holistic approach in which a smaller sample is recruited to participate in unstructured conversational interviews with narratives analysed to explore multiple perspectives. Applying different analytical narrative models was likely to reveal the immediacy, complexity and depth of the individual participants' contemporary experience. Until that date most studies had been carried out in America. I aimed to explore current issues of straight spouses both female and male in England, believing personal interviews with participants who are free to talk and interact with an audience in a co-constructed production are likely to reveal further dimensions and layers of meaning in this context.

1.7.1 Current developments in research

Until the research of Daly et al (2018) was published it appeared that the focus had moved on to consider gender issues, the concerns of trans people and other variations of sexuality. Children are now presenting with beliefs that their biological sex does not reflect their perceived gender. Current questions being asked are how older same-sex couples can achieve an equivalent quality of life with heterosexual couples when legislation and some institutional standards continue to exclude them. I had been expecting to read of possible marital counsellors who would assist mixed-orientation couples to renegotiate their agreements in order to continue their relationships, but this seems not to have happened or been reported. Three more recent studies follow which adopt a more recent perspective.

Umberson, Thomeer, Reevzek & Donnelly, (2016). Physical Illness in Gay, Lesbian and Heterosexual Marriages: *Gendered Dyadic Experiences. Journal of Health and Social Behaviour* 57 (4) 517-531. 45 couples were interviewed to consider how spouses co-construct illness experiences. Findings: men tend to downplay illness and provide minimal care work, whereas women tend to construct illness as immersive and involving intensive care work in both same-sex and different-sex marriages. Same-sex spouses describe more similar constructions of illness than different sex couples and same-sex spouses describe less illness-related stress and disagreement. The study would inform practices to support the health of gay, lesbian and heterosexual couples.

Charlton, Gordon, Reisner, Sarda, Samnaliev & Austin (2018). Sexual orientation-related quality of life: *BMJ Open* Jul 26,8 (6)e020418. In this cohort study of U.S. male and female adolescents and young adults 9914 were aged between 18 and 32. Conclusions: disparities in employment, health insurance and various Health Related Quality of Life dimensions are pervasive across sexual minority subgroups, non-cohabiting couples and youth in families of middle-to-high socioeconomic positions.

In the 2011 Barcelona Health Interview Survey by Marti-Pastor, Peres, Germano, Pont, Garin, Alonso, Golserus & Ferrer (2018). *Plos One* 13(1) e0191334. 3277 adults answered the EQ-5D measuring five dimensions of Health Review Quality of

Life. Findings were the LGB group had a lower EQ-5D index than heterosexuals with prevalence ratios of problems in physical dimensions among both genders. Conclusions were LGB participants experienced worse HRQoL than heterosexuals.

1.8 Summary

In this chapter I first considered the key findings from the research studied on the experience of couples and individuals in mixed-orientation marriages, or those who found out that their partner is of a lesbian, gay or bisexual orientation. Public knowledge of homosexuality in America and England was limited before the l980's. Until then the straight wife's position had been largely overlooked with the main focus on the homosexual or bisexual male and treatment to change their sexual orientation. Literature on GLB subjects increased markedly in Couple and Family Journals between 1997 and 2009, thought to be triggered by the increasing number of men and women 'coming out' following the Gay Liberation Movement of the l960's. American wives were acutely aware of 'sexism' and the Liberation Ethic which positioned them in double-bind situations with their gay husbands. Bisexual men shared many attributes of heterosexual men and were not easily identified. Women appreciated their sensitivity, support for women's rights and less 'sexist' views (Hays and Samuels, 1989). The 'new couples' aimed for compatible and flexible marriages, being less concerned about social convention than traditional couples (Nahas & Turley, 1975).   Most straight spouses were left to discover their partner's sexuality after marriage, with few told in advance (Gochros, 1985); (Hays and Samuels, 1989). Disclosure is seldom a single event, and more often a process of discovery over years (Gochros, 1982).   Constellations of content and context contributed to the straight spouse's perception of a disclosure being positive or negative, influenced mainly by the sensitivity and commitment their partner demonstrated towards them (Gochros, 1982).   If wives' coping skills or new adaptations failed, they would likely become crisis-prone (Golan, 1978).   An unexpected finding was that when a husband 'came out' the stigma attached to him reduced but often transferred to the wife (Gochros, 1982). Following disclosure many American wives in the 1980's struggled less with homosexuality itself than with consequences of isolation, stigma, loss, cognitive confusion and dissonance. They complained of counsellors without empathy and some therapists who pretended

to be knowledgeable, making assumptions that the wives were passive-aggressive, neurotic or homophobic, often reiterated by husbands and others, reflecting the views of Hatterer (1974). Low self-esteem, shame and stigma resulted in depression being overlooked, with 50% of participants being suicidal at one stage. Participants were referred too late, most having met the criteria for crisis (Gochros, 1982). Religion and faith communities exerted pressures on straight wives prolonging their decisions to leave or causing dissonance in cases of ambiguous loss (Boss, l999) as reported by Hernandez & Wilson (2007). Surviving mixed-orientation marriages were usually based on openness and honesty, depending on the husband's commitment (Buxton, 2004). Recent studies report such marriages lasting far longer (Jordal, 2011; Zimmerman, 2013). Wives who divorced husbands they loved wondered retrospectively if the marriage had needed to end now more couples remain married, with counsellors facilitating their mutual agreement. Gochros believed no wife divorced because of homosexuality alone, but owing to existing marital problems. Her findings suggested wives could cope with the needs of their bisexual husbands, if they received appropriate help (Gochros, 1982). Despite having arranged several alerts and searches for newer academic studies on the straight partners left by husbands or wives whose sexual orientation was not heterosexual as believed, I found only 'grey' literature, mainly accounts by spouses who published anecdotal stories until the study by Daly et al (2018) where nine female participants, eight being Catholic, had married many years before their husbands came out as gay. In common with the participants in the present study, none agreed to a mixed orientation marriage and all eventually separated although one couple remained in the family home. Cultural and religious principles mattered to the participants, but were of less concern to participants in the present study. The earlier focus appeared to have been covered by Gochros, Buxton, Hays & Samuels, and Zimmerman until the present study set in England and a study by Daly et al (2018) set in Ireland. More recent researchers appeared to be considering gender issues, violence and / or cooperation between same-sex partners, same-sex parenting, ageing issues for same-sex partners and discrimination in UK legislation affecting their quality of life.

1.9 Methodology employed

I now consider the Methodology used and have shown that Gochros' study used multiple methods, including long in-depth personal interviews with responses verified by a battery of scales (Hudson, 1982). Gochros comments on the limitations of the study but does not reflect on her own input or the impact of the interviews on herself, although other researchers may have been involved. Many American studies used questionnaires at a distance or, as reported by Hays & Samuels' (1989) asked specific questions, resulting in an overview of wide ranging responses which the researchers combined and wrote up in a narrative. Without meeting the participants, observations of the recounting of stories and joint interaction as in personal interviews, was not possible. Earlier studies seldom commented on the input and influence of the researcher, power relations, ethical considerations, limitations or reflexivity, which are currently expected. Participants' right to confidentiality and to give informed consent to record, or to change their mind and withdraw without penalty, are now expected. Categorical methods were used in Buxton's large-scale studies, often quoting massed historical secondary data besides current results, which were then generalised. More recently IPA has examined the lived experience of women in Ireland who discovered their husbands were gay. (Daly, MacNeela, & Sarmak (2018). There still appears to be a space for a contemporary exploration of the experiences of heterosexual spouses in England whose partners begin same-sex relationships, using personal face-to-face unstructured conversational interviews, taking a pluralistic narrative approach to privilege the participants' stories and account for multiple perspectives and layers, using a variety of narrative methods.

Lead into Chapter 2

In the next chapter I discuss the methodology employed to address the research question: How Heterosexual Spouses Describe their Experiences of Being Left by Their Partner for a Same Sex Relationship. The aims are to explore the perspectives of the straight spouses in order to achieve a holistic view of their experiences.

CHAPTER 2   METHODOLOGY

2. Introduction

This is a qualitative study taking a cross-methods approach to consider themes and narratives derived from accounts of participants' experiences of being left by a spouse to pursue a same-sex relationship. This approach was taken to gain insight into and understanding of the ways that participants made sense of their experiences by bringing different methodological perspectives to the data. The study explores stories in accounts narrated by heterosexual women and men about their experiences of having been married for at least five years, and finding out over time, or by disclosure, that their spouse is of a different sexual orientation to the one they had believed. The impact of this discovery on the lives of the straight spouses has received less attention in the research literature than that given to those who are coming out who now have established support centres and social networks across America and Britain.   This chapter provides the rationale for the qualitative approach adopted and discusses the choice of pluralistic narrative analysis as the main approach employed. The chapter will also show how I sought to bring a reflexive stance to the study, taking account of my own input and influence throughout the research process, noting dilemmas encountered and the decisions taken.

2.1 Study design

This is a qualitative study that used a purposive recruitment strategy and employed broad thematic and narrative methods pluralistically to analyse individual stories, identified as conforming to the structural theories of Labov (1972) or Riessman's Stanzaic or Dialogic / Performance models (2008), or Reflexive Awareness (Becker, 1999). The analysis takes a multi-perspectival view to give a comprehensive and holistic account of the participants' contemporary experiences and acknowledges my dual role as the researcher and the audience in the co-constructed accounts.

2.1.1 Research aims

The study sets out to explore how married heterosexual spouses came to discover that their partners' sexuality was different to what they believed it was and what this meant to them as recounted through their personal stories of experience. It is hoped that the resultant findings may usefully complement the work of clinicians, counsellors and therapists who are consulted by heterosexual spouses for support in these circumstances and raises awareness of their particular concerns in current training courses. The participants' wish is for increased public awareness with understanding and validation of their place in society, which has so long been overlooked. For the schedule of open questions see Appendix F.

2.1.2 Taking a qualitative approach

'Qualitative research is concerned with meaning in context' (Willig, 2008:8). A qualitative approach is interested in how people make sense of the world and personal experience. Researchers adopting this methodology are not focused on cause and effect relationships but with the quality and texture of people's experience (Willig, 2008). Qualitative approaches in psychology are generally concerned to describe and interpret personal experience in depth and acknowledge the researcher's presence, input and influence in the study (Frost, 2016).   Frequently the research concerns a sensitive topic with a focus on personal feelings and descriptions. Qualitative methods in psychology have increased since the l980's but according to Howitt, (2010), there has been a qualitative tradition possibly dating from the 19th century. Qualitative researchers engage closely with data, often gathered during in-depth interviews, to examine the texture and quality of an experience and to understand how participants manage particular situations. In this study the defining characteristics of qualitative psychology are important in order to capture individual perspectives brought to meaning-making of life-changing experiences. A post-modern perspective also applies, so that although language may be a link with reality, it cannot represent it, there being many different versions of reality formed by individuals' perspectives (Gergen, 1994). In this study I was interested to know how the participants experienced finding out that their spouse's sexuality was different to what they had believed, and sought to follow their narratives and stories

to understand what was important and meaningful to them as they faced the consequences of this life-changing event.

2.1.3 Epistemological positioning

Epistemological positioning is the starting point of any research project (Willig, 2011:13). It concerns what it is possible to know (Burr, 2003:203). Epistemology studies what knowledge is and how it is understood. It also involves questions concerning the nature of truth. Epistemological positions range on a continuum from naïve realism to radical relativism (Madill, Jordan, and Shirley, 2000) in which data is understood as being either representative of experience or actually constructing it. Narrative psychology is situated midway between realist and relativist extremes on this continuum in the constructionist position (Madill, 2000). Owing to its links with social constructionism, narrative inquiry agrees that constructs are formed in a socio-cultural environment which includes both description and the creative personal world of lived experience (Hiles & Cermak, 2008:151). My aim in this study was to hear the stories and personal views of the participants which have been constructed as being meaningful and influenced by knowledge communicated predominantly through language. Social constructionism holds that human experience is influenced through socially shared cultural concepts and expressed mainly in language. Human beings interpret this when constructing their own reality by interacting with the world to produce meaning (Crotty, 1998). A relativist position in the relationship between reality and stories would be on what people say, arguing that contact with constructionism itself is not possible. Social constructionists adopting a critical realist stance attempt interpretations beyond the text. In this study the participants are understood to interact socially in creating their own reality and meaning. As the researcher I acknowledge my role in the way the data is produced and analysed and in accounting for the context and audience (Harper, 2012). The data gathered is considered the result of cultural, historical and personal knowledge which informs the participants' descriptive language. The participants describe and represent events as they experienced and understood them at the time of recall; however, the meaning and telling of stories can change depending on the context, time and place and the audience listening. Therefore the same event can be described in different ways and at different times to different people, leading to different, but equally valid

perceptions. As the researcher I expected to reflect on the ways in which the context of the story-telling has influenced my interpretation (Willig, 2013).

2.1.4 Ontological positioning

Ontology focused on the nature of the world is concerned with assumptions about what it is possible to know. It can account for processes which are multiple, changing and fragmented. According to Murray (2015), when interviewed by H.V. Hevern, Theodore Sarbin observed 'stories have ontological status. We are always enveloped in stories.' Ontological positions comprise both realist and relativist explanations. Realists believe the world comprises entities related by cause and effect but a relativist ontological position would disagree that the world is an orderly place being aware that multiple interpretations can apply. I accept the laws of physics and nature and the existence of material objects but in agreeing with ontological pluralism, I assume that the world and the ways humans make sense of it, are multiple (Frost, 2016:160). An epistemological pluralistic approach is based on a consistent ontological position which produces multiple types of knowledge, while maintaining coherence (Clarke, Willis, Barnes, Caddick, Cromby, McDermott, & Wiltshire, 2015).

2.2 Reflexivity

Concerning personal reflexivity, my interest and personal perspective was shared with the participants and is owned in section B. 2.6.2. p75**.** Like many others, I had not thought about the remaining straight spouses until this situation arose for distant family friends. Epistemological reflexivity concerns reflections on the way in which the research questions shaped what could be found. This guided my choice of unstructured, interactive conversational interviews so that participants could speak freely with minimal constraints.   My assumption was that this was a topic that participants would wish to talk about because they had so little opportunity to speak out. Earlier research frequently used questionnaires but in carrying out personal interviews I hoped that participants could 'hold the floor' (Riessman, 2008) and tell stories of significance to them (Frosh, 2003), rather than seeking responses to assumptions that I may be bringing to the research. I hoped to elicit a range of rich,

detailed stories about the unique experience of each person, including particular aspects of significance. Hearing accounts of determination, stoicism and resilience, besides shock and pain, revealed the wide emotional range in the participants' accounts. Expectations of hearing about feelings of being devastated and hurt by deception were borne out. Assuming it might be difficult for some to recount what had happened I prepared an aide memoire to assist the flow, however during the interview, all spoke fluently, keen to express their emotions and views, so this and most of my prepared questions were not required. It surprised me to hear that a key reason for taking part in the research was to achieve public recognition and validation, having been silent for years. Being ignored by the media, feeling shame by proxy, and the indifference of LGBT groups towards straight spouses were all resented. I was also surprised that their stories were not all set in the present or began with the marriage and its breakdown but were sometimes related to childhood. Participants wanted knowledgeable counselling provision and support soon after finding out, and revision of the inequitable sexist grounds for divorce. My responses and reactions to the participants and their stories shed light on my own way of making sense of the phenomenon. Although I aimed to remain professionally neutral as the researcher, listening intently and following their reasoning, I acknowledged the feelings of sadness evoked in me by their stories and this allowed me to recognise more the additional impact of not being validated in the public arena. I felt sad for all who had suffered a huge disruption in their lives and wondered if some would fully recover.

Owing to the sensitivity of the subject I aimed to convey a friendly, non-hierarchical approach during the interviews. Recognising my role in the co-construction of the telling of the stories I adopted a conversational approach that enabled the participants to guide the interview and to talk freely of what was meaningful to them. Responses were frank, detailed and rich. Many stories captured the emotions people experienced at the time and included details of context and other characters. Some participants spoke of issues other than the experience itself, for example their earlier years, home and school. I aimed to adopt a non-judgmental and accepting manner which recognised that although I was a researcher who had not had this experience, I was interested to learn about it from their perspective. I was conscious of being a woman interviewing wives and a woman interviewing husbands which might

suggest a possible bias; therefore I was careful to take a fair and non-sexist stance. Sex differences were obviously present in the interviews with the male participants. As expected I heard female participants express their anxieties about ageing, finance and loneliness because of my experience of having been a woman who found herself alone after a marriage, who hoped that I might understand something of their experience of loss. I was less clear whether this was as relevant to the male participants but found that they clearly articulated feelings of loss and devastation. Although the difference in our sexes was present and will have influenced how I understood their stories, I was drawn to empathise with the men, and in a similar way, to how I had responded to the women; I encouraged them to continue with their narratives by showing empathy over the loss of their partnerships. After the interviews our interaction wound down in a friendly manner as each participant prepared to resume their normal activities. Several said the experience had been worthwhile and positive. Hearing their personal stories spoken aloud after years had elapsed, some became aware of new insights, changed meanings and different understandings which they shared with me. All hoped for validation.

In considering my research questions, and how I would elicit data to address them, I held in mind the situatedness in my personal biography (Riessman, 2002), of my understanding of being married, and why marriages end. Whilst all the participants shared similarities with me of being white, middle-aged or older and raised in Western cultures, the reasons for the ending of their marriages were different to mine, and most likely, disruptive to the expectations formed in their childhood. I assumed that our shared cultural backgrounds meant that we would narrate and understand stories temporally. I followed each participant's narrative as it unfolded, deciding together on the pace, and asking occasional questions during the process (Riessman, 1987).

My interest in researching this topic arose after hearing about the experience of a family friend, but I am also aware that as an aspiring successful doctoral student I was keen to provide research of interest to an audience of practitioners and academics. I will have positioned myself, and been positioned by participants, as a researcher but also sometimes as a former counsellor and psychologist. At times I wondered whether participants may be seeking more information through the

research process in order to increase their understanding of why this had happened to them, or whether they were asking me as a health professional for help. These were difficult positions for me to inhabit during the research. Besides feeling sympathy as I listened to and analysed the stories, I often felt powerless in providing more than suggested support services. As a psychologist who had worked for many years I found it hard to position myself simply as an interested researcher. As a researcher I found it hard sometimes to show the same level of interest in stories that seemed not to be related to my research focus. In these positions I was aware of the unbalanced power hierarchy in which I may have been perceived, as holding explanations that the participants were seeking. By recognising these aspects I was better able to understand more of how the stories were developed between me and the participants and to be open to the range of possible meanings in the stories.

Because the research question aimed to elicit individual and holistic insights into what the experience meant to each participant I chose methods that would not only identify conventional stories (Labov) but would also explore stories for emotions and affect (Riessman). Being aware of the importance of the way that I listened to and heard the stories, I employed Becker's approach to listen in different ways and to question my interpretations of aspects of their accounts. I questioned what function the telling of a story might be seeking to achieve by it being told in a certain way. I was guided in the analyses by the emphases participants placed on certain aspects through repetition and emotional content such as fear or anger, often accompanied by body language. When the content included emotion and descriptive detail, future hopes and human relationships, Riessman's methods took account of the context, affect and the prevailing socio-political climate. Riessman's stanzaic method was used for some extended stories, comprising different scenes and her dialogic / performative method allowed me to explore extracts in which I contributed to the co-constructed result. To make sense of stories when a participant could not access language but acted out terror soundlessly, or to explore metaphors, silences and sighs, I used Becker's reflexive listening. By using these methods pluralistically the different facets of the research question and the different ways stories are told, could be investigated.

There were moments during the analysis in which my reading of the meanings differed from what participants told me and suggested other possibilities. At times I found it hard to believe what was being said and wondered what this told me about my own assumptions and understandings of the participants' experiences and their retelling of them to me. I also pondered whether participants may be seeking more information to broaden their understanding of their own situation. Being aware of the presence of another character in their story, a spouse, a parent or a lover, I wondered how this may have been an influence despite not having been described as significant by the participant.

'Reflexivity involves entering a hall of mirrors that illuminates a social phenomenon from many angles' (Riessman, 2015). I learned that reflexivity continues throughout the process after the story-telling ends and can lead to different understandings when studied from an alternative or critical perspective. Reflexivity is *'full of muddy ambiguity and multiple trails'* (Finlay, 2002 p.212). As an instrument of the research the narrative researcher must be aware of the personal and epistemological reflexivity with which they engage with the process (Willig, 2010), intersubjective interactions within it (Bannister et al, 1994), and the power positions and interest they bring to it (Hertz, 1997). This has meant seeking to understand my own assumptions about marriage, marriage endings and being a spouse who had been left, and how these might have informed the data elicitation and interpretation, as well as the methodological choices that I made, and overall, how these may have played into the co-construction of the narratives.

It is therefore helpful to consider Riessman's suggestion (2002) to consider 'master narratives' that dominate understandings of social institutions. One such institution in Western culture is that of marriage. Until recently, and for people of my age and that of the participants, the master narratives around marriage were that they were between two people of opposite sexes, ideally lifelong and producing children to be raised by both parents. Although this master narrative is beginning to be challenged in the UK and other Western cultures, the dominant discourse about why marriages end generally still do not include the choice of one partner to pursue a single-sex relationship. I am a white, heterosexual woman who is both a widow from a previous heterosexual marriage, and a wife in a current long-term heterosexual

marriage. My expectations of marriage were formed during my upbringing in accordance with pervading heteronormative discourse of the time. Being widowed disrupted these expectations and helps me to consider different political-personal positions (Lavis, 2015). Had I grown up as a lesbian for example, my expectations of marriage would have been situated differently – I may have resisted conformity. Perhaps I would have felt excluded, or pathologised for wanting a marriage that did not fit the heteronormative discourse, or I might have positioned myself as a heterosexual wife, as expected. As a lesbian researcher of the experiences of heterosexual spouses left by their partners for same-sex relationships I would have brought different understandings and experiences to the research which, in turn, would have shaped the co-constructions of the narrative and their meanings. Considering this helps me to identify and challenge the ways in which I position heterosexual spouses who have been left for same-sex relationships, perhaps being less constrained by my perspective (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008). It helps to consider for example that a decision to leave may have been more difficult or compelling for the spouse seeking a same-sex relationship than is recognised by their former spouse.

Reflecting now on how the interviews might have unfolded had I been a non-heterosexual researcher, I might have asked some questions to elicit the position of both partners, to allow me to consider for example, how this might have influenced the ways that explanations of the absent spouse were experienced by the participants. I might have employed circular questioning as used in systemic therapy, to ask the participant first about their experience and then, how they understood their absent spouse to have experienced it. Questions about how decisions were made, and by whom, might have illuminated power issues that emerged during the marriage break-ups (Hertz, 2007). I may then have been more able to see some participants as agents of change rather than as victims (Riesman, 2002).

Throughout the research process I attempted to make my assumptions and interactions as transparent as possible. Notes were written soon after interviews had taken place and used to reflect on my experience of it and to understand the interventions I made, or did not. This allowed me to see that on occasions when I did not probe too deeply I may have deferred to my perception of the vulnerability of some participants. In retrospect I think I could have safely enquired further in most

instances, and that the resonance I felt with some of the stories may have deterred me from seeking to elicit more detail. In one account I diverted details that I thought the narrator would have regretted after the interview. This participant chose not to read the transcript afterwards, which I initially interpreted as preferring not to see embarrassing details in print. On reflection, this tells me more about the disruption to my positioning of the participant as non-agentic, and perhaps my own discomfort when she was recounting her story. By inhibiting the telling of the story this could have been a protective mechanism for myself. In another instance I had commented *'so your husband was close to the children'* which was met with an angry rebuttal: ***No!*** *he was a gay man who hid behind the family',* which showed me my positioning of fathers, as aiming to form good relationships with their children, was not always shared, because the participant appeared to understand her husband had used their children to conceal his sexual orientation. My journal was important in the data analysis besides listening to the recordings to further consider what may have influenced my decisions to ask further questions or not. Recognising that in both the intersubjective interactions during the interviews and my (solitary) interpretations of them, I was bringing my own understandings to the co-construction of the meanings of marriages ending this way. For example, during analysis I found that I assumed at times that the straight spouse had little choice in the matter. Questioning these interpretations I revisited the transcripts to find participants' explanations about how decisions were made and by whom. At other times I wondered about the sadness that I felt about the emotional impact of being left. I recognised that this may have been rooted partially in my experience of being widowed rather than in the words of the participants. Recognising and negotiating my identity as a researcher was an important lesson to learn throughout the whole research process, upon which the trustworthiness of the work depends. I accept that these positions, and probably others that I was unaware of, will have informed how I heard and understood the stories. I recognise that ultimately, what I choose to present as the 'write-up' of the research in this thesis is a further co-construction of the narratives and of an inherent power imbalance. Using a pluralistic approach to analysis, and seeking to maintain an enhanced awareness of subjective understandings of meanings, I have aimed to challenge and disrupt my understandings of the data. By doing so, my interpretations, whilst grounded in textual evidence are tentative but rigorously reached.

2.3 Narrative and Communication

"What created humanity is narration"

(Pierre Janet 1928: 42).

Narrative is acknowledged as the main means through which humans make sense and communicate in a changing world. Conferring a sense of order in recounting experiences, it enables individuals to define themselves as distinct from others. (Murray, 2008). Referred to as *'the root metaphor'* (Sarbin, 1986:3) narrative links events and experiences over time bringing a sense of order and coherence to the narrator's world (Bruner, 1986; Ricoeur, 1984; Polkinghorne, l988). Sarbin's book is a collection of 14 essays, demonstrating *'that narrative psychology is a viable alternative to the positivist paradigm'* (Sarbin l986 p.vii). A chapter by Mary and Kenneth Gergen sets out a structure for narratives being progressive, regressive or stable. The literary critic Northrop Frye (l957) had categorised narratives as comedy, romance, tragedy or satire, according to the profile of the plot. Narrative was used in human development and life story studies by McAdams, (l985) and narratives of redemption, chaos and quest were identified by Frank, (l995). The progression of narratives is often linear throughout, with a beginning, a middle and an end, but some take a wandering course to accommodate changed meanings and different endings. Frosh considers narrative analysis to be a methodology that is sensitive to subjective meaning and social processes, and that it is at this intersection narratives are constructed (Frosh, 2004). Alternative meanings of narratives which are chaotic or disjointed, departing from the conventions of story-telling have also been proposed (Becker, 1999) and circularity or multiplicity of endings have been noted in women's stories (Gergen, M. 1991). People are defined by the stories they tell and the way they choose to tell them, to the extent that they *are* their stories (McAdams, 1993). McAdams' theory can be recognised when people tell a story in a particular way, when often they reveal themselves, and thereby create an identity. The versatility of narrative serves different purposes and story-telling can invite an audience to share the narrator's experience. Furthermore *'Narratives express the narrator's point of view and are an action, or a call for social action'* (Riessman, 2008:9). This resonates with feminist and similar movements, and arguably is relevant to the storytelling of the spouses in this study who hoped for increased

social awareness and validation by telling their stories. The participants were eager to talk about their experiences confirming human beings' strong inclination to narrate events when their lives are disrupted to make sense of it (Murray, 2008). Andrews and colleagues approve the current breadth and scope of narrative research as a multi-level inter-disciplinary field, arguing that attempts to reduce its complexity would be to its detriment (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou 2009; Riessman, 2008).

2.3.1 Narrative inquiry

The wide-ranging term 'narrative inquiry' denotes personal dimensions of experience, taking account of the relationship between individual experience and cultural context (Clandinin & Connelly 2000). Grounded in the study of the particular, the narrator reflects upon their experience allowing the listener access to their perceptions (Radley & Chamberlain 2001:331). Narrative inquiry has links with social constructionism through a paradigm incorporating both rich description of the socio-cultural environment and the creative inner world of lived experience (Hiles & Cermak, 2008). This involves gathering narratives and focusing on the meanings that are given to experiences (Josselson, 2006). Although narrative research focuses on the story itself, it also takes account of the context and the manner of the telling. The narrator makes these decisions and presents the story, thereby constructing a narrative identity (Hiles & Cermak, 2009). In this study all the participants shared a past experience but at deeper levels lay many variations, implications and nuances in a social context of increasing diversity. A more complete understanding of each person's experience was reached by examining selected stories using different understandings of narratives to convey meaning. All the stories were considered as joint constructions produced by each participant and myself in the context of the interviews and their interpretation, in which how the stories were told and the positioning and purpose of the teller, as well as of me, the researcher, were considered.

2.3.2 Narrative Methodology

Narrative analysis is an umbrella term describing a wide variety of approaches (Elliot, 2005; Esin, 2008). In the present context it is understood as a story that is told to convey a person's experience of events, feelings and thoughts for a reason. It includes other characters and is set in a cultural context. The plot consists of events that follow within a time scale explaining the narrator's experience. In addition, a narrative approach includes the researcher's presence, input and influence in the study through personal and theoretical reflexivity (Frost, 2016).   Frequently the research concerns a sensitive topic with a focus on personal feelings and descriptions, which applies to the present study. A quantitative approach could not have captured the subtleties and complexity of meaning in the stories participants told; Nor could it convey the manner in which stories were told, or account for my presence as the audience. For these reasons a qualitative approach was most suitable for the focus of enquiry which aimed to elicit rich data for in-depth analysis of participants' accounts. The units for analysis were the stories the participants told. In my dual role as researcher and audience I planned to examine the stories by adopting a multi-perspectival approach using different analytical models to achieve a more holistic and layered view than would result from taking a single perspective. Considering that the researcher is always part of qualitative research (Frost, 2016) I aimed to consider reflexivity, both personal and theoretical throughout the process.

2.4 Recruitment of participants

The study explored the situation of straight husbands or wives in a stable heterosexual marriage for at least five years who had found out their spouse had begun or was contemplating a same-sex relationship. A purposive sample of participants was recruited by seeking individuals who had all experienced the same situation. The Straight Spouse Network in California offered a link to a small organisation in the English Midlands which offered e-mail support to straight spouses. The organiser of Straight Spouses Anonymous agreed to circulate the Invitation to Participate in the study which a researcher at the Open University also displayed (Appendix A).   The final sample of eight women and three men resulted. All had been married to a spouse who was not heterosexual as they had assumed, but

otherwise were a varied group of individuals aged from twenty-nine to sixty-four years. Participants had different educational backgrounds and careers and had been separated or divorced between six months and ten years. They had received an explanation of the study, its aims and participants' potential involvement (Appendix B), with information on their right to change their mind and withdraw at any time and the safeguarding of confidentiality. A choice of dates at the university was offered for recorded interviews lasting up to an hour and a half, with a sample form of consent (Appendix C). Contact 'phone numbers and email addresses for my supervisor and myself were included. A synopsis of the participants' background history is given (Appendix E).

2.4.1 Ethical considerations

The principles of safeguarding the psychological well-being and dignity of participants were adhered to throughout the study (BPS Code of ethics and conduct, 2009). The participants had responded to the Invitation to Participate, (Appendix A), and received a printed explanation of the study and its aims in advance, (Appendix B). They were fully informed about the research procedure involving personal recorded interviews when they would be invited to tell their story, extracts of which would be quoted in the analysis. Information included interview dates, location and the time commitment. The use of pseudonyms was explained with personal identifying details in the transcript being changed to safeguard confidentiality. An explanation of participants' rights was repeated: to choose not to answer certain questions, to request the tape to be paused or to change their mind and withdraw at any stage without any questions. A map of the university with information on local transport was supplied. Contact 'phone and email addresses for my supervisor and myself were given for further information.

2.4.2 Considerations applying to sensitive topics

Each participant was met personally at the main university entrance and registered as a visitor. All had been asked if assistance with mobility was required. I accompanied each participant to the interview room which was arranged to appear welcoming with refreshments. It is during this time that the tone is set and where reciprocity begins

(Corbin & Morse, 2003). I aimed to set the participants at ease by making friendly conversation on the way to the room. Before the informed consent forms were signed and the interviews began participants completed brief demographic details and the main ethical safeguards were repeated to ensure they were fully aware of their rights and their further questions were answered. The participants had agreed that extracts of their narratives could be included in the writing up and a summary of the results would be offered to those interested. Being sensitive to any possible power imbalance, I maintained a friendly and non-hierarchical stance during the interviews (Oakley, 1981). The participants were entering an academic environment and meeting a comparative stranger to talk about highly personal issues which might prove distressing. I aimed to be approachable and open to answering their questions before and during the interview, and to be aware of signs of potential distress or fatigue. The benefits to the participants had been given serious thought besides questioning the value of the findings in a social context. In compliance with City University London Ethics Committee, advance arrangements were made for stand-by counselling the same day for any participant who became unduly distressed. Assurances were given that data would be securely stored with access restricted to myself, the university supervisors and examiners. From a positive ethical stance it was hoped that the interview experience could be cathartic and beneficial by giving participants an opportunity to speak about a topic not widely acknowledged, and to contribute to a burgeoning field of research. Because the straight spouses have for years been a marginalised and silent group, I was mindful of positive ethical approaches that facilitate understanding and of potential benefits it may bring to participants by contributing to the research. Appreciation of each person's contribution to the study was personally expressed to convey they were valued as individuals and were in no sense being used instrumentally to complete my research (Fisher, 2000) cited in Knapp & Vande Creek (2006). I followed up each interview a few days later by sending an email to thank participants for taking part and reiterated that they could contact me or my supervisor with any resulting concerns. None did.

Table 1 Demographic chart

Participants' pseudonyms with personal details changed

Name	Age	Sex	Professional Role	Years married	Years since divorce or separation	Number of children	Self-rating level of recovery 1= least 10= full
Beryl	55	Female	Researcher	25	10	2	9.5
Cindy	46	Female	Trainer	19	1	1	1-2
Bill	44	Male	Graphic Designer	7	4	1	7
Becky	37	Female	Admin.	13	2	0	10
Carol	54	Female	Manager	30	2	3	5
Claude	63	Male	Consultant	13	2	2	'just existing'
Angela	29	Female	Lawyer	5	1	0	9
Ben	53	Male	IT Manager	11	1	0	8
Celia	56	Female	Admin.	26	2	2	5
Anna	64	Female	Retail	33	5	2	9
Avril	60	Female	Fashion writer	28	2	2	3

2.4.3 The interviews

Unstructured interactive interviews lasted about an hour. (Corbin & Morse, 2003).
This choice of interview procedure allows participants considerable control over the
process, and, according to Corbin & Morse, when guided by ethics, it can have
mutual benefits.   The interviews were held in a quiet room at the university where
we could not be overheard.   With participants' permission the interviews were
recorded to enable later transcription by me. The participants were eager to talk and
adopting a friendly and interested stance I drew on my prepared schedule of
questions and prompts, (Appendix F) inviting them to tell their stories. Questions

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were tailored to suit each participant, as shown in the following examples; however few were required because the participants volunteered very detailed narratives.

.

> Can you say how/when you first became aware of ….?
>
> How did your wife/husband explain?
>
> Are you able to describe your feelings when ….?

Participants were aware of my interest in the emotional effects of this experience and who they were able to tell, where they found support, and how others responded. They began their narrative wherever they wished. Some gave a brief background of their home life, parents and significant events in earlier years while others began with their wedding or the early years of marriage. There was seldom the need to interrupt, so keen were the participants to talk. After the recorders were turned off I asked how they felt about the interview. Some said it was the first time they had spoken in detail about their experience which had brought a huge sense of relief (Harper & Gray, 1997). New insights were found by some in their stories while recounting them. Several found telling their story had been moving and enlightening. Occasional pauses were taken, but none of the participants required counselling and all said they were pleased to have participated. Following debriefing they were given a printed leaflet of resources (Appendix D). Contacts for counselling psychologists in their area were listed besides local and national counselling and support agencies. Most accepted the offer to receive a summary of the results. The last fifteen minutes were spent in normal conversation to bring the interview to a positive conclusion. I thanked each participant for their time and willingness to share their personal experiences and accompanied them to the main university entrance before writing up my notes.

2.4.4 Data collection

Data was elicited using unstructured interactive interviews lasting about an hour (Corbin & Morse, 2003). The approach taken allowed the participants to speak freely with few interruptions from myself in a 'conversation with a purpose' (Kvale, 1996). He conceptualised an interview as a *'construction site for knowledge and an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual*

interest' (Kvale,1996:14). Few of the open-ended questions I had prepared in Appendix F were required because the participants spoke fluently about significant aspects for them concerning finding out their spouse's sexuality and subsequent developments. All had been given a list of six possible topics that might be used as an aide memoire to assist the flow. This visual aid was similar to the storyboard used by Veroff, Sutherland, Chadiha, & Ortega, (2002). (Appendix G). The participants decided where they would begin their narrative and I followed their accounts with concentrated listening (Chase, 2003). Most spoke of different stages in the course of their marriages, recalling a broadly chronological trend with several departures tracking back and forth over time. Significant incidents were remembered involving detours, including one subplot which overtook the main story. I responded to the narrative with nods and mms to encourage spontaneous and detailed stories, making few interruptions except to clarify points after a pause.

2.4.5 Transcribing the narratives

I transcribed each interview personally within three days in order to recall as much as possible of the experience of the interview. This was a lengthy process with repeated listening sessions for each recording to ensure accuracy (Chase, 2003). Minimal standard punctuation was used to allow alternative meanings to be discerned on further examination, and to avoid imposing unintended meaning on the stories. Dysfluencies, erms and mms remained with long pauses and gestures noted (Riessman, 1993). Lines were numbered singly, pseudonyms inserted and identifying details changed to protect participants' confidentiality. Participants were offered a copy of their own transcript and those who had read it did not request any major changes.

2.4.6 Data security

The interview recordings were transferred to a hard drive for safety which, with the two digital recorders were locked in a safe until all the transcriptions were completed. The data will be kept until five years after the DPsych degree is awarded. Related transcriptions and notes will be secured in a separate locked filing

cabinet to which only myself, my supervisor and the examiners will have access. Since the interviews three participants have been in contact to tell me of their progress.

2.4.7 Alternative analytical methods considered

Being aware of Polkinghorne's opinion that coding is 'too mechanical' and inappropriate for narrative work and Riessman's advice not to allow structure to dominate or fragment the stories which needed to be heard, I examined the transcripts again. Not wishing to fragment the narratives and preferring to keep the individual stories intact to preserve cohesion, alternative methods were considered before finally deciding a pluralistic narrative analysis would enable the most insight into how the participants constructed and told their stories.   Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was not chosen because it would focus on the participants' lived experiences of being a separated spouse rather than on how they made sense of the experiences (Smith & Eatough, 2006). Grounded Theory also risked fragmenting the data and concentrated on generating concepts to be used to theorise across cases (Charmaz, 2014:133).   In narrative analysis there is a case-centred commitment (Riessman, 2008:74). This was considered important in order to retain the individual nature of the description of experience, told through stories. Grounded Theory would not account for the reflexive stance that I believed was essential, because the research topic is one that has different meanings for different people.   Conversation analysis and discourse analysis were not chosen because their main focus is on the language used rather than taking into account the wider social context.   The topic is under-explored, therefore I was keen to identify significant issues for the straight spouses who had experienced this, not only how they spoke about it in terms of the language used, but how others responded when they were told in social contexts and what might be usefully learned and applied in counselling psychology settings. Although all the participants shared a common dilemma, there are different versions of the story.

2.5 Initial analysis: exploring themes and patterns

After the interviews were completed and transcribed, I had been firmly guided to choose narrative analysis as my methodology with which I was unfamiliar. During my supervisor's long absence I read extensively attempting to find an appropriate narrative method. With 250 pages of single spaced transcripts each narrative was read many times, a précis was produced, linear profiles of plots were drawn, sub plots and turning points noted. Initially adopting methods of Lieblich et al (1998) and (Murray 2005) I identified broad general themes and patterns besides those that were unique or shared by fewer participants, by making marginal notes and progressive comparisons between the narratives. This produced three typologies of marriage, reducing the bulk of the data.   The typologies of the marriages A, B and C were then explored and are linked to appropriate extracts in the next chapter. The themes were reproduced in a diagram and, for my own interest a simple categorical content exercise followed, based on the frequency particular elements occurred in each transcript (Tuval-Mashiach, 1998:127-8). (Appendix I). It became clear that three of the marriages had been unsatisfactory from the start, mainly owing to sexual deficiencies yet the straight partners had stoically conformed: Typology A.   Four other marriages had begun well but eventually broke down hastened by communication problems and avoidance: Typology B. Four long-term marriages which the straight spouses had believed to be generally happy and contented, ended abruptly, leaving the remaining straight partners experiencing trauma and disillusionment: Typology C. The diagram illustrates the more common themes and incorporates three smaller groups of themes relating predominantly, but not exclusively to one type of marriage. Participants in each typology of marriage were given short pseudonyms beginning with initials A, B or C to correspond with a typology and to assist the reader. From starting out with an interest in shared patterns and themes, I recognised that there was more to be discovered in the data. At this point, lost in the narrative forest without a guide I saw the need to find a different method to analyse the stories, keeping them un-fragmented, while exploring the variety of dimensions they contained. Professor Carla Willig recognised my dilemma and advised a change. A supervisor experienced in narrative analysis was appointed which marked an important turning point.   Thereafter a pluralistic narrative analysis was adopted to accommodate the multiple dimensions of the

participants' descriptions of their experiences, resulting in a more holistic understanding (Frost, 2011). A method was found that could examine selected stories without fragmenting them in order to convey participants' different perspectives of their experiences. In my dual role as researcher and audience I planned to examine the stories by adopting a multi-perspectival approach using different analytical models to achieve a more holistic and layered view than a single perspective would achieve.
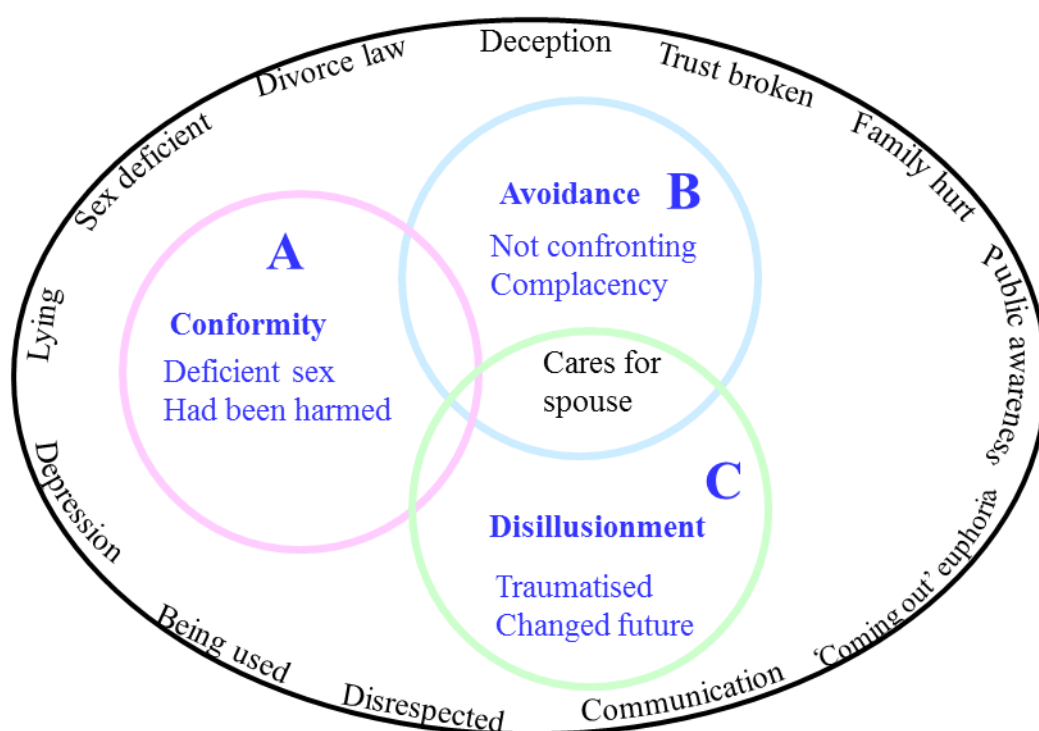
Figure 1: Diagram of shared and unique themes

2.5.1 Rationale for changing to pluralism

From starting out with an interest in shared patterns and themes I recognised there was more to be discovered in the data and I needed to find the appropriate method. The shared and unique themes and typologies of marriages would be an introduction

leading to a closer analysis of the narratives and stories. Heeding the cautions of Riessman and Polkinghorne about fragmenting the narrative and having been introduced to the publications of Frost, (2011) I recognised the advantage of using a pluralistic narrative analysis for this preliminary study to offer a multi-perspectival view. This would produce a rounded account, consider differences in story content and context and address how the participants positioned themselves and recounted their stories. Also as both researcher and audience my reflexive input and influence in a co-constructed dialogue would be relevant. Pluralism seemed the most appropriate method to take account of the multiple dimensions of individual stories. It could extract most meaning by exploring various layers which could not have been reached by applying a single method. Within the canopy of pluralism fragmentation would be minimised and different models for narrative analysis applied to maintain coherence for the reader, whilst privileging the participants' voices. It potentially offered an in-depth snapshot of the varied dimensions of participants' experiences and views, captured in a single interview.   I recognised this was the turning point in the long search for a method to fit my aims.

