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P.Dick

The social construction of policing: discourse, gender and identity

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Publications

Refereed journal articles submitted

Dick, P. and Jankowicz, A.D. *Performance value judgements in a UK police force: the influence of power and gender.* Submitted to Policing: An International Journal of Police Management and Strategy, February 2000.

Dick, P. *A theoretical account of the processes involved in producing the vertical and horizontal segregation of policewomen: a discourse analytic approach.* Submitted to Feminism & Psychology, March 2000.

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International conference papers

Dick, P. and Biswas, R. (1996) *An assessment of Equal Opportunities and the role of HRD in the Police Service* Paper presented to the Academy of Human Resource Development, March, Minneapolis,

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Dick, P. (forthcoming) *Using interpretative discourse analysis to explore work identities.* Paper presented as part of symposium *Expanding our research and practice.* British Academy of Management Conference, September, Edinburgh.

The social construction of policing: discourse, gender and identity.

Penelope Dick

Summary

The aim of this thesis was to examine how male and female police officers constitute policing as both a profession and an identity through discourses, and to provide a theoretical explanation both of the act of self-constitution and of how discourses are reproduced, maintained or changed during the construction of accounts of work experiences. A second aim was to explain why policewomen express contentment with a status quo that is often culturally constructed as oppressive.

Using a form of discourse analysis based on Foucauldian principles, it is argued that the nature of policing as a profession and an identity is a contested and highly political domain, and these tensions are revealed in the ways individuals attempt to construct their identities within the web of discursive resources available. Dominant constructions of policing do prevail, but there is a hegemonic struggle at the individual and relational levels of discourse (Fairclough, 1992) that opens up spaces where the position of female officers, with regards to promotion and retention, may be facilitated over time.

It is suggested that because female officers are targeted with a host of discrediting discourses concerning their motivation, ambitions and credibility, this motivates them to construct positive accounts of their experiences in order to enable them to take up

subject positions in dominant discourses of liberal democracy: specifically, those that

emphasise the autonomy and integrity of the self. It is therefore argued that self-

constitution at the level of identity reproduces hegemonic discourses at the ideational

level (Fairclough, 1992) mediated by the relational operation of discourse within the

interactional context.

The social construction of policing: discourse, gender and identity

Thesis overview

The purpose of this overview is to chart the changes that occurred in my thinking over the course of the development of this thesis in order to provide a coherent rationale for the questions that the thesis seeks to address.

I began the thesis seeking to address two key questions: Are women's experiences at work different to those of men? Does working with men affect the ways women see themselves? These questions were informed by a large body of literature that suggested the answer to these questions was affirmative (e.g. Freedman and Phillips, 1988; Sheppard, 1989; Marshall, 1995). I was specifically interested in asking these questions within the context of the police organisation, largely because it receives so much criticism for its treatment of women, and partly because I had worked in a police force as a psychologist and believed that this 'insider' knowledge of the organisation would be useful. These questions were also informed by my education and training as an occupational psychologist where the individual is a key unit of analysis (Hollway, 1991).

The theoretical frameworks that informed my initial thinking can be broadly classified as products of mainstream social psychology. The idea that individuals have different experiences on the basis of social categorisation was informed by the literature on stereotyping (Allport, 1954, Bem, 1974, Schein, 1973; 1975; Schein and Mueller, 1992), and the idea that working within a male dominated organisation would affect

the self-concept, by the literature on organisational and occupational socialisation (Van Maanen, 1975; Frese, 1982; Nicholson, 1984). Both these bodies of literature are based on assumptions in which the individual is conceptualised as a pre-given entity who is privileged as the source and agent of his or her own experiences (Henriques, 1984; Venn, 1984). The methodological consequence of this thinking was that my initial efforts to answer the research questions utilised positivist techniques (surveys) that attempted to provide measurements of both the organisation and of the individual.

One of the first issues that I wrestled with at the beginning of this research was how to investigate gender differences in an organisation that had such a poor reputation for its treatment of women. My experiences as both an employee and a researcher led me to believe that police officers would not engage enthusiastically with my research, as they would be unwilling to 'tell me the truth' for fear of placing themselves or the organisation in an unfavourable light. The epistemology of this position did not strike me as anything other than a problem to be resolved through methodology, though, as my thinking developed, epistemological issues came to dominate the formulation of the thesis questions. My chief aim, methodologically, was to develop a technique that would enable me to uncover the nature of the police organisation, free from any subjective biases created by my respondents' awareness of the research aims. I therefore developed four surveys that I believed disguised the research aims while facilitating the likelihood of revealing the 'real' nature of the police organisation. The surveys consisted of a list of performance attributes, such as 'Has good knowledge of police work' and 'Reliable', and each survey was sent to groups of respondents in four separate geographic areas of the police force in which the research took place,

effectively creating four independent samples. One sample was asked to rate the extent to which each performance attribute would facilitate performance in CID (a male dominated specialist department); the second, the extent to which each attribute would facilitate performance in the Family Protection Unit (FPU) (a female dominated specialist department); the third, the extent to which each attribute would facilitate promotion to the next rank, and the fourth, the extent to which each attribute could be thought of as male-like or female-like.

