

## Appendix 3

### **The Pilot**

During the spring of 2009 I conducted a pilot study in order to inform methodological choices I had to make regarding interview types for the main research project. The primary focus of the pilot was not on the criminological significance of the findings but to examine the epistemological, ontological and methodological challenges of conducting research as an 'insider' researcher. The pilot involved six participants (n=6) between 31-48 years of age; three appellants serving life sentences and three campaigners each active in campaigning to challenge the convictions of one of the appellants. The pilot involved twelve semi-structured interviews (n=12) with six participants enabling me to pilot two interview schedules. Structured interviews were piloted but the interview schedule did not fit easily into a flexible design study. The participants wanted to express their views and experiences and a more rigid format did not accommodate their desire to extend and develop their views and ideas.

During the process of data collection I discussed with participants their concerns regarding aspects of the research and after completing semi-structured interviews returned to interview the participants employing an unstructured interview method. During the interview the researcher used a list of topic areas as an interview guide. This worked well and encouraged the participants to express their views on other aspects of their relationship with the appellant. The unstructured interviews were more informal than the semi-structured interviews but provided additional information not included in the earlier semi-structured interviews.

I conducted a total of nine interviews with the appellants having decided to interview each prisoner three times. Each prison interview lasted approximately one hour. The duration of the interview was determined by the time allocated by the prison for the social visit. Semi-structured and unstructured interviews were similarly conducted with three campaigners who were each interviewed in their

own homes. The focus of these interviews was again to examine relational issues and to compare and contrast their responses with those fighting their convictions from prison. The pilot took approximately five months to complete. An important function of the pilot was to re-examine the direction of the main research topic and to use the conclusions from the pilot to improve and, where necessary, to modify the focus of the doctoral thesis. The main conclusions from the pilot focused on reflexive interviews and data collection and safeguards to research bias.