Data analysis – and applying methods pluralistically

2.5.2 Labov's (1972) method

Labov's 1972 model of analysis is founded on identifying stories with a beginning, middle and an end by their structure. The model proposes that stories are temporally ordered and comprise six elements that work to engage an audience:

1. Abstract – this informs the point of the story
2. Orientation – refers to characters, time, place and situation
3. Complicating action – answers the question "then what happened?"
4. Evaluation – the narrator comments on meaning and how they wish to be
   understood. Three types identified: external, embedded and evaluative action
5. Resolution – the final conclusion, outcome of the plot
6. The Coda signals the end of the narrative and returns the action to the present.

Some elements such as the Evaluation and Resolution occur more than once in a story. Structural narrative analysis regards narratives as constructed from events that have already occurred, and requires stepping aside from the content to see how the teller is using form and language in telling the story to a listener who did not witness the event. Labov's approach generates insights to actions that advance the plot, and regards individual experience as created by language. The model is not concerned with context, hypothetical future events or conditional thoughts, and therefore excludes much salient detail enriching the stories. The stories are identified by stripping out other detail or background, leaving a pared down account. I use Labov's approach mainly to initially identify stories which have a beginning a middle and an end. By fitting the six elements to certain phrases and omitting other text a 'core narrative' remains. Insights generated will be mainly of action without descriptive context. They suggest the teller's position as it relates to other characters (Patterson, 2008). This model is used in the study to identify narratives in the interview transcripts that are particularly concise and / or delivered with a sharp vocal tone drawing attention to them through the style of narration. When Labovian story form is not followed, yet the text reads like a story, I chose a different method for analysis.

2.5.3 Riessman's Performative Model (2008)

This model focuses both on discreet stories and extended accounts that 'sound like stories'. In common with Labov's model, it seeks temporal ordering of the plot but also considers text that does not conform, to understand why a story is told in a particular way. It takes account of emotion, descriptive language and characters, besides the effect of hypothetical or habitual dialogue, to consider the setting and mood of the story telling. This provides insight to the function of the story. Position and subjectivity are also considered by including in the analysis the perspectives of narrator and the researcher. Questioning why the story is told in a particular way can suggest how a participant wishes to be perceived. The social positioning by the narrator of other characters in their story, the audience and that of the narrator, all convey an impression and this is likely to be of significance to the narrator. In this study I use Riessman's method to add a layer of analysis when for example, a story

identified by Labov is told with repeated emphasis on particular details, or when I perceive affect in the story telling that is not contained in its structural components.

2.5.4 Becker's Reflexive Awareness (1999)

This approach requires careful repeated listening, to fill gaps and understand indistinct phrases. It aims to add insight to possible meanings in aspects of story telling such as spoken imagery, rapid speech and metaphor, as well as to highlight their roles in the co-construction of the story. I use this approach to help make sense of disjointed discourse, and narratives containing several muddled or rushed sentences and to retain a focus on my reflexive engagement with the story telling and the interpretations of the stories.

2.5.5 Using the methods pluralistically

Each method adds a layer of understanding to the analysis, thus developing a more holistic insight into what is being said and why it is being said. Most stories are first identified by Labov's method for structure, then further analysed for affect, performance and coherence, using one or both of the other methods to further explore, enrich and bring depth to understanding possible meanings of the stories and why they are being told.   Using narrative methods pluralistically allowed for different aspects of the research question to be investigated as well as the different ways stories were told. Labov's method attributes clauses that follow the sequence of the plot, giving a compact, pared-down account. Some participants may have found it easier to report the main factual events tersely, omitting descriptive and emotional content which might stir up painful feelings. Telling their story using Riessman's methods was usually lengthy, comprising scenes depicting small personal detail, capturing mood, emotional content, hopes and fears set in the social context of the time. In this way participants told of their struggle, their pain revealing their dashed hopes and drew me in to share their experience.   One participant appeared noticeably younger and vulnerable as she appealed for support while contemplating a different future. Becker's method of listening in different ways, to hear and understand other possible interpretations, and to ask why a story was told in a certain way, suggested to me ways in which participants wanted to be

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perceived. Some appeared philosophical, others chose to be seen as survivors not victims, while a few saw no future. Frequently metaphor represented feelings and behaviours. As the years elapsed new meanings evolved with new perspectives, several being more hopeful.

General conclusion

For each method the stories told are the units for analysis. After studying whole narratives, I have seen dialogue and text that read like a story with a beginning, a middle and an end, and others that do not follow that order, but break off, make detours and then emerge later. In these cases I have looked for revealing words and phrases signalling continuity, the emotion conveyed in the telling besides referring to my interview notes. In some stories the narrator made a choice between alternatives. I followed the path taken but noted the possibility of a different ending had the other way prevailed. Circularity occurred in a narrative which came full circle when a couple met again over thirty years later (Gergen, M. 1992). Some stories were recognised retrospectively as a romance, a comedy or tragedy according to the criteria of literary critic (Frye, 1957) or as a quest (Frank, 1995). Throughout I considered how the interpretation of participants' perspectives was examined and looked for any contradictions.

2.5.6 Identifying stories and the analytical approach

Stories selected from the three types of marriages were first identified by applying Labov's (l972) model. Consideration of the structure of the story led to deciding the appropriate analytical model to interpret the content and the manner of the telling, to reveal most meaning. When stories did not conform to Labov's structure, yet read like a story, these were analysed in accordance with Riessman's methods including Stanzaic or Dialogic/Performance analysis or Becker's reflexive awareness model. Emotionality and drama expressed and enacted in the stories were identified by listening and observation, and referring to my post interview notes. I considered my emotional and intellectual response to hearing a participant's story which might reveal assumptions or views that could influence my interpretation (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). The tone of the story, imagery, rhetoric and body language used were noted with the ability of the account to persuade, involve, evoke emotion or

empathy in the audience. I considered how the participant chose to portray her/himself in their telling. Reflexive Awareness (Becker, 1999) afforded a means to understand in which ways my presence as researcher and audience had influenced or contributed to the jointly-constructed account concerning the interpretations of participants' perspectives.

2.5.7 Selecting the stories

I aimed to be fair in choosing a balanced selection of different stories for analysis to convey a range of experiences and perspectives. The narratives and stories were kept intact and unfragmented, so far as possible, to facilitate coherence for readers who may be unfamiliar with the many possible modes of narrative analysis and for whom this might be an introduction to a real-life situation that is seldom aired. Future researchers may use other methods to examine different or related aspects, but in this broad preliminary study, it seemed appropriate to privilege the voices of the participants, while respecting their wishes for increased understanding and validation. I acknowledged times when I had not encouraged more detail for fear of appearing intrusive and to respect a participant's limits. One participant's story was diverted when I sensed they would surely regret saying more. This was the only participant who chose not to receive their interview transcript. Another participant spoke so quickly and at length, that I suggested a pause because by then I was picking up transferred sensations of his stress. Throughout I aimed to be open to whatever the participants chose to express while remaining aware that it was being produced for an audience, and susceptible to my response, however unintentional that might be. I adopted an accepting and interested attitude, nodding my understanding or asking an occasional question to encourage the natural flow. After the interviews I wrote up my impressions and noted the general tone, imagery, emphases, body language and silences. Some of the stories remained on my mind long after the interview when I found myself thinking involuntarily about the dilemmas participants faced. Deep in thought on the train after one emotional interview I travelled past my destination. Replaying a taped interview helped me to understand how my presence or response might have influenced a participant's decision about what to include in their stories and how much detail. When a participant used my name several times in an appeal for help or advice, I felt the

frustration of not being able to respond with something practical or useful to comfort them, but remained in researcher role.

2.6 Listening to the stories

When an interview began, there were moments of tension checking the recorders were working besides listening closely to the story, mentally noting the tone, pace and accompanying body language all converging at the same time, but this was soon overtaken by interest in the participants and their varied stories. Unusual or poignant stories evoked different emotions in me as the audience, which were necessarily contained until writing my notes. I could then consider how analysis offered the opportunity to recall the emotionality in stories and to consider the significance of its introduction at certain points or question *why* the story was told in such a way. When a participant felt particularly strongly about an issue this might be pressed into any available space emphasising its importance to the teller. I considered how the stories were told, their likely purpose and the impressions the participants had intended (Goffman,1956; Esin, 2011). While some participants may have considered how they wished to be perceived, I sensed once they began to speak, many dispensed with such defences and conveyed the raw reality of their experience, feeling sufficiently safe to release their feelings, before an interested and non-judgmental audience. This appeared particularly painful for partners more recently separated and for those without any prior suspicions as they struggled to find meaning in their lives.

2.6.1 Quality criteria

Madill et al., (2000) and Reicher (2000) argue there is no such thing as a qualitative research paradigm; Criteria for evaluating qualitative research need to be tailored to fit the method they are meant to evaluate. Having examined the criteria of Yardley (2009), Henwood & Pidgeon (1992), Elliott, Fischer & Rennie (1999) and Williams & Morrow (2009) I have chosen the criteria against which my study may be evaluated.   The type of knowledge I aimed to produce was a holistic and multidimensional snapshot of the stories the participants told in face-to-face unstructured conversational interviews about their different experiences of finding

out their spouse was not heterosexual as they had believed, and their wide-ranging views on the consequences for each of the straight partners. As the sole researcher in this qualitative study, criteria involving inter-rater reliability, and triangulation involving measurements and others' findings were not relevant as would obtain in quantitative research.

2.6.2 Owning one's perspective (Elliott et al, 1999)

My values and assumptions are set out below, so readers can consider the analysis and balance my interpretations with their own. I acknowledge my position as a heterosexual woman and chartered psychologist working with adults and young people in the NHS until retirement. Widowed unexpectedly in my thirties with dependent children, I have some understanding of the shock and emotions the participants may have experienced in sudden loss, although for different reasons. I have attempted to situate the sample (Elliott et al, 1999) by describing the participants and their backgrounds to allow readers to follow their experiences through their stories, taking account of the social and political context and culture in England in 2011.

2.6.3 Sensitivity to Context (Yardley, 2009)

This is relevant because I am exploring a contemporary topic in England and aim to attend to the socio-cultural contexts of the participants and myself in relation to the previous theoretical literature. The socio-cultural settings in contemporary U.K. and recent American society are acknowledged with similarities and differences concerning marriage, sexuality and changing national legislation over time. The background details of the participants place them in context. They had different levels of education with ages ranging from 29 to 64. All were keen to tell their stories and emphasised those issues that were of personal significance. All wished for increased public awareness and an understanding of their situation and revision of the grounds for divorce. I aimed to reflect their views in the extracts and stories selected. To respect the sensitivity of the participants' experience an approachable and non-hierarchical stance was taken (Oakley, 1981). This encouraged richly detailed narratives while remaining mindful of positive ethical guidelines. Stand-by

counselling arranged as a precaution was not required and all those interviewed confirmed it had been it a worthwhile experience.

2.6.4 Importance of fit and Coherence   (Elliott et al., 1999)

Elliott et al., (l999) consider the importance of fit. I have therefore grounded the examples and extracts of the data to demonstrate the different analytical models used and how they were applied for the reader's consideration. Concerning coherence (Elliott et al., 1999), I have aimed to present analyses that are integrated in a framework that addressed the research questions and analysed narrative units, besides stating clearly how I have tentatively interpreted the meaning to allow for alternative understandings and referred to supporting theory. It was important to persuade the reader that the aims of the study were justified and have contributed to their understanding of the topic.

2.6.5 Transparency (Yardley, 2009)

This was addressed in the previous methods section when I discussed the challenges and decisions about the analysis in previous years. The transition from adopting a single mode of narrative analysis to changing to a pluralistic model was described with an account of the long search for a method which could accommodate a multi-perspectival approach. Initially I reduced the data by seeking broad themes and found a typology of marriages. Thereafter once a pluralistic narrative analytical approach was taken, the phenomenon of mixed-orientation marriage was presented. The different methods used to analyse individual stories were defined as structural, (Labov, 1974) Stanzaic or dialogic/performative (Riessman, 2008) and reflexive thinking, (Becker, 1999). These were linked to theory to present a reasoned interpretation.

Lead into chapter 3

I aim to explore the narratives told by heterosexual women and men about their experiences of having been married for several years and finding out over time or by disclosure that their spouse is of a different sexual orientation to the one they had

believed. This chapter discusses the findings that led to Typologies of marriage being identified. The impact this discovery makes on the lives of the straight spouses appears to have received less attention in the research literature than that given to accounts of individuals who are coming out who have well established support centres and social networks across America and Britain.

CHAPTER 3   TYPOLOGIES

3. Introduction

This chapter proposes a Typology of three marriages, according to the descriptions volunteered during interviews. Three participants spoke of conforming to others' wishes, four gave accounts of avoidance and poor communication affecting their marriages. Participants in longer marriages which they had believed were settled and happy, told stories of the shock, trauma and disillusionment experienced when their spouses suddenly revealed being in a same sex relationship.

Goffman believed narrators aim to present dramas to an audience (Goffman, 1959). When both listening to and reading the transcriptions of the stories I looked for expressions of emotionality, use of language, metaphor and body language in the way stories were told in order to shed further light on the meaning and purpose of the telling of the stories. This was to discern if there was a typology of stories and to clarify differences and similarities between the participants at a general surface level before drilling down to examine more complex and intricate individual differences. Three types of story tellers were identified: those who had conformed to authority and the expectations of their spouse, those who adopted avoidant behaviour in the marriage, ignoring difficult issues, and those who had believed they were happily married, but later described their disillusionment following an abrupt and shocking revelation.

Discovering the sexuality of their husband or wife was different to what each participant had believed, was for most an unexpected disruption in their lives although some had recognised significant signs in the past which were not understood at the time. For each participant their story and the meaning they made of it was unique, although at a cursory level all had shared an experience in common. The participants began their stories wherever they wished. Some gave a resume of their earlier life, including home and school influences or particular events and relationships leading up to the present time. Several stories began with a broad outline of the main events in their narrative and then reverted to the beginning to volunteer details of personal significance. From a later perspective I saw how a general plot line ran through all the stories told. The participants had married with

positive hopes for the relationship but for many, at different stages in the marriage, feelings of dissatisfaction arose. Sexual issues and poor communication were most commonly cited as deficient. Unexplained signs raised suspicions which some participants set aside, ignored or buried until a turning point was reached. Sometimes the straight spouse asked their partner directly about their sexuality. Other narratives told how a husband or wife abruptly and unexpectedly disclosed the truth to their spouse. At these points the straight partners realised the direction of their lives was changing and they faced a different future.

3.1 Identification of themes in the narratives

Each transcription was read several times with a précis being made of the narrative, the profile of the plot, sub plots and turning points. Tone, language, body language and metaphors were noted. Initially a search for obvious patterns and broad themes was undertaken by adapting the approaches of (Murray, 2005; and (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Marginal notes were made to identify general and less common or unique themes to reduce the mass of data followed by progressive comparisons across the eleven transcripts. My aim was not to fragment the narratives but to keep the stories intact to preserve coherence for the reader. Purely for my own interest a simple categorical content exercise was applied to check the frequency and distribution of the themes by counting their occurrence (Tuval-Mashiach, 1998). An initial diagram was drawn up illustrating the most common general themes to which less common or unique themes were added relating predominantly, but not exclusively, to one type of marriage.

Stories describing three typologies of marriages were identified.

Those that described participants conforming to the expectations of others, often stoically, and putting up with disappointment from the start were labelled type A. Stories that described avoidant behaviour with difficulty communicating about sensitive subjects, in which signs were ignored and suspicions buried, were type B. Stories of long-term marriages which the straight spouses had believed were happy and settled, but which ended traumatically with disillusionment following their partner's abrupt disclosure, were identified as type C. In this way a typology of

three types of marriages resulted: A, B and C. In each type of marriage participants'
pseudonyms began with the corresponding letter A, B or C.

3.1.1 The stories told

The stories about finding out the sexuality of their spouses comprised three
Typologies according to the main themes. The Typologies are shown in the table
below:

Table 2: Three Typologies of marriages

Typology	Typology Description	Participants whose accounts fit the Typology	Illustrative quotes
Conformity	Marriages lasted between 6 and 25 years Marital sex experienced as disappointing Increasing distance in the relationship Believed they had been used or harmed by their spouses Chose to have no further contact with spouse after separation	Angela Avril Anna	*I just wanted to tell someone and I felt obliged to keep his secret and obliged to hide in his closet, which goes against my very nature* *I said okay, I don't mind moving if it's the right house… because this is what I do, I'll do what other people want.* *(I really didn't want to leave that house.)* *I can't take any more and I said, 'I want a divorce'.* *'We're not having a divorce, no. you are not divorcin' me.'* *The next thing … erm, I was so ill I could hardly move*

Avoidance	Deterioration in marriage between 5 and 10 years Deterioration initially blamed on poor communication	Beryl	*there was .... a zing in the air when L and this guy were together I didn't know what it meant, I didn't want to know what it meant. I didn't ask, I didn't wonder, I just denied it, buried it.*
	Retrospective recognition of earlier signs of differences in sexuality	Becky	*we weren't very good at communicating, we were very good at pretending there wasn't a problem and hiding our heads in the sand*
	Breakdown of marriage usually triggered by challenge of spouse with suspicions	Ben	*We were doing ostrich impressions I thought out of sight out of mind – let sleeping dogs lie,*
	Most partners except Bill remained in contact (with spouse after separation	Bill	*I'd made her the focus of everything, er, and when you come out the other end of that suddenly you find there's nobody about.*
Disillusion-ment	Participant was shocked and traumatised by the abrupt and unforeseen disclosure by spouse	Celia	*I wasn't functioning properly, and it gradually got better, but work was my salvation*
	Up to this point had believed that they were relatively happily married	Carol	*someone was completely altering my life in a way I didn't like, not only someone, but the person that I loved and trusted*

	Emotional responses differed for each participant from shock, disgust & grief, to gratitude for good years and family	Claude	*most in the entire world.*
	None had foreseen breakdown of marriage and had expected to remain together for life		*When I was told, I felt everything drained, I just went completely cold, just realising that my life as I envisaged it, was over,*
		Cindy	*every time I realise that I can't accept what's happening it's started to change my thinking now in terms of where we are going*

Although Conformity, Avoidance and Disillusionment were dominant in each typology there were some degrees of overlap between all the typologies. For example some participants who gave accounts of avoidant behaviour also told of conforming at times, or being temporarily disillusioned.

3.1.2 Typology A

Typology A: Angela, Avril and Anna

Conformity

Marriages not right from the start

Used as a front   Sex was deficient for all
Parental/religious, spouse   Lacked emotion, unconvincing,
Control   atrocious

Angela	Avril	Anna
deceived	we drifted apart	he was distant
		parenting alone
comfort eating	deception	suspicious illness
support helped	new partner	quest to divorce
divorce	full circle	finding safety

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Typology B: Ben, Beryl, Becky and Bill

Avoidance

Marriages that began well but after some years changed

Communication Deteriorated
Avoiding confronting difficult issues

Ben	Beryl	Becky	Bill
complacency	celibate years	not a proper marriage	struggling to please
disrespected	Deceived	ashamed not knowing	controlling wife
broken trust	felt used	supported husband	was cheated
resilient	friends now	valued counselling	saved by divorce

3.1.4 Typology C

Typology C: Celia, Cindy, Claude and Carol

Disillusionment

They had thought they were happy

Traumatic disclosure   Depression/illness
most felt hurt but still cared for spouse

Celia	Cindy	Claude	Carol
broken trust	he had changed	devastated	told people
deception	could she compromise	just surviving	resilient
depression	questioning herself	being controlled	a survivor
memories ruined	fearing separation	children's needs	happier

3.2 The Typologies

3.2.1 Typology A – stories of Conformity: Avril, Angela and Anna

The three participants in the A group who conformed had all experienced marital sex from the beginning of marriage as disappointing or worse for different reasons.   All

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had been controlled by parents, religion, or their spouse's wishes. Angela said religion was "drummed into her." Avril feared her parents and Anna complied with her husband's wish for 'respectability.' All three women believed they were used.

Participants' words are in *italics*
R denotes the researcher

Avril

The parents of twenty-year-old Avril threatened that if she did not end an innocent romance with a boy she had met on holiday who was not of the same religion they would cut her off. Reluctantly she complied and their correspondence ended. Eventually she married a man her mother approved of, but her dominant parents managed the wedding which was an ordeal the couple survived.

> *The wedding was a nightmare because my parents took over*
> *so neither of us have good memories of actually getting married*
> *but we got through it*
>
> (Avril:1/L19-21)

From the start of the marriage Avril felt something was missing. For Avril it lacked the depth and emotion which she had expected, although she had no previous sexual experience, so the main focus was on the children and working together.

> R You felt something was missing?
>
> A *Yes, you know what was missing? Emotional … the emotional*
> *closeness. and that's partly because we didn't have a sexual*
> *relationship so, of course the intimacy from that which binds*
> *you together wasn't there, because I didn't know this at the time.*
>
> (Avril: 7/L260-264)

Avril gave another example of conforming when her husband wanted to move to a smaller house leaving the one she loved.

> *He said we are swinging around, not using the rooms and I said*
> *'okay, I don't mind moving if it's the right house' … because*
> *this is what I do, I'll do what other people want.*
> *I really didn't want to leave that house.*

<div align="right">(Avril: 3/L96-99)</div>

Avril and Angela had been raised to be obedient to their parents and to conform with their religious beliefs.

Angela

Angela attended church schools and was raised in a religious home where she was taught that being gay was a lifestyle choice, and divorce was not countenanced.   Her fiancé shared a similar religious background.

> *We'd been brought up as very strict conservative Christians and*
> *it was drummed into the both of us that you know, being gay was*
> *a choice, you weren't born that way, you know, it was a*
> *life style choice that you actively made.*

<div align="right">(Angela: 3/L98-102)</div>

Angela had been in a serious and loving relationship for over three years at college which ended sadly for her because he was all she had ever wanted. Soon afterwards she agreed to be engaged to a young man she had known for years. Just before the wedding a stranger wrote to say that her fiancé had been in a long relationship with an older man.   Still mourning her past love, and unable to face cancelling the wedding Angela was persuaded by her fiancé to believe that his future behaviour would change. Once married, his attitude that sex was her duty made life intolerable and helped by friends, she avoided contact with him.

> R   Can you say a bit more about that, what was making you so unhappy?

> A   *Well, our sex life was atrocious.   It was … it was just (voice*
> *trembling) terrible. There's no other way I can express it. But*

<div align="center">85</div>

he'd made a big big fuss about how it was the right thing for
us to do - not to sleep together before we got married.

<div align="right">(Angela: 5/L165-170)</div>

<div align="center">……………</div>

Well I was brought up that you get married once, you don't
get divorced, you certainly don't get divorced, and I thought
'this is it.. this is my life' ... yes, sorry…. (long pause) tearful….

<div align="right">(Angela: 5/L188-191)</div>

Angela was distressed because marriage bore no resemblance to her previous relationship. Accepting her family's views on divorce, she resigned herself to this being her future life. Anna and Avril who had children tolerated their situation for over twenty years before discovering their husbands' sexuality. Distance in the three marriages increased over time. Helped by supportive counselling Angela became assertive, decided to divorce after six years, and told her husband to leave. In retrospect Angela came to believe she had 'been used' as a convenience or a front by her husband, which damaged her self-esteem.

Anna

Anna's narrative began with her wedding. She would have been satisfied with a simple civil wedding but conformed by deferring to her husband who, conscious of his public image, insisted on a formal church ceremony. (Only the participants in the A group included details of their weddings.)

He insisted a church wedding' (yes) *It had to be very er... to book*
I was quite happy to go to a registry office but no, no, church, so
okay, and erm, I thought he was honest and I thought he was (p)
genuine and actually loved me (p) for who I am.

<div align="right">(Anna:1/L2-7)</div>

Years later Anna's doubts were confirmed. Her husband had provided for the family but was not a hands-on, caring father. Anna raised the children on her own while her husband became increasingly detached and critical, reluctant to communicate or

share with Anna, with further odd behavioural changes that scared her. Anna was unconvinced her husband liked sex and asked him twice if he was gay, which he strongly denied. Being a practical person, Anna temporarily set this notion aside to focus on establishing a home.

> *.. you know, the sexual side wasn't overly exciting but I (p)*
> *you know I said well is it? ..."no no no" I said, "are you sure*
> *you enjoyed that?" "of course, I did or else I wouldn't have*
> *done it." and I'm thinking that's a funny thing to say erm, it*
> *did cross my mind and I thought no, no, let's... it's not the*
> *most important maybe we are getting on okay with working....*

> (Anna: 1/L8-15)

In the three accounts above, the seeds of conformity can be discerned in early obedience to parents and later in the wives' stoicism. All three participants eventually separated and chose to have no further contact with their husbands, believing the marriages had been deleterious and harmful.

3.2.2 Typology B – stories of Avoidance: Beryl, Becky, Ben and Bill

The four participants in the B group told stories describing avoidant behaviour with regard to sexuality and communication problems in marriages that began well; but a few years later the straight partners began to notice signs which they did not understand at the time. Often these were ignored or put aside to avoid having their fears confirmed, particularly if they were dependent or had a family. A 'zing' in the air had puzzled Beryl each time a certain friend visited. Over time it grew into a suspicion. Having not queried the years of celibate marriage, Beryl finally confronted her husband.

Beryl
> *But something that I did notice, was that there was some kind*
> *of a… erm, a zing in the air when L and this guy were together,*
> *and erm, I didn't know what it meant, I didn't want to know*
> *what it meant. I didn't ask, I didn't wonder, I just denied it,*

buried it. And this went on for … about two or three years I guess.

<div align="right">(Beryl: 1/L20-24)</div>

Beryl's husband was honest when confronted and told her the whole story.   Initially enraged by the deception and *"being used as a smokescreen,"* years later she believed she had been fortunate because so few wives ever hear the truth.

> *I didn't realise it at the time, but I was really lucky I was*
> *lucky that he was honest because many straight partners*
> *never get to that point.*

<div align="right">(Beryl:3/L122-124)</div>

<u>Becky</u>

Becky described the avoidance of herself and her husband in raising sexual matters and being happy with her husband with whom she had a close and loving relationship. She mentions something being *'a bit wrong'* possibly minimising her concern without being explicit. Both she and her husband were reluctant to confront problems and hid their heads in the sand, choosing not to upset their partner.

> *I started noticing that there was something a bit wrong and*
> *we weren't very good at communicating, we were very good*
> *at pretending there wasn't a problem and hiding our heads*
> *in the sand, and so didn't really talk about it.*

<div align="right">(Becky: 1/L10-13)</div>

When her husband said he was gay, Becky found it hard to believe because they were married, but in retrospect she concluded the relationship had been closer to a friendship than a marriage.

> *I didn't think it was possible and I suppose even now part*
> *of me thinks 'you married me, you know, you're straight',*
> *kind of thing but the way that our relationship had been,*

<div align="center">88</div>

it was much more of a friendship I think than a marriage….

<div align="right">(Becky: 2/L45-48)</div>

Ben

Ben was surprised to find on social media evidence of his wife's love for a woman. In his own words he described avoiding acting on his early suspicions and not asking sooner but waited until he was sure before confronting her.

> *I hadn't been asked not to mention anything because I wasn't*
> *actually aware that there was an extra-marital affair going on.*
> *I had my suspicions but again, it was suspicions, (p) then it was*
> *let sleeping dogs lie or doing an ostrich impression, if you*
> *want to call it that.*

<div align="right">(Ben: 3/L105-109)</div>

Ben told how making the effort to communicate declined over time, suggesting they had taken each other for granted and neglected their relationship. He felt he had learned the importance of mutual sensitivity and communication.

> *but also, what it has done, taught me is communication …..   ……*
> *talk to each other, yeah…*

<div align="right">(Ben:11/L417-418)</div>

Ben's story revealed how awareness of each other's sensitivities became overlooked and their earlier good married relationship changed, suggesting it was taken for granted, but not discussed or nurtured.

Bill

Bill's story included much detail and metaphor and he spoke quickly. It was a long interview during which a ten-minute break was taken. Bill recalled being controlled and not confronting his wife in the hope of saving his marriage. He married a woman with whom he shared a productive working relationship but after two years she became dissatisfied and began moving from job to job. Bill added *'sex went*

downhill' and he was left caring for her teenager and his son, while she spent evenings dancing or socialising. Her control steadily tightened, his 'phone calls were monitored while his savings diminished. Only when his wife wanted a live-in girlfriend to displace him did Bill refuse and immediately became ill. Her tales of affairs with men and women confused him and despite still loving her, yet feeling manipulated and cheated, divorce beckoned. By agreeing to his wife's whims Bill had relinquished his autonomy. Thereafter his tone changed from avoiding confrontation to decisive action and organising his own divorce.

> B   *That she decided she was going to stay with a girlfriend*
> *etcetera, was perfectly obvious. What the upshot was it*
> *doesn't really matter what she thinks as far as I'm concerned.*

> R   So, you mentioned the signs that you tolerated but overlooked
> at the time *(Mm)* and when all this happened, were you expected
> to keep it to yourself?

> B   *In hindsight, I was. The idea was that erm, that we would*
> *stay married etcetera and keep it on the QT, was entirely for*
> *her benefit, on account of the fact she could not face the idea*
> *of being 'outed' to the world.*

(Bill: 6/L 218-228)

Both Becky and Beryl had remained in contact with their partners after parting. Ben had no concerns about his wife's sexuality and divorced owing to her infidelity and breaking the trust which he could not forgive. Bill divorced, despite still loving his wife, to retrieve control of his life and contact ended.

3.2.3 Typology C - stories of Disillusionment: Celia, Carol, Claude and Cindy

Four participants told stories describing their reactions and disillusionment when their husband or wife disclosed they were involved in a same-sex relationship after many years of marriage. Three of the participants had no prior suspicions having expected to remain together for life. Cindy had recently learned her husband was

meeting a man once a week. She then struggled with her quest to save the marriage. Participants in the C group of long-term marriages became disillusioned after disclosure, having believed they were relatively happily married and contented. All had loved and trusted their spouses implicitly and were profoundly shocked and traumatised by the abrupt and unforeseen disclosure.

Celia

Celia reflected on how the hurtful way her husband disclosed his casual sexual behaviour to her had changed her as a person.

> R You were saying that you think this has seriously affected you as a person…

> C *Yes, it has, it's made me erm …. I was a happy person, I was a contented person and I'm not now. I still take antidepressants and I find the world now is a place that I'm not comfortable in. I don't understand things, I don't like…I look at the negative all the time now instead of the positive. I read the papers and see the negative ….. and things upset me a lot more than they used to.*
>
> (Celia: 7/L263-271)

Following an insensitive and abrupt disclosure by her husband on his frequenting of mens' saunas, which shocked and disgusted Celia, she had become depressed and said she was *"not happy in her own skin"*. She was finding the world more negative and less comprehensible so that she was not at ease in it. Sensitive to the reported news, she noticed mostly negative aspects and became more upset than she used to by taking things increasingly to heart.   Later in the interview Celia said what hurt most is that she had

> *' been used as a shield and to be something for his mother all my life'.*
>
> (Celia:11/L419-422)

Carol

For Carol too finding out was a shock but she also expressed gratitude for their good years together and for raising a lovely family.   She explained in her story:

> C   *Somehow the sexuality side didn't entirely surprise me, I mean my husband's always been, I would have said a kind of sensitive person and he's quite creative, he's quite musical, so on the spectrum of people, you know, he's not a macho type in terms of… he doesn't present in any way gay or effeminate but he's not one to go down to the pub for a drink with the lads or he's not into football or you know or he's, (p) which is part of the reason I've got on with him so well to be honest* (yes) *and so in that sense it wasn't a complete and utter shock but in the sense of our marriage being at risk it was a complete and utter shock and erm, my first thought was damage limitation and whether I could somehow keep him… part of him erm so….*
>
> R   You had been happy together did you say?
>
> C   *Well exactly, I mean I was happy – I wasn't the happiest I've ever been because I can't feel l00% happy if I feel he's not happy.*
>
> <div align="right">(Carol: 4/L168-182)</div>

Carol began by describing a thoughtful letter her husband had given her to explain how in later life he had come to experiment to make sure what his sexuality was. He had written saying he had fallen in love with her and that suppressing this other side of his nature had been no problem until recently. As a complementary couple, Carol said the marriage had been good. Her husband was creative and musical and Carol was the practical one. What shocked her most was the idea that her husband would put their long marriage at risk having met someone just a few times. Immediately she thought about what might be saved in the marriage, adding wistfully, whether she might keep him … or part of him.

Claude

Claude, an older husband and father who said he was *'just existing'*, was grieving his loss and feeling cut-off emotionally, having had no warning before his wife said she wanted to separate having fallen in love with a woman and would be taking their children to live with her, with no prior consultation with Claude.

> *'I want to separate, because I'm in love with somebody else and*
> *that person is J** and I'm taking the children to live with her'.*
> *So I was completely devastated. I think I said 'how predictable'*
> *because it just felt it was predictable with J** but of course it wasn't*
> *predictable in many ways. It took me completely by surprise. Erm ..*
> *and so there, there we have it. Now the biggest betrayal is not the*
> *sexual betrayal, it's the betrayal of trust, the fact that she could not*
> *discuss it with me in advance and she had to present me with a fait*
> *accompli, that hurt terribly and it means I can never trust her again…*
> *and we had complete trust up to, … I mean we were very very open*
> *with each other and very trusting. It was just utter betrayal of our*
> *relationship and erm, I don't think I'll ever recover from that.*
>
> (Claude: 3/L106-118)

Claude described being *'completely devastated'* upon hearing his wife wanted to separate. He had no idea that she was in another relationship because during their marriage there had been complete trust which she had often confirmed. Using strong emotive language he experienced betrayal on two levels, sexually and in their personal relationship which had been so strong. To be the fifth person to be told of his wife's plan to leave and take their children, without any discussion with Claude, was experienced as highly disrespectful, but he had already described his wife as a controlling person. Claude believed in the security of the nuclear family for the children. This appeared threatened by the euphoria of his wife in a new relationship. Claude doubted he would ever recover because his wife had been the love of his life and he agreed to have children despite being over fifty, because she had wanted them. Once born they became precious to Claude, who was deeply concerned for

their welfare having raised them since infancy while his wife worked.   Disillusioned and hurt, with trust destroyed, Claude sank into depression.

Cindy

This final story of a straight spouse in a long marriage who had believed they were happy is of a dilemma in which the straight partner searches endlessly for a solution. Cindy described a marital relationship that was good for her in every way, and one others might envy.   Quoting many positive aspects in the first extract the tone changes when Cindy has to consider whether their 20-year marriage might include the same-sex relationship her husband had recently begun.   Cindy then recalled her husband saying casually that given different circumstances, he might have been gay or bisexual.

> *We've had a very good relationship. In all senses it's been great,*
> *and we've been, we've been brilliant as a couple, you know,*
> *probably enviable to other people in a way, a good relationship*
> *we get on very well, we are very good friends, got lots in common*
> *very very happy, erm, and then (p ….).*
>
> (Cindy: 1/L29-34)

Cindy pondered whether this other man was important for her husband's happiness, because she loved her husband and wanted him to be happy, and for the marriage to survive. Being a person who used strategies, Cindy struggled for months seeking a workable solution while feeling unhappy about sharing her husband.   She saw he was contented having all he wanted, both a wife and a man in his life. Eventually exhausted, Cindy became depressed.   Counselling helped her to prioritise her concerns and to care for herself.

I asked Cindy about the impact of the struggle

C   *Oh, it's big (p) It's really big 'cos its...*

R   Have you had any health issues? erm, sleeping and...

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C   *Sleeping, not good (worry) and just depression I would say*
    depression, because I can't get away from it Christine, I can't
    I wake up in the morning thinking about it. I'm planning all
    the time, what shall I do now? What shall I try next? (Mm)
    What could we do, what could he do? And it's, it's an over....
    an all- consuming erm event so, it's, it's like a depression and
    I started seeing a counsellor a few weeks ago erm, (Mm) *to*
    just... 'cos I felt like I got stuck, I just couldn't, I'd run out of
    ideas ....

                                                    (Cindy: 8/L314-328)

They moved into separate bedrooms allowing Cindy time to weep privately and consider the future. She recognised the possibility of separation looming. Within six months her husband left her to live with the other man.

3.3 Listening to the stories and reflecting

At the beginning of an interview, listening closely to the stories was accompanied by some tension while concentrating on following the narrative besides making mental notes of the tone or accompanying body language. Tension was quickly overtaken by interest in the stories and how the participants presented themselves. It then became easier to respond naturally and to contribute to the jointly produced narrative. With mms and nods I encouraged all the participants to speak as freely as they wished, but did not press them when I sensed they were ready to move to a different aspect or topic and followed their preference. Some accounts which were particularly poignant or distressing evoked feelings in me which were necessarily contained until afterwards when writing my notes. In the analysis there was the opportunity to recall the emotional impact in their stories and to consider the significance of its introduction at certain points and the possible meaning. I considered how the stories were told, their intended purpose and how each participant had wished to be perceived. (Goffman, 1956). When a participant felt strongly about a particular issue, it was sometimes pressed into any available space whether or not it followed logically, suggesting its importance to them. Replaying the tapes, I heard the voices of participants and my own and could examine the co-constructed dialogue,

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prompted by my notes. Some sections when listened to again suggested there might be an alternative interpretation which I address in the next chapter.

Lead into Chapter 4

Chapter 4 follows in which a selection of the participants' stories are analysed pluralistically to demonstrate a holistic view of contemporary accounts concerning discovery of a spouse's sexuality and the emotional impact of this on the straight partner, who they could tell and the end of a marriage.   The social context, available support and counselling also feature and the hopes of participants for positive future change and validation.

CHAPTER 4   DISRUPTIVE REVELATIONS

4. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the structural, performative and reflexive analysis of stories identified in the interviews.   Labov's method (l972) was used to identify temporally structured stories. When an extract did not conform to Labov's method in having a beginning a middle and an end, yet read like a story, Riessman's Stanzaic model or Dialogic / Performative Analysis (Riessman, 2008) or Becker's model of Reflexive Awareness (Becker, 1999) were employed to analyse the stories. The prism of reflexive awareness, which the use of Becker's model enabled, took account of the effect on myself as the audience and the meanings discerned in stories by careful listening. This also helped to identify my influence in the co-construction of the narratives.

This chapter discusses four main themes using different models of analysis dependent on the content and form of the stories told.   Some have several subsections. The themes are:

Finding out their partner's sexuality
The emotional impact on the straight spouse
Telling others and their response
Ending the marriage

4.1 Finding Out their Spouse's Sexuality

All the participants told stories of finding out about their partner's sexuality. Three participants likened their immediate emotional response affecting them like *'a bomb'* or *'a bombshell'*. This metaphor originated in World War I, meaning a sudden shocking and dangerous impact with far reaching consequential damaging fall-out.

4.1.1 Carol's story

Carol described the huge shock she felt *'like a bomb going off'* despite her account of remaining calm on learning about her husband's sexuality having read the thoughtfully worded letter he had handed to her. Carol qualified her less than entire surprise saying her husband was always a sensitive and creative person which attributes she liked. Using Becker's reflexive awareness, I identified the expressed emotion in the language and the repeated metaphor of disclosure being a bomb or a bombshell for Carol and the two following participants.

<div align="center">

Analysis according to Labov (1972)

</div>

Erm, it was a huge shock,	AB
erm, it was really like a bomb going off,	CA
when he actually gave me the letter	OR
I was relatively calm	EV
the sexuality side didn't entirely surprise me	EV
my husband's always been, I would have said	EV
a kind of sensitive person and he's quite creative.	OR

<div align="right">(Carol:4/L165-169)</div>

Later the shock and implications hit Carol, which she had not processed initially, possibly due to cognitive overload. After telling the children, her emotions underwent a significant change. She began to panic, gasping for air and reacting involuntarily, bashing her head, (perhaps subconsciously trying to drive out the shocking knowledge).