The hypothesis was that attributes seen as most important for performance in CID and for promotion would be 'masculine' attributes, and those seen as most important for FPU would be female attributes (the masculinity and femininity of each attribute being ascertained from the fourth survey). I believed that should this hypothesis be confirmed, I would have evidence to show that men and women were judged in different ways, even if individual men and women denied that this was the case (as in fact many did during the course of the initial research). In fact, the analysis of the survey data did not confirm the hypothesis, and indeed suggested that successful performance in both CID and FPU was seen to be related to very similar performance attributes, and that attributes seen as important for promotion were unrelated to those attributes seen as important in the two specialist departments.

The second major component of my initial research design was the use of the Bem Sex Role inventory to measure the psychological androgyny of male and female officers (Bem, 1974). The hypothesis here was that since the police organisation was male dominated with a reputation for macho behaviour, male police officers would have a stereotypically male self-concept and female officers would see themselves as

more masculine than feminine. Again, my hypothesis was disconfirmed as the results suggested that most officers (irrespective of sex) saw themselves as androgynous.

Despite my initial disappointment at having my hypotheses disconfirmed, I still believed that I had uncovered much that was of interest, though not necessarily researchable. Firstly, for instance, I felt that the results of the surveys and of the Bem Sex Role Inventory reflected the increasing pressures on police officers to express politically correct ideas about the nature of policing and police officers. My problem was that I had no way of 'proving' that this was the case. Secondly, I was perplexed by the high proportion of female officers who I met during the initial research who reported nothing but positive experiences and dismissed any ideas that the police as an organisation was either sexist or macho. My initial reaction to these reports was to treat them with a high level of scepticism. I felt that the policewomen who reported such positive experiences were improperly motivated by, for instance, wanting to be seen to protect their male colleagues in order to be accepted by them

I initially attempted to resolve these issues within the existing theoretical and methodological frameworks informing my approach, though this actually resulted in the evolution of the actual thesis questions. Firstly, I wanted to explain why police officers would be motivated to present a picture of policing which was so different from that presented in research papers and the media. My gut reaction was to impute this to defensiveness and to the protection of their own self-image: police officers would hardly admit that the organisation was sexist and macho since this would produce all manner of questions as to why they would be working for such an organisation. Secondly, I could not understand why so many policewomen expressed

contentment with a status quo that clearly oppressed them (few women progress beyond the rank of sergeant and there is clear horizontal segregation (Brown, 1998; Prime et al., 1998)). As I have already explained, I likewise imputed this to improper motive. However, in attempting to resolve these questions within those theoretical frameworks offered by mainstream social psychology, I became increasingly, though unwillingly, pessimistic about the prospects for changing the position of policewomen, since change is seen as the outcome of resistance, which in turn is seen as the outcome of individual cognition. This argument is developed in chapter 1. I was unwilling to accept this pessimism and deliberately sought out texts that addressed emancipatory issues.

Eventually, I came to the belief that the problems I was wrestling with were not 'problems' but were questions in their own right and these informed the search for an appropriate theoretical and methodological framework. The thesis questions thus became:

How is the nature of policing and police officers portrayed by members of the police organisation and why is it portrayed in these ways?

Why do policewomen express contentment with a status quo, that on paper, appears to oppress them?

Chapter 1 Social constructionism and agency-structure dualism

Introduction

As I explained in the overview, the questions that this thesis seeks to address are:
How is the nature of policing and police officers portrayed by members of the police

organisation and why is it portrayed in these ways? Why do policewomen express

contentment with a status quo that, on paper, appears to oppress them?

The purpose of this first chapter is to begin to provide a justification of the theoretical

and analytical frameworks that I developed to answer these questions. The chapter

will begin by reviewing the broad terrain of social constructionism, setting out and

demonstrating, through a review of relevant literature, some of the pitfalls that are

associated with it, focusing specifically on problems associated with agency-structure

dualism. The chapter will then move on to review a number of theoretical approaches

that have attempted to deal with some of the problems associated with agency-

structure dualism, showing the extent to which these approaches are useful for dealing

with the thesis questions.

Social constructionism, realism and relativism

In seeking to address the question of how individuals portray the organisations in

which they work, one is inevitably drawn into the debates about the nature of reality

that are central to both social and organisational theory. Broadly speaking, these

debates are concerned with whether reality is reflected by the accounts of individuals

or whether it is constructed in their accounts. This has been referred to as the

objective vs subjective dimension in social theory (Burrell and Morgan 1979). The attractiveness of the subjective or social constructionist position is that it is fundamentally emancipatory: explicit in social constructionism is the idea that the world can be different (Burr, 1998). This position is especially important for those, like myself, seeking to address questions of apparent inequality, since social constructionism rejects the idea that men and women, for instance, are essentially different (Hearn and Parkin, 1983) and instead seeks, among other things, to understand the ways and contexts in which they are constructed as different.