Shortly after we told the teenagers erm,	OR
the shock actually (p) hit me,	AB
The implications of what he'd told me which	AB
I don't think had gone in initially,	EV
well I was sort of panicking about it	EV
I had a horrible experience of actually erm,	CA
bashing my head on the wall.	RE

<div align="right">(Carol: 6/L237-243)</div>

<u>4.1.2 Ben's story</u>

Ben also described feeling as if a bombshell had been dropped on him by his wife at the time she disclosed being gay. For Ben it was more of a surprise than a shock because before marriage his wife had disclosed her previous relationship with a woman but initially she was fully committed to their marriage.

> *My now ex-wife erm, sort of dropped a bombshell on me*
> *In the New Year one evening to say that she was gay.*
> *We'd been out we'd had a few drinks and then when we came*
> *home she just said, 'there's something I've got to tell you –*
> *'I'm gay'.*
>
> (Ben: 1/L5-9)

Ben described wondering how his wife spent her time when visiting friends and admitted to *'doing ostrich impressions,'* meaning that so long as she was discrete, he buried his head in the sand until he had reason for concern.   His demeanour remained calm until the last line.

> *I had my suspicions but again, it was suspicions, then it was*
> *let sleeping dogs lie or doing an ostrich impression, if you want*
> *to call it that.*
>
> (Ben :3/L107-109)

When describing finding out Ben did not express his distress but later recalled he had felt publicly humiliated when he saw references to his wife's new relationship on social media which anyone could read before he had been told.   The phrase 'inadvertently stumble' suggests Ben intended me to understand he was not directly seeking information, yet he had wondered about an affair, and being alert for evidence was looking at his wife's media comments.

> *When in three clicks I can inadvertently stumble across a page,*
> *a Facebook page that has my wife and a) another person on,*
> *professing their undying love for each other I thought – 'no,*

> *I've got the patience of a saint here, but you've just overstepped*
>
> *the line'.*

<div align="right">(Ben: 3/L113-117)</div>

The tension rises in the previous four lines, and Ben's tone became angry upon reading the messages. Ben then assumed the high ground and sounds justified in suggesting there may be consequences for overstepping the line.

4.1.3 Claude's story

Before Claude was told his wife was leaving him and taking their children he describes a hypothetical conversation he imagines between his wife and her mother. His wife had calculated that Claude may not choose to go on holiday with them after she drops her 'bombshell' about leaving him and in advance had enlisted her mother's help. Dramatising the scene Claude repeats the likely dialogue which imparts immediacy to the script. Claude had wondered why his wife always stayed with the children during sleepovers with a friend, but had promptly dismissed the thought as unworthy.

> *So, she stood her mother by, saying 'I'm going to drop*
> *this bombshell and Claude may not want to come to *****
> *on holiday erm, so you had better come with me' because*
> *she needs support with the children.*

<div align="right">(Claude:4/L138-141)</div>

In these extracts of three participants, the abrupt disclosure was not anticipated and was a shock for the straight spouse, revealing the infidelity / deceit of their partners and, in Claude's case, how his wife also used her mother.

4.1.4 Carol's reflections

Carol was aware she had been preoccupied with her demanding new job and had not noticed changes at home.   She rationalised that even if she had been aware, she doubted she could have prevented it, making these developments appear inevitable and beyond her influence.

My attention was very much focused on changing that place

and surviving the journey that I was going on at work so I

didn't give a huge amount of attention to what was going on,

erm not that I could have stopped it, even if I had wanted to

(Carol: 3/L103-106)

Distance and time spent apart was a factor in all three stories. Carol and Claude were preoccupied with their work and a project and had spent less time with their partner. Ben was abroad, waiting until any problem became obvious. However, most participants thought that this was not the cause of the differences in sexuality but it had offered an opportunity. The first three stories highlighted each participant's profound shock in finding out about their spouse's sexuality during their marriage which had not been anticipated.

4.1.5 Angela's story

In contrast Angela found out about her spouse's sexuality before the marriage, in a letter from a stranger. Using Riessman's dialogic/performance analysis it is clear that learning in this letter that her prospective husband had been leading a double life caused Angela to feel unsettled and unprepared to hear the shocking details.

Dialogic/ Performance Analysis Riessman (2008),

The letter

I got a letter six weeks before the wedding which started

'you don't know me but there's something you need to know

You don't know the person you are about to marry,

he's living a double life behind your back'.

What the writer knew

And just went through all these quite expressive details

about the life R was leading with her cousin.

It came at a time when I wasn't ready to hear it.

I certainly wasn't ready to deal with it.

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<u>The wedding was booked</u>

I had a very very elaborate erm wedding booked and …

well I didn't really want to believe it at all.

I thought either everything she is saying is correct, or nothing

<u>Further details</u>

She knew what outfit R was wearing the night he proposed to me.

She just knew all these intimate details and said

'my cousin left his wife and kids and they went and lived together'

<u>What Angela knew</u>

I knew he'd had a male room-mate while he was at University-

we weren't in touch all that often

I did not think to ask 'oh, room- mate / or you know, lover'.

(Angela: 2L/59-89)

Angela relayed this story in a friendly and confidential tone as if we had known each other for years. During the engagement year Angela had referred to time *'plodding on'* simply noting the dreary passing of time using Riessman's flat 'habitual narrative' while diverting herself with wedding plans (Riessman, 2008:99). The couple met only in the vacations and Angela made no reference to pleasure or anticipation of these times.   In the first stanza Angela's tone reflects the dramatic situation describing the arrival of the letter from a stranger telling her of her fiancé's double life followed by the next stanza recounting supporting details of her fiancé's relationship with the writer's cousin.   Despite describing her relationship with her mother as *'quite close'*, Angela did not confide in her about the letter.   Had she done so her story might have had a different ending.   Angela was unprepared to hear or deal with this shocking news or to *want* to believe it, despite the accuracy of the details known.   She was preoccupied with the wedding plans which both families had encouraged.   Riessman's method allows the social context in the story to be recognised and suggests Angela's anxiety and the consequences if the truth should be revealed.   Innocently she had not suspected nor thought to ask about her fiancé's relationship with his room-mate.   Such a question at the time would have appeared odd. Angela delivered this last line with a hint of amusement. After further thought

Angela had confronted her husband-to-be. Analysing the extension of the story using Labov's model shows how it progressed to a conclusion. Following confrontation with her fiancé, Angela accepted his excuse about being coerced in a relationship he did not want, and believing his assurances, agreed to be sworn to secrecy. The Evaluation is significant: 'he told me things I probably needed to hear' which some analysts believe is *the soul* of Labovian analysis (Riessman, 1993). Clinging to words she needed to hear, Angela ignored her doubts and reverting to her initial reluctance to believe the allegations, proceeded with the marriage.

Analysis according to Labov (1972)

I confronted him about this letter	AB
I said you're not denying what she's telling me	OR
So, he told me the things	CA
I basically probably needed to hear	EV

(Angela: 3/L103-114)

With hindsight Angela reflected that she had not been strong enough to face the consequences of cancelling the wedding. Later she had said she thought her mind had tricked her. Her fiancé told her what she needed to hear. Both families' community standing would have been affected and her fiancé's career prospects harmed if his sexuality had been revealed. Angela, sworn to secrecy, knowingly took the risk of proceeding with the wedding, hoping for the best outcome, but without fully considering the future cost for her.

4.1.6 Becky's story

Stories of avoidance and communication difficulties were recounted by Becky and Ben in relation to their reluctance to address sensitive issues. Their accounts are examples of poor communication inhibiting discovery. Following the end of a previous relationship Becky had been 'phoned by her future husband who expressed an interest in her and whom she felt she would like to meet. Their meeting went well and she particularly enjoyed all the attention he gave her. After a year they married and were mutually affectionate and loving. At times Becky would become

withdrawn but the reason for this was never discussed. Becky spoke in a controlled quiet tone about her marriage, calmly relating events as though they had occurred far longer than three years ago. When married the couple had found it hard to communicate about sensitive sexual subjects fearing upsetting each other.

> *'We weren't very good at communicating,*
> *we were very good at pretending there wasn't a problem*
> *and hiding our heads in the sand,'*

<div align="right">(Becky: 1/L11-13)</div>

Keeping things inside and exercising restraint about her concerns was reflected in the way Becky told her story even when speaking of emotional topics. Married for eleven years, she indicated something was *'a bit wrong.'* Briefly she mentioned an *'incident'* but gave no details and quickly followed this saying her husband started to attend a gym where a man had chatted with him. It is not clear what the incident involved, because Becky minimised her concern and I did not probe further. Writing my notes later I realised I had mirrored Becky's reluctance to be explicit, not wishing to upset her. Becky's husband had said the man who talked to him was gay but there was nothing more to it than that. Her husband confided his doubts about his own sexuality on two later occasions and I wondered if he might be introducing the subject gradually to prepare her. Eventually they consulted Relate together where Becky sensed intuitively her husband might be gay and asked him directly. He then confirmed this and Becky concluded: '*and that was obviously the point of no return',* adding after a pause…. *'I suppose'.* Her story about finding out ends here, but her uncertain tone and wistful trailing comment *'I suppose'* suggests Becky had possibly left room for an alternative ending.

<div align="center">Analysis According to Labov 1972</div>

My husband started going to a gym	AB
He told me this guy was gay	OR
He had begun to have doubts about his sexuality	CA
He thought he was gay, erm but wasn't sure	EV

We went to Relate and had some counselling CA

I said to him 'are you gay' and he said 'yes' CA

That was obviously the point of no return…. I suppose RE

(Becky: 1/L9-33)

Becky's story is an example of finding out her husband's sexual orientation in a gradual way. The plot illustrates how communication issues and avoidance prevented the couple having a full understanding of each other's feelings and needs. Sensitive matters were ignored leaving issues unaddressed which affected their relationship. Becky's withdrawn mood may have arisen owing to suppression or avoidance of important matters she could not confront. This was a factor in all the participants' stories in the B typology of marriages. Finding out for Becky was a 'prolonged process of discovery' (Gochros, 1982) following several hints from her husband. She did not feel deceived because her husband had confided in her and their friendship has survived. Becky's story could also have been analysed using Riessman's dialogic performance method to take account of the telling and how she minimised issues indicating something 'being *a bit* wrong', and moved quickly past *'an incident'* which was not explained. Becky's transcript was one of the shorter ones. Her language suggested emotion but was delivered in an understated manner. Counselling later helped Becky to be more open but she described a lingering sense of shame having not realised her husband was gay, and assumed others would conclude she must be stupid.

<u>In extracts of dialogue R denotes the researcher</u>

<u>4.1.7 Ben's story</u>

Ben had described himself as 'the breadwinner' in his marriage until his wife began a responsible job. He then focused on the relationship. He acknowledged that there were times when he had not stopped to consider why their relationship had changed from earlier good times and confirmed there were issues that neither had questioned while their relationship deteriorated, yet he acknowledged signs had been present.

Erm, there hadn't been much of a physical relationship for, for
some time and I suppose I was either, either doing a head in the
sand job on it or perhaps thinking that well after twelve years
things do slide a little bit in that department, so I hadn't
really…(p) I hadn't actually thought about it but er.. you know
in hindsight, I think - okay, there were signs there.

(Ben: 1/L8-15)

In her new career Ben's wife spent her days off staying with friends. Their physical relationship had declined and Ben shared his supposition that he was either ignoring the issue, *'putting his head in the sand',* or possibly accepting that after twelve years this might be expected. Referring to *'things sliding a little bit in that department',* Ben adopted a casual tone. He started to say he had not realised, then paused, corrected himself and admitted he had not actually *thought* about it, but with hindsight, there had been signs which he had not registered. Ben felt humiliated and disrespected reading on social media his wife and another woman professing their mutual love. Although his wife's sexuality did not concern him, breaking the trust hurt deeply, besides having his feelings trampled publicly. He conceded there were signs that the marriage had been neglected which were ignored. These emotions were illuminated by using Riessman's Dialogic/ Performance Analysis.

Dialogic/ Performance Analysis Riessman (2008).

R And what would you say were the things that perhaps
   you thought you should have talked about?

B *Well, I think it's just general communication other than*
   the mundane routine,

R The events?

B *The events, it's the emotions, how are you, what are you*
   doing, how are you feeling etcetera etcetera and yes, why, is
   there a drop off in the physical relationship? Things like that.

R   Did that happen quite suddenly?

B   *No, it was a gradual thing, it was definitely a gradual thing*

R   And no-one mentioned it?

B   *No, neither of us mentioned it to each other, no, I think we*
     were both possibly in denial or doing ostrich impressions.

(Ben:11-13/L419-435)

By considering my words as well as Ben's I could see that with a Socratic question I invited Ben to reflect on what he thought they should have discussed. Ben's story tells of avoidance and possible complacency of both partners, not noticing or questioning changes in a relationship over time in order to maintain an emotional bond. It appears this state gradually crept up on the couple, but neither mentioned it. Earlier Ben had referred to himself as a *'glass half-full man'*. Not given to introspection or worrying about what might have been, Ben believed *'we are where we are - move on'*. He acknowledged that he and his wife had neglected nurturing emotions and feelings and concluded they had both possibly been in denial or doing ostrich impressions. On reflection I had the impression that Ben might have been responding in the way he thought was expected because discussing emotional issues was not easy for him or something he often considered. Saying he had recovered in two or three weeks after the discovery of his wife's affair seemed too short a time, if their relationship had been one of depth, but Ben chose to portray himself as strong. He had presented as the dominant partner, responsible, self-sufficient and resilient. He had not asked for support and seemed surprised that other straight spouses had needed counselling, yet he had volunteered to tell his story to me, a stranger, perhaps to safely reveal a glimpse of his defended self to someone he need not meet again.

Becky and Ben told their stories in contrasting ways. Ben spoke in a confident and pragmatic way consistent with his preferred self, revealing he had not taken time to question the ways in which the marriage had deteriorated owing to poor communication and lack of sensitivity. Becky's story was told in a quieter tone and

was both reflective and responsible. She described their close and loving friendship but the couple had not discussed why sex was disappointing, nor had Becky explained why she became depressed. Like Ben, Becky acknowledged their avoidance and "hiding their heads in the sand."   They had ignored sensitive issues while pretending everything was fine. Becky was empathetic and motivated to spare her husband's feelings whereas Ben had felt justified in criticising his wife.

4.2 The Emotional Impact on the Straight Spouse

4.2.1 Celia's story

Celia spoke clearly and briskly. She set the scene telling of family illness and her own diagnosis. Her husband's parents had recently died and he had experienced stress at work but Celia believed they were approaching the end of this difficult time. Her implicit trust in her husband had never wavered in their twenty-five years of marriage and she considered they were a stable family.   Celia had thought of herself as a happy and contented person until things changed during the past two years. Recently her husband had suggested something was wrong with the marriage and Celia was keen to access help to address the matter. Labov's analysis captures the stark details.

<div align="center">Analysis according to Labov (1972)</div>

He was leading me to believe that the marriage had broken down	AB
and he was quite emphatic that he would go	EV
so one day he came home from work early	OR
'For the past two years I've been visiting gay saunas	CA
and for the past six months I've been having casual sex with men'	CA
and that was said from the opposite side of the room	OR
with no apology; no compassion, no anything	EV
I was calm, erm, I was in shock	EV
So that was how I found out	RE

<div align="right">(Celia: 2/L45-62)</div>

Celia's tone softened as she reached the final line. In earlier parts of her narrative

she had introduced an aside with humour, but there were also many dark observations about *'not enduring'*. Referring to her reaction upon finding out, Celia explained *'Sex was the white elephant in the room'* equating sex with both a discarded object and an important issue ignored. A consultation with Relate did not help, during which Celia wept throughout, while her husband *'sat on the fence'* saying he no longer wished to be married. Labov's essential clauses succinctly sum up the abrupt disclosure. The content and context of her husband's disclosure made an indelible impact on Celia who sank into depression and considered killing herself but later found work was her *'salvation.'* Celia would have probably met the crisis-prone criteria of Golan (l957). The evaluation clause contrasts her husband's statement, without compassion or apology, while evaluation for Celia reflects her remaining calm after suffering shock.

Riessman's dialogic/performance analysis was used to analyse the following three dramatic extracts. Celia's story here is divided into scenes, stanzas of about four lines, each on a different topic.

Dialogic /Performance Analysis (Riessman, 2008).

R   So what emotional turmoil did you go through?
      Can you put words to it?

<u>scene l – devastation</u>

C   *I was just devastated .. I mean my life was over.*
    I felt I'd been robbed. I felt I'd been cheated, I felt used,
    I couldn't see a future
    I couldn't look more than a day or so ahead.

Celia summed up her feelings as being personally devastated, explaining that her life seemed over. Using short sharp clauses beginning with 'I', Celia captured her main points precisely in dramatic and strong accusative language, feeling she had been robbed, cheated and used yet she wished to be regarded as a survivor not as a victim. Unable to imagine a possible future, she coped with just a day or so at a time.

Celia's tone was both angry and wounded. Her pain was palpable and I felt like reaching out to her.

scene 2 – a different retirement

Obviously at my age I find it difficult to contemplate
starting again you know... we'd been looking forward to...
I thought we'd be looking forward to retirement and what we would do.
We were comfortably off, you know (Mm)

Celia's tone became less anguished as she thought of their retirement plans, which would now not happen. By saying *'you know'* Celia may have assumed that being retired, I would understand how hard it would be for her to consider starting again at her age. It is not clear what she is thinking of starting, possibly a new chapter of her life, relocating or taking up different leisure interests. She began to say how they had been looking forward to retirement and what they would do now they could afford it, then corrected herself saying <u>she</u> had thought this would be the case, inferring her husband may have had different ideas.

Scene 3 - parental control

He'd just had this big inheritance which again I think was
something that influenced this, because if he'd decided to come
out before his mother died it would be a bedsit in Lewisham not
a luxury apartment on the river…. because he did like the nice things

Here Celia suggests his mother's legacy had influenced the timing for her husband to come out. She smiled as she introduced a humorous comment, knowing how his mother had viewed being gay and contrasted a possible bedsit with his comfortable apartment and his penchant for nice things. Being present with Celia I could witness her smile and the tone of voice she used besides receiving an impression of her mother-in-law, her husband and his choice of timing for leaving the marriage.

<u>Scene 4 – different taste</u>

You know we used to joke when we went looking for wallpaper
I was in the woodchip and he was in the Farrow and Ball sort of thing.

(Celia 7/L243-258)

In this couplet Celia looked back recalling better times and describes her husband's love of fine quality and her more thrifty choice in home décor and the humour they shared. Her mood lightened and her tone became softer losing its bitter edge as she appeared to savour the memory with a wry smile.

The analytical approaches taken here have shown me that analysis using Labov does not take account of context and hypothetical thinking, or include emotional input although his Evaluation clause is considered to be the narrator's view. Labov's method is effective when analysing action stories that have taken place. It incisively followed the events of the first extract. The clauses delivered cold facts about the husband's shocking and risky behaviour without consideration or sensitivity for his wife's feelings, and suggests no emotional input on his part. The impression given is of an unfeeling husband. Celia remained calm, despite being in shock at the same time. Labov's method also demonstrates the traditional story structure with a beginning a middle and an end, relying on the relationship of clauses. It is an efficient initial framework but does not take direct account of the context or the input of an audience or focus on the potential future or personal relationships with emotional content. Riessman's Dialogic/performance analysis follows the development of the story through descriptive scenes which provide the context and explain the development of the plot and describe other characters. Dialogic/performance analysis affords a fuller and more complete evaluation of the stories told and accounts for the context, characters, emotion, mood change and imagery used. Riessman's method accommodates Celia's description of feeling "devastated", as if her life was over, and unable to see a future. The emotional impact described moved me to empathise with Celia. Similarly, I gathered impressions of her mother-in-law and could discern a glimpse of Celia's humour and

anger besides her despair.   Unspoken subtle meanings were inferred about their retirement, inviting me to understand her loss. Riessman's method captures the more complex and personal layers of Celia's experience and emotional content which, used with Labov's method, reveals different layers of meaning.

4.2.2 Cindy's story

The following extracts show how Cindy became extremely emotional, describing her desperate quest to find a way to remain married.   By using my name several times she drew me into her situation. Her feelings of bereavement were described as similar to those experienced when her father died. She questioned herself and her judgement. Identifying a hypothetical narrative (Riessman, 2003) I noted Cindy had pointed out what her husband *could* have said if he had doubts about marrying. The account read like a story but did not fit Labov's model, therefore I used Riessman's Performative / Dialogic Analysis.   By recognising that by dramatising her story while crying rather than telling it in a more detached way, Cindy's appeal for commonality was plain.   I felt she was seeking empathy and comfort. After her husband had told her he was bisexual he kept a weekly liaison with a man, which he explained was just for sex: *'there is no relationship, there's no emotion, it's just sex.'* Cindy began to dread this particular day and later perceived a relationship was developing.

I asked Cindy how this had affected her.

Dialogic/ Performance Analysis Riessman (2008).

C   *I have been completely (p) devastated.*
  (long pause) close *to tears*

R   It's been really hard for you

Cindy is tearful, deeply troubled and pauses as she struggles to find a word,
then describes being "completely devastated."   Sensing her distress I respond
with empathy

<u>The worst experience ever</u>

Yes (p) it's been the worst thing I've
ever experienced (very emotional)
on so many levels Christine, for so many reasons
erm, it's like grief, about losing something that
you felt very secure with you know erm,

(Cindy:4/L165-171)

Cindy explains tearfully it is the worst experience she has ever had, emphasising the impact is on many different levels and for many reasons. Using my name, she invites me to understand her experience which she likens to grief and the loss of a presence that gave her comfort and security.

<u>Similarities with bereavement</u>

my Dad died a few years ago and the feeling
is the same (Mm) *the loss and that bereaved*
feeling is very much, it's very similar to that
it's occurred to me you know, erm and …

(Cindy:4-5/L172-175)

Cindy's tone of voice sounded younger in this stanza, recalling her father as a comforting and secure presence in her life, whose death had evoked feelings of bereavement and loss which she was again re-living during the present threat to her marriage. At intervals her comment *'you know'* suggests I might understand how emotional she is feeling.

<u>A changed future</u>

it's devastating to realise that everything you
thought was going to be the case
you know, the future has now changed

(Cindy:4-5/L176-178)

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Cindy contemplates the possible consequences of all she had anticipated and hoped for in the future, not working out. This prospect for her was <u>devastating</u>. Repeating this word three times she acknowledges the future will be different to the one she had envisaged, and might be frightening and stressful.

R   what you could count on

I paraphrase briefly what I assumed Cindy had been meaning which she confirms,

<u>Questioning</u>

C   *Yes, and it's very hard personally erm because*
it's made me question everything about my
judgement. It makes me question everything
about being a woman. It's made me question
everything about marriage and why we did it

(Cindy:5/L179-184)

Cindy finds it hard now she questions her judgement and seems to wonder what part she played in the marital dilemma she faces. She questions her femininity, womanhood and her appearance and whether she might have done things differently. She reflects on the past and questions everything about marriage and their reasons for marrying.

<u>Anger with her husband</u>

and anger at <u>him</u> for getting us into this
when he could at any point have said
'I'm not sure that this is right' you know
and so it's just been completely devastating
- and I don't know what's going to happen

(Cindy:5/L185-189)

Cindy's mood changed in the last stanza and she sounded angry with her husband. She had said *they* married but later changed the emphasis to suggest her husband was the one who initiated the marriage. Using the hypothetical narrative, Cindy points out that *he* could have said at any time if he was unsure that he should marry. My

silent thoughts were that twenty years earlier her young husband may not have thought or known he was unsure of his sexuality, or like many, believed any doubts would disappear once he was married. She summarised the whole situation as *'completely devastating'* besides not knowing what lies ahead and whether the marriage will survive. Cindy had pulled up her chair and leaned towards me speaking emotionally in a pleading tone. She used my name to emphasise the different levels and reasons that made this dilemma such a painful experience, drawing similarities with the death of her father and experiencing the same feelings of insecurity. Cindy had been examining her judgement about being a woman and marriage itself and wondering if she had been sufficiently feminine, or could have been a better wife. (Buxton, 2006:322). When we met Cindy was seeking a solution to remain married. She was the only participant who had briefly wondered about a mixed-orientation marriage, but had later predicted they might end up living like housemates or separated. Cindy had travelled a long distance for the interview and I found her quest to save her marriage very moving. I responded with empathy and understanding to her story but as the researcher my role was constrained and I felt relieved to know she was receiving counselling near home.

4.2.3 Bill's story

The emotional impact of living with an enigma

Bill was invited to consider what he hopes for – he made a joke then became serious. Choosing *'peace',* he wanted to feel calm, without anxiety, or free from relentless sensations of running. Now divorced, he was still unable to relax. He presented with nervous energy and was striving to recover a normal life having been manipulated and cheated because he trusted unwisely. Bill spoke quickly with passion mingling irony with humour. He worried about the future, which at times looked bleak and lonely, which suggested at other times it might appear brighter. He could not make sense of his emotions. Bill's interview was one of the longer ones, with his detailed story being told at an increasing pace which transferred some of the sensations of running to me. We both appreciated a pause halfway through the interview to avoid fatigue. Bill enjoys language and concluded with an ironic question, asking if disaster had a happy ending, to which there is no positive response.

Dialogic/ Performance Analysis Riessman (2008).

Exploring his hopes

R   Now looking ahead to the future, what would you like
      it to hold for you? what would you wish is there?

B   *A winning lottery ticket. Hmmm…   Peace*

R   Peace of mind?

B   *Just peace* (Mm) *to be able to stop for five minutes*

I invite Bill to anticipate what he would hope for in the future.   He opened with a joke about a lottery ticket then became serious. He chose 'peace' to be able to stop running, as he had felt when he was anxious and 'on alert' trying to please his wife.

On alert

B   *I'm still running.   I'm not running away from anything,*
      but I'm still going like a little hamster on the treadmill, all of
      the time, all of the time, constantly going, and …. that still
      wakes me up at night

Fearing the future

   And em, I don't know what the future holds.
   At times I think it's very bleak and very empty and very lonely.
   I am very poor since this has completely destroyed me financially

Disorientation

   That erm, emotionally …(sighing).   I haven't a clue.
   I said to someone does disaster have a happy ending?
   but it doesn't.

                                                                    (Bill:17L653-668)

Bill's story confirms how constant anxiety still troubles him. During his marriage he was 'on alert' trying to please his wife's changing whims, until it took a toll of his health. Bill lost so much through his marriage, that after several years and still loving her, he reasoned he had to divorce to save his sanity. The last straw was when she wanted to bring a woman to live with her, displacing Bill. For the first time he refused her and immediately became ill. Afterwards the residual symptoms of anxiety lasted for months. The metaphor of the hamster running in its wheel captures the continual running sensations Bill continued to experience. His money was spent and his emotions are in turmoil. He sighs seeming lost and lowers his head. His voice assumed a desperate edge as he recalled the worst times when only thoughts of his son, described as *'a diamond'* had prevented him lying on the railway.

4.3 Telling others and their response

4.3.1 Claude's account

Some participants like Claude found it extremely hard to tell others and despite his erudition, he did not have the language and found it embarrassing. A friend of his wife who had known of her plan to leave before Claude was told, retorted *'Grow up and get over it'* while his own male friends had responded with empathy and support.

<div align="right">(Claude:10/L400)</div>

4.3.2 Aged parents

Aged parents were often not told immediately in case they suffered a heart attack or a stroke. When parents enjoyed friendly relations with their son or daughter's GLB partner some couples did not wish their separation to affect this and facilitated the contact, even driving their ex-partner to visit.

<u>4.3.3 Cindy - Telling friends</u>

Cindy said if she told her girlfriends that her husband was having an affair with a woman they would have totally understood, but to say he was having a relationship with a man would be *'off the radar because in 2011 it is not normal conversation.'* Cindy dramatized the typical scene:

'Oh yes, by the way my husband is having an affair with a man' (Turning to me)
'You don't <u>do</u> that – you don't have that kind of conversation'.

<div align="right">(Cindy:15/L600-603)</div>

This may have changed in recent years with greater acceptance of diversity but it is still startling that marriages are ending for this reason.

<u>4.3.4 Carol's story</u>

Unwilling to be pushed into a closet or to see herself as a victim, Carol found that repeating her story helped her to begin to accept what had happened. She enacted her mental process of scanning people in public places, on buses or the railways while wondering *'are <u>you</u> gay? or are you'?* Having overcome a longstanding disability, Carol was confident the strength this had required would serve her well in future because her survival would depend upon herself. Using a brisk optimistic tone, Carol explained how she had needed to tell her story repeatedly to assimilate the reality of her husband's unexpected disclosure. She had never thought he would put their long marriage at risk, which she had believed was happy. Labov's analysis could have been used but Becker's reflexive awareness illuminates her nautical metaphors and the burden of destructive 'all-consuming' feelings Carol had been carrying.

    R   So did you tell your friends eventually and relations?

<div align="center"><u>Reflexive Awareness – Becker (1999).</u></div>

    C   *I <u>refused</u> to be put in the closet by what he's done*
                and therefore I tell people and even sometimes

(smiling) inappropriate people perhaps because

I just feel it's so <u>all-consuming</u>

but it's been all-consuming that I've

been carrying this around with me that

I could hardly have a conversation with someone

without explaining to them at any kind of length,

so, I've told people - and I actually believe that

is the thing to do because with me a lot of it was

completely not being able to believe that this had

happened because it was so unexpected,

(Carol: 8/9 L345-354)

Carol recognised the problems secrecy can lead to and was determined to talk and tell, partly because finding out was too overwhelming to accept immediately, and possibly to explain or even to expose her husband's behaviour. The shocking news saturated her thoughts and the urge to tell people was irresistible, (even inappropriate people). Describing twice how it was *'all consuming'* suggests it had enveloped Carol or even consumed her, as a monstrous creature might. Talking helped Carol to process what her husband had disclosed, because she had never anticipated such a possibility.   Her nautical metaphor represents marriage as a voyage involving effort to survive the elements: *'you're in for the long haul aren't you? I mean you don't think of marriage going that long with the thought that the minute somebody's a bit unhappy you drop them.'*

(Carol:5/L186-188)

Carol spoke quickly and urgently describing the shocking news as *all-consuming,* suggesting it was absorbing her mental processes and excluding all other concerns. It took time for her to register what had happened, therefore repeating the story to others had helped. She believed, that acting on the persistent need to talk, for her, had been the right thing to do *"because with me a lot of it was not being able to believe this has happened."* Carol looked beyond what society expected owing to the pressing need to articulate her feelings and told people her story. The resourcefulness and self-reliance of Carol was heartening to witness, and although

finding out had been a colossal shock, she was taking control of her life and being pro-active to survive the tempest.

4.4 Stories about the ending of a marriage

<u>4.4.1 Avril's story</u>

Labov's l972 method suits Avril's story which follows the regular story form and shows each type of clause comprising the story. Beginning with Avril feeling happy on her birthday and telling her husband about her former boyfriend, it ends with her husband turning the tables by disclosing his deceit during many years of marriage, leaving Avril feeling deflated and dumped. From early in her marriage Avril described feeling that '*something was not quite right'* because her husband, although kind, lacked emotional depth, but having no previous sexual experience, which was not unusual in the l960's, she was unsure what this was. The couple initially shared work interests but drifted apart after her husband trained in business consultancy. Feeling lonely, distanced by his new occupation and its jargon Avril renewed her friendship with her first boyfriend. 'Phone calls took place over six months before they met again thirty-seven years after her parents had ended their friendship for religious differences. Soon after meeting their relationship began. Unwilling to lie, Avril told her husband, whereupon he immediately disclosed he was bisexual and about to leave her for a man, having continued covert same-sex relationships for years. In this story Avril's husband decided to divorce.   Avril concluded later she and the children had been *'used as a cover'* to conceal her husband's other life.

<u>Analysis according to Labov (l972).</u>

I was happy	AB
it was my birthday	OR
and everything was going well	EV
he (V) wanted to find	OR
I was having a relationship	OR
he said, 'you are having an affair'	EV
so, I told him the whole story	CA
I told him how I first met J	OR

V's reaction was "how romantic"	EV
I've been wanting to tell you I'm bisexual	CA
I've been having a relationship with L for years	RE

(Avril: 9/L357-376)

Avril was in a happy mood on her birthday and in the first evaluation clause she recognised feeling life was good but was aware V was seeking evidence of an affair. When challenged Avril told him everything from how aged twenty she first met J as a student. V's comment *'how romantic'* sounds inappropriate and possibly sarcastic. He then swiftly countered suddenly disclosing he was bisexual, having deceived her for years. His intention was to divorce Avril to marry a man with whom he had been in a long relationship. Avril described being shocked by her husband's revelation, her happiness drained and she felt *'dumped'*. Retrospectively she intuited that V had been waiting for her to provide him with a reason to leave. Avril believed he had hidden behind the family using them as a cover for his liaisons. He said if she had not told him about her recent relationship he would probably not have disclosed his sexuality, but now the marriage was over. The disclosure of his infidelity in retaliation appeared calculated to leave Avril shocked and hurt. In the genre of a literary romance, (Frye, 1957) Avril's story comes full circle after negotiating many obstacles and remaining faithful in a long marriage lacking emotional depth and sexual satisfaction to a deceitful husband. Upon following her own convictions Avril achieved a happier ending. Meeting J again and rekindling their youthful feelings confirmed to her what had been missing during the marriage.

He is now my new partner,	AB
after I met him I realised what was missing	CA
I didn't realise at that point V was gay.	EV
Something in our relationship just wasn't there	EV
Thinking back I'm not sure we ever had it.	RE

(Avril:9/L343-347)

Avril had been married for 27 years before the marriage ended for reasons associated with her husband's sexuality. For some participants the decision to end the marriage was made by their gay or bisexual spouse, as in this case. Avril's story was told in a

detailed manner with many departures from the main strand, to include her parents' threat to cut her off if she left home aged twenty to join J, and the later effects on her children. Angry about being pressed to divorce quickly so that her husband could marry his partner, Avril said she would agree to it, but when *she* was ready.

4.4.2 Anna's story

Anna's story describes her suspicion that her spouse was gay, but whenever she had asked him directly he always denied it. Confirmation that her husband was gay came some years after her divorce and a long marriage. His habitual denial appears to have led to a change in his personality and serious harm for Anna. Her story recounts the immediate consequences of ending the marriage in which she suspects her husband of poisoning her. Although she had believed her husband loved and accepted her, once married it became clear her husband was not interested in sex and wanted little contact with their children. He had provided a home and Anna had tolerated his distancing, racism, bad temper and growing criticism of herself until the children grew up before broaching the subject of divorce. This he stridently opposed, saying *'you are my wife, you will not divorce me'.* Anna realised she was being used as a convenience and regarded as a chattel. Within three days she became seriously ill. A relative urged her to immediately consult her doctor who took many tests. Recuperation with her own relatives after the doctor's diagnosis of serious internal organ damage, took several months, but determined to pursue divorce, Anna later returned home. Her husband by then was acting even more strangely and addressed her as a biblical figure. She suspected he was struggling with his impulses. When Anna asked if she had done something to upset him he replied '*no, it's something I have done'* but explained no further. In a quiet aside to me, stepping outside the story, Anna confided she had a good idea what he had done, which was troubling him. She continued with an account of a night when her husband's odd behaviour alarmed her and she went to bed early. During the night Anna was disturbed hearing cutlery being rattled downstairs. Describing sounds of knives clashing Anna physically shook and her voice trembled; words tumbled out inaudibly as she relived her panic and being frozen with fear, was unable to access help. Anna used the hypothetical narrative to describe that if she *could* have called the police, they could have seen what was going on, but illustrated both with her

words and her physical posture that she was too emotional and afraid at the time. At dawn Anna finally left her home and sought legal help.

Analysis of Anna's story using Riessman's Dialogic-Performative Analysis is a description and a dramatic re-enactment of a terrifying experience Anna lived through one night soon after she returned home following her illness. She reflects using the hypothetical narrative, and her words, her physical posture and delivery recall her terror at the time which prevented her from risking venturing outside the bedroom door. Anna's dramatic presentation of her ordeal drew me into the scene and momentarily I held my breath. She speaks of her thoughts and emotions at the time and physically shook with fear before me as she re-lived the terrifying scene.

<u>Riessman's dialogical / performative method</u>

R. So, you got up did you?

A. *No, I could hear him wandering about*
 I was .... too frightened to. I shook
 Why I didn't call the Police ..... ?
 If I called the Police there and then .... and they
 could 'ave come and witness what was going on ....
 they could have seen it, but I was absolutely....

Anna sets the scene, speaking hesitantly and too scared to move having heard clashing of cutlery and her husband wandering around. She questions or berates herself for not calling the Police, and using the hypothetical narrative, imagines a different ending when the Police could have witnessed what was happening, for which she might have been hoping, but she was trembling and hardly able to speak.

(become emotional when I get...) I freaked.... you
can't even think, you are just like .... it was just
like in a horror film, you just can't think what would happen next.
I wasn't going to go outside not with him lurking around
... erm so the next mornin'.....

(Anna: 8/L316-326)

Anna tells the audience she was overcome by emotion and cannot find the words being totally overwhelmed and not able to think. Anna then depersonalises and changes from *you* are just like, to *it* was just like in a horror film, meaning it is unimaginable, there is no sense to it. The only thing Anna is certain of it not to go outside the door while her husband is 'lurking around' which suggests fearful possibilities. The powerful telling of this story in which Anna transmitted to me her fear of what might happen next was enabled both in what she said and how it was expressed as well as what she was unable to vocalise. Plainly the experience induced such fear in Anna that the only action she was clear about was to remain locked away from her husband. In re-telling the event she again struggled to find words to describe her emotions. At first light next day Anna left home, contacted the police and a refuge. By her own efforts, helped by a criminal lawyer, she won her divorce but her ordeal did not end there. For two years after divorce Anna had been intimidated and followed by paid bullies until the law had intervened. Shortly after this her daughter told Anna that her father had confirmed that *'yes, he was gay'*. Anna believed her husband's lifelong denial of his sexuality had led to the weird behaviour which frightened her. She assumed he had received mandatory treatment to be able to accept his sexuality. Anna felt 'used as a background' to conceal the hidden side of her husband. She believed that if he had trusted her she could have coped with the gay issue, but not with the psychotic behaviour.

<div align="center">Analysed according to Labov (l972)</div>

I could have accepted he's gay (p)	AB
perfectly alright with me	EV
you know we could have sorted it out	CA
when I said it isn't working	OR
but he couldn't accept it himself	EV
that's what I find so (p) odd.	RE

<div align="right">(Anna:12/L485-489)</div>

Reflecting on past events, Anna revisited the possibility of a different ending or a tentative hope. She repeatedly used the hypothetical narrative to say that she *could*

have accepted her husband being gay, then strengthens her argument by asserting it would have been perfectly alright with her. Looking directly at me, Anna made her point *'you know we could have sorted it out'*, contemplating an opportunity lost when she had told her husband their marriage was not working out, but he still refused to disclose the truth. The revealing evaluation clause is that he could not accept (it) himself.

The stories that Avril and Anna told about finally discovering the truth came towards the end of their interviews. Anna had married a man whom she had thought had loved her for herself. In time she came to understand it was to provide the appropriate setting for him to appear as the straight and respected family man he had really wanted to be instead of being gay which probably caused cognitive dissonance. The husbands of Avril and Angela were not their first choice. Both had followed previous relationships that ended sadly for the women. Angela, Avril and Anna had all conformed in different ways to comply with parental, religious or their husbands' expectations for marriage. At the same time their husbands had used their wives to conceal their sexuality and project their own preferred images.

Summary

Stories analysed in this chapter have examined the experiences of finding out the sexuality of their partner, the emotional impact on the straight spouse, also telling others and their response, and the ending of a marriage. Using different methods of narrative analysis I aimed to show that for each participant the experience and the sense they made of it differed. For some participants finding out was abrupt, shocking and 'out of the blue,' while others described recognising signs and suspicions that made sense once the marriage had ended. 'Devastating' was a commonly used adjective to convey the sense of shock and desperation, with life as they knew it, having been crushed or destroyed. When the truth was revealed five straight wives felt they had 'been used.' The three men had all felt 'disrespected and/or humiliated' by unexpected disclosure. The stories were narrated by both women and men and analysed using Labov's (l972) structural model, when stories conformed to his theory. Riessman's Dialogic / Performative model was used for extracts which read like a story but did not conform to Labov's structure. The latter

captured contextual details and the personal feelings dramatised by the teller and included my input as the audience in a co-production. Reflexive Awareness (Becker 1999) helped to identify key themes and metaphor in story content and the impact of the telling of a story on both the narrator and myself as the audience, in which the contextual details and personal feelings dramatised by the teller added texture and depth and took account of the teller's purpose and the presence of the audience.

Lead into Chapter 5

Chapter 5 follows in which I draw conclusions gathered from the comparisons between the present study and earlier ones and include new findings reported by the participants which may lead to future research concerning the perceptions of straight husbands whose wives or partners leave them for same-sex relationships, besides the views and perceptions of their children.

CHAPTER 5   DISCUSSION

5. Introduction

In this thesis I have presented the analysis of the experiences of eight heterosexual women and three heterosexual men who found out that they were married to a partner whose sexual orientation was different to what they had believed. From initially sorting the interview accounts into Typologies (Chapter 3) I employed a pluralistic narrative analysis approach to explore the narratives occurring within them (Chapter 4). Throughout, I have aimed to consider and identify my impact as the researcher on the way the narratives were recounted, listened to and heard. This means that I have acknowledged my role in eliciting and analysing the data and have considered how the relationship I have formed with each participant during the interviews may have impacted on the content and nature of the stories told. I sought to keep the narratives intact as far as possible to minimise imposing unintended meanings and significance.

5.1 Theoretical interpretations and implications of the meanings

In this chapter I discuss the theoretical interpretations that can be brought to the Findings as well as the implications of the meanings of these Findings for those whose partners leave them for same-sex relationships now and for the services developed to support them. This chapter also discusses the limitations of the existing study and suggests avenues for further research arising from this study. The chapter closes with a final reflection on my role and experience of conducting this research.

5.1.1 Three typologies

As Wolf (l982) and Gochros (l982) had found, the participants in the present study were unique individuals with varied backgrounds for whom generalising would be inappropriate. Having studied the whole narratives and guided by Lieblich et al, (1998) and Murray, (2008) three typologies of marriage were discerned in the interview accounts. Three marriages were described as deficient from the start

(Typology A). Four marriages began well but deteriorated and ended (Typology B), and four long-term marriages which had been considered happy and contented, ended abruptly and traumatically (Typology C). Gochros (l982) had found five types of marriages, ranging from the Ideal American Dream, through varied marriages, neither good nor bad, to those seriously flawed. A similarity with Gochros' study was that most women in the present study believed they had experienced less conflict than if their husband had left them for a woman. One participant in the present study explained she did not upset herself on this account because if her husband had wanted a man, no woman would be good enough. Gochros' participants had reported consulting their ministers of religion and sometimes a teacher; however, the participants in this study did not discuss personal issues with religious leaders or teachers, and most did not confide in their work colleagues. This suggests perhaps that religion and sex in America are topics more open to public view, and politicised whereas personal matters in Britain appear more likely to remain private, although this may also be a reflection of the sample of participants recruited to this study. In what follows I draw on a number of theories in the literature studied concerning mixed-orientation marriages to discuss the key themes identified in the present study.

5.1.2 Sexuality defied prediction

Findings in the current study that bisexual husbands had similar positive attributes as heterosexual men, such as kindness, sensitivity, pleasant appearance, humour and charm, making sexuality difficult to predict, were also identified by Hays and Samuels (l989). In their study American women noted the men were less 'sexist' and supported women's rights. In the studies by Gochros (1982), and Hays and Samuels (1989) participants had married for love and not to change their partner's sexual orientation, if it was known. Similarly all the participants in the present study had married for these reasons expecting a monogamous marriage. The four American wives in the l989 study and one woman and one man in the present study, who were aware of their prospective spouses' earlier same-sex relationships, believed their behaviour would change.

5.1.3 Finding out their partner is not heterosexual

In both the present study and Hays and Samuels' (1989) research the straight spouses felt surprised, shocked or traumatised when they found out that their partner was not heterosexual. However, many wives in both studies had some prior concerns having noticed repeated clues which they did not understand at the time but which made sense retrospectively. Wives in the present study who had noticed puzzling signs had often chosen to ignore them if the possible outcome appeared too threatening to contemplate. This was particularly so if they felt vulnerable for other reasons at the time. In these situations it was still a shock to have their fears or suspicions eventually confirmed. In the present study and in those of Gochros (l982) and Hays and Samuels (1989) most of the participants discovered the truth over time. This supports Gochros' theory that disclosure is often not a single major event but *'a process of repeated events, 'disclosures' over time, often taking many years'.* (Gochros, 1982:57). Gochros believed that no single factor except the husband's degree of empathy and concern for his wife determined her reactions to disclosure. (Gochros, 1985). In the present study two wives asked their husbands directly if they were gay. This was denied several times by one husband who disclosed he was gay thirty years later. The other husband confirmed he was gay, having given his wife many broad hints, which fitted Gochros' theory of disclosure being a repeated process of discovery, often for years. Another wife in the present study who had noticed personal chemistry between her husband and a male colleague for some years during the marriage, eventually challenged her spouse directly and learned the whole story. Two men and four wives found out through unexpected and shocking disclosures by their spouses. Before marriage one woman had disclosed her earlier relationship with a woman to her fiancé and a stranger wrote to a bride shortly before her wedding exposing her fiancés double life.   After the initial shock of finding out, wives in the present study experienced feeling totally alone, unsure who to tell or where to seek support. In Gochros' dissertation wives reported experiencing, isolation, stigma, cognitive confusion and dissonance, feelings which some considered worse than the actual disclosure of homosexuality. (Gochros, 1982). Many were reluctant to seek support from their families fearing criticism for having married a gay man.

5.1.4 Awareness of sexuality and denial before disclosure

In the current study of eleven participants, seven husbands and two wives had been aware or suspected they were bisexual before marriage, but only one woman disclosed this before marriage.   In Hays & Samuel's study (1989) six husbands had known their sexuality before marriage, six discovered this after marriage and six did not tell their wives when they knew. For these American wives the criteria for a strong marriage included open communication, husbands self-identifying as bisexual, the wife having opportunities for extra marital relations and, a sexual relationship continuing within the marriage.   Three wives were confident their marriages would last, based on openness and honesty including their husbands' commitment, advocated by Buxton, (2004). However, only two marriages survived (Hays & Samuels 1989).   Hays & Samuels (1989) reported that when their participants had challenged their husbands, many men initially denied their sexuality before eventually disclosing while other wives found out in various ways. Most wives said that they would not have married had they known before marriage. (Hays & Samuels, 1989).   However, some of the wives quoted in Gochros' dissertation believed that their marriages to bisexual men had in several ways been happier than those of many women they knew married to heterosexual men (Gochros, 1982:133). In the present study the wives' main complaints included poor communication, sexual deprivation, physical withdrawal and distancing which were similar to the criticisms of Hays and Samuels' participants who had cited the same but in addition experienced their husbands' mood swings and abuse. Post-disclosure all except one husband in the Hays & Samuels' study wanted the marriage to continue but their wives' reactions differed. Some were relieved by knowing the truth while others experienced anger, disgust and confusion. Fourteen wives who had not known before marriage felt deeply shocked and hurt; however when they realised there had also been an *emotional* attachment, they experienced renewed anger and grief (Hays & Samuels (1989:92).   In the present study two wives briefly considered the possibility of remaining married but their husbands chose to leave, so all the couples in this study finally separated.

5.1.5 Emotional effects on the straight spouse

This section comprises subthemes which are discussed in reference to existing studies. Broken Trust damaged three of the couples' relationships in the present study. Upon disclosure most heterosexual wives and husbands felt shocked and hurt. Those in longer marriages, who believed they were happy were stunned and traumatised. Describing this unanticipated disclosure as *'devastating'*, anxiety about the future followed.   Intentional deceit was construed as *'utter betrayal'* leaving one husband feeling emotionally cut off and *'just existing'*.   Three participants immediately became physically ill with symptoms of acute stress. Nine were treated for depression of which three contemplated suicide.   Gochros reported wives in her study had appetite and sleep disturbances with 50% seriously depressed and 15 being suicidal at one point (Gochros, 1982:88). In the present study two wives who did not feel deceived were supportive towards their husbands because the men had already confided in them.   Hays & Samuels (l989) reported that after disclosure while still married, many of the wives had extra-marital relationships with heterosexual men, encouraged by some husbands which some of the wives resented. It was reported that most wives attempted to renegotiate the contract, allowing for homosexual activity (Gochros, 1982:114).   *She concluded 'happier wives had husbands who were less active homosexually or who had impersonal encounters not involving love'* (Gochros, 1982:121).   In the present study these compromises were not considered; participants did not engage in heterosexual relationships until sufficient time had elapsed since separation or divorce and they felt sufficiently recovered and none of the wives or husbands agreed to homosexual activity to preserve their marriages.   Three wives doubted they could trust again and questioned their own judgement. Unlike the participants in Hays & Samuels' study the straight wives and straight husbands in the current study chose not to work on the marriage after disclosure, and separated.   This may have been owing to a lack of specific marital support in Britain. At the time mixed-orientation marriage may still have been considered unacceptable. The usual expectation was that the couple would separate and divorce. In current American society with awareness of possible alternatives, committed couples could work on their mixed-orientation marriages, supported by specialist counsellors negotiating agreed boundaries for the marriage to continue based on mutual honesty and openness (Kays, Yarhouse & Ripley, 2014);

(Kort, 2015). Recent research has shown that these mixed-orientation relationships can survive longer than was thought, with average durations of 14 and 22 years recorded. (Jordal, 2011; Zimmerman, 2013). These differences suggest some American participants were willing to relax their personal constructs to allow flexibility in their marital contracts whereas the participants in the present study adhered to perceived cultural norms (Kelly, 1955).

5.l.6 Content and Context of disclosure

Gochros observed how the content and context of finding out made a lasting impression on the straight wives in her l982 thesis. She postulated negative and positive constellations of disclosure in which the care and sensitivity of the husband towards his wife made a crucial difference in how disclosure was perceived and could influence the trajectory of the relationship (Gochros, l982:67). Even a negative disclosure could be viewed more positively when accompanied by genuine sensitivity and concern for the wife.   In the present study this was clearly demonstrated in the stories of two wives. Carol's husband handed a thoughtful letter to his wife explaining he had been concerned to understand his sexuality and had engaged in recent same-sex activity to find out. She read that he had always loved her deeply and did not wish to hurt her. It was still a shock to read this from the person who meant most to her in the world. Celia's husband came home early and before finally leaving the house, announced without preamble or sensitivity towards his unsuspecting wife, that for the past two years he had been frequenting mens' saunas and having unprotected sex, whereupon she collapsed feeling stunned and distraught. Carol, although shocked, could look back and recall with gratitude their happier times and raising a lovely family. The marriage had been happy but the news was so unexpected that she panicked and banged her head when telling the children later. Cognitive confusion, (Gochros, 1982) understood as conflicting thoughts experienced while evaluating her options, might explain her uncharacteristic reaction.   Celia's husband's unfeeling account of experimentation and risk announced without regret or apology ruined his wife's good memories of earlier years, rendering them less believable. Although she still loved her husband, Celia felt disgusted by his behaviour. Traumatic stress symptoms caused insomnia, intrusive images, waves of anger and a deliberate aversion to any reference to sex.

5.1.7 Wives reactions to finding out and Crisis Theory

Gochros' unpublished dissertation: When Husbands come out of the Closet: A Study of the Consequences for Their Wives (1982) aimed to gain insight into wives' reactions upon discovering their spouses' sexuality, along with the problems that the wives had faced and what helped them cope with the immediate, interim and long term consequences.   The study's objective was to advance social work practice. Gochros also wished to determine whether this problem was a crisis, according to Crisis Theory (Golan, 1978).   This describes the effect of a crisis for a person or a group and involves five components: the event, the vulnerable state, the precipitating facts, a stage of active crisis and the stage of reintegration or resolution.   An opportunity for growth is likely, and as the crisis subsides, resolution may occur.   To be adaptive three phases are required. 1) Accurate cognition of the problem and the event. 2) Acceptance and release of associated feelings. 3) Development of new coping skills for the new situation.   These are essential for effective adaptation. Gochros concluded that all except three participants in her study, met Golan's criteria (Gochros 1982).   Applying Crisis Theory to findings in the present study confirmed all the participants recognised what had happened and the situation they faced. Following disclosure, most were shocked and hurt. Many had felt vulnerable, becoming depressed and anxious about change. Seeking counselling support, telling their story, externalising emotions and questioning their judgement, they achieved a level of acceptance and daily coping. This intermediate stage lasted longest, before reintegration and adjustment.   Reintegration varied with some studying for new qualifications, developing former interests or making new relationships. Most of the participants in the present study appeared to have been crisis-prone, although none had referred to this as such.

5.1.8 Ambiguous Loss and religious communities

Hernandez and Wilson's (2007) study of Five Seventh Day Adventist Wives was undertaken to understand if mixed-orientation marriages represented a type of loss that is ambiguous, when there is no known clear cut ending to a relationship, according to the theory of Boss, (1999) discussed in Chapter 2. Ambiguous loss can result following a person's physical disappearance or presumed death with no visible

proof. It can also result when the person is physically present but otherwise absent as in Altzheimer's disease. Some people cannot achieve closure without final proof and deny this possibility, continuing to hope. According to the theory this may lead to hopelessness and ultimately, depression. Lack of resolution may block cognition, coping and stress management, and so freeze the grief process (Boss, l999). For participants in the present study there was usually an ending of the marriage once a partner's sexuality was disclosed when invariably the couple would separate. Once the truth was revealed loss and grief were not always prolonged. Angela was the exception in the present study. Mindful of religious teaching emphasised at home and at school that homosexuality was a lifestyle choice and divorce could not be countenanced, she became depressed in a sham marriage. After five years being sworn to silence and feeling used as a 'front,' support from the Straight Spouse Network enabled her to divorce. Angela recounted how London had broadened her experience of life and tolerance of difference, challenging many inherited and biased views *"which had been drummed into her."* Recognising her parents' strong influence, Angela concluded she would never return to the church. By divorcing she gained freedom to make her own decisions but there were also losses in relationships with family and her faith and with some ambiguity to be reconciled. Other participants did not mention religion or discuss personal matters with priests, pastors or teachers. Gochros observed that religion appeared significant to religious mixed-orientation couples who decided to remain living together while fearing censure from their church or faith groups. Faced with the choice of rejecting sin or remaining married triggered an integrity crisis for some, as reported by Hernandez & Wilson, (2007). This may highlight cultural differences between the English and American participants. The impact of religion in Britain appears to have declined so far as Christian traditions are concerned, with reduced congregations and rural churches closing. The findings of the present study may also be indicative of changes in culture so that religion has less influence in the 21st Century in Britain than it had in the 20th Century in America.

5.1.9 The emotional impact

Extracts in Chapter 4 illustrate how the straight spouses in the current study described finding out or being told their spouse was gay or leaving them. Three used

the metaphor of 'a bomb or bombshell' to convey the impact of abrupt disclosure which damaged or destroyed their future hopes, suggesting a scene of smouldering wreckage. The emotional response of wives and husbands in the present study whose partners had engaged in same-sex relationships varied according to whether they had suspected this, having noticed clues over time before challenging, or if it was totally unsuspected. Becky did not think it was possible for her husband to be gay, because as she said '*we were married*.' Upon hearing her husband's disclosure she remained calm. Feelings of shame later troubled her because after many years together, she had not realised, and believed people would assume she was stupid. This experience is not unique because many partners do not question their marital relationships, particularly if middle-aged, as Avril had also confirmed. Younger women are more likely to have higher expectations of physical satisfaction and appear better informed. However, the couple's friendship continued after separating and Becky credited counselling for changing her life. She became more open, less avoidant about addressing sensitive issues and immensely improved her general health.

5.2 The consequences of finding out

Isolation, stigma, loss, cognitive confusion and dissonance.
Upon disclosure participants in the current study expressed feeling alone, not knowing where to seek help and being unsure who to tell. Confusion, turmoil and feeling devastated followed the shock, being unsure how they would cope and how the future would unfold. Some became physically ill while others suffered insomnia and lost their appetite. Questions and unspoken fears were described and nine of the eleven participants became depressed with most receiving counselling. The wives in the present study did not express fear of abandonment, unlike Hays and Samuels' participants, but acknowledged change and prepared to cope with their grief, loss and issues of ageing, suggesting reserves of resilience. American wives reported fearing their husbands might abandon the family, implying dependency and younger children (Hays and Samuels, l989:93). Gochros emphasised the American wives' sense of isolation in the l980's following disclosure, as if they alone experienced this besides perceiving a threat of loss as their husbands withdrew their commitment to them (Gochros, 1982). In their distress some wives resorted to over-eating, drinking,

self-medicating and risk taking. These unfortunate remedies became a greater concern than the disclosure of homosexuality which had triggered this response. *'Some women sped down highways looking for an accident. Two aimed their cars at a bridge and changed their mind almost at the point of impact'* (Gochros, 1982:90.) Following a traumatic loss, this type of impulsive behaviour has been recorded as a symptom of suicide crisis syndrome (Orbach, 2003). Gochros also reported being surprised to hear accounts of the stigma that homosexual American husbands carried, reducing when the men came out publicly, but then frequently transferred to their wives. This accounted for further unhappiness together with the 'Sexism' and hurtful Liberation Ethic that was prevalent at the time which required wives to support the rights of the oppressed gay person so that however they responded to their husbands or to homosexuality, they were deemed to be at fault (Gochros, 1985). American wives reported counsellors in the l980's lacking empathy and therapists falsely claiming expert knowledge of the concerns of straight wives whose husbands or partners had begun same-sex relationships. Even some family members had assumed that women who married homosexual men were likely to be neurotic, passive-aggressive or homophobic. These assumptions caused many of the American women more anguish than the actual disclosure of homosexuality itself.

By the time women in England were becoming concerned about their marriages for similar reasons, many years had passed, and books on homosexuality which had previously been withdrawn from public circulation to avoid promoting non-heterosexuality, reappeared in libraries about the time when Civil Partnerships were legalised, shortly followed by Gay Marriage. Most wives in the present study thought they would have experienced more stress if their husband had left them for a woman, which would involve competition, whereas they could not compete with a man, which agreed broadly with the findings of Hays & Samuels, (l989: 93-4),

5.2.1 Different understandings about diversity

Most participants in the present study confided in their family, trusted friends or colleagues who listened without judging and were quietly supportive. Negative responses were reported by two participants in the current study who experienced older friends making hurtful comments suggesting, for example, that they 'had

turned their husbands gay.' Such comments ended the friendships. One husband in the present study was brusquely told by his wife's friend 'to grow up and get over it.' Many straight spouses across all the studies still cared for their gay or bisexual partners and resented others' critical remarks and assumptions that they would be pleased the marriage was over. In the present study the participants did not perceive their spouses as bad or wicked but were angry and hurt by their deception. Similarly, Gochros reported that '*the wives did not see their spouses as villains'* (Gochros, 1982); however, wives in her study were concerned about others' opinion of them having married a gay or bisexual spouse, fearing this might reflect unfavourably on them   (Gochros, 1982).   In the current study the wives were cautious who they told, considering it to be a private matter.   The three straight husbands confided in a few close friends or relatives. Elderly parents were often not told immediately for fear they might become ill with shock. Some gay spouses who were close their in-laws continued to visit them, often encouraged by their straight ex-wives to maintain the contact. Such issues support the wishes of straight spouses for knowledgeable counselling to be available to help couples to deal with their concerns and also to assist with family issues and associated complexities which are addressed by Buxton (2008). In the present study stigma was perceived by some participants from the ways that others responded once friends knew or were told when reactions were often mixed. Some were supportive and non-judgmental while others did not get in touch or include the couple socially, distancing themselves as if fearing being tainted by association. Bias also showed in the assumptions some made by attributing the husband's sexuality to a fault in his wife which the American wives had experienced in the l980's. Anna was asked what she did to turn her husband gay. Another former friend even laughed when told.   Beryl also had been asked a similar question which she felt was not only ignorant but needlessly cruel. Several friendships ended for similar reasons. Some wives observed that they would have received more understanding if they had been widowed. Counselling fitted the need of many straight spouses who wished to talk in a safe place and to have their feelings validated, which was confirmed as beneficial. None of the participants in the current study spoke of being stigmatised by therapists or clinicians, unlike some wives participating in the American studies in the l980s who often delayed telling relatives fearing criticism (Gochros,1985). Writing as a therapist who counselled many American women experiencing this dilemma Duffey found that the (frequently

gay male) therapist positioned the wife as 'the problem' and possibly '*the less interesting spouse'* Duffey (2006). Several wives in other studies resumed their education to ensure providing for themselves if they divorced. In the present study participants were still working except for one wife and one husband who had retired. An English wife approaching retirement who had anticipated leisure time with her husband had her hopes dashed and replaced with looming financial problems. Gochros'observations were that happier mixed-orientation marriages involved a non-heterosexual husband who remained committed to his wife and became involved in empathic problem solving (Gochros 1982). Gochros found that no wives divorced owing to homosexuality alone, but because other relationship issues were present, and wives coped with the needs of their bisexual husbands, given appropriate help (Gochros, 1985:112).

5.2.2 Loss and Grief

Many of the wives and two of the husbands in the present study still loved their gay or bisexual spouses although trust had been broken and they had been hurt. Some reported feeling deeply disillusioned after many years together. One wife said after a long marriage *'it is not like a bereavement, it is one'.* Remarks like *'we always suspected it'* or comments suggesting the straight partner is glad to be separating betrayed the thoughtless assumptions of others. Cindy spoke of her emotions about the prospect of separation being similar to those when her father died, involving a loss of security and greater uncertainty about the future. When she ran out of strategies, she consulted a counsellor who was supportive and helped her to prioritise and care for herself. Many American wives divorced husbands whom they still loved which might not have happened had they been offered better professional help (Gochros, 1985:112). Being unaware that their husband was homosexual resulted in many wives losing confidence in their own judgement. Several participants in the present study experienced this, and doubted their judgement, questioning why they had not been more aware. In the present study Cindy pondered whether she had not been sufficiently feminine, or if she had masculine attributes, or if she could have been a better wife. Similar doubts had been expressed by the American wives when their husbands disclosed (Gochros, 1985:109).

5.2.3 Cognitive confusion and Dissonance

These states were experienced in response to the revelations of deception and infidelity, particularly in cases where none had been suspected. The devastating knowledge that what had seemed safe and secure, was untrue and the future was precarious, overwhelmed the straight spouses until some grasp of reality was achieved, and sense made of the situation. Incredulity was the reaction of one straight wife in the current study who found it hard to believe or accept that her husband would leave a long happy marriage for someone he had met a few times. Telling her story repeatedly helped her to accept reality.   A participant in Hays & Samuel's study also reported telling repeatedly until she reached acceptance (Hays & Samuels, l989:95). These reactions might be explained by cognitive confusion and dissonance arising from the sudden and overwhelming overload of stress (Gochros 1985:110).   Cognitive dissonance occurs when principles and views that had guided a person are challenged by new contrary beliefs. Buxton reports that the resulting tension caused anxiety and troubled some religious participants in America who feared losing their moral compass or their belief system upon discovering their spouse's different sexuality, or subsequently experienced an identity crisis (Buxton, 2006:).   Gochros expands on cognitive dissonance, confusion, isolation, stigma and loss, which were all permeating themes in the wives' accounts (Gochros, 1982). The reciprocal and cumulative effect of these factors was serious. Each of the problems was created by and added to the others. For assertive American women cognitive confusion was as detrimental to their self-esteem as any of their husbands' behaviour (Gochros, 1982:123). Some women remained married knowing they could not make a rational decision while others left in order to survive the mental stress.   Religious conservatives were disquieted because their husbands no longer fitted the previous stereotypes of homosexuals and political liberals saw these changes affecting their own lives. The changed attitudes and behaviours of their husbands added to the wives' confusion. '*The men's new expressed identity as bisexuals no longer matched the wives' perceptions of their husbands,*' compounding the confusion (Gochros, 1982: 124-5).   In the present study thirty years later, there was not the same emphasis on political events and pressure groups affecting participants' marital relationships. The public behaviour of participants' husbands who had come out,

was not reported to have markedly changed. One participant whose husband had come out said her husband still had no idea who Peter Tatchell was.

5.2.4 Broken Trust and depression

The present study found that following disclosure by their partners, participants reported that broken trust damaged the couples' relationships. Participants in longer marriages who had believed they were happy, were stunned and traumatised by disclosure. Most described the abrupt and unexpected announcement as *'devastating'* leading to anxiety about their future. Intentional deceit was construed as *'utter betrayal'* by one husband who felt emotionally cut off and was *'just existing'*. Celia articulated being *'devastated, robbed, cheated and used, life was over.'* Two wives and one husband immediately became physically ill with symptoms of acute stress. Nine were treated for depression and three contemplated suicide. Most received counselling which they found beneficial and supportive. Only two wives in the present study did not feel deceived and were supportive towards their husbands who had previously confided in them. Gochros' research had also reported heterosexual wives being shocked and hurt. Many suffered appetite and sleep disturbances with 50% of the participants becoming severely depressed and 15 at risk of suicide at one point which the wives thought should have been referred sooner (Gochros, 1982:88). In the present study three participants had felt suicidal. Nine of the eleven participants were treated for depression. Ben relied on supportive friends and Anna was occupied with her quest to divorce.

5.2.5 Changes in relationships after disclosure

Post disclosure many of Hays & Samuel's participants had heterosexual relationships with other men, while still married with their husbands' consent and even encouragement, which some wives resented, considering it a ploy to dismiss the problem. Six wives felt they had compromised their values and beliefs about primacy relationships in order to remain married (Hays and Samuels 1989:88). The present study differed; the wives did not contemplate heterosexual relationships until time had elapsed since separation or divorce and they felt sufficiently recovered. Three doubted they could trust again and questioned their own judgement. The

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straight wives and straight husbands in the present study chose not to work on the marriage after disclosure and separated. This may have been owing to lack of specific marital counselling and because at the time mixed orientation marriage for most people would have been unfamiliar or considered unacceptable. In current American society with awareness of possible alternatives, committed couples can work on their mixed-orientation marriages, supported by specialist counsellors and negotiate boundaries for a continuation of the marriage based on mutual honesty and openness (Kays &Yarhouse 2010); (Kort, 2005). Research of Jordal (2011) and Zimmerman (2013) showed that these mixed-orientation marriages can and do survive in America. Marriages lasting for an average of 14.5 years for 14 couples and 22 years for 13 couples were shown in their studies. In the present study only one English husband who had left his wife wanted to return after his same-sex relationship ended. His wife already granted her decree nisi could not consider this but they retained a cordial relationship living separately. The other husbands in the study chose not to return and the couples separated. Hays & Samuels reported the reverse. All except one of the American husbands had hoped to return to the marriage (Hays and Samuels 1989). In the present study the wives of the three heterosexual male participants separated from their husbands to pursue relationships with women. Two husbands initiated divorce and the third will divorce when arrangements for the children are agreed. Also in the current study two wives considered continuing living with their husbands, but leading separate lives, however the men left to live with male partners. In the current study no participants expressed anger with homosexuality itself which agreed with Gochros' findings that participants generally had a better opinion of bisexuality than before they were aware of their husbands' sexuality, having had the opportunity to get to know more about bisexual men (Gochros l985:115). In the present study one wife felt strongly that non-heterosexuals should be open about their sexuality before marriage. Her advice to those about to marry was to ask their intended spouse directly and get the truth. She believed that for homosexual or bisexual men (or women) to marry heterosexual partners without first disclosing their different sexuality, was the most unkind thing they could do. Now that same-sex marriage is legal, both sides of the Atlantic, in time there may be less pressure to conform to heterocentric expectations. A participant e-mailed saying that her young gay relative was engaged to marry a lovely girl who had no knowledge of his sexuality. She feared that unsuspected

sadness awaited the couple which she had experienced, as cautioned by Nahas and Turley (1979).

5.2.6 Compassion, care and love for the absent spouse

Some straight English spouses expressed care and compassion retrospectively for their absent partners. This suggested feelings in common with some wives in the American study who had divorced their bisexual husbands while still loving them who later wondered whether the marriage had needed to end (Gochros, 1985:122). These wives had been surprised by the strength of the emotion they still felt years later. Some American wives had also been concerned by the extreme distress of their husbands at the time of their disclosure   In the present study wives who had been deceived and hurt were in time able to speak of having some care or love for their husbands and, in Anna's case, forgiveness, if an apology had been received. Angela did not excuse her husband's deception but conceded he may not have felt he had a choice at the time.   Three wives remained in contact with their former husbands and continued to meet for family occasions.   The straight husband with younger children continued his involvement as a parent. He cared for his wife but had learned not to trust her. Most believed their partner was not defined mainly by their sexuality and recalled their strengths and reasons for marrying them.

5.2.7 Fear of the future, ageing, loss and grief

The straight English spouses faced a changed future, possibly living alone, with those approaching retirement fearing ageing, illness and loneliness.   In the American studies issues of ageing for straight spouses were not addressed but in the current study, 50% were approaching or had passed retirement age. Women with older relatives or with children in education were conscious of the necessity to provide for them and have an income. The distress of straight spouses in longer marriages who had believed they were happy and settled was extreme. Many spoke of loss and grief, of both the relationship and their future. One wife said after 30 years it was truly a bereavement, which others did not understand. It was hard to take in the shocking facts immediately having trusted completely for many years, and expecting to end their lives together. Realising after separation they would be coping on their

own, some straight spouses initially felt isolated and unsupported and looked for guidance.   In contrast, other participants felt angry upon discovering their spouses' covert lives, which were often 'compartmentalised' for secrecy.   Five wives vocalised their feelings about 'being used' to conceal aspects of their husbands' behaviour.   The three male participants re-framed similar sentiments as 'being disrespected' and humiliated by their wives who left them.

Differences in the perceptions of men and women who had been left

5.2.8 Wives' perceptions of 'being used'

 These findings had not been anticipated nor did I find accounts in other literature although Gochros briefly mentions wives being apt to assume this following a gross violation in the marriage. The meaning and implications of 'being used' or 'disrespected' was specific to each individual. Five English wives in the present study were angry, not with homosexuality per se, but by 'being used' as a cover, a smokescreen, a front or a shield to conceal their husbands' hidden lives.   This conclusion clarified the wives' feelings about the marriage and their perceived personal worth which immediately reduced their self-esteem.   Beryl had noted countless cues and tolerated a platonic marriage for years but eventually challenged her husband and heard the whole story. After her rage subsided she learned more about the abuse and bias non-heterosexual men encountered, chiefly owing to public ignorance. Her anger then targeted homophobia itself and she supported many who were reeling with shock after discovering their partner's sexuality. Celia, married many years believed she had been used as a *'shield against his mother'.* Celia felt abused, not valued for herself but as *'a thing or offering for his mother'.* Despite divorcing, she acknowledged her feelings for him, saying '*you can't turn love off, like a tap'.*   Angela believed she was used as a *'convenience'* or a front for her husband to appear acceptable. Influences of religion and parental authority delayed her decision to end the years of secrecy, comfort eating and depression, and to divorce. Avril concluded the family was used to conceal her husband's serial infidelities with men for years. Anna said her husband denied his sexuality because he had so wanted to be straight.   She felt used as a background to support his preferred image, that of a typical family man (Goffman, 1956.) Fears of exposure

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and the strain of dissonance may have caused his psychological problems.

5.2.9 Husbands' perceptions of 'being disrespected'

The three straight husbands whose wives were in same-sex relationships described 'being disrespected'. Two husbands were deeply shocked and traumatised having not anticipated this. The third husband who was surprised rather than shocked, became angry when his wife's relationship was posted on public media before she had told him. Her sexuality did not concern Ben. Her infidelity, his humiliation online and introducing her new partner to his friends in his absence hurt the most. Bill had made his wife central to his life but found his trust abused, his savings spent and her girlfriend about to displace him. Bill 'drove' his divorce through, aware he still cared for his wife but knowing he could not remain sane married to an enigma. Claude was deeply wounded by his wife's unilateral decision to leave him for a woman and take their children. Prioritising the children's needs, he will relocate to maintain his support as their father.

5.3 Euphoria, when beginning new same-sex relationships

This topic was not anticipated but stories of the heady excitement and influence of their spouses' new relationships were recalled by 50% of participants in the present study. One gay husband returned to tell his former wife about the splendid new apartment he and his male partner had bought, oblivious that it would have been her wedding anniversary. Another wife increasingly stressed by her husband repeatedly staying with his new partner for a few days and then returning home, eventually helped him to decide to leave. A participant training as a counsellor had heard similar accounts of the euphoria and thoughtlessness of partners coming out *'acting like selfish teenagers'.* One man mimicked his wife saying *'I'm fine, so what's your problem?'* Interestingly, euphoria is identified as a symptom found in a study of the early stages of Intensive, Passionate, Romantic Love. (Fisher, Xu, Aron & Brown, 2016). This research proposed that romantic love is a natural (and often positive) addiction when reciprocated, but can be a harmful negative addiction otherwise. Neural tests and MRI scans have shown many symptoms of substance and non-

substance or behavioural addictions include <u>euphoria</u>.   For those interested please refer to (Appendix J).

5.4 Family matters; parental death and concern for children

In the present study the husbands of three wives did not come out until after their parents had died. This was not mentioned in other studies I examined.   Celia's mother-in-law had vetoed an artistic career for her son, fearing he might become gay. Anna's husband retired soon after his parents died and began a countryside project, distancing himself further from the family.   Carol considered it significant that her husband 'delayed any exploration of his sexuality until after his father died.' These wives believed their husbands would then have felt free of any constraints. American children in their teens and twenties were usually told about their father's sexuality by both parents or by their mother but younger children who were not told in time, sometimes heard through neighbours or experienced school bullying (Hays & Samuels 1989).   Mothers of older teenagers were concerned that their father's sexuality affected relationships with the opposite sex.   They advised their daughters to think carefully about marrying a non-heterosexual husband in view of their own experiences.   In the present study Cindy recalled her son missing the company of his old Dad and Celia's daughter had questioned the veracity of her childhood memories of her father.   Buxton discusses how the whole family is affected when a spouse comes out as non-heterosexual (Buxton, 2005).

5.5 Methodology used

This preliminary contemporary study offers a holistic and multi-dimensional view focused on the narratives and stories of the straight spouses who remain when their husbands or wives come out or leave them for a same-sex relationship.   I believed prioritising the participants' stories and views and the manner in which these were recounted would enable readers to follow the narratives and gain insight into their experiences.   A qualitative method was chosen and initially by following patterns and making comparisons, three typologies of marriage were identified.   From this point I adopted a pluralistic narrative analysis to examine the text and explicate the stories by applying different analytical models to reveal different layers and to

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illuminate multiple aspects of significance to the participants. This method differed from those adopted in earlier studies I had read concerning the straight spouses. Gochros was an exception in holding interviews, and noting the limitations of her research but like others did not include personal and epistemological reflexivity (Gochros, 1982). Wolf (l982), Hays & Samuels (l989) and Hernandez & Wilson (2007) used questionnaires or set specific questions to elicit written responses. Buxton employed mixed methods, with large cohorts of different sexual orientations, often augmented by an historic data base. Analysis frequently employed quantitative methods with results being generalised. Jordal (2011) and Zimmerman (2013) interviewed dyads together and individually by 'phone or Skype without meeting face to face. For my purposes it was important to listen to the individual accounts and to observe how participants presented themselves and took the opportunity to introduce new aspects and fresh insights which reflected important concerns for them. With such a sensitive topic, ethical considerations and reflexivity were given much thought. The participants were eager to recount their experiences and naturally volunteered richly textured accounts so few prepared questions were required. In some stories a flavour of the socio/political context entered the background, consistent with social constructionism. While sexuality and diversity issues continue to develop, it is hoped this study may give fresh snapshots of episodes in the lives of a range of straight spouses in England at the time and contribute to their validation and increased public understanding. Narrative analysis as a methodology was not used in the previous studies which suggests there might be a gap to fill using this approach with a long neglected topic.

5.6 Counselling providing a safe space

Two wives in the present study told of their husbands' insistence on total secrecy upon coming out. This had an adverse effect on both wives who stifled their need to talk until counselling provided a safe outlet for them to speak in confidence. Keeping appearances normal and monitoring what they said had been a strain which led to both becoming depressed. Counselling helped eight straight spouses in the current study who needed to talk in a safe place and to have their feelings validated, which they confirmed as beneficial. Becky later credited counselling for *'changing her life'*. She became more open, addressed residual shame issues and no longer avoids

confronting sensitive matters. Cindy was helped to prioritise her concerns and to care for herself. None of the participants in the current study complained of being stigmatised by therapists or clinicians, unlike some wives participating in the l980's American studies when some delayed telling their families fearing assumptions that they were passive-aggressive, neurotic or homophobic Gochros (1982). Gochros had reported American wives' awareness of 'sexism' and a hurtful Liberation Ethic which placed a straight wife in a double bind (Gochros 1985). Duffey, writing as a therapist who counselled many women experiencing this dilemma concluded from her client's accounts that some male therapists too readily positioned the wife as 'the problem' Duffey, (2006). With growing awareness of possible alternatives, committed couples in America may work on their mixed-orientation marriages, supported by specialist counsellors and negotiate boundaries for a continuation of the marriage based on mutual honesty and openness (Kays and Yarhouse 2010;2014); (Kort, 2005). Buxton (2004) had found that three years was the approximate duration of these marriages after disclosure, but the research of Jordal (2011) and Zimmerman (2013) provided contrary evidence of marriages lasting averages of 13.5 and 22 years. This could become a future development in Britain. In the present study only one English husband who had left his wife wanted to return after his same-sex relationship ended. The other husbands of straight wives in the study chose not to return and the couples separated. Hays and Samuels reported the reverse. All except one of these American husbands had hoped to return to the marriage (Hays & Samuels, 1989). In the present study the wives of three heterosexual male participants left their husbands to pursue relationships with women. Two of the husbands initiated divorce and the third will divorce when they agree arrangements for the children. The two straight wives who considered remaining with their husbands, but leading separate lives, also separated after their husbands chose to live with male partners. In the current study no participants expressed anger with homosexuality itself which agreed with Gochros' findings whose participants generally had a positive opinion of bisexuality, having become better informed after disclosure. Accounts of happier mixed-orientation marriages involved a non-heterosexual husband who remained committed to his wife and together became involved in empathic problem solving (Gochros,1982). In Gochros' experience no wives divorced owing to homosexuality alone, but because other relationship issues were present, and wives coped with the needs of bisexual

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husbands when given appropriate help (Gochros, 1985:112). Most of the American participants attempted to renegotiate the marital contract allowing for homosexual activity; if not willingly, grudgingly later (Gochros, 1982:114). No participants in the present study had considered this. Avril felt strongly that non-heterosexuals should be open about their sexuality before marriage. She advised those about to marry to ask their intended spouse directly and obtain the truth. Now that same-sex marriage is legal both sides of the Atlantic, given time there may be less pressure to conform to heterocentric expectations of family and society. A male therapist who worked with gay men married to heterosexual women, revised his earlier assumptions that a man may wish to come out, and came to understand the various reasons for gay men deciding to remain in their marriages. (Alessi, 2008). Often the positive bond these couples shared guided their decision. He quoted Buxton's study which found 59% of 32 married gay men sought counselling to cope with disclosure as compared to 16% of 456 married bisexual men, (Buxton, 2002). This suggested gay men struggled with greater dissonance than bisexual men. Leone emphasised that information volunteered about a spouse who is not present can only be partial (Leone, 2013). Schwartz counsels mixed orientation couples using Carter & McGoldrick's (1999) multi-contextual framework with trauma focused methods and believes the quality of the therapist's relationship with the client or clients is of central importance to achieving the best result (Schwartz, 2012).

5.6.1 Implications for Counselling Psychology Practice

This study has shown that in a dynamic climate of diversity it is important for counsellors and therapists to be aware of current thinking and to be informed about new developments that may be relevant to clients who self-identify in different ways. A knowledge of the specific issues that straight spouses are likely to present is important because these are still largely overlooked and assumptions made that their concerns are the same as those in heterosexual relationships. Once the reason for their separation or divorce is known, some feel different or are socially excluded. Following the shock of disclosure, often disorientation due to stress, loneliness or isolation can result. Being unsure who can be safely told means that the counsellor is often the first person they confide in, where there is a listening space to release emotions like anger, pain and loss, and the opportunity to work through these,

besides associated family issues. Some concerns may be similar to those of heterosexual couples but this study has shown that many differ. Upon disclosure many straight clients will experience disorientation, question their identity and integrity, even their sexuality, with possible challenges to their belief system (Buxton, 2004:325). This suggests that clients may need sensitive prompts to explain so that they do not leave the session feeling unheard. They may also fear being judged having heard how others have publicly discussed these situations. However, while the couples are still together they may hope to rescue the marriage so joint counselling may be appropriate. The findings of the present study suggest that clients could be traumatised, suffering cognitive confusion and experiencing the loss of their partner after many years together, so immediately their world appears devastated and they are seeking support. Most of the participants in this study experienced initial loneliness or isolation following the shock of disclosure and often disorientation owing to stress. Counsellors can encourage self-care to help the spouse remain positive while coping with decisions and anxieties about separation, divorce and legal matters. An important finding was that nine of the eleven participants in the current study experienced depression with three of them considering suicide before finding support. Some participants waited months for a counselling referral which could have been accessed sooner had the services been available. The initial devastating feelings of being alone, isolated and disorientated require an early response for reassurance and support before depression becomes established. It is also important for therapists to anticipate some of the particular dilemmas straight spouses are likely to present, which differ from concerns of heterosexual couples. For example personal integrity issues might arise involving adjusting the marital agreement or giving permission to a spouse, in the light of religious beliefs. Clients may question their own sexuality wondering if they are to blame or whether they are not sufficiently feminine or masculine, arising from a partner's same-sex infidelity. In future committed couples in Britain might choose to remain married, given appropriate help to maintain their mixed-orientation relationships with mutual agreement. Families with children and older couples who commit to each other, may not wish to separate, in which case specialist counsellor training may be required.

5.7 Limitations of the study

Owing to the original design of this study a recommended number of 11 participants were recruited. With the change of methodology this was found to be too many which had the effect of limiting the depth to be explored with each. Future research could focus in more detail on fewer participants and apply more than one type of narrative analysis to each story. This study conducted only one interview with each participant. A future study could be longitudinal in order to see what changes occur over time and enable further in-depth exploration of the experience of heterosexual men, who appeared to have a different perception of their wives' behaviour with concern about being disrespected or humiliated whereas the heterosexual wives had felt used and devalued as women.

5.8 Final reflections

Conducting this research has been a journey of the unexpected, with many turns in the road, and often lonely, but always interesting, certainly challenging, sometimes surprising and emotional, but one I travelled in hope. The perspective of the straight spouses who discovered their wives or husbands were not heterosexual as they had believed, kindled my interest in exploring a topic seldom aired this side of the Atlantic. Meeting the participants and hearing their stories was certainly a privilege and the choice of unstructured conversational interviews offered multi-dimensional views and rich narratives (Corbin & Morse, 2003). An approachable and interested stance was intended to reduce any power imbalance (Oakley, 1981). Participants were encouraged to talk freely about their experiences so that few prompts were required to interrupt the flow from finding out their spouse's sexuality to the emotional impact upon the straight partners, who they could tell, and where they found support. Some interviews were particularly emotional when participants came close to re-living an event which had been traumatic or terrifying. Such dramatic accounts drew me into the scene and evoked strong feelings. At these times I could have moved into counselling mode, however as the researcher, my emotions were contained while I empathised with their distress and indicated understanding. Concentrated listening as recommended by Chase, (2003) was particularly useful, noting the presentation, tone and language while following the stories. It surprised

me when a participant who had recounted being suicidal upon disclosure, later in the interview saw humour in a situation which relieved the desperation of her narrative and concluded on a calmer note. This demonstrated how swiftly mood may change, transported by thoughts and images. A few participants inserted a view regardless of relevance to what preceded or followed it, emphasising its significance. For all the participants, raising public awareness and support for straight partners was important. Wives considered it particularly demeaning to have to accept 'unreasonable behaviour' as grounds for divorce from bisexual husbands who were never faithful, and believed the law should change. One man considered all sexual relations outside marriage should be termed adulterous. Personal stories of different experiences were told, from reeling after hearing shocking revelations, to fearing physical harm, and desperation leading to comfort eating. All the participants experienced a form of loss: the loss of love or self-esteem, loss of a good or an unhappy marriage, or the loss of a desired future. Some losses led to positive outcomes, for example the loss of others' control and gaining the freedom to change. Upon starting this study I had anticipated that some participants might be so devastated by discovering their spouse's sexuality, they might not fully recover. Fortunately for most the contrary was true. Having taken time to adjust they became motivated to seek new areas of satisfaction with increased independence and renewed confidence, which testified to their resourcefulness, resilience and courage.

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Appendices for section B

Appendix A   Invitation to Participate

MY RESEARCH IS PART OF A PORTFOLIO OF WORK FOR THE

DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY AT

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON.

THE TITLE: <u>THE SILENT SPOUSE</u>

THE STUDY AIMS TO EXPLORE THE EXPERIENCE AND
UNDERSTANDING OF STRAIGHT SPOUSES, MALE OR FEMALE, WHOSE
HETEROSEXUAL MARRIAGES OR RELATIONSHIPS HAVE BEEN
AFFECTED, RENEGOTIATED OR ENDED WHEN THEY REALISED THEIR
PARTNER WAS GAY, LESBIAN OR BISEXUAL

If you are the straight spouse or the straight partner who, having lived in a
heterosexual relationship for at least five years and then experienced this situation,
and you would be willing to set aside some time to meet and tell your story in
confidence in a personal interview, please contact me by e-mail for further details:

██████████████

<u>The study is Supervised by Professor Nollaig Frost</u>

Personal details will be anonymised or changed so that you cannot be identified and
pseudonyms will replace participants' names. It would remain your right to change
your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time before the portfolio
is submitted. If you decide you would like to contribute to this research, printed
details of the study and its aims will be provided. If you have not previously spoken
openly about this subject, or like many straight spouses in this situation, you have
felt unrecognised, unseen and unheard, this could be <u>your</u> opportunity.   It is hoped
that by addressing these issues, public awareness may be raised and result in
recognition of the many silent spouses and their need for appropriate emotional
support.

Appendix B   Participant Information Sheet

Thank you for responding to my Invitation to Participate in my research study on The Silent Spouse. My name is Christine Paske and I am completing a doctoral Psychology Degree at City University London following twenty years working as a psychologist in the NHS.   I am interested in hearing the stories and views of heterosexual wives, husbands or partners who have been in a relationship or marriage for at least five years, and find out that their husband, wife or partner's sexuality is different to what they had believed.

The purpose of the research is to understand what is important to the straight spouses by listening to their stories about how they found out their partner's sexuality, the meaning of this for them and the effect on their lives. Hearing about who they told, where they found support and how they coped, besides the consequences for the straight partner personally and the effect on their relationship will all be of interest. It is an opportunity for heterosexual spouses to speak in confidence, recounting their own experiences and to reflect on what support or helpful changes they think might benefit the straight partners who remain.

Interviews will be held on City University London premises, lasting up to about an hour and a half in a suitably quiet room.   Every interview will be confidential in which your rights as participants are respected and you will not have to answer any questions you prefer not to. Participants will be asked to sign a consent form for the interviews to be digitally recorded for transcription and analysis later. Extracts from the transcripts will be analysed in my dissertation and in any later publication. In all cases participants' names will be replaced by pseudonyms and personal identifying details removed or changed to safeguard confidentiality. At any point a participant can change their mind and withdraw their consent without giving a reason. Access to all data will be limited to myself, my supervisor and the university examiners.

It is hoped that the interview will be a positive experience for the participants, some of whom may not have had the opportunity to speak openly about these matters. If you have any further questions please contact me: ███████████████████

Appendix C   Consent To Participate / Audio Recording

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed in my research study 'The Silent Spouse' on the premises of City University London.   It is important that you understand what this involves and that you agree to give your signed consent to have the interview or interviews, recorded.   The recordings will then be transcribed and analysed. The transcribed recordings of the interviews will have identifying details removed or changed and pseudonyms will be used throughout the analysis or in any later publication to protect your confidentiality. The consent forms are stored securely in a separate locked safe, not with the transcribed interviews.   The interviews will be conversational when you will be invited to tell your story about finding out your spouse or partner's sexuality is different to what you had believed and the meaning of this for you. During the interview you have the right not to answer any questions you prefer not to. You can request a pause in the recording or you can change your mind and withdraw your consent at any point, without giving a reason for your decision.

I agree to participate in the research concerning the straight spouse or partner who finds out their husband, wife or partner is not heterosexual as they had believed.

I agree to having the interview/s recorded for the purpose of transcription and subsequent analysis and understand personal details and names will be changed to protect my identity.   I agree to the publication of extracts from the transcripts providing my identity is protected.

Participant's name ……………………………………………………………

Participant's signature …………………………………. Date ……………

Researcher's name …………………………………………………………..

Researcher's signature …………………………………Date …………….

This research is conducted by Christine Paske   Email: ███████████████

      The study has received ethical approval from City University London

Appendix D   Resources Sheet

RESOURCE LIST FOR PARTICIPANTS

Title: The Silent Spouse

Thank you for taking part in this study.   It is much appreciated that you agreed to participate in a recorded interview to talk about your personal experiences.   I hope that telling your story in confidence has been a positive experience.

Sometimes people find that talking about personal and sensitive issues may give rise to upsetting feelings.   If this should happen to you, or at some future time you feel you would like to have further support or counselling, contact numbers and web sites of organisations offering these services are listed below.

British Psychological Society: Directory www.bps.org.uk

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy www.bacp.co.uk

Counselling across the UK   www.rscpp.co.uk

Mental Health Foundation www.mentalhealth.org.uk

National Health Direct   www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Mind   www.mind.org.uk

Samaritans available all hours   www.samaritans.org
Samaritans Helpline UK 24 hours daily 116 123   email; jo@samaritans.org.

Relate www.relate.org.uk links to regional offices

A Counselling Psychologists near where you live would be:

………………………………………………………………………..

If you would like to receive a copy of a summary of the results when the study is completed, please leave a contact address or email.

In a few days, if you wish, I will email you to make sure all is well.

If, in the meantime you have any further concerns or questions, please don't hesitate to contact me:

███████████████

    Researcher at City University London, EC1V OHB

Appendix E   Introducing The Participants

Avril – Always did what others wanted – lost her first love then married her parents' choice. She was deceived because he had known he was gay since l6.   Demanding parents and religion exerted pressure. Emotional depth was always missing in the marriage. After 28 years she met her first boyfriend again and now is happy. She felt used.

<div align="right">**Conformed to others' wishes**</div>

Angela – After a long relationship ended sadly for her she married as both religious families expected despite receiving a stranger's letter with allegations about her fiance's double life. They moved to England and in a more liberated climate she divorced after 5 unhappy years.

<div align="right">**Conformed to others' wishes**</div>

Anna – Now hopes to enjoy her retirement after frightening behaviour of husband who could not accept fact he was gay and allegedly tried to harm her and had her intimidated post divorce.   She believes she could have coped with the gay issue but not the frightening behaviour.

<div align="right">**Conformed to raise her family**</div>

Beryl – Married her first love, met at l9 and came to England.   She did not question years of celibate marriage but experienced depressive episodes. Her husband came out after 22 yrs.   She has health concerns and fears the future alone and ageing. Now on good terms with ex-husband and does not blame him but homophobia.

<div align="right">**Ignored telling signs**</div>

Bill – Feels battered and vulnerable, his controlling wife claimed his house and spent his savings. He is recovering and now sees he was far too trusting.   Becoming resilient and confident is taking time.   Divorce restored his freedom and autonomy.
`

<div align="right">**Avoided confrontation**</div>

Becky – Met her husband whose sensitivity and caring personality appealed to her. He persuaded her to marry but they avoided addressing sensitive issues and although very loving, it was more like a close friendship. He shared his doubts with Becky and came to recognise he was gay. They parted amicably and continue to meet. Counselling has helped to change Becky's life.

<div align="right">**Pretended all was well**</div>

<div align="right">continued….</div>

Ben – Found out his wife's affair by chance on the internet. He felt disrespected when his wife introduced her girl friend to neighbours in Ben's absence. Deceived and humiliated, he knows she has changed. Both became complacent. Ben was upset for 3 weeks but being pragmatic, looks the future. He has a new girlfriend but fears commitment.

Neglected communication

Celia – Felt rejected as a wife, lost confidence and survived many family health issues. She wanted to mend the marriage but he was reluctant. He told her in stark terms of his recent behaviour. She feels their many years together were a lie. Celia is *' not comfortable in her own skin'.* Following a partner's rejection, her husband wanted to return to Celia but the divorce is proceeding.

Disillusioned

Claude – An idealist, found the love of his life and lost it to a woman. He has two young children he raised while his wife worked abroad, but wonders if he will afford to move so frequently to keep in contact with them if his ex-wife's job changes as has been the case. He accepts the situation, wants harmony and to be included to parent his children.

Disillusioned

Cindy – Liked her life. They were seen as a brilliant couple. When she realised he was meeting a man regularly she struggled to find a way to remain married. The situation became too hard for Cindy to accept and led to depression. Her husband left to live with the other man.

Disillusioned

Carol – Trusted her husband completely and understood diversity. She had a traumatic reaction when he disclosed but being resilient, she determined to survive. Talking about what had happened helped her to accept it. She is concerned how her husband will manage because she was the organised partner. Carol has started a support group.

Disillusioned but resilient

Appendix F   Interview Schedule

Example of an Interview Schedule for The Silent Spouse with questions adapted to suit each participant who found out their partner was not heterosexual

Where would you feel able / or like / to begin?

Can you say how/when you first became aware of …..
        Had you noticed any previous signs, or had concerns?
        How did you feel at that time?
        When did you speak about this to your partner?
        How did he/she explain?

Are you able to describe your feelings/emotions when ….
        The effects: emotional, physical health

Who were you able to tell? your partner, family, friends?
        How did they respond – as you had hoped? otherwise
        Are there any particular instances you recall?
        that were helpful / disappointing /unhelpful

Where did you seek support – (from a GP or a counsellor or other)
        How did he/she respond?
        What did you find most helpful?
        Can you say how you coped generally?

At the time what did you feel your options were?
        Can you say what you were hoping for?
        Were you able to discuss the situation as a couple?
        What decisions arose at that time

Looking back, since then what is different for you now?
        What changes have taken place?
        Do you see anything differently now after (time)?
        On reflection what advice might you have for others in this position?
        How do you see the future?

What changes do you think might help straight spouses?
        How might increased public awareness help?
        What do you think about the availability of support services?

Prompts: Could you say a little more about that?
        And then what happened?

Appendix G This Is Your Story

An aide memoire to assist participants   "The Silent Spouse"

Finding out – sexual orientation

The emotional effects

Telling others and their response

What help/support was available

What you may have learned

Any changes you think would help straight spouses

Advice for other straight spouses

Appendix H   Transcription Notation

Adapted from Gail Jefferson's work as cited in Elliott (2005)

(p) pause

(long pause)

………….. trailing comment

-------------   inaudible speech

(   ) unclear talk

Wor-   sharp cut off

Word   underlined = spoken with emphasis

(laugh) (sigh) sound or gesture

Appendix I   **Content Analysis**

Topic	Number	Experienced or expressed by
Raised public awareness	10	All except Cindy who was too upset
Finding out was traumatic	9	Angela, Anna Avril, Beryl, Bill, Becky, Cindy, Claude, Celia,
Subsequent depression	9	Angela, Avril, Beryl, Bill Becky,Carol,Celia, Cindy, Claude
Communication poor	9	Anna, Avril, Angela, Ben, Beryl, Bill, Celia, Claude, Carol
Sex was unsatisfactory	8	Angela, Avril, Anna, Beryl, Bill, Ben, Becky, Celia
They ignored signs	8	Angela, Avril, Beryl, Becky, Ben, Cindy. Carol, Claude
Felt used / disrespected	8	Angela, Avril, Anna, Beryl, Celia, Bill, Ben, Claude
Early support centres	8	Angela, Avril, Anna, Becky Beryl, Bill, Carol Claude
Revision of divorce law	8	Angela, Avril, Beryl, Ben, Bill, Becky. Celia,Carol
Counselling was helpful	8	Angela, Beryl, Becky, Bill, Celia, Cindy ,Claude Carol
Controlled by partner	7	Anna, Angela, Avril, Beryl, Bill Cindy. Claude
They still cared for partner	7	Avril, Becky, Beryl, Celia, Cindy, Carol, Claude
Questioning their judgement	7	Angela, Avril, Bill, Becky, Beryl, Cindy, Carol
Anxiety re: future/ageing	7	Anna, Avril, Beryl, Bill, Celia, Claude, Cindy
Broken trust hurt most	7	Avril, Bill, Ben, Celia, Claude, Carol, Cindy
Concern about finance	6	Anna, Avril, Bill, Ben,Claude, Carol
Anger experienced	6	Anna, Avril, Beryl, Ben, Bill, Celia
Friends were supportive	5	Angela, Becky, Ben, Claude, Carol
Resilience shown	5	Anna, Becky, Ben, Carol, Cindy
Shame /embarrassment	4	Becky, Ben, Bill Claude
Friends were critical	4	Anna, Avril, Beryl, Claude
Jealous of the lover	3	Cindy, Carol, Claude
Partner wanted secrecy	3	Angela Avril, Cindy
Counsellor was uninformed	1	Avril
Exposed to harm	1	Anna

Wilkinson, S., (2008). In Smith, J.A. (ed.).
Qualitative Psychology 2nd ed. A Practical Guide to Research Methods

Appendix J   Euphoria

Euphoria is identified as a symptom found in a study of the early stages of Intensive, Passionate, Romantic Love. (Fisher, Xu, Aron and Brown, 2016).   The researchers have proposed that romantic love is a natural (and often positive) addiction when reciprocated, but can be a harmful negative addiction otherwise. It evolved from mammalian antecedents some 4 million years ago as a survival mechanism to encourage pair bonding. Neural tests and MRI scans have shown many symptoms of substance and non-substance or behavioural addictions include euphoria, craving, tolerance, emotional and physical dependence, withdrawal and relapse.   The experience of romantic love shares some neural reward pathways with various substance and behavioural addictions and may influence the drug and / or behavioural response. For those interested the full reference follows:

Fisher, H.E., Xu, X., Aron, A., & Brown, L.L. (2016). Intense, Passionate, Romantic Love: A Natural Addition? How The Fields That Investigate Romance and Substance Abuse can Inform Each Other.

Cognitive Science. Frontiers in Psychology. 7, 687.

SECTION C

Professional Practice

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Section C: case studies pages 176-208

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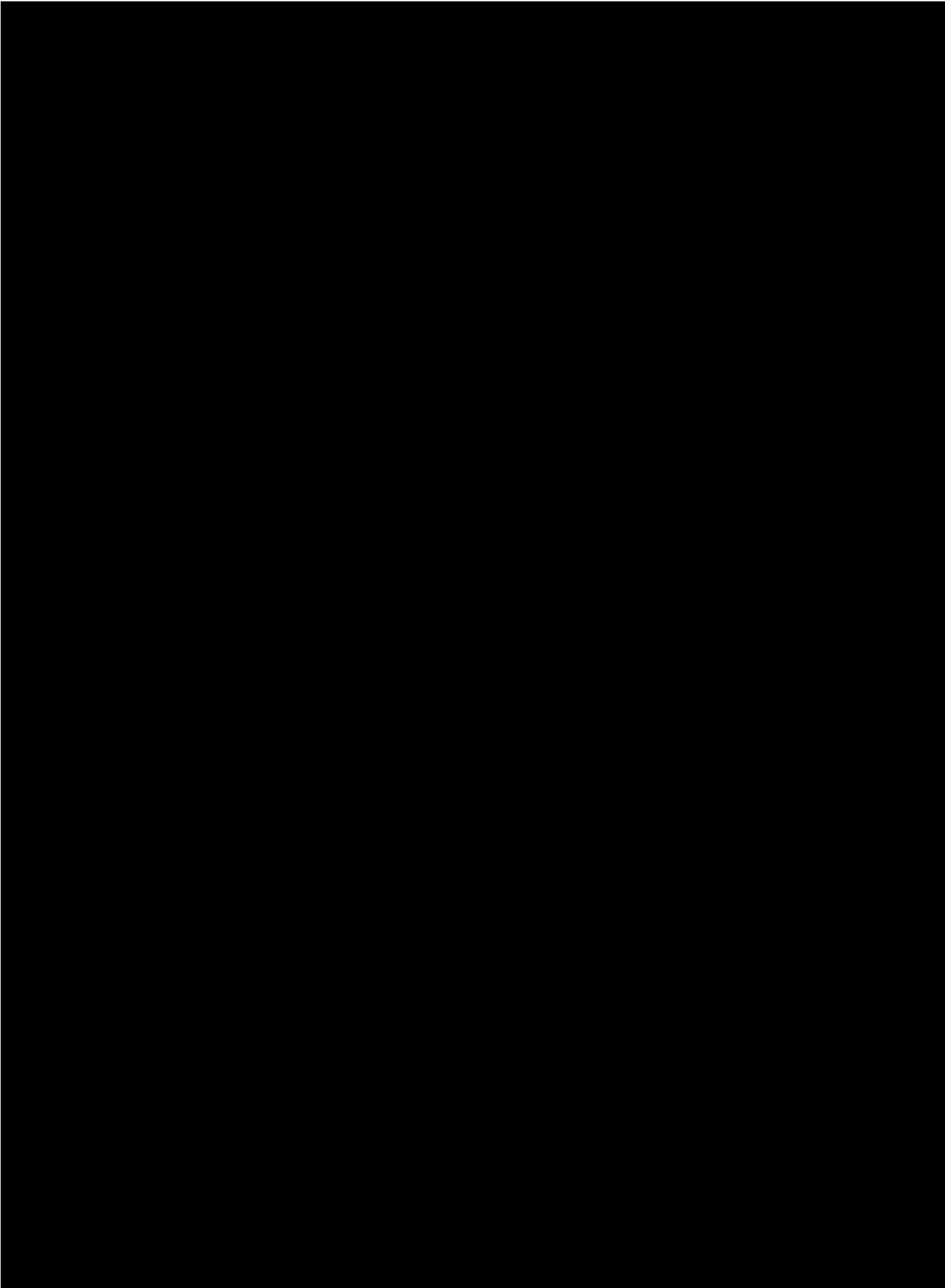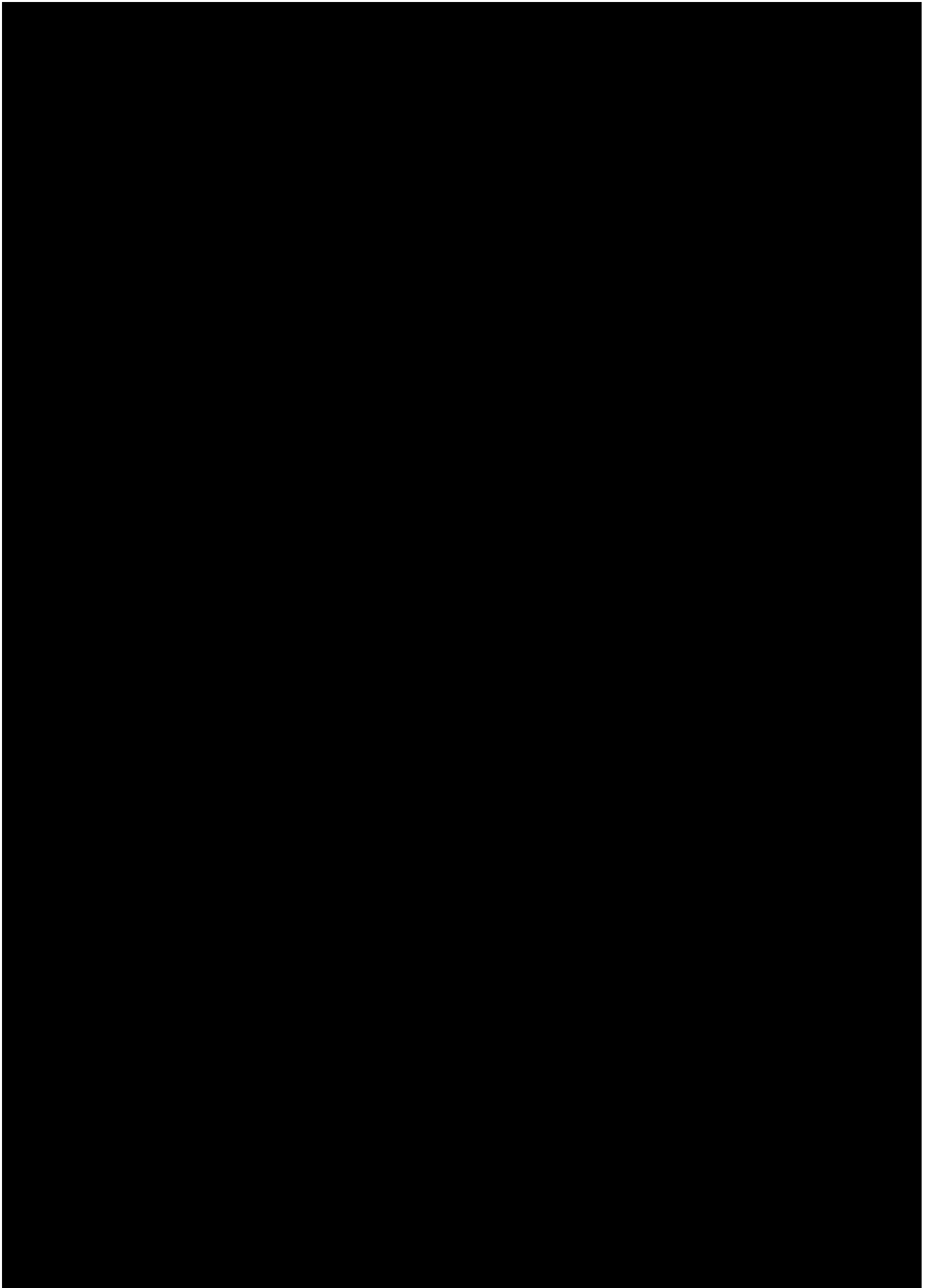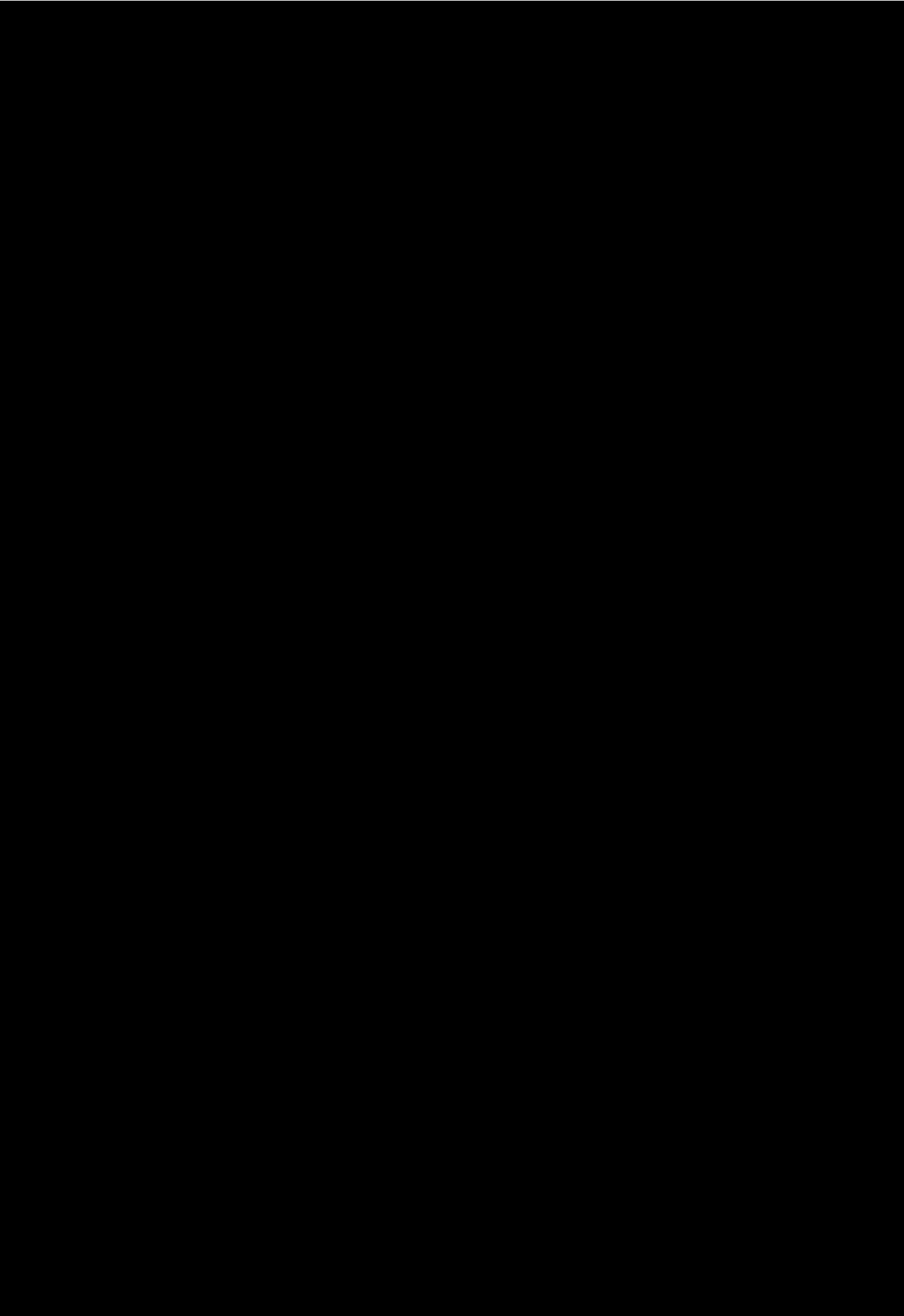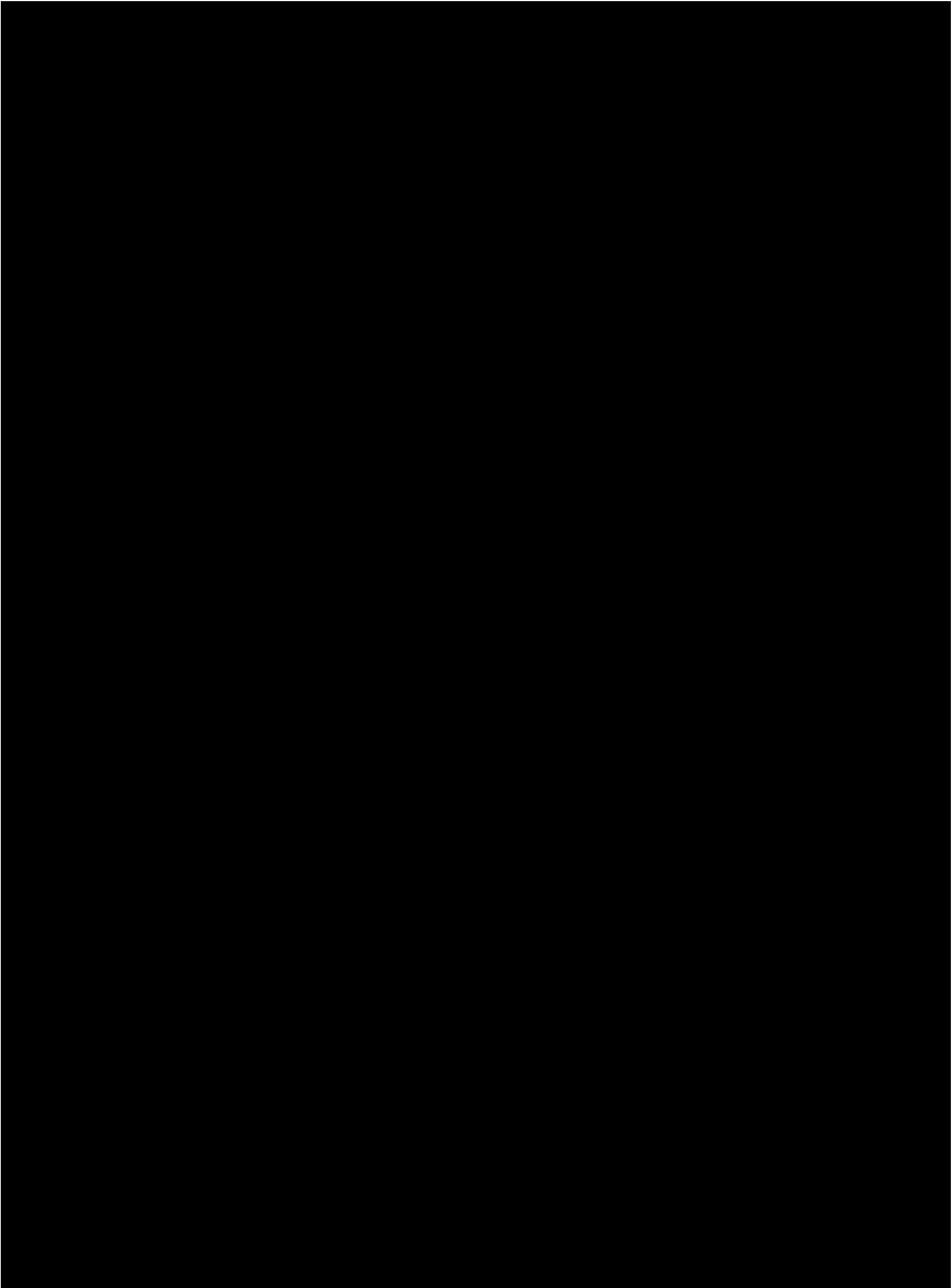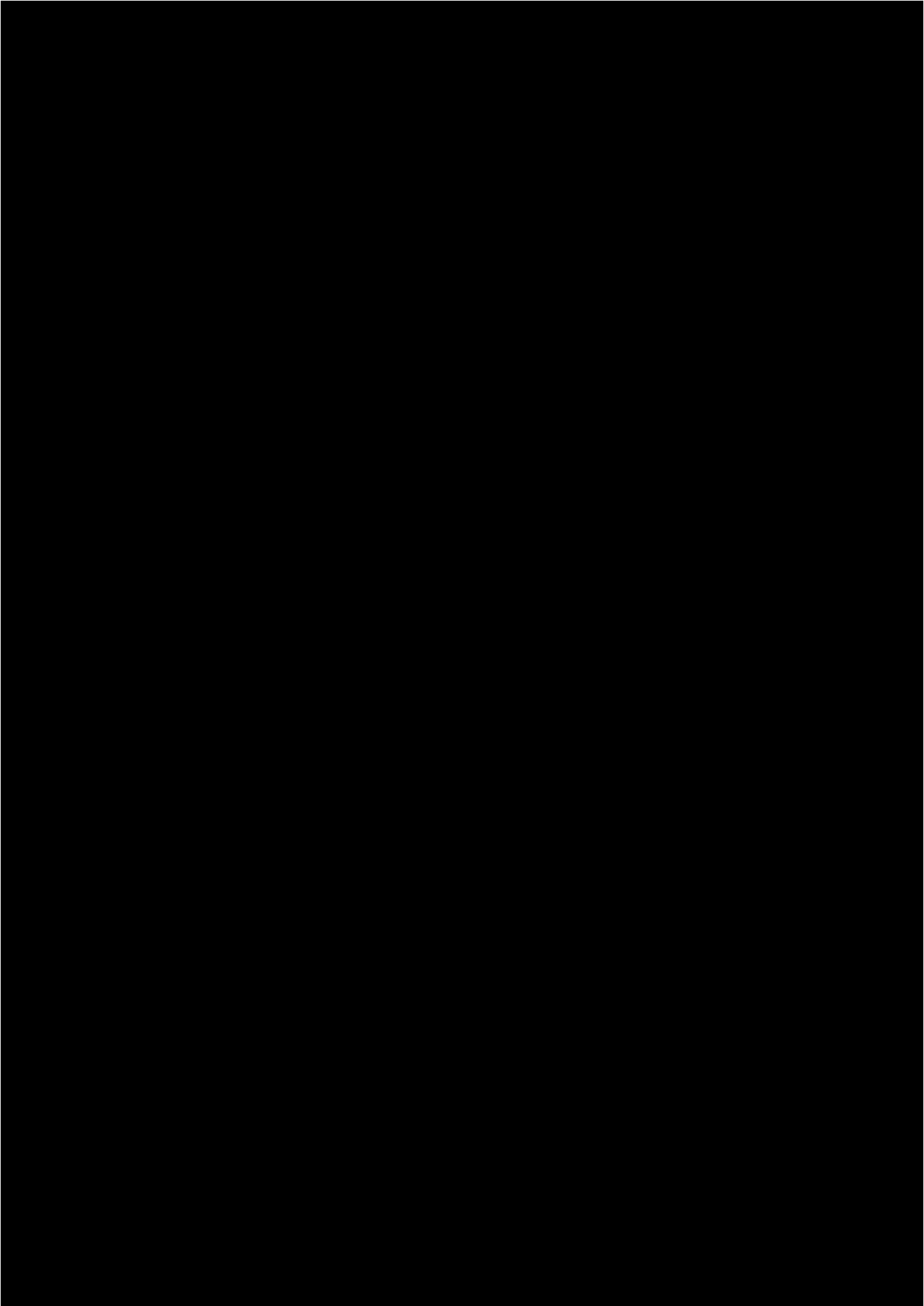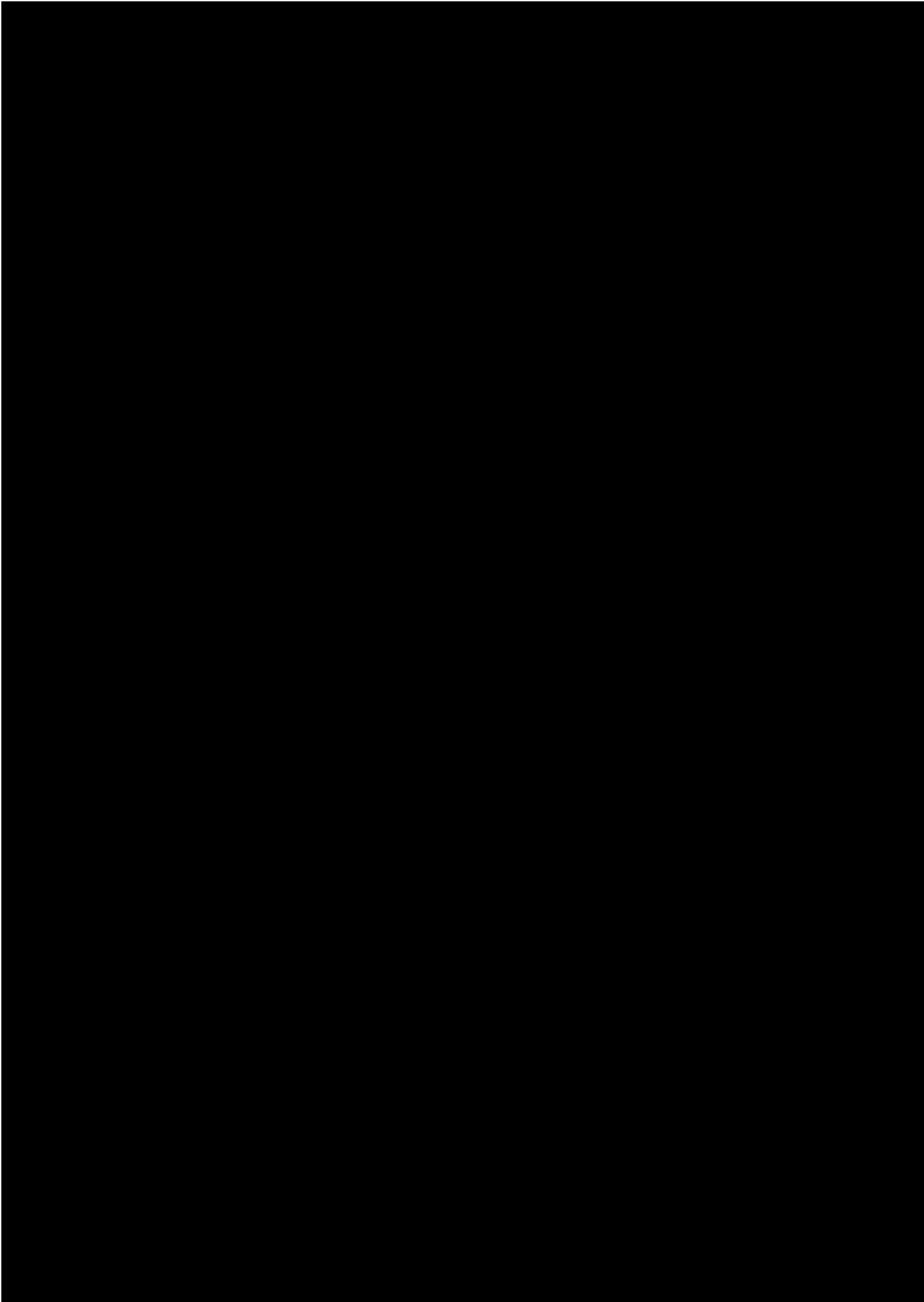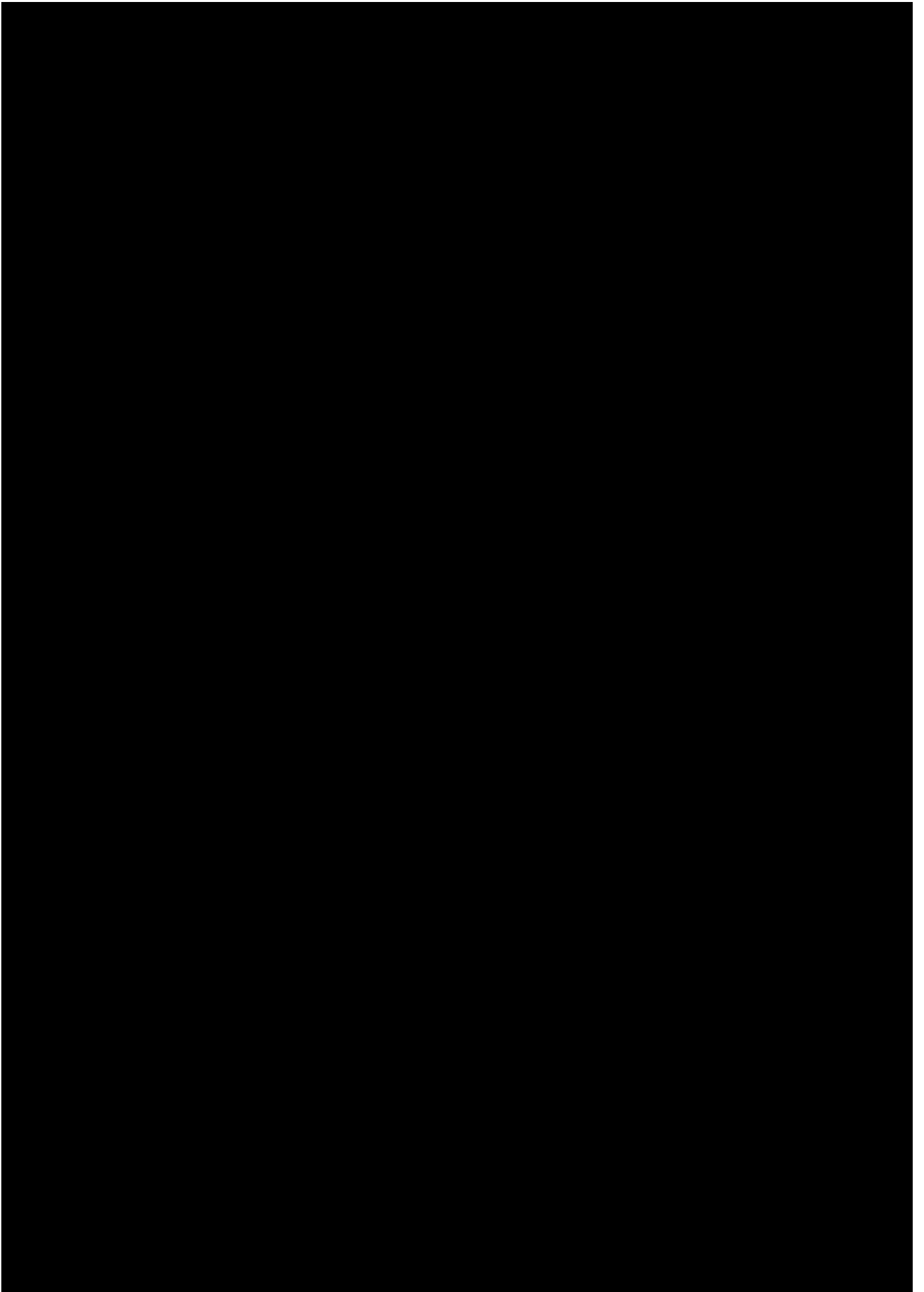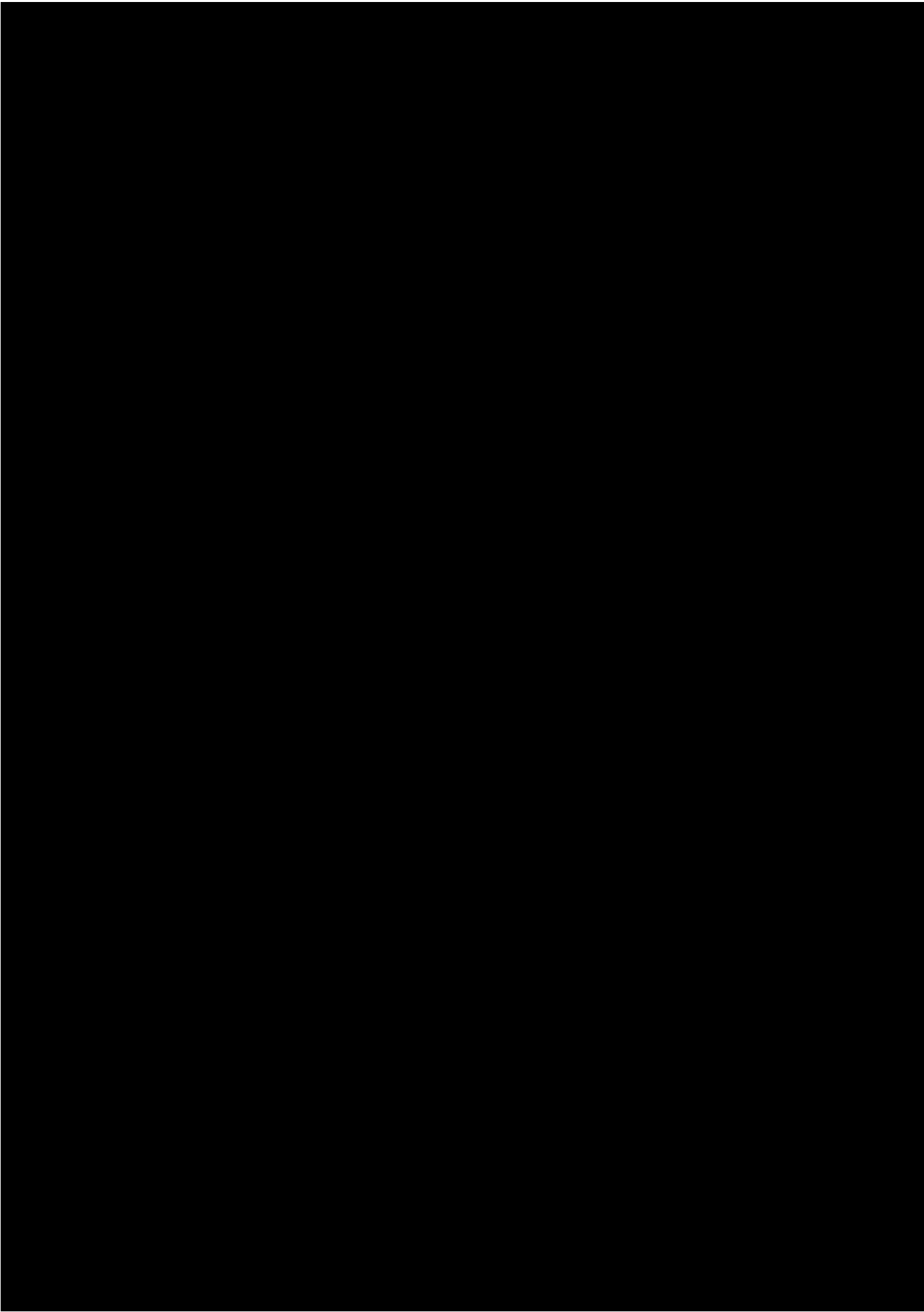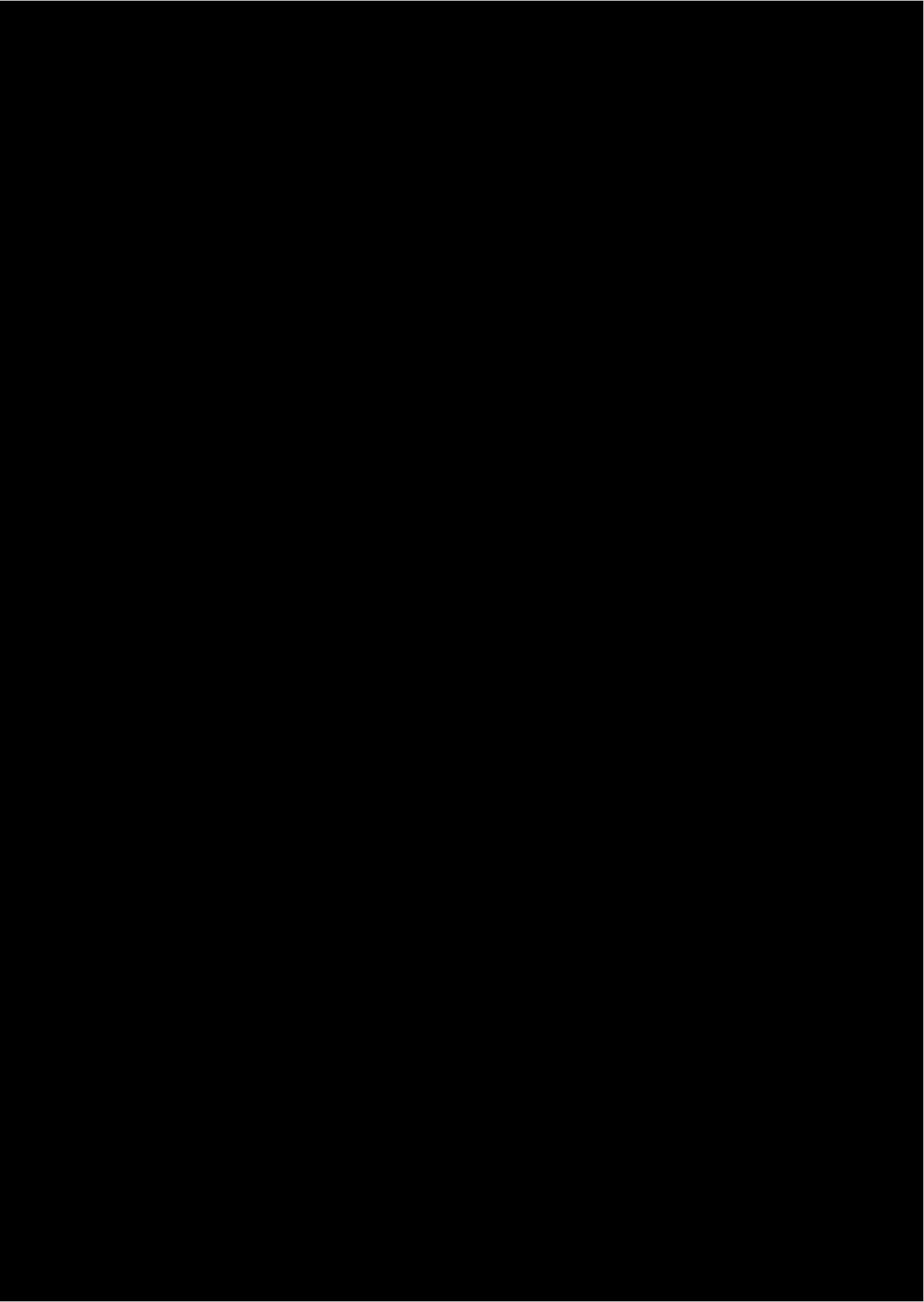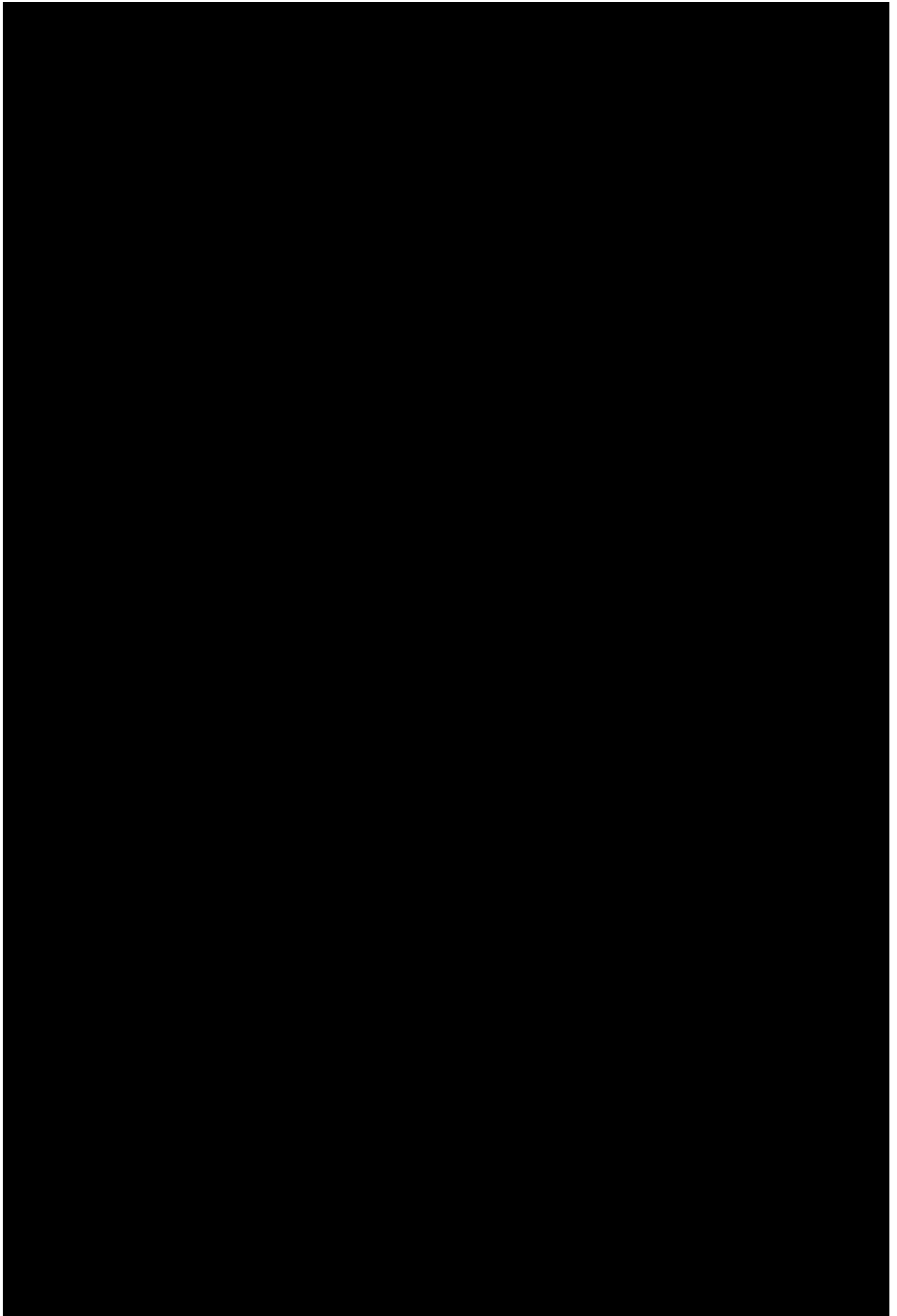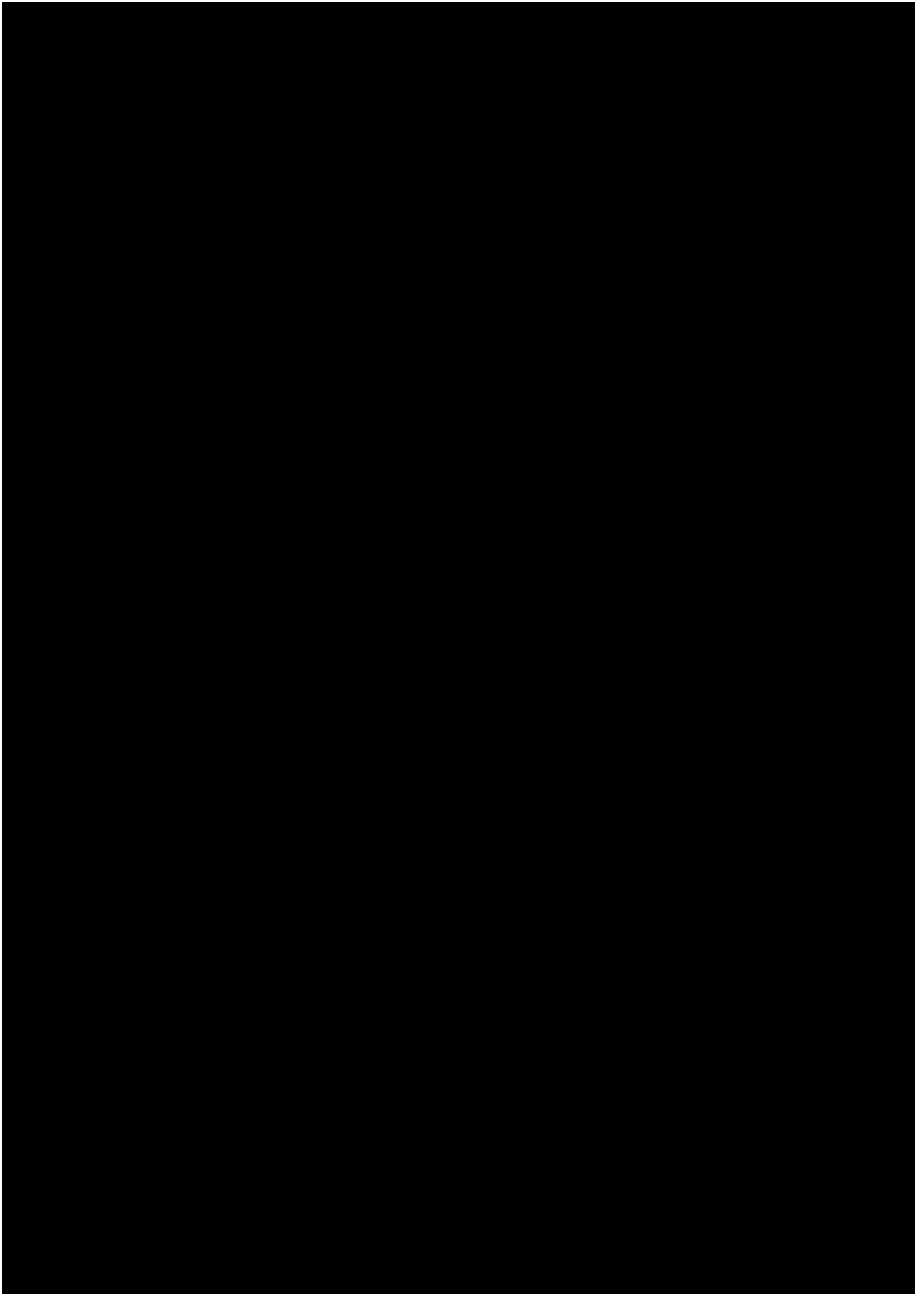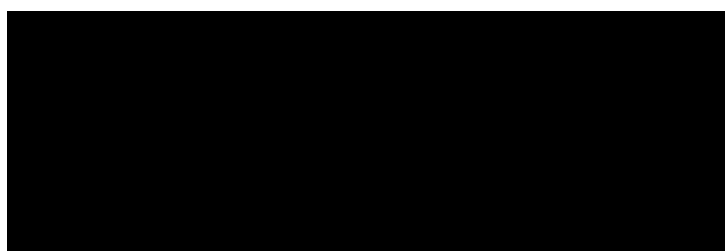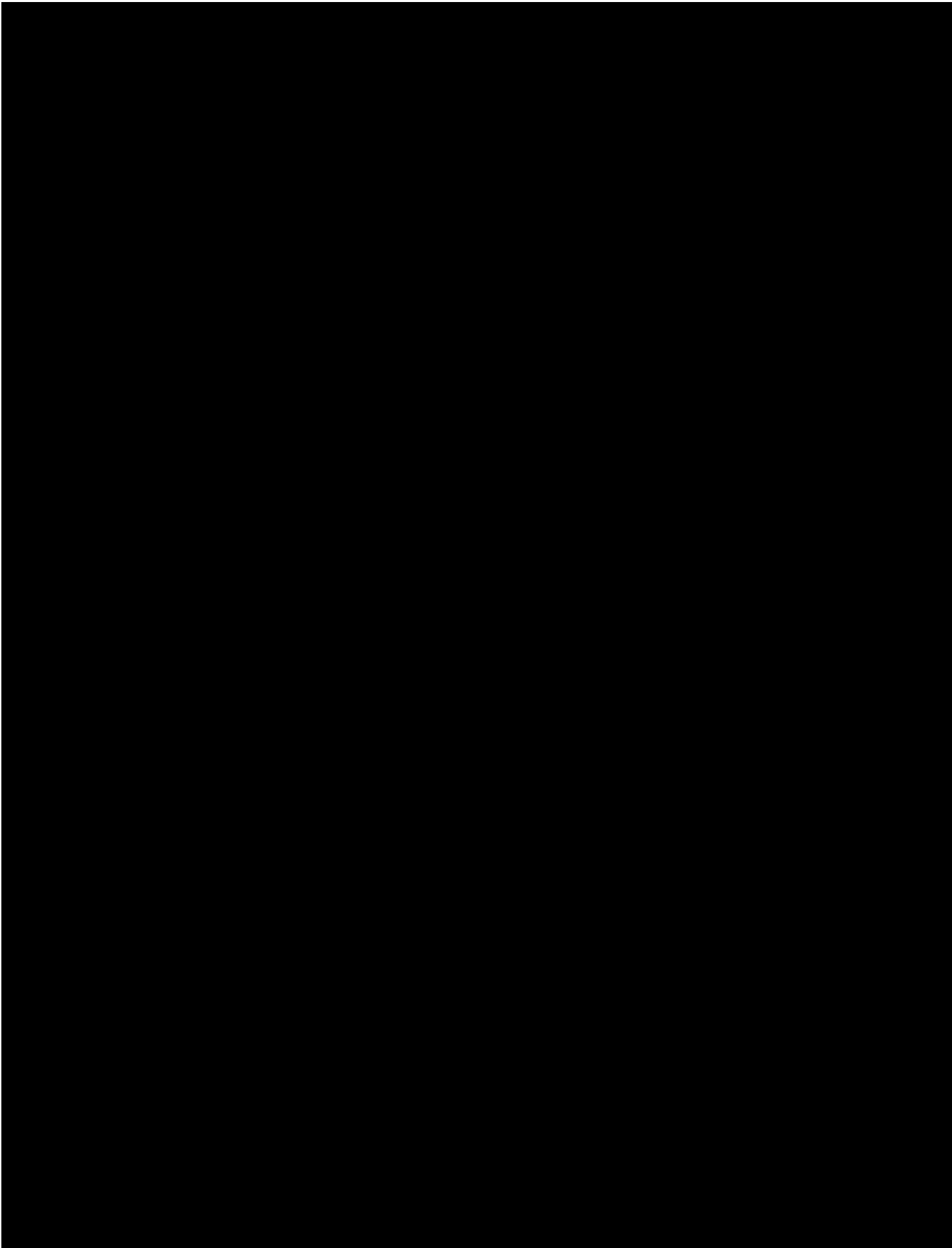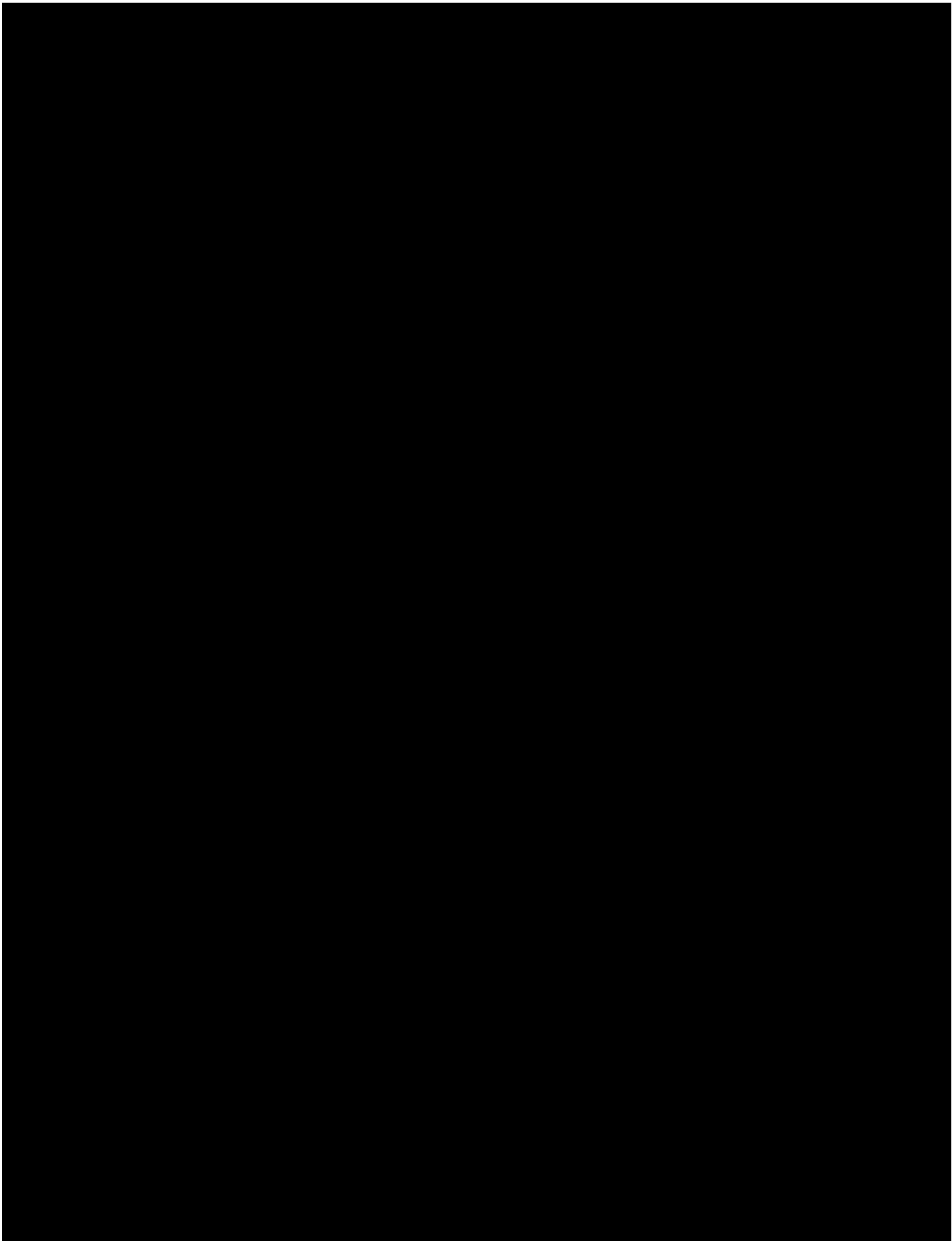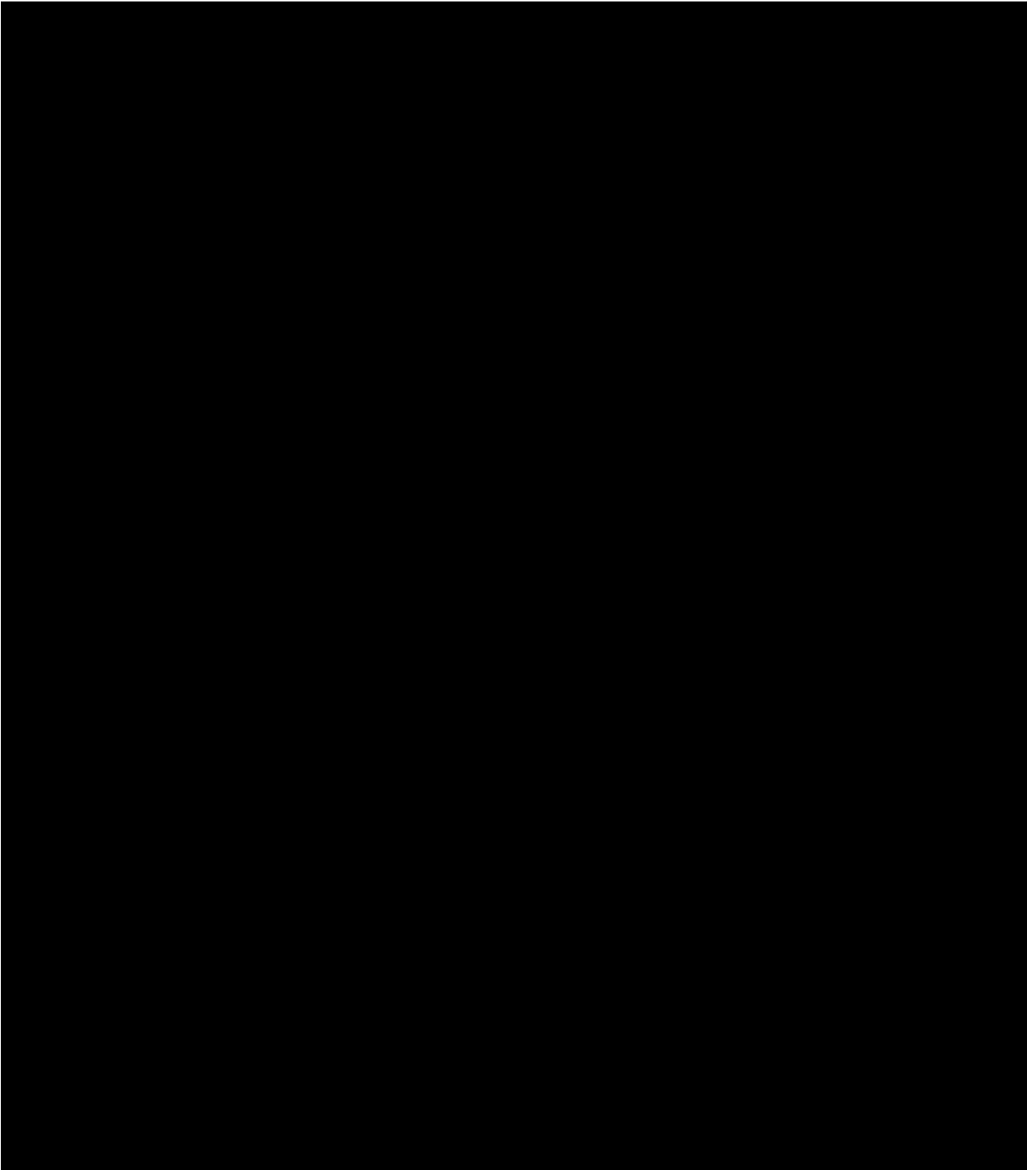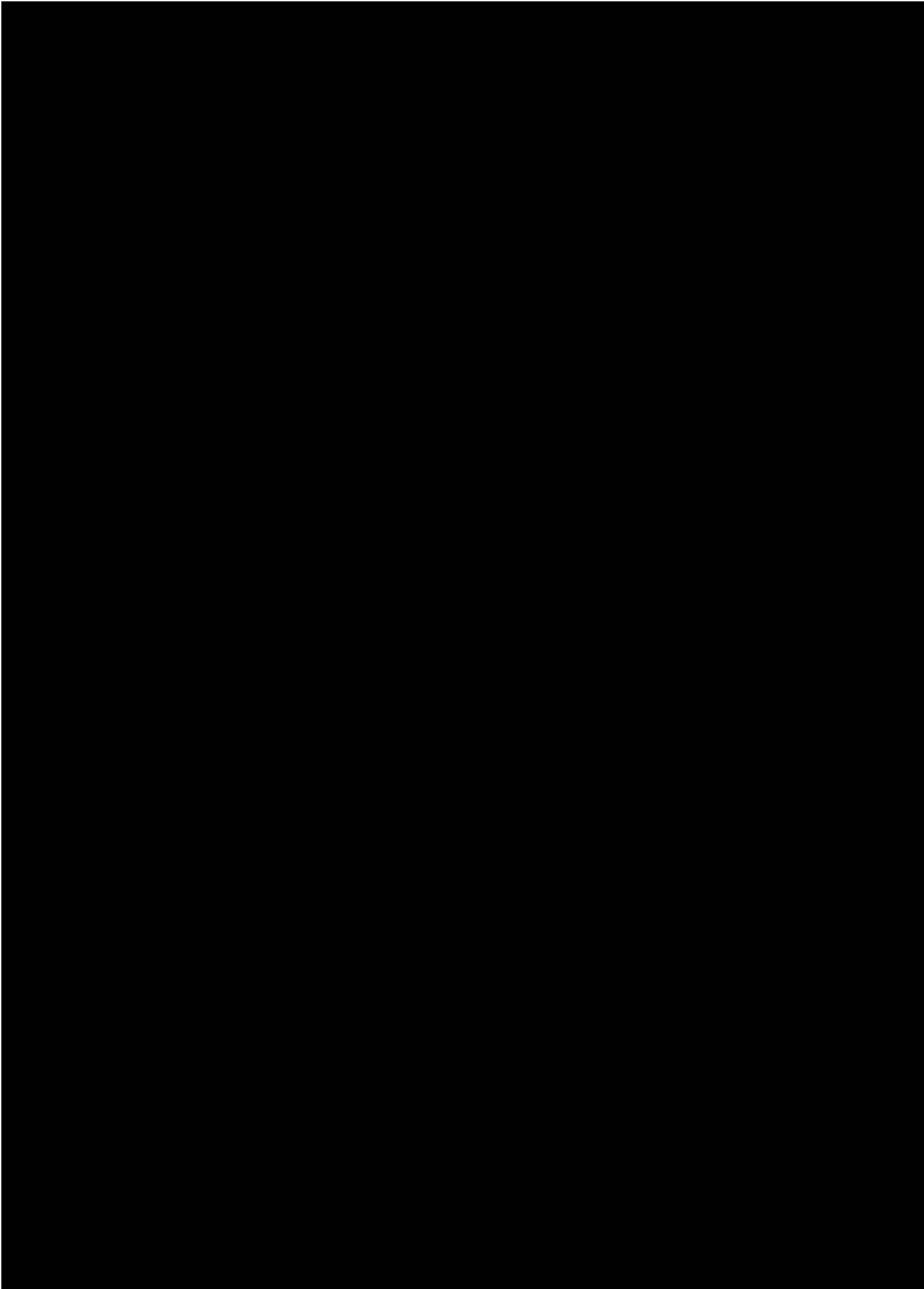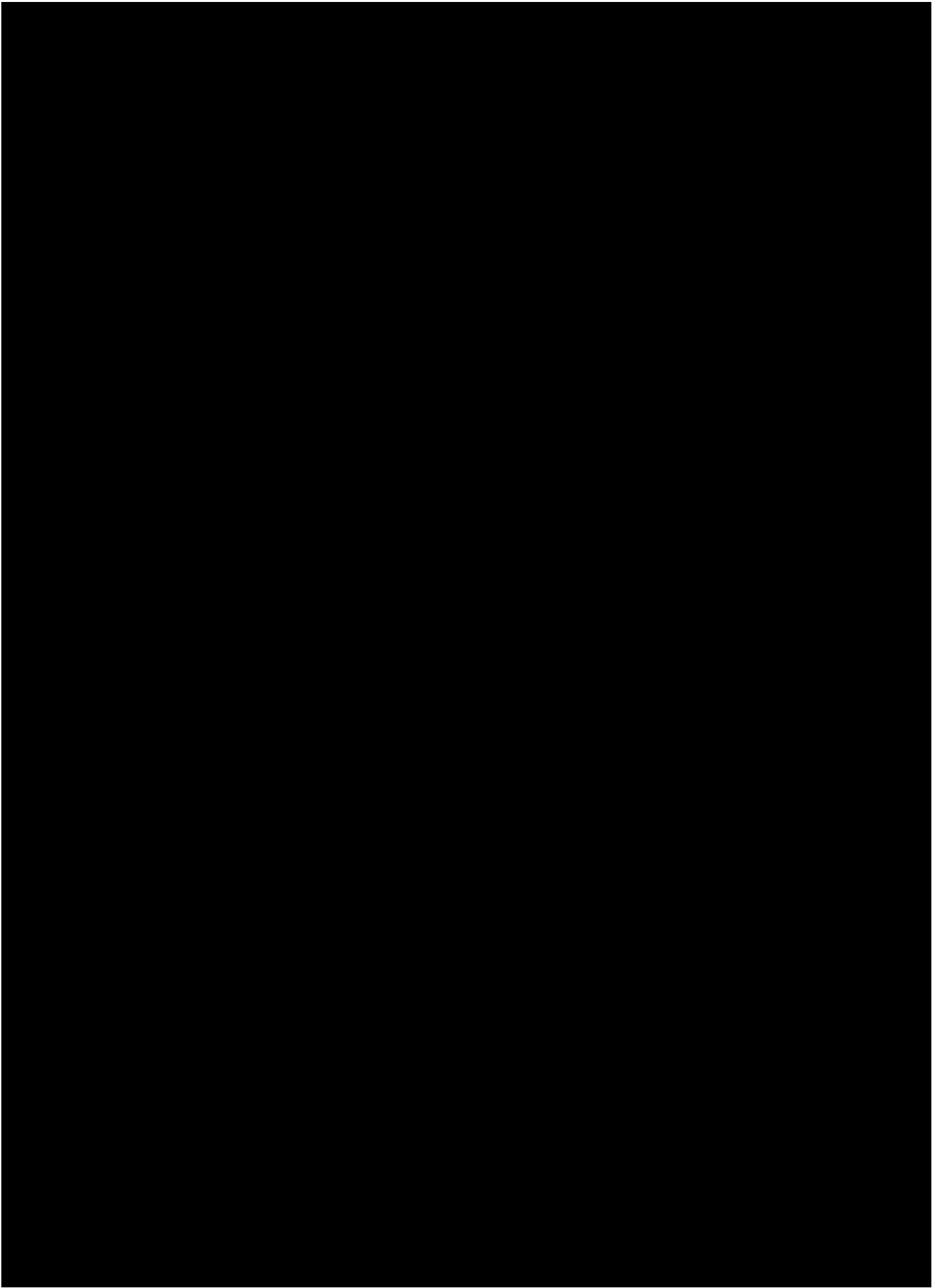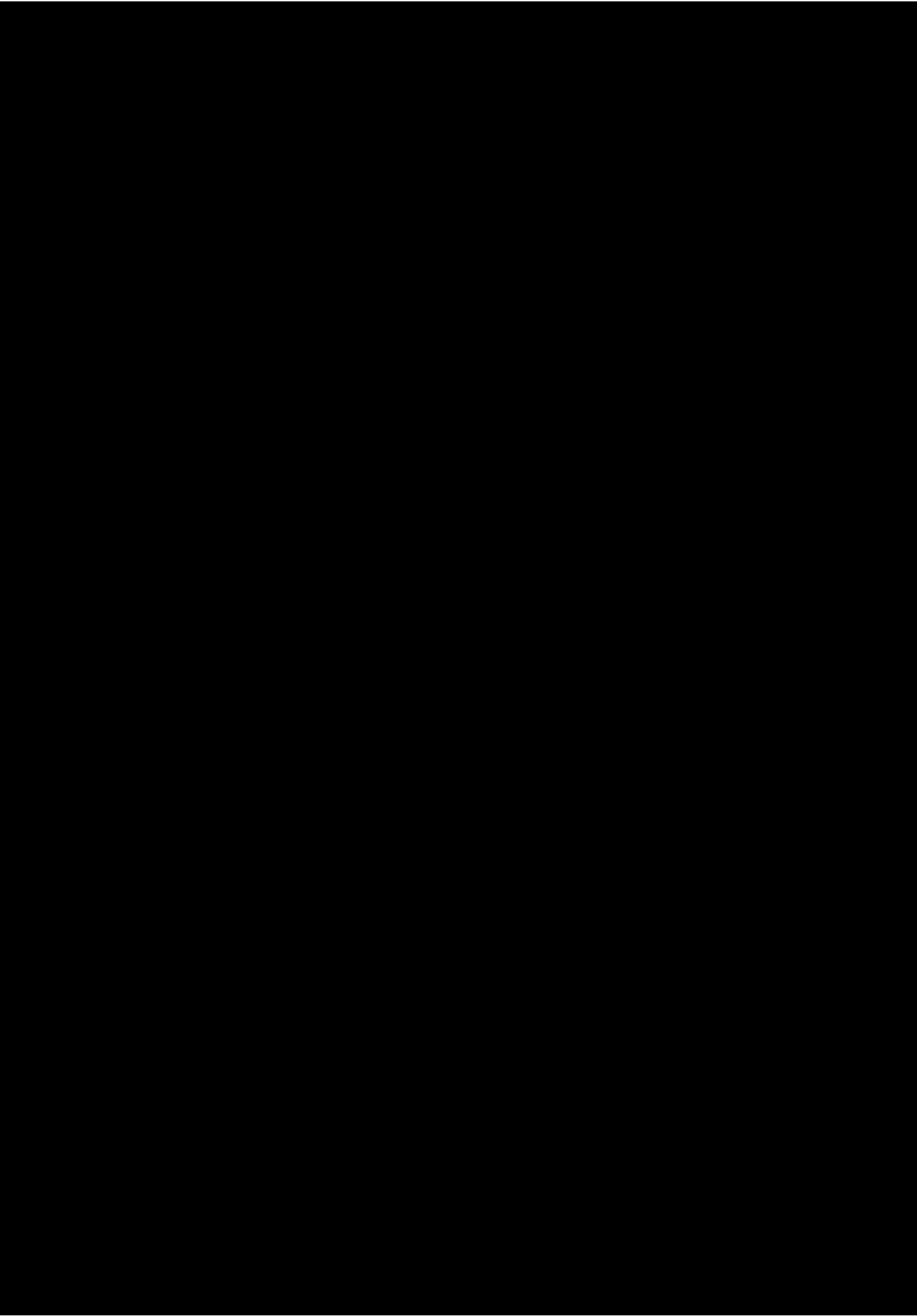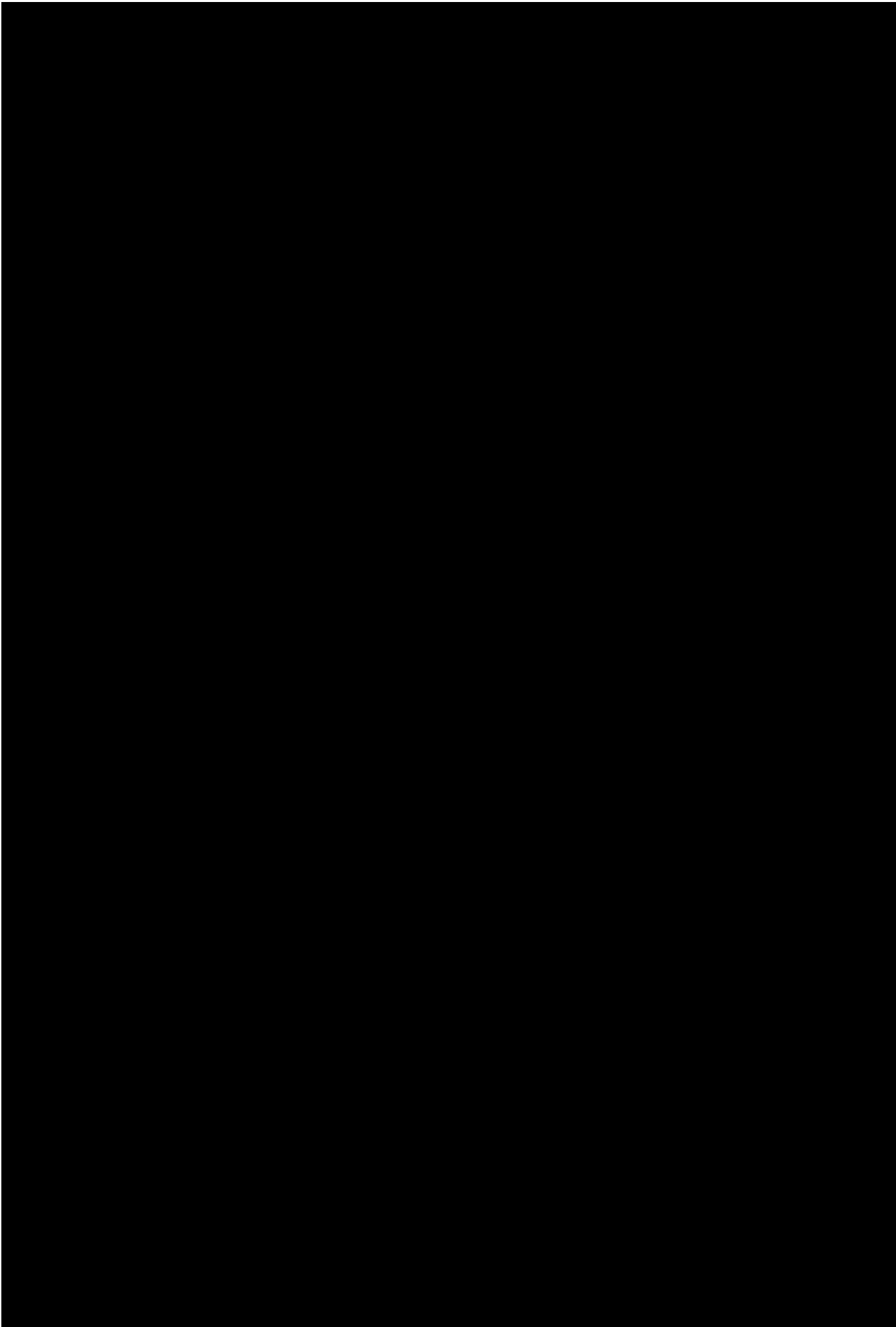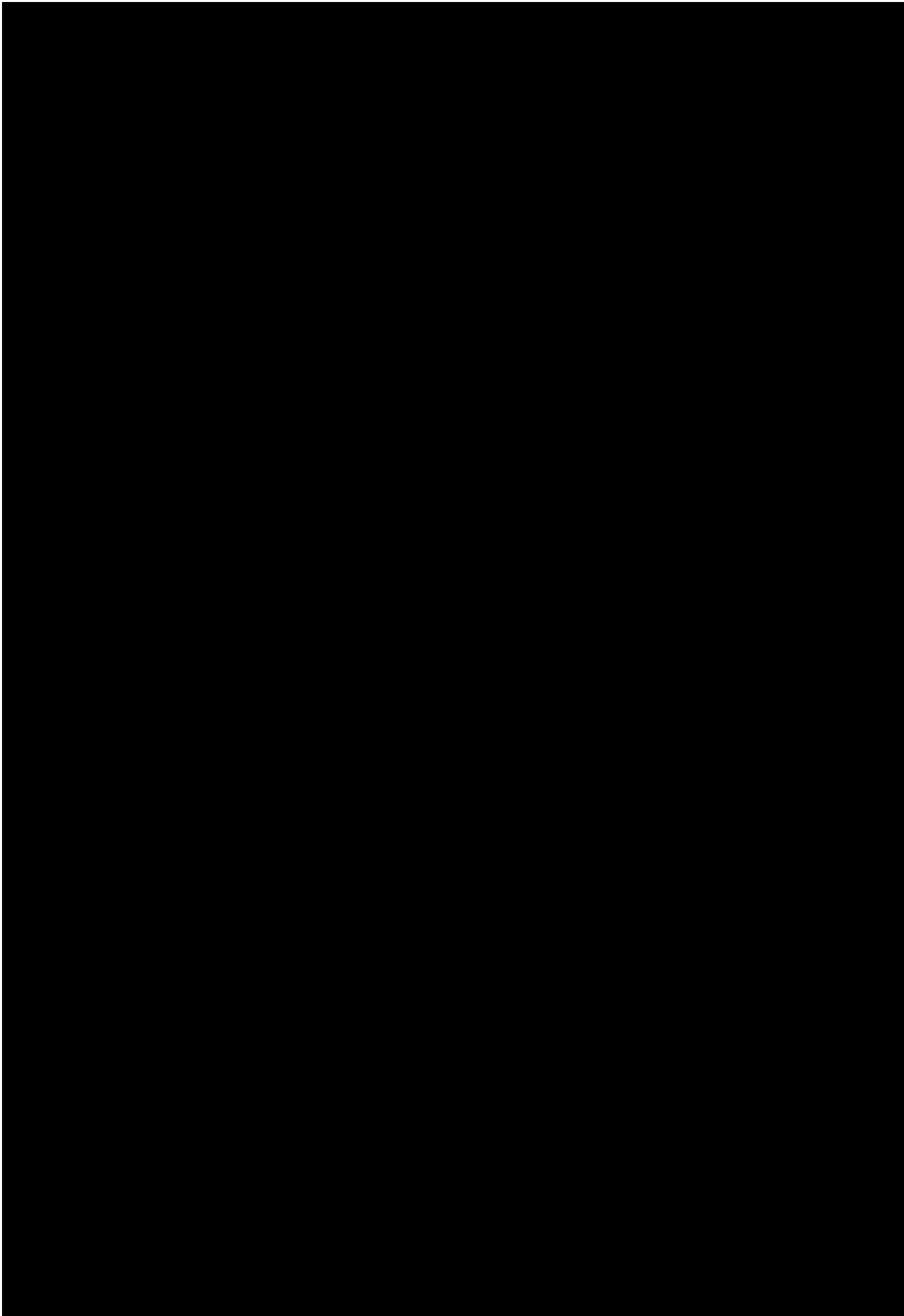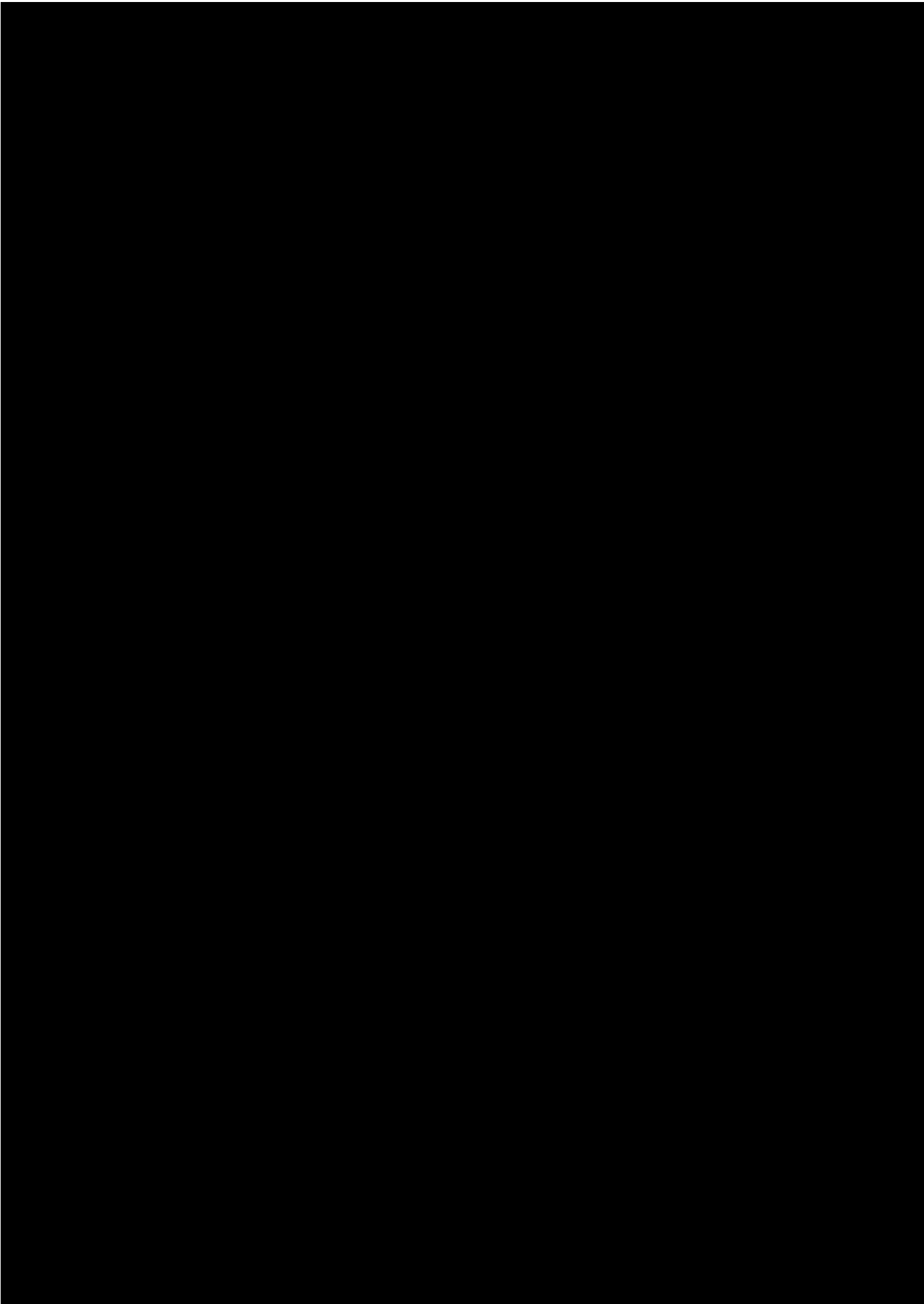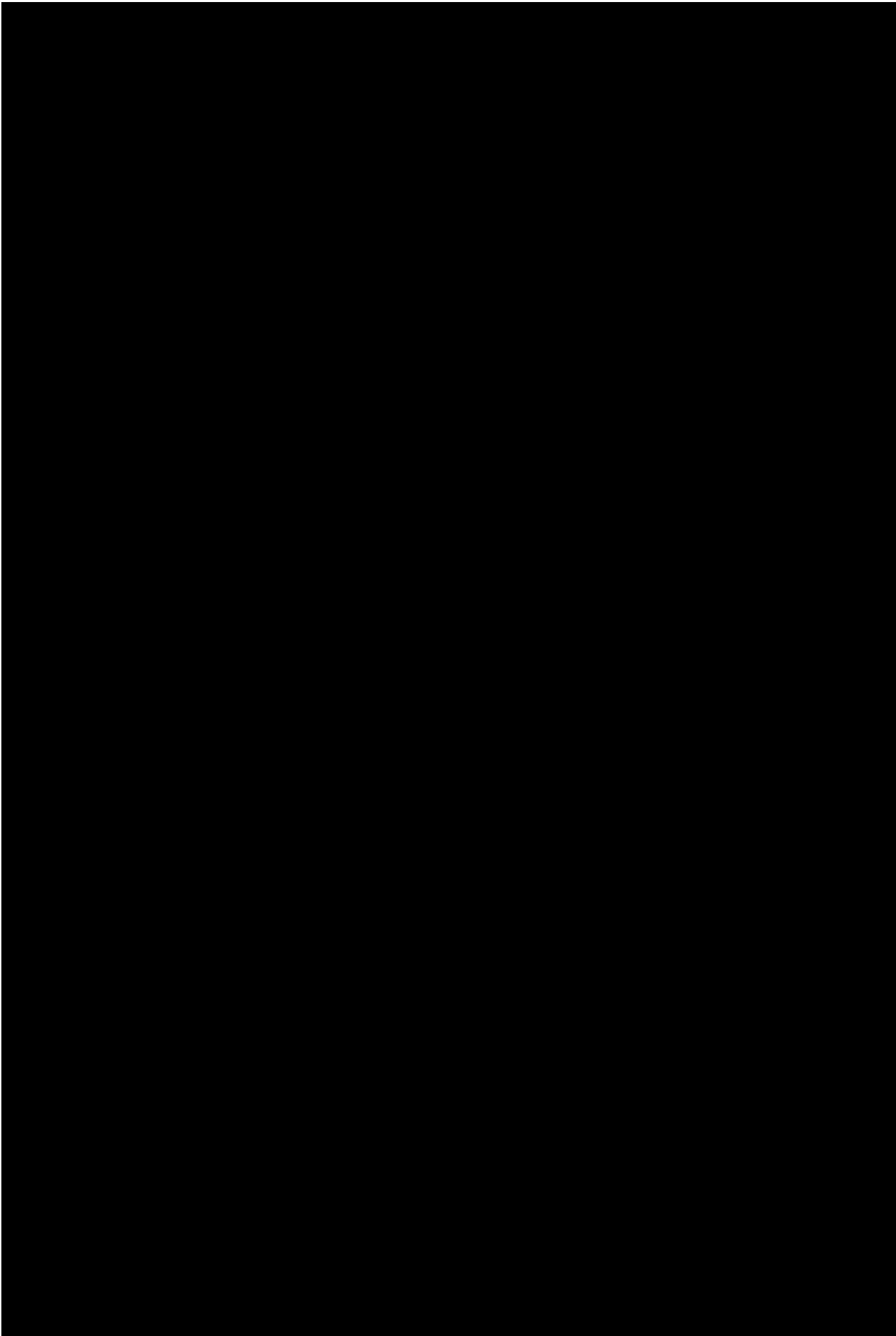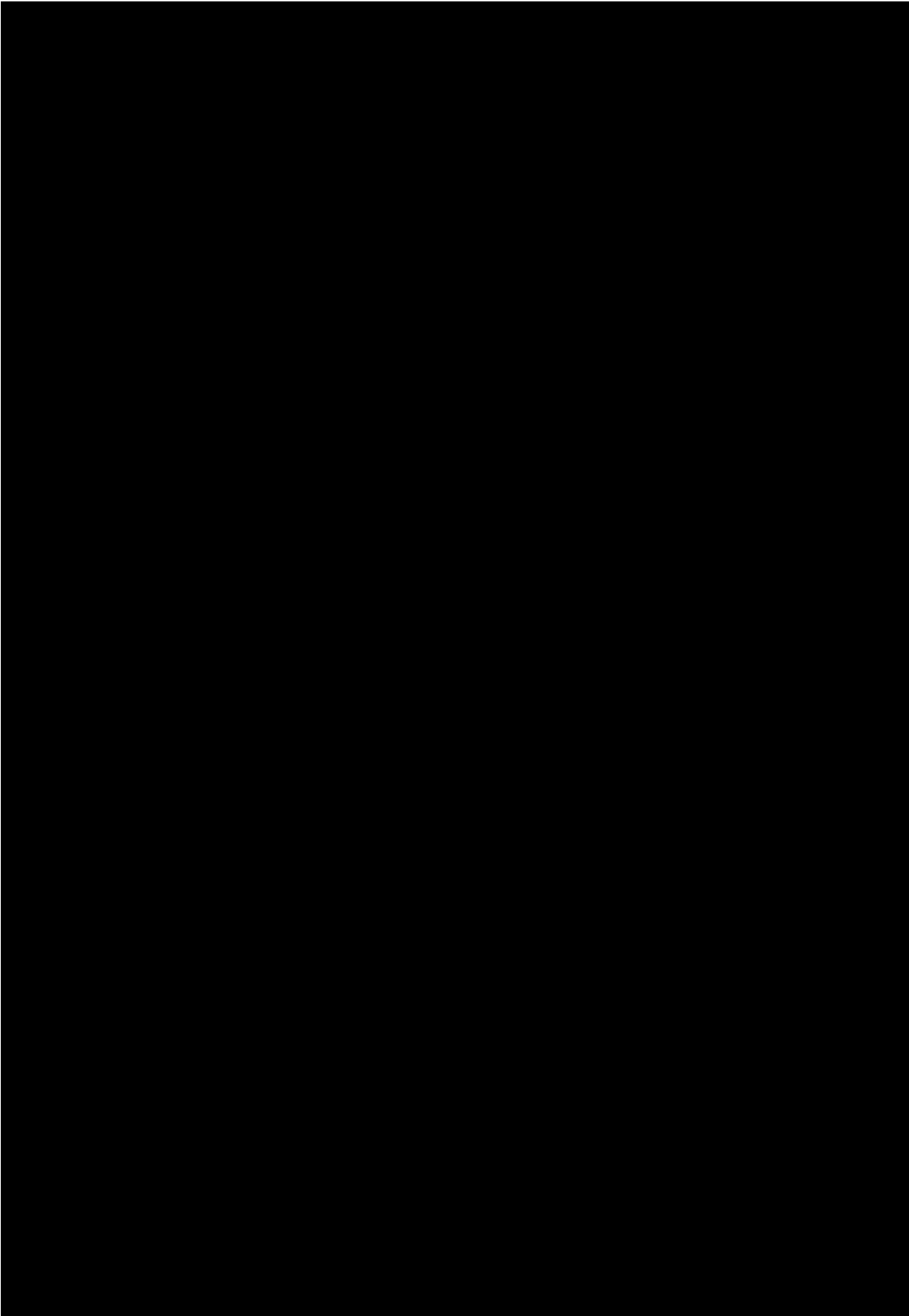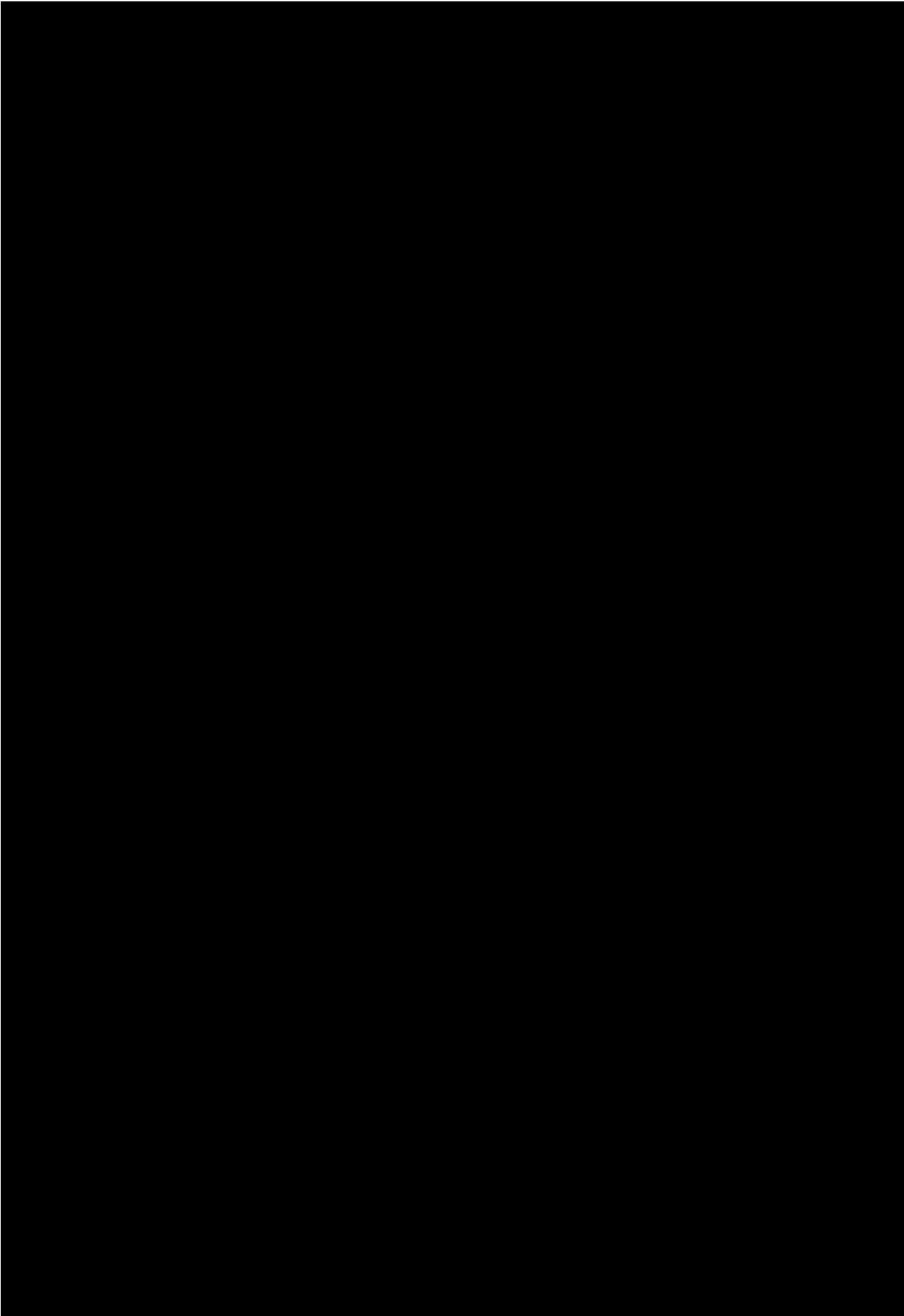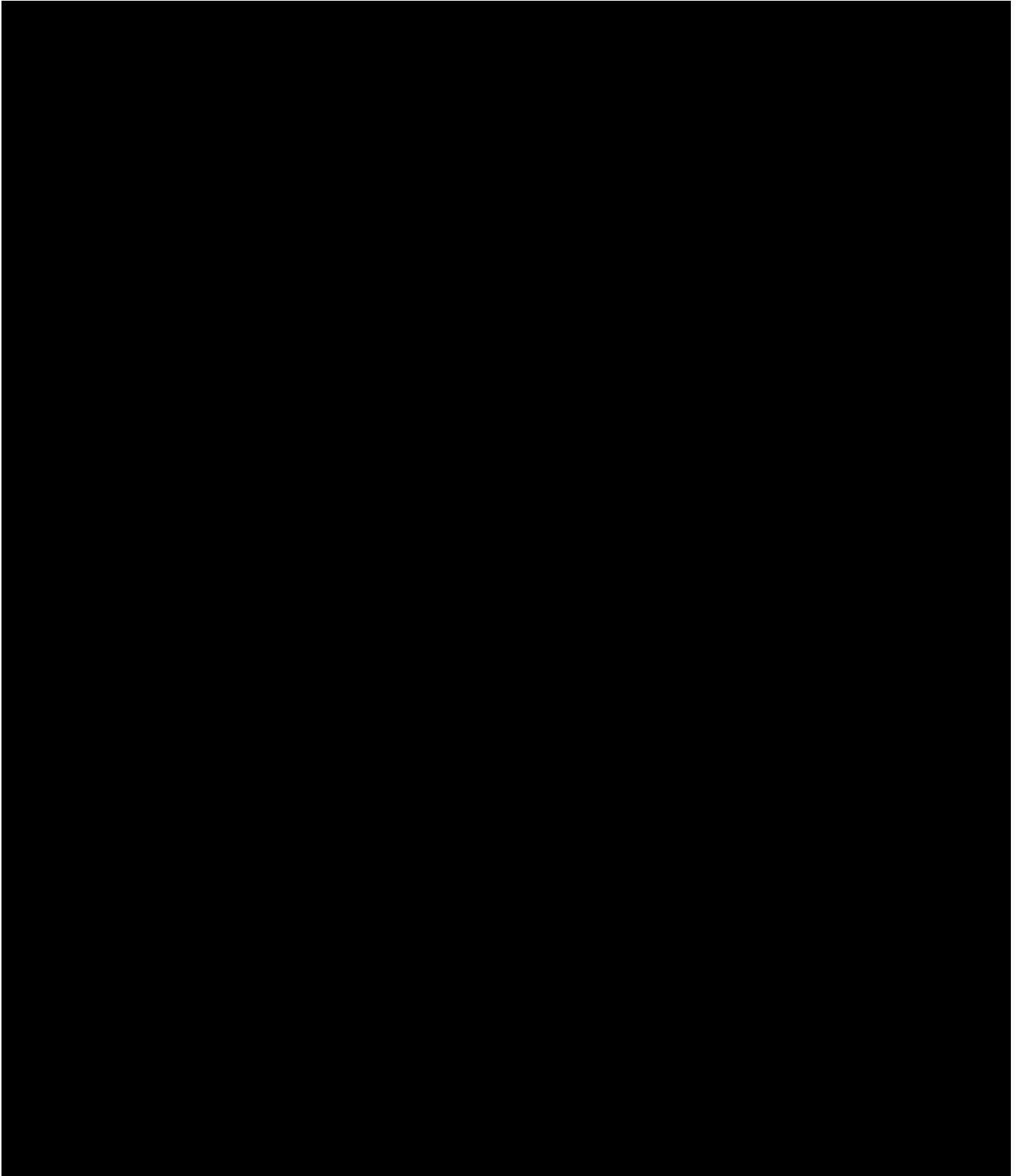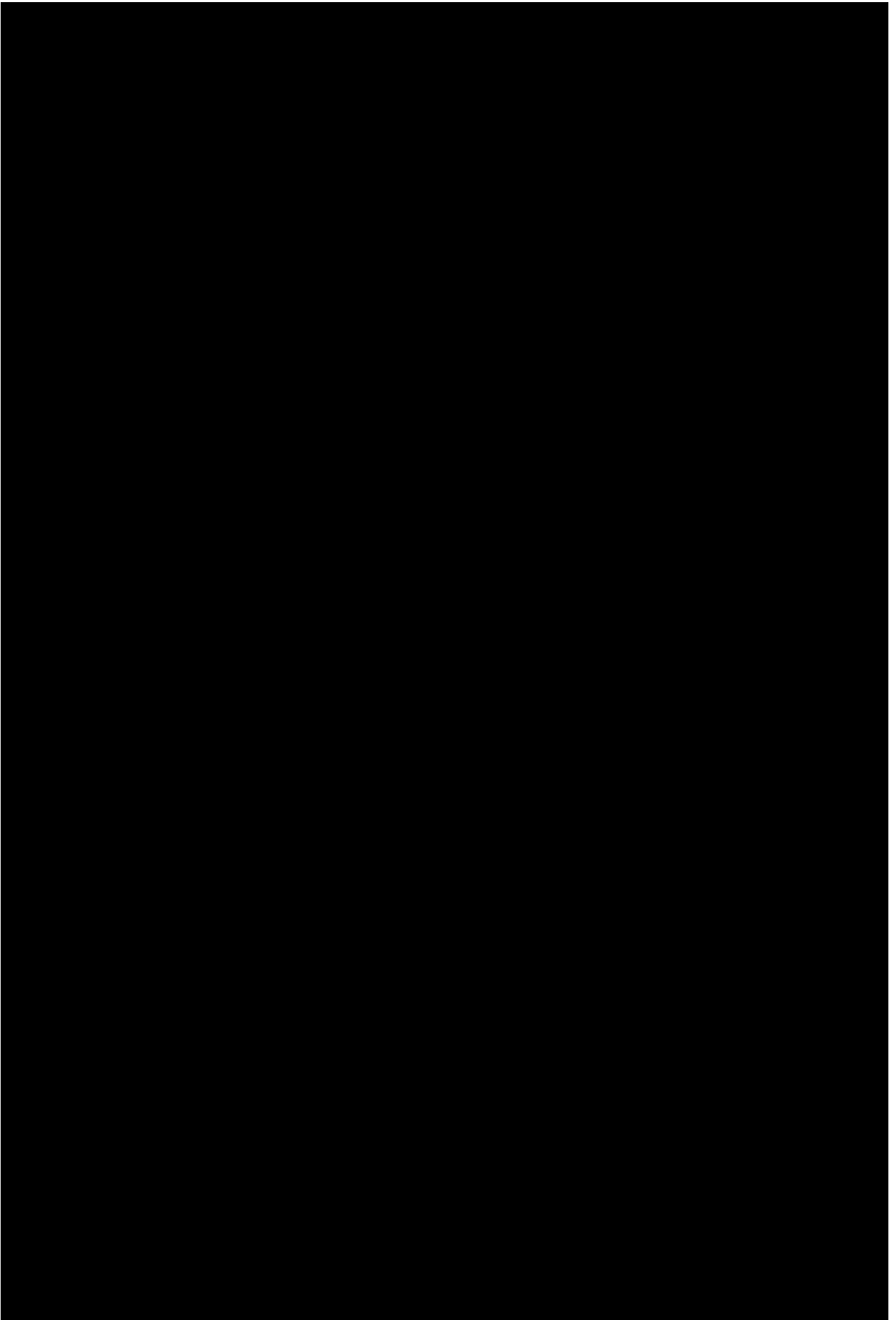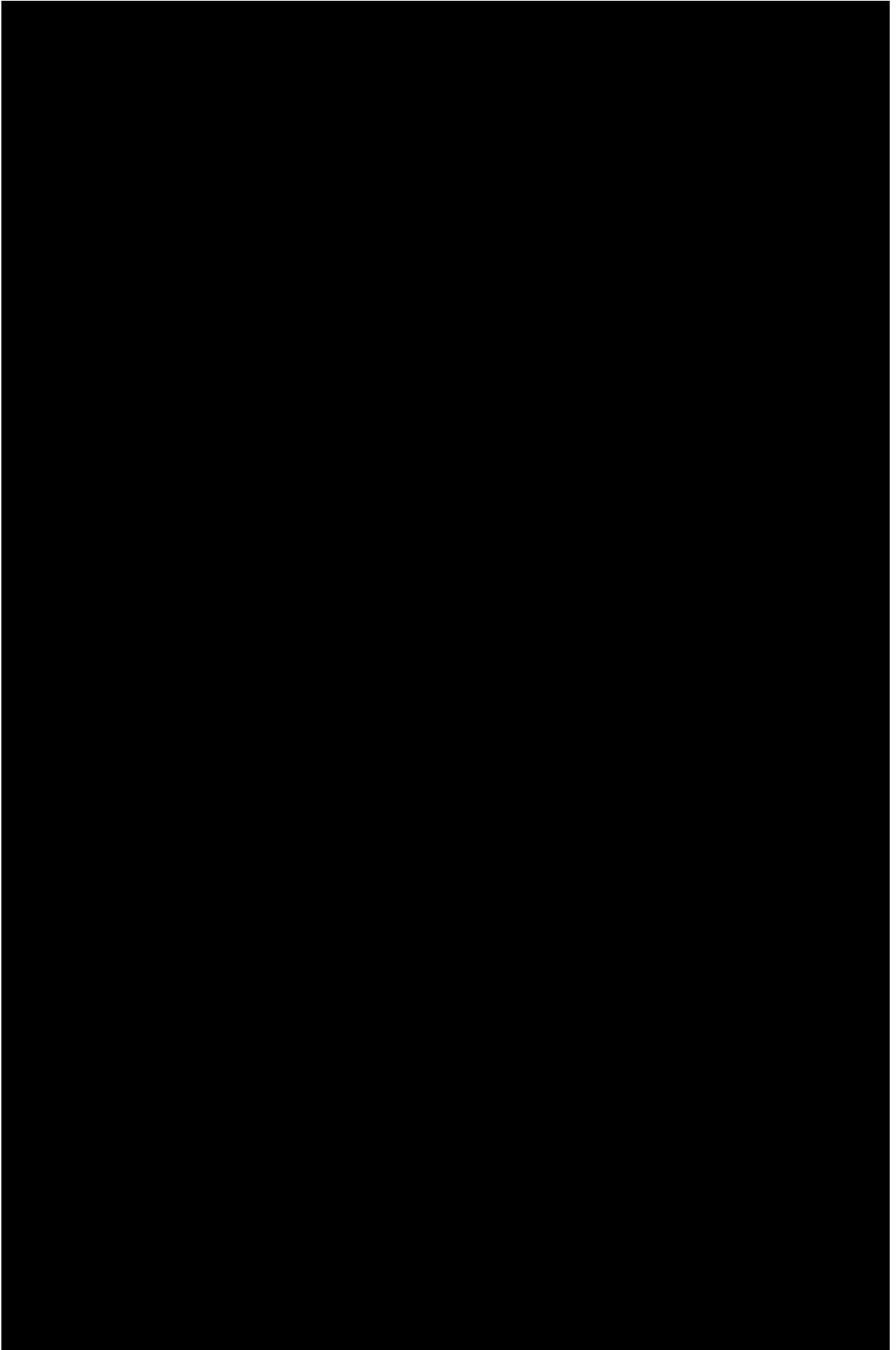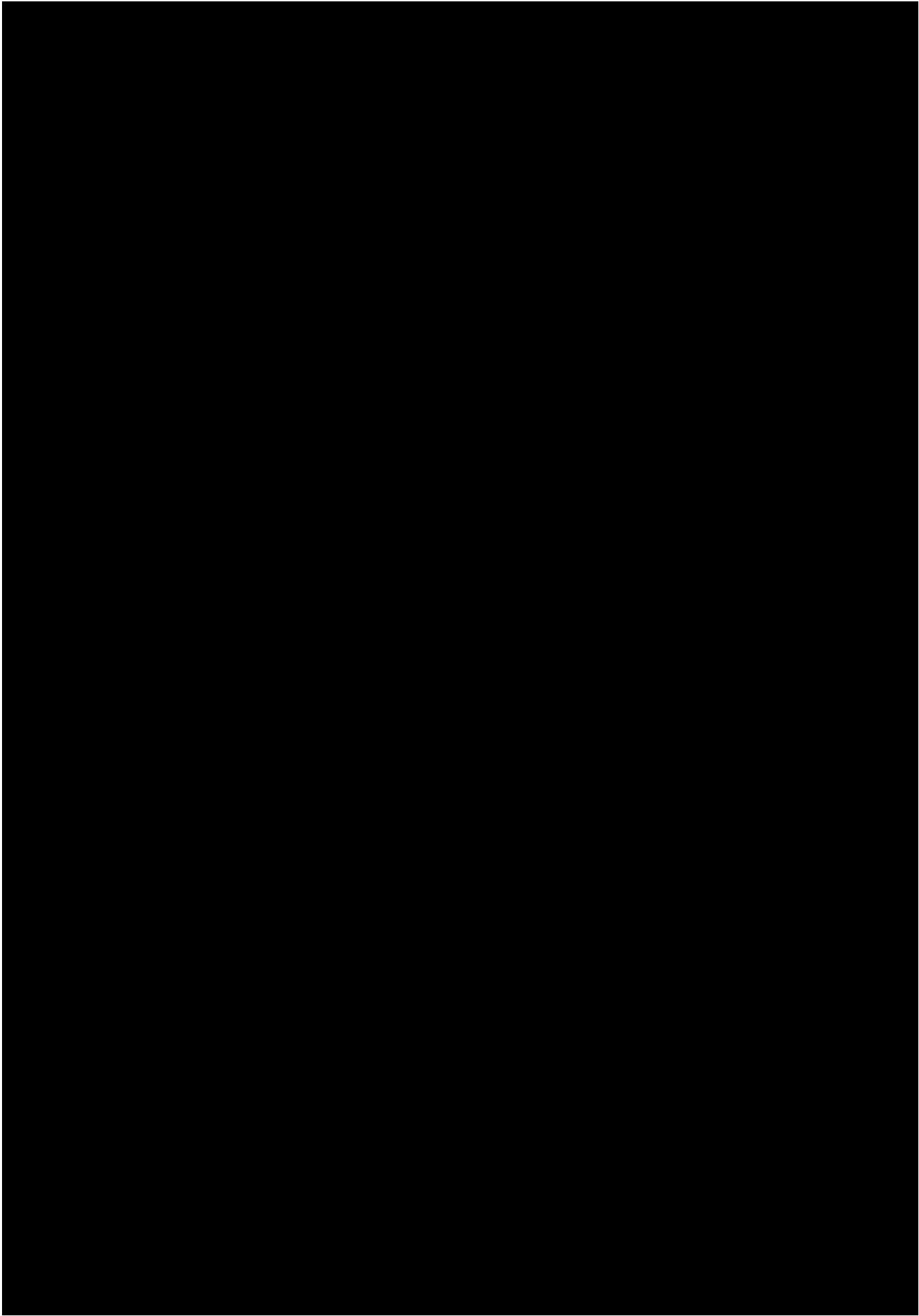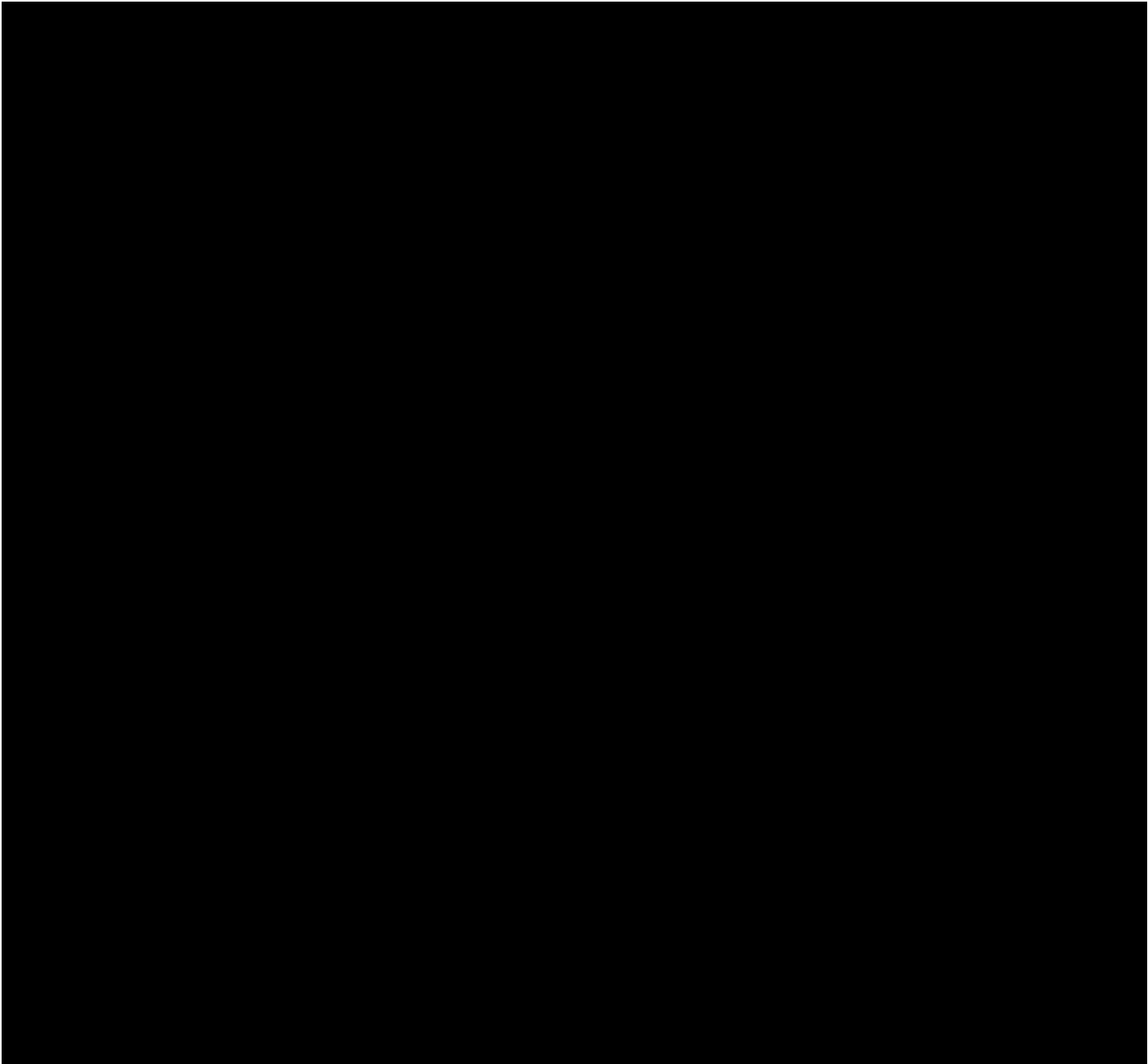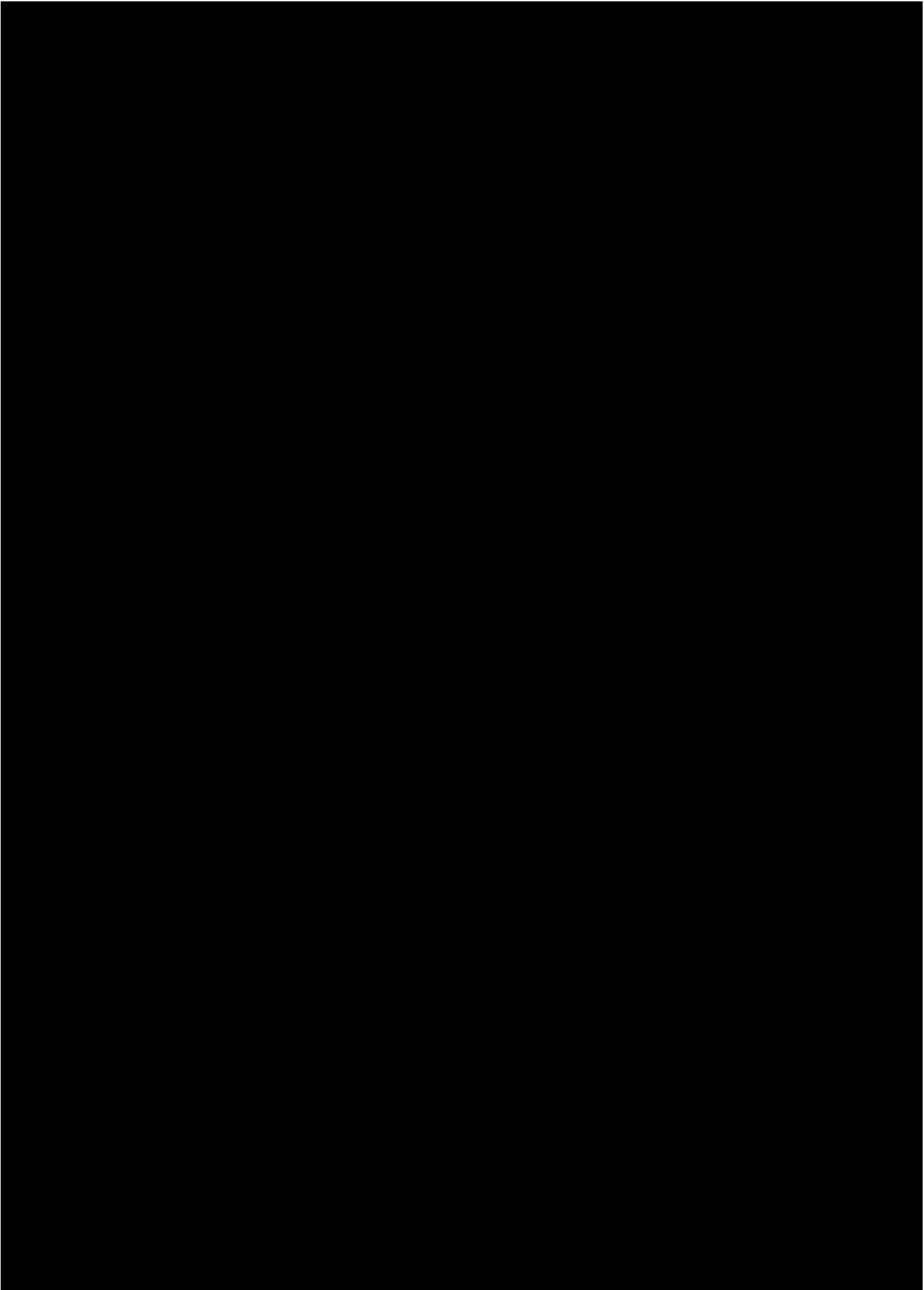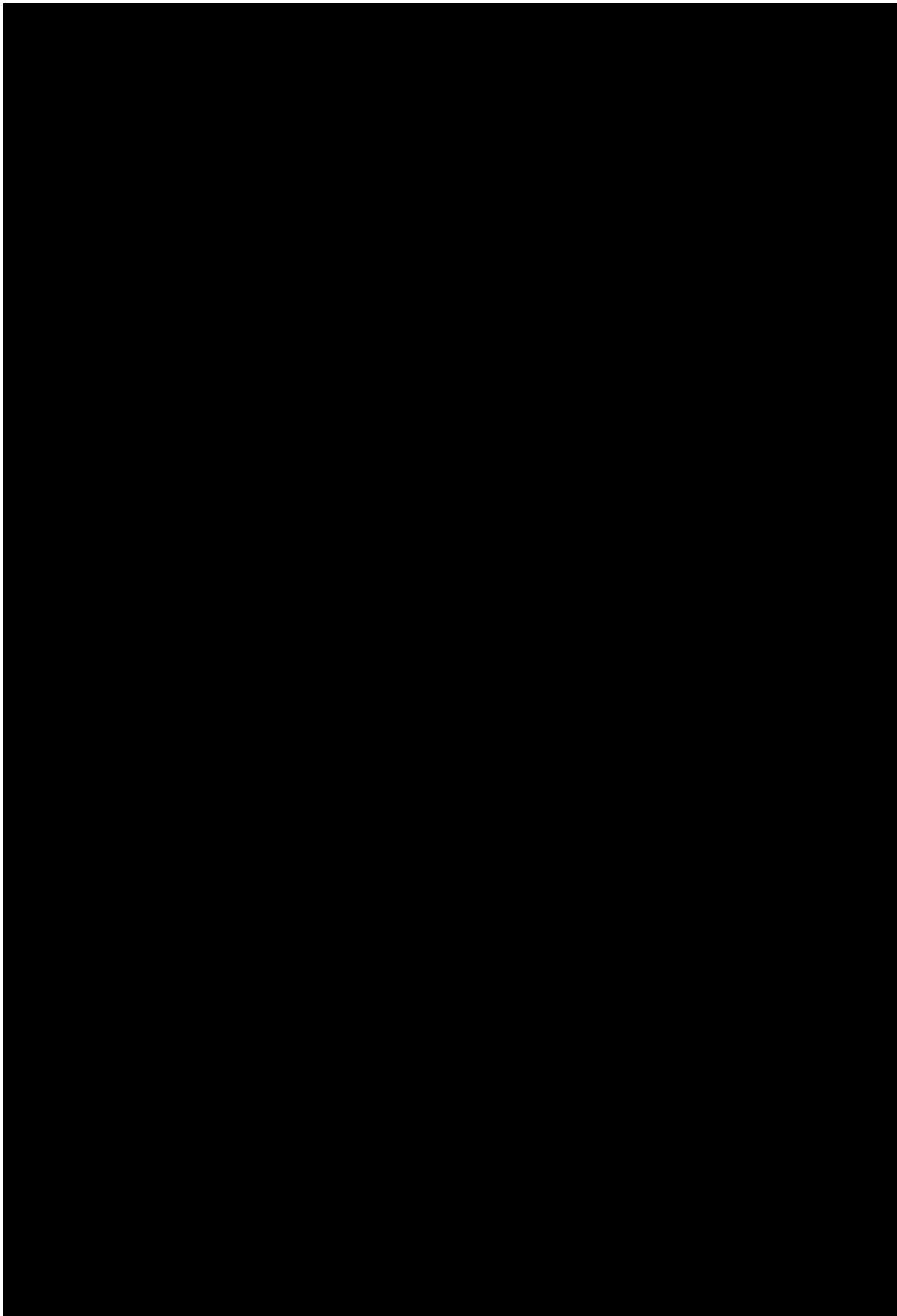
SECTION D

Critical Literature Review

SECTION D: CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Has compassion added a new dimension in therapy?

Introduction

Compassion is one of six core values in the NHS Constitution (DOH 2013).   It is therefore the expectation that psychologists, counsellors and therapists bring compassion into their work to help people who are troubled with emotional difficulties and formally diagnosed disorders. Since the millennium the uses and benefits of compassion integrated in therapy have aroused considerable interest in mental health advances judging from the prolific number of internationally published articles over recent years. The extent to which Compassion–Focused Therapy has initiated new approaches in mental health and counselling practice and has been integrated to enhance existing treatments has resulted in CFT being considered a stand-alone treatment (Gilbert, 2014).

Aims of the Review

This review aims to set the development and trajectory of Compassion-Focused Therapy (Gilbert, 2014) in context, particularly demonstrating its importance in helping self-critical people who may be troubled by shame and suffer mood and anxiety problems to experience compassion for themselves. I will also refer to other therapeutic applications in which compassion has been a significant component. This review does not claim to be exhaustive but offers an overview of the course that CFT and Compassionate Mind Training have taken, and their impact and influence on current advances in therapy. Kirby usefully reviewed current compassion interventions, the programmes, the evidence and implications for research and practice (Kirby, 2016) following a favourable Systematic Review (Leavis & Uttley, 2015).

Rationale for selecting the studies

My rationale for selecting studies for inclusion was to follow the development of Gilbert's new therapy in which he combined cognitive behavioural methods with a

decidedly compassionate approach to inculcate self-compassion in individuals or groups who were high in shame and self-criticism and to demonstrate the progression of his therapy over time. The review spans the time during which literature on Compassion Focused Therapy was emerging from its initial founding in 2000 and early studies by Gilbert in 2004, through to 2018. Studies include examples for individual client work and studies involving both non-clinical groups, and clinical groups with varied diagnoses. The literature also considers a selection of studies carried out by other researchers adhering to Gilbert's principles as a main framework in which a protocol for another condition can be integrated, for example: a treatment for mood disorders, eating disorders (Goss & Allan (2014) or smoking reduction Kelly, Zuroff & Foa (2010). There was no cut-off date because Gilbert continues to seek new CFT interventions.

My <u>inclusion criteria:</u> Peer reviewed publications, selected pilot studies and randomized controlled trials, ideally with a control condition, 2000-2018 with self-critical individuals or mixed gender groups, with trans-diagnostic conditions or self-critical mixed gender groups suffering depression or anxiety, and most recently a study for sexual minority young adults with depressive symptomatology in Australia. (Pepping, Lyons, McNair, Kirby, Petrocchi & Gilbert, 2017).

My <u>exclusion criteria:</u> Publications which were not peer reviewed and grey literature or anecdotal accounts in magazines and newspapers. Studies that included CFT administered alongside more than one other protocol. There was no cut-off date because Gilbert continues to seek new compassion focused interventions.

The selection criteria dated from Gilbert's earliest studies on the subject from 2000 when he founded Compassion Focused Therapy and Compassionate Mind Training which embodied the core principles of CFT (Gilbert & Procter, 2006). A sample range of other researchers' work based on Gilbert's CFT principles was included up to 2018. This includes therapy for individuals, for groups with mixed conditions and CFT combined with one (or at most) two specific single strand therapies/protocols/conditions. '*Amongst other compassion-based interventions CFT is different being a form of psychotherapy. Most other interventions are manualised programmes. CFT can be flexibly delivered based upon the formulation*

developed for an individual client. It does not have to follow the prescribed session content' (Kirby 2016). CFT is also theoretically different being founded on evolutionist psychology, attachment theory and developed by applied psychological research, both physiological and neurological. The model incorporates strategies to stimulate affiliative processes such as the parasympathetic system, which is explained to the client in psychoeducation (Kirby, 2016).

A systematic review of fourteen studies employing CFT, reported positively on its potential for treating mood disorders for highly self-critical people (Leaviss and Uttley 2015). Of all interventions centred on compassion, CFT has been the most evaluated and considered the most appropriate for use in clinical applications. For these reasons CFT can be considered a 'stand alone' treatment.

This therapy was adapted and disseminated by Gilbert and other researchers to treat a variety of conditions both in group and individual therapy. Besides encouraging self-awareness and self-compassion, it promoted confidence in self-critical people. Other therapists and researchers have developed it further in protocols for eating disorders, binge eating and in smoking reduction programmes, as well as for mixed mood or anxiety conditions. Clinicians in Britain, Ireland, Japan and other countries have carried out trials and innovative variations. It is salient to refer to the influence of Neff whose studies focused on self-compassion during the same years and developed a self-compassion scale (Neff, 2003). The Mindful Self-Compassion Program for public use or with clinical populations followed (Neff & Germer, 2012). My conclusion is that by integrating a compassionate approach, therapy could be shown to have more meaning for many individuals who require reassurance and support, delivered at a slower pace towards averting harmful consequences of depression. According to Leaviss & Uttley's Systematic Review (2015) of fourteen studies employing CFT, it shows promise for mood disorders, particularly those high in self-criticism. However more large scale, high quality trials are required before it is confirmed as evidence-based practice, necessitating considerable financial investment. In an age promoting speed and economy, therapy integrated with compassion and deeper understanding appears justified and likely to confer longer-lasting benefits.

Early beginnings

Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT) was founded and developed by Professor Paul Gilbert over the past twenty years to help patients who were high in shame and self-criticism who understood the logic of CBT therapy and could generate alternative thoughts, but were not able to <u>feel</u> comforted. CFT was found to be effective in treating these patients who often had traumatic histories and insecure attachment from childhood (Bowlby, l969). An early pilot study explored the self-critical thoughts and attributions of depressed patients and their use of compassionate imagery to self-soothe (Gilbert and Irons, 2004). Results showed a significant increase in self-compassion and a reduction in depression levels. Compassionate Mind Training (CMT) was then developed (Gilbert and Procter, 2006). CMT lies at the core of CFT and is a structured programme for individuals or groups to learn the main skills necessary to cultivate the essential elements of compassion. Some skills involve imagery, compassionate letter writing and responding to self-criticism with compassion. Developed to help self-critical individuals who may also experience shame, CMT de-personalises the concept of fault and de-shames shame. The view taken is that automatic reactions are not an individual's fault or easily managed, but are part of the human condition as a result of evolved human genes and conditioning.

Growing interest in Compassion Focused Therapy

Paul Gilbert's London seminar some years ago alerted me to the developments in CFT when interest in it as a therapy was rapidly increasing. The application of compassion focused interventions of Gilbert and others researching compassion has since burgeoned, capturing international interest. CFT like Dialectical Behaviour Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Mindfulness, sometimes referred to as CBT Third Wave therapies, have developed during the past thirty years with some becoming recognised treatments for specific mental health conditions. All have links with CBT and adopt some techniques from Mindfulness. Compassion Focused Therapy includes CBT principles of formulation in assessment, psycho-education and Socratic questioning, but differs in being an integrated treatment drawing on social, developmental and evolutionary theories, Buddhist psychology and neuroscience. It is not a manualised therapy but includes some multi-modal

exercises guided by a trained clinician using a friendly and compassionate approach. In both CFT and CMT the usual pace of CBT may need to slow down, to allow reflection and practise in the session, with the therapist modelling a compassionate attitude and the therapeutic content suitably adapted.

Compassion Focused Therapy in Clinical Settings

When Gilbert worked as a clinical psychologist with patients troubled by shame and self-criticism, some would say that despite knowing they were not at fault, they still could not <u>feel</u> this. To address these patients' inability to feel what they logically knew, Gilbert introduced a compassionate focus to the treatment. Therapy was delivered in a warm tone of voice, understanding and validating the patient's views, aiming to cultivate the patient's internalised sense of self-compassion. These patients' shame and self-criticism often related to experiences of neglect, lack of affection or abuse in childhood (Andrews, l998; Schore, l998). Gilbert was aware of the importance that many approaches attached to the early experiences of childhood and Bowlby's influential theory of attachment (Bowlby, l969). Insecure attachment was understood as a consequence of children being abused, neglected or lacking parental affection (Bowlby, l969). Early adverse experiences can influence the development of self-other schemas affecting the neurophysiological processes governing emotional regulation (Schore, l994; Siegel, 2001). Such a history could predispose someone to be more sensitive to threat or criticism from others and prone to develop self-attacking behaviour. Gilbert acknowledged that working with shame and self-criticism could necessitate a focus on adverse experiences which might overlap with therapeutic interventions addressing trauma and its consequences. Research had shown that when children had been exposed to neglect, threat or abuse, this might increase their vulnerability to develop mental health problems like self-devaluation, and becoming self-critical with self-attacking feelings (Gilbert, Clarke, Hempel, Miles & Irons, 2004). Research has also shown that children raised with love, warmth and parental affection were likely to benefit from emotional well-being and resilience. People whose early experiences are harsh are often extremely sensitive to others' criticism or rejection which they construe as external threats, and which, for some result in self-attacking thoughts. They perceive others' disapproval, which then affects their own sense of themselves, causing increased self-criticism

(Procter & Gilbert 2006 p.354). According to Lewis (l995), external and internal shame could fuse and become 'the exposed self' presenting a major threat. Cheung, Gilbert and Irons, (2004) found feelings of shame and inferiority may become linked with depressive rumination. Self-criticism is significantly associated with a susceptibility to feel shame with the risk of depression (Murphy et al 2002), for which a Scale for Susceptibility to Put Down was devised (Gilbert and Miles, 2000). Publications of (Gilbert, Clarke, Hempel, Miles & Irons, 2004) and (Gilbert, Baldwin, Irons & Palmer, 2006) addressed self-criticism in relation to depression. CFT interventions depersonalise the notion of fault in patients troubled by shame and self-criticism. Therapy conducted in a friendly, non-judgemental manner holds a very human appeal and is more likely to facilitate a good therapeutic alliance. Gilbert believes that compassion protects against stress and is central to the process of recovery from psychopathology (Gilbert, 2005;2010). Compassionate Mind Training followed (Gilbert & Procter, 2006). This structured experiential programme aimed to compensate and redress the inability to feel kind and understanding towards the self by cultivating self-compassion and addressing the fear of receiving compassion from others. Over the years attachment theory, ideas from Buddhism and contemporary scientific knowledge, have continued to inform and develop Compassion-Focused Therapy.

Definitions of Compassion

According to Oxford Dictionaries the word compassion means *"sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others."* The origin is in middle English, via old French from ecclesiastical Latin, compassio(n-) from compati 'suffer with.'

Darwin stated *'those communities which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best and rear the greatest number of offspring'* (Darwin, 1871 p130).

Gilbert defines compassion as *'sensitivity to suffering in self and others, with a commitment to try to alleviate and prevent it'* (Gilbert, 2014: p19). It is a core element of pro-social behaviour (Gilbert, 2017).

Strauss, *et al.,* (2016) asked: What is compassion and how can we measure it? producing 'A review of definitions and measures.' Following interrogation of Web of Science, PsychINFO and Medline, and including nine measures rated for quality, the following five components of compassion were identified.

1. Recognition of suffering
2. Understanding its universality
3. Feeling sympathy, empathy or concern for those who are suffering
4. Tolerating the distress associated with the witnessing of the suffering
5. Motivation to act or acting to alleviate the suffering.

Each component had been found in published definitions of compassion although no single existing definition comprised all five. Compassion was defined in line with the literature, as involving five elements but a systematic search of measures of compassion found all had psychometric weaknesses. Strauss *et al.,* concluded that although this review gives a foundation for research into compassion, it is just a starting point. Potential future plans were outlined aiming to produce a theoretical understanding (Strauss *et al., 2016).

The origins and nature of compassion- focused therapy

'Compassion focused therapy (CFT) is rooted in an evolutionary, functional analysis of basic social motivational systems, (e.g. to live in groups, form hierarchies and ranks, seek out sexual, partners help and share with alliances, and care for kin) and different functional emotional systems (e.g. to respond to threats, seek out resources and for states of contentment/safeness)' (Gilbert, 2014 p6).

Gilbert observes that some 2 million years ago pre-humans evolved a range of cognitive abilities for reasoning, including imagining, mentalizing and creating a sense of self in a social context. Taking an evolutionary view Gilbert believes these new competencies can conflict with the earlier motivation and emotional systems. The human brain is understood in terms of Darwinian 'selection for function' (Buss, 2009; Panksepp, 2010). The evolved brain *(called tricky brain)* (Gilbert, 2014 p6), can cause problems owing to its design and inclination to engage in destructive behaviours, leading to mental health problems. However, humans can counter this by

their evolved motives and emotions for affiliative, caring and altruistic behaviour. Therefore CFT considers that it is important to develop the capacity to access, tolerate and direct affiliative motives and emotions internalising compassion and so influence our reasoning to benefit society and mental health (Gilbert, 2014). Gilbert now defines CFT as being process-focused rather than disorder-focused because shame and self-criticism are trans-diagnostic processes that have been linked to a range of psychological disorders. (Gilbert & Irons, 2005; Zuroff, Santor, & Mongrain, 2005). CFT also aims to educate people about the human mind and the three part emotion-regulation systems: Threat/self-protect system, the drive/reward system and the affiliative/soothing system. People who become trapped between the threat and reward systems may experience feelings of failure, self-criticism and shame (Gilbert 2014). However the affiliative /soothing system, which encourages compassion can be primed by exercises like compassionate imagery which incline this to become the organising system. Imagery used in the process of activating positive and negative affect had become an important area of research (Hackman and Holmes, 2004) which Gilbert uses in many studies. The following pilot study for Compassionate Mind Training, (Gilbert & Procter, 2006) explores self-criticism further, and the acceptability and effectiveness of compassionate imagery.

Critiques of Selected Studies

Gilbert, P., & Irons, C. (2004).
<u>A pilot exploration of the use of compassionate images in a group of self-critical people.</u>

Recent research had suggested that self-critics have under-elaborated and undeveloped capacities for compassionate self-soothing and warmth. Gilbert & Irons (2005). Self-compassion has a long tradition in Buddhism and is studied by Neff who developed the Self-Compassion Scale, (Neff, 2003). This pilot study explored how participants responded to keeping diaries of naturally arising self-critical thoughts and to generating their own compassionate images with qualities of warmth and wisdom to self soothe and counter their self-criticism.

The aims of the study:

l. To invite people attending a depression support group who have problems with self-criticism to collaborative in a research project investigating their inner self-critical and self-soothing processes.

2. To use a diary method to explore the triggers and forms (degree of intrusiveness and the power) of naturally occurring self-criticism in this group.

3. To explore the ability to generate and use compassionate imagery and obtain views on how helpful this may be for this group.

4. To explore the *types of images* generated and their experiences of working with compassionate imagery.

Despite the small sample the study suggested the potential value of developing further methodologies for studying the capacity for self-compassion and interventions to increase this, including imagery techniques, and effects on mental health. Two men and seven women volunteered but one dropped out, so eight participated. Gender balance was not an issue because all were self-critical and had been prescribed anti-depressants. Participants attended for l ½ hours weekly for four weeks. A diary was developed for participants to record their self-attacking thoughts and self-soothing thoughts and images. Tests used were the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale HADS; (Zigmond & Snaith, 1983). The group mean for the depression subscale was 9.00 and the group mean for the anxiety subscale 11.83. All participants had experienced problems for more than ten years and some had co-morbid difficulties, like social anxiety, agoraphobia and OCD but the focus was on self-criticism and imagery development, not on a specific disorder. Tables and statistics were clearly set out. The results for self-criticism post Criticism CM training were slightly improved for the group, but non-significant. The group results for self-soothing/compassion post CM training were significantly increased.

Critique

There was no control group but it was a pilot study. There was no follow-up after the fourth session. The design and procedure were clearly described with tables and results well presented.   Pre-CM Training listed HADS individual depression

subscale scores but not for anxiety which might have clarified some individual scores. Week 1 diaries and Week 2 diaries were distributed for participants to record their critical thoughts daily. Instructions changed for the 3rd and 4th weeks when <u>weekly</u> diary entries were required. Subsequently diaries were lost and entries forgotten so the data was unreliable. Participants thought more frequent sampling could help. An unplanned delay of two weeks meant the fourth weekly session took place at six weeks which two participants could not attend. At this session a final form asked five questions: What image was used and how it appeared; what was the most difficult aspect; how much time was spent practising; and was use of the image helpful. The time spent practising imagery varied from daily to occasional. Image generation being an unfamiliar concept had caused some anxiety. Images like rainbows or sun were reported with one participant experiencing the image in several senses. Some images were fleeting and one woman felt 'set back' when her compassionate image changed into something unpleasant. Imagery improved with practice and was considered rewarding. Possibly too much was attempted within an inconsistent time frame and with these changes participants did not feel contained.

Concerning the scores: in the post self- compassion/soothing CM training results the score of participant no 7 remained unchanged at 20.00 and the score of no 8 reduced from 7.17 to 6.40 after compassion/soothing CM training. Other participants' scores increased post compassion CM training so the total score of the group for self-compassion was significantly increased. Criticism scores post CM training showed four participants nos 2,3, 6 and 8 all had higher scores and were more critical <u>after</u> the training than before. The group score was slightly raised, but non-significant. These findings were not explained. Exploring the functions of self-criticism and the fear of giving this up is suggested. Evidence shows that highly self-critical depressed people may not improve as much as low self-critical depressed people in regular cognitive therapy (Rector, Bagby, Segal, Joffe & Levitt, 2000). The participants believed diaries were valuable in recording self-critical and self-soothing thoughts but required more frequent checks. Changes in diary keeping instructions and the two weeks unplanned delay before the final meeting, besides anxiety about generating images could have reduced the participants' motivation.

The first aim of the study was met. The participants collaborated well and were cohesive as a group. Diary keeping was good for weeks 1 and 2 but after week 3 when instructions changed from daily to weekly entries, diaries were lost or not written, thus the data was unreliable. The third aim was met and in time most participants were able to generate images and shared (mixed) experiences. The fourth aim was met and participants described images of rainbows, sun, plants or a comforting arm. One person's image evoked many senses having spiritual qualities.

Two further studies followed in 2006 relating to aspects of depression and self-criticism. l97 students participated, 26 men and l7l women. 50 students from McGill University, Montreal, Canada and 147 students from the University of Derby.

Irons, C., Gilbert,P., Baldwin, M.W., Baccus, J.R., & Palmer, M. (2006).
Parental recall, attachment relating, and self-attacking/self-reassurance:
Their relationship with depression.

This first study set out to explore the way in which recall of parenting and attachment style related to a person's internal self-to-self relating style. It was hypothesized that recall of parents as rejecting would relate to a more hostile self-criticalness and recall of parents as warm would relate to abilities to be self-reassuring and these self- critical or self-reassurance processes might mediate the link between recall of parenting and depressive symptoms. 197 undergraduate students from the U.K. and Canada completed self-report questionnaires (s-EMBU) with 3 subscales, measuring recall of parental styles: Rejection, Emotional Warmth & Over-protection. Cronbach's alphas were .89 rejection .78 over-protection .90 emotional warmth. The Relationship Questionnaire (Bartholomew & Horowitz, l99l) related to a person's self-image, positive or negative and their image of others, positive or negative. The Self-Criticising/Attacking & Self-Reassuring Scale (FSCRS) Gilbert et al (2004) and (CES-D scale (Radloff, l977) measured depression symptoms. The results showed a recall of parents as rejecting and overprotecting was significantly related to both inadequacy and self-hating self-criticism. In contrast, parental warmth was negatively correlated with these kinds of self-criticism. When

things go wrong recall of parental warmth was associated with a person's ability to be self-reassuring. A mediator analysis suggested: 1) The impact of recall of negative parenting on depression is mediated through the two forms of self-criticism. 2) The effect of parental warmth on depression is mediated by the ability to be self-reassuring. Conclusions: The impact of negative parenting styles may lead to vulnerabilities in the way children and later adults, develop their self-to-self relating e.g. as self-critical versus self-reassuring. Further research is needed on the link between attachment experiences, recall of parental rejection or warmth, and their relationship to internal, self-evaluative and affect systems increasing vulnerabilities to psychopathology. Helping people with difficult backgrounds to become self-reassuring could be a focus for therapy which supported Gilbert's aims for Compassionate Mind Training.

<u>Critique</u>

The procedure is not clearly set out; groups are mentioned but size and gender are unstated. Results showed no difference but are correlational and do not show causality. Gender is unbalanced with many more women than men. No follow-up was planned. I would suggest a smaller study with an equal gender balance, in a clinical population, repeating the same tests and possibly conducting semi-structured interviews to reach a more comprehensive view.

Gilbert, P., Baldwin, M.W., Irons, C., Baccus, J. R., & Palmer, M. (2006).
<u>Self-Criticism and Self-Warmth: An Imagery Study Exploring Their Relation to Depression.</u>

In this second study l97 students participated (26 male, 171 Female) 50 from McGill University and 147 from the University of Derby. A self-imagery task investigated trait self-criticism and trait self-reassurance in relation to the ease and clarity of generating self-critical and self-reassuring images and the felt power and emotion of such imagery.

Recent research has suggested that self-critics have under-elaborated and undeveloped capacities for compassionate self-soothing and warmth (Gilbert &

Irons, 2005). When things go wrong those who are self-critical compared to those who self-reassure, are at increased risk of psychopathology. The CES-D Scale assessed depressive symptomatology in non-psychiatric populations (Radloff, 1977), and The Form of Self-Criticizing/Attacking & Self-Reassuring Scale (FSCRS) developed by Gilbert et al. (2004) was used as a 22 items scale and The Social Comparison Scale (Allan & Gilbert, 1997; Gilbert & Allan, 1998) which is highly correlated with depression. Two visualization studies were conducted. In the first, participants were asked to imagine the critical part of themselves as another person and were questioned about the ease of visualising this and the clarity, power and emotion of such imagery when faced with a disappointing grade for their essay. Results suggested that trait self-criticism is associated with ease and clarity in generating hostile and powerful self-critical images which are not easily dismissed. The second visualization task concerned trait self-reassurance with similar questions. This is also associated with ease and clarity of generating warm and supportive images of the self. Further analysis suggests that difficulties in generating self-reassurance and compassionate images about the self with self-directed warmth, may also contribute to depressive symptoms. Self-critics may not only suffer increased negative feelings about the self but also may struggle to generate self-supportive images and feelings for the self which suggests a need for therapeutic interventions. Therefore it is not a general ability to generate clarity of an image but the *type* of image and the qualities it is given. The power of the image and the associated anger were significantly related to trait self-criticism and depressive symptomatology. Self-critics found their images difficult to dismiss. The degree of trait self-reassurance was inversely related to the power of a self-critical image and anger in the image. A trait self-assurance image was related to less discouragement, it was less powerful and easier to dismiss. People high in trait self-reassurance do not have such an intense or clear internal self-critical relationship. It may be that it is both the ease of accessing critical images and the difficulty of accessing warm supportive thoughts, feelings and images that impact on depressive symptoms. If the affect system for responding to reassuring cues is toned down for some reason, then helpful cognitions might not be able to link to certain types of soothing affect systems. This implies it may not be sufficient to teach patients how to rationally re-evaluate their negative self-cognitions but for the therapist to help promote and practice experiencing internal scripts and role relationships based on warmth,

compassion and forgiveness (Gilbert, 2000; Gilbert & Irons, 2005). The brain is highly responsive to signals of warmth and affection and shows different patterns of activation to this in contrast to hostility and criticalness (Panksepp, l998; Cacioppo et al., 2000; Buss, 2009).

Critique

 It would be interesting to repeat the study with a mature clinical population balanced for gender, with 50% of participants with trait self-criticism receiving compassion-focused therapy to raise their ability to self-reassure and a matched self-critical control group on a reserve list for comparison with the first group after therapy. The control group could then be offered the same therapy so they are not disadvantaged and results compared.

An important study follows employing CMT with patients with disturbed backgrounds and experiencing long term problems, who attended a CBT day centre for therapy.

Paul Gilbert & Sue Procter (2006).
Compassionate Mind Training for People with High Shame and Self-Criticism: Overview and Pilot Study of a Group Therapy Approach.

Overview

Compassionate Mind Training is at the core of CFT (Leaviss & Uttley, 2015). CMT aims to help clients to learn the skills required to develop the key qualities and attributes of compassion, cited as care for well-being, sensitivity, distress tolerance, empathy and non-judgement (Gilbert, 2009b). CMT is a structured programme for 12 weeks with tasks and exercises developed for people with high shame and self-criticism, often with long-term problems, who were previously unable to experience self-compassion, to be helped to cultivate it. Self-warmth and self-acceptance was difficult for some who might also fear receiving compassion. When researching the role of shame and self-criticism in psychological difficulties it is important to consider the affect systems, activating versus soothing, and the theory and therapy

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process of CMT. Some elements of this approach had previously been tested (Gilbert & Irons, 2004) but a more systematic group format was required. Compassion expressed in a group setting can be an important factor in change, according to Bates (2005).

The Study

The patients had long term complex problems, most with personality disorders and abusive backgrounds. All were receiving treatment in a CBT day centre. The researchers did not refer to diagnostic labels. They aimed to explore acceptability to the patients, their understanding, and abilities to use and practise compassion-focused processes of CMT in an uncontrolled trial. Nine patients volunteered but three dropped out, leaving two men and four women. CMT uses CBT approaches of psycho-education, Socratic discussion, guided discovery, learning thought and affect monitoring, recognising their source, de-centring, acceptance, testing out ideas and behavioural practice. Sometimes Mindfulness is used to help people to 'be in the moment' and to prevent rumination. The relationship-building skills of the therapist involve those of DBT (Lynch et al., 2006) and CBT (Gilbert & Leahy in press) which are essential to CMT. In CBT automatic thoughts are important elements in the theory, but in CMT they are viewed as part of people's automatic *reactions* to events that become fused with emotions, behavioural tendencies and thoughts. Gilbert stresses the focus on reactions because such reactions to threat are often rapid responses from our defence and safety systems, linked to emotional memories and occur before we can consciously influence them. In CMT it is important to help people to understand this and to accept the fact that automatic reactions are *not their fault*, or easily controlled, but occur as a result of evolved defences, genes, learning and conditioning. This can help to reduce people's beliefs that they should be able to control their automatic reactions, that their feelings or reactions are wrong, or shameful or that there is something 'wrong with them,' if they cannot. (Leahy, 2002; 2005). Some people have not had the opportunity to develop their abilities to understand the source of their distress or to be gentle and self-soothing when set-backs occur but are internally and externally, sensitive to threat. The participants attended a two-hour session weekly in Compassionate Mind Training for twelve weeks. They understood that the study was part of a research programme to observe

the process and effectiveness of CMT and they as active collaborators, would inform the researchers what was helpful and what was not. The measures were weekly diaries in which participants recorded their self-critical and self-soothing thoughts and images. Six scales were completed, many developed by Gilbert, and HADS which were completed at the beginning and end of therapy. The results showed significant reductions in depression, anxiety, self-criticism, shame, inferiority and submissive behaviour. The participants' ability to be self-soothing and to focus on feelings of warmth and reassurance for the self, increased. Self-persecution was reduced but not self-correction 'to keep me on my toes'. Anxieties about reducing this form of self-attacking were fears of becoming lazy and not 'keeping up.' Submissive behaviour was reduced, although assertiveness had not been an aim. This study appeared to be more successful than the study in 2004 although no control group was offered because it too was a pilot study. The discussion reported that some patients found mindful breathing so disturbing they might not continue if this was required. A group discussion decided tennis balls would be provided for participants to hold for sensory attention which helped several to relax and some carried as a transitional object. Lee (2005) had suggested certain smells can cue compassionate feelings. Most of the measures had changed positively, except self-correcting which was little changed but participants considered this maintained their standards. The group focused on developing compassion not on challenging or interpreting behaviour, which issues were contained in the group (Bates, 2005).

Critique

The breathing exercise was not tolerated even for 15 seconds. People felt unwilling to continue, whereas introducing tennis balls for sensory focus was acceptable and appreciated. A strength of the study was participants' recognition that if they could focus on compassion they were attempting to activate a different mentality in themselves. Perhaps as the researchers suggested, behavioural tasks could be usefully introduced rather than engaging with self-criticism. The perception of compassion initially perceived as 'risky' was confirmed. Some participants said the study was a 'revolutionary experience' in recognising their previous hostility towards themselves and discovering what inner compassion and acceptance felt like being a 'healthy way of thinking.' Gilbert confirms that the process of refining their

approach continues towards making self-compassion a specific focus for therapy, particularly for those with chronic difficulties and abusive histories.

Katherine M. Lucre & Naomi Corten (2013).

An exploration of group compassion-focused therapy for personality disorder.

This study was of interest because records have shown people with personality disorders who experience high self-criticism and shame can be therapeutically challenging with a high rate of drop-out and because the researchers set a one year follow-up to evaluate the participants' progress following treatment. The mixed method design incorporating participants' narratives was of personal interest. Self-report measures were completed at the beginning and the end of therapy and at one year follow–up. The study was designed as a pre-randomized controlled trial to support applications to fund an RCT. The study aimed to evaluate a newly developed CFT group work programme for people with PD. Eight patients participated who regarded themselves as self-critical and had experienced long term complex trauma, met the diagnostic criteria for PD. The evolutionary-based CFT model was explained to the participants, the nature of self-criticism and shame, and the main compassion-focused exercises. Results showed this 16 week group therapy was associated with significant reductions in the following: Shame (Others as Shamer Scale;) Social comparison (Social Comparison Scale;) feelings of hating oneself and increased abilities to be self-reassuring (Self-Attacking and Self-Reassuring Scale,) with depression and stress measured by the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS). Significant changes occurred on all CORE variables, well-being, risk, functioning, and problems. All variables showed trends for continued improvement at one year follow-up although statistically non-significant. Content analysis reported patients had found it a moving and very significant process in their efforts to develop emotional regulation and self-understanding. In conclusion CFT revealed a beneficial impact on a range of outcome measures which were maintained at one year follow-up. More detailed analysis is needed to explore the benefits of CFT. This study and the following study show how CFT has expanded to treat different and mixed populations of diagnosed patients effectively, offering new ways to manage their self-critical tendencies through change directed by self-compassion. The authors believe that the capacity to 'practice what you preach' was important to

this process and therapist self-compassion practice should be integrated into future training and protocols, anticipating the study of Gale, Schroder and Gilbert (2017).

Critique

The refreshing approach of incorporating the themes in the patients' narratives added depth and meaning to the statistical results and enriched the study. The follow-up was positive with plans for a further RCT study.

The following two studies explore group-based CFT. The first concerns clients who were mostly severely depressed and who responded positively to CFT.

Judge, L., Cleghorn, A., McEwan, K. & Gilbert, P. (2012).
An Exploration of Group Based Compassion-Focused Therapy for a Heterogeneous Range of Clients Presenting to a Community Mental Health Team.

35 clients in groups of 5 were run over 12-14 weeks. At pre-intervention most patients were in the 'severe' category of depression scores. One hour weekly group sessions with home practice of loving-kindness meditation (compassion directed to self, to others, then to strangers) increased positive emotions, mindfulness, feelings of purpose in life and social support and decreased illness symptoms. When therapy ended the majority were in the borderline category.   The therapy was easily understood, well-tolerated, considered helpful and produced significant changes in objective measures of mental health difficulties in naturalistic settings.   Funding had not allowed for a control group, but the results were considered positive because despite the three day workshop training the clinicians had received, the resultant data was promising for the utility of CFT.

Cuppage, J., Baird, K., Gibson, J., Booth, R., & Hevey, D. (2017). Exploring the effectiveness with a transdiagnostic group and potential processes of change.

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of a compassion-focused therapy (CFT) group with a trans-diagnostic population as compared to Treatment As Usual (TAU). Ethically a randomized design was not possible in the treatment setting

therefore a TAU group was substituted. A secondary aim was to explore the potential processes of change within the treatment. 58 participants in group CFT were compared to 29 receiving TAU. Group CFT attended two sessions a week for five weeks then once a week for four weeks, 14 sessions in total. Self-report measures of psychopathology, shame, self-criticism, fears of self-compassion and social safeness were completed pre-treatment, post treatment and at two months follow-up. The results showed significantly greater improvements in levels of psychopathology, fears of self-compassion and social safeness for CFT compared to TAU. Shame and self-criticism were improved within the CFT group but not for the TAU group. All improvements were maintained at two month follow-up. CFT appears to be an effective group intervention for a range of mental health difficulties. The positive results demonstrated the value of addressing underlying psychological process, rather than symptoms alone. Follow-up response was 57% of those completing the course, possibly owing to travel distance. The study confirms CFT interventions with a group can benefit a trans-diagnostic population. The researchers, aware of previous CFT group interventions, (Gale et al., 2014; Judge et al., 2012) and the recommendations of Lucre & Corten (2013) offered the current group 14 sessions and four booster sessions.

Critique

The design and procedure were clearly set out. Reductions in self-criticism in relation to self-persecution and in fears of self-compassion also predicted the improvements in psychopathology which supported the change proposed by Gilbert's model (Gilbert, 2010). Overall it appears the aims were met.

Kristin Neff's research on self-compassion

While Gilbert researched CFT and CMT Kristin Neff in America has pioneered research in self-compassion, developing The Self-Compassion Scale (Neff 2003). Knowledge of Buddhist principles and Mindfulness underpin Neff's research. She defines self-compassion as having three components: a) being mindful, not over-identifying with problems: b) connecting with others, versus isolation; c) adopting self-kindness over being judgmental (Neff, 2003). Neff compared the realistic

acceptance of academic failure in students who were self-compassionate and coped with disappointment (Neff, K.D., Hseih, Y., & Dejitthirat, K, 2005). The popular Western concept of self-esteem was compared with the more inclusive, altruistic values of self-compassion for healthy living (Neff, 2011). A later pilot study and RCT was published: The Mindful Self-Compassion Program for public use or with clinical populations (Neff & Germer 2012).

Goss, K., & Allan, S. (2014) published <u>The development and application of compassion-focused therapy for eating disorders (CFT-E)</u> which is now a recognised therapeutic intervention.

Kelly, A. C., & Carter, J., C. (2015). <u>Self-compassion training for binge eating disorder: a pilot randomized controlled trial.</u>

 34 women and 7 men with binge eating disorder were randomly assigned to three conditions for 3 weeks of 1) food planning and self-compassion exercises or 2) food planning and behavioural strategies, or 3) a waitlist as a control condition. Self-report questionnaires were completed pre and post the interventions. Power point delivered instructions and participants completed reports of their homework after weeks 1 and 2 before returning after week 3. Both conditions of self-compassion training and behavioural strategies improved more than the waitlist condition. Evidence showed that in combination with food planning and self-monitoring, self-help exercises that focus on cultivating self-compassion may be an effective treatment. Self-compassion training reduced global eating disorder pathology, eating concerns and weight concerns more than the behavioural condition. Participants low in fear of self-compassion gained more benefit from this than those high in fear of self-compassion. For people to gain most benefit from self-compassion training, assessing and lowering fear of self-compassion will be essential.

The following three recent studies were published in 2017 and 2018.

Pepping, C.A., Lyons, A., McNair, R., Kirby, J.N., Petrocchi, N. & Gilbert, P. (2017). A tailored compassion-focused therapy program for sexual minority young adults with depressive symptomatology:

Lesbian, gay and bisexual men and women represent one of the highest risk populations for depressive symptomatology and disorders with young LGB adults being at greatest risk. This is an outline protocol for an RCT to test the preliminary efficacy of a compassion-focused therapy intervention for young LGB adults compared with a self-directed cognitive behavioural program with no specific tailoring for LGB participants. 50 young adults male and female aged 18 – 25 will be recruited over a five month period in Australia. The Beck Depression Inventory II and demographic information will provide information. The design is a mixed model with repeated measures. The intervention will be delivered through manualized treatment protocols for CFT and CBT.

Sommers-Spijkerman, M., Trompetter, H., Schjreurs, L., & Bohlmeijer, E. (2018). Pathways to Improving Mental Health in Compassion-Focused Therapy: Self-Reassurance. Self-Criticism and Affect as Mediators of Change.

The working mechanisms of CFT remain understudied. Drawing on the theoretical model underlying CFT four putative working mechanisms were examined: self-reassurance, self-criticism, positive/negative affect, in relation to changes in well-being and psychological distress. Conclusions were the study provided preliminary empirical evidence that CFT operates through cultivating self-reassurance, reducing self-criticism and regulating positive and negative affect in a non-clinical sample. Further exploration of therapeutic change processes and their interplay is needed to advance the development of CFT.

Ehret, A.M., Joormann, J., Berking, M. (2018). <u>Self-compassion is more effective than acceptance and reappraisal in decreasing depressed mood in currently and formerly depressed individuals.</u>

Major depressive disorder is highly recurrent with the risk for repeated episodes in individuals who have recovered from a depressive episode exceeding 80%. Self compassion was discussed as an effective *affect r*egulation strategy to reduce negative affective states. The current study aimed to compare the efficacy of self-compassion to the more established strategies of acceptance and reappraisal. Depressed mood was induced in formerly, currently and never depressed individuals 30 in each condition at four different time points. Participants were instructed to regulate their emotions after each mood induction by either, waiting, employing self-compassion, accepting their emotions or reappraising the situation. Level of depressed mood was assessed before and after each mood induction and regulation phase. Across the group results showed decreases in depressed mood were greater in the self-compassion mode compared to the waiting and acceptance conditions. In the recovered and never depressed participants, self-compassion was also more effective than reappraisal. A limitation was that results relied solely on self-report data. Future research is planned employing self-compassion interventions to understand how they may enhance efficacy and stability of current depression treatments.

<u>Conclusions</u>

The results of Gilbert, Neff and others researching the therapeutic effects of compassion and self- compassion continues to capture international interest leading to new developments in therapy with improved mental health outcomes and consideration of sexual minority young adults at risk of depressive disorders. In view of the evidence to date it appears compassion has surely added a new dimension in therapy.

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SCALES USED

Self Critical / Self Reassuring Scale   Gilbert, Clarke, Hempel, Miles & Irons, 2004.

Other As Shamer Scale (OAS)   Gilbert, Allan & Goss, l994.

Social Comparison Scale   Allan & Gilbert, l995.

The Submissive Behaviour Scale   Allan & Gilbert, l997.

Epilogue

<u>Compassion and its connection with each section of the portfolio</u>

Compassion is the theme that links all the parts of the portfolio. It is an important resource in the caring professions and particularly for psychologists, counsellors and therapists. Compassion is expected to underpin a clinician's knowledge and theoretical practice when consulted by people who are hurt or troubled by life events and seeking support and a safe place to confide their concerns. Strauss et al (2016) continue their quest to define and to measure compassion but I will focus on the definition of Gilbert, (2017) *'the sensitivity to suffering in self and others, with a commitment to try to alleviate and prevent it.'* Compassion is the essential ingredient that governs the ethos of Gilbert's Compassion Focused Therapy, and the manner in which it is applied. It is influenced by the theory of John Bowlby (1969) who studied the need for compassion towards children and individuals who had experienced harsh and neglectful early years. The mythical tale of the sun and the wind competing to see which element could make a man remove his coat, illustrates how warmth and kindness can prove more effective than force. By modelling compassion in therapy through tone of voice, warmth and acceptance, the therapist demonstrates the benefits to a client who learns to treat themselves more kindly. Taking time to establish a relationship with a client and to listen deeply is respectful and important towards beginning help for a person to understand their feelings and perspective. Interest in Gilbert's CFT has continued to increase with adaptations developed to suit different conditions, for individual or group therapy and for therapists to apply in their own lives. The two clients in the case studies needed very different approaches to demonstrate compassion, to which they could comfortably respond. One had experienced a secure childhood and a happy marriage, which appeared to strengthen her trust and motivation in therapy. She readily responded to an empathetic, warm and sociable style. The second client recalled an anxious childhood with unpredictable parenting and the need to be vigilant and responsible. Trusting in therapy for her was more challenging and she chose to be intellectually involved, including understanding the rationale for the therapy chosen and reading the research papers. Both clients responded to a particular style of care and understanding adapted to their preferred approach. In Section B, the research study,

examples of compassion were discerned in the narratives of participants who were struggling to cope with their own disrupted lives, yet who expressed concern and care for their non-heterosexual spouses who had left them. Compassion was narrated in different ways through their story telling. Three women forgave their husbands' infidelity which was honestly disclosed and empathised with the insults the men experienced upon coming out publicly. Other wives became more understanding as the years passed and some encouraged their parents and ex-husbands to remain on friendly terms. Three husbands whose wives had suddenly left them for relationships with women, made fewer allowances for the hurtful remarks and behaviour of their euphoric wives, but still supported them. One husband set aside his grief to prioritise the needs of his children while a second divorced to recover his health, having been reduced to penury. Several participants recalled happier times in their marriages which seemed to comfort them, and, given time were able to look forward. In conclusion: straight partners, who over time relinquished anger and bitterness and experienced compassion for the anguish and public hostility their spouses experienced appeared to adapt more readily to finding new directions in life. As a researcher, taking a compassionate stance has helped me to reflexively engage with the data to see meanings that may not have been perceived otherwise. This has also been experienced in my counselling role. As the portfolio developed I became aware that I had been studying people from different social minorities who were often overlooked: the heterosexual spouses whose partners leave them for same-sex relationships; older patients who are not offered psychological therapy and self-critical clients who cannot experience self-compassion. The cultivation of social awareness of the benefits of compassion, kindness and empathy could be further demonstrated through educational and media links generally, supported by real life examples. At a personal level, individual application of these qualities can be encouraged by people initially noticing, if and how they respond or reach out to others towards developing rapport.