A further advantage of the social constructionist position, is that ways of constructing the world are not seen as neutral or value free, but as motivated by certain ends. As Burr (1998) points out:

"Our perception has 'intentionality', so that we can only ever perceive something in terms of what it can matter to us, or do for us." (Burr, 1998:23)

Thus, an important and emancipatory aim of a social constructionist analysis is to explain the functions of the constructions of the world that people produce. Furthermore, if constructions have a functional component, then an important question that arises is "whose interests do such constructions furnish?" This has been a central argument in the feminist appropriation of social constructionism as an appropriate research methodology, since, it is argued, many dominant constructions of reality (for example, the idea that women enjoy domestic life) further the interests of men (Ferguson, 1984; Weedon, 1987). Thus a social constructionist approach not only analyses the ways in which reality is constructed by different groups and individuals,

but seeks to understand why it is constructed in the ways that it is, so that the functional and invested nature of constructions can be made visible and hence challengeable.

However, a fundamental problem with social constructionism is that in seeking to displace the notion of objective truths, its proponents are accused of subscribing to a position of relativism (Reed, 1997, Layder, 1994), or an 'anything goes' philosophy, where there are no authoritative versions of 'reality'. Any construction, it is argued, is equally as valid as any other. This has a number of profound ethical implications, because if 'truth' is a simple matter of construction and if no construction can be said to have any more authority than any other, then what is to stop the promotion of, say, rape, as a natural male response to evolutionary pressures? Burr summarises this problem, as it pertains to social scientists, as follows:

"But on what basis do we argue for the legitimacy of our position? Without the familiar and comfortable presence of truth behind the scenes to back up our claims we must find other criteria by which to justify our moral choices. If we argue that a position is justifiable if it leads to the improvement of conditions for certain people, what do we mean by improvement, and can we be satisfied that our understanding would be the same as theirs? The celebration of 'difference' that deconstruction has brought leaves us in the difficult position of problematising the categories and groups of persons whose interests we might wish to serve, so that we can no longer allow ourselves to talk about 'women', 'blacks', or 'gays' and the basis for collectivity begins to disappear." (Burr, 1998: 16)

While this is a problem that may not be currently resolvable, it is one that nevertheless needs to be acknowledged and discussed in studies informed explicitly or implicitly by social constructionism.

A second and related problem for social constructionism lies in how the relationship between the human agent and the social context in which she is located is explained. While rejecting objective approaches on the grounds that they unproblematically reproduce a status quo that can be disadvantageous to some groups (Knights, 1997), social constructionism has be to wary of theorising the individual-society relationship in ways that treat the status quo (whatever that is) as universal. Burr (1998) summarises this problem as follows:

"Social constructionism makes us conscious of the diversity and difference in humanity. I believe that it rightly cautions us against assuming that 'we' (whoever 'we' are) can legitimately speak on behalf of 'them' (whoever 'they' are)." (Burr, 1998: 17)

In attempting to answer the second of the thesis questions (why policewomen express contentment with a status quo that, on paper, appears oppressive?), this is of fundamental importance. Analytically, the researcher needs to recognise that her own construction of any given 'status quo' is as invested as those of the research participants (Casey, 1995) if she is to avoid privileging her own constructions as somehow authoritative (Burr, 1998). Furthermore, in suggesting that a given status quo privileges some groups relative to others, there is a danger of imputing intentionality to the privileged group, as well as reproducing an assumption that all

members of that collectivity are basically similar in nature and experience. Social constructionism needs to account for the diversity as well as the commonalties of collective experiences.

A fourth problem is that if the individual-society relationship is not adequately theorised, then it is difficult to explain both the durability of social systems and institutions, and how such systems are changed and transformed. While a social constructionist analysis might show how certain constructions meet the interests of some groups and not of others, an adequate theory is needed to explain why certain constructions continue unchallenged over prolonged periods of time (e.g. women being the home-maker and not the breadwinner) and why transformations in such constructions occur at different points in history (e.g. the now taken for granted idea that women have careers), producing fundamental changes in social systems (e.g. the different forms of the twenty first century family).

Apart from these issues, there are even more fundamental problems around the issue of human agency and the physical reality of, say, work. If reality is socially constructed there is a danger that both the human agent and physical, material realities are somehow collapsed into ephemeral entities that exist only in the narratives of the speaking subject (Fairclough, 1992). An adequate social constructionist theory needs to account for both the constructed and material nature of reality.

This chapter will now review a number of empirical studies of gender and organisations that can be broadly classified as social constructionist in their underlying epistemology, and which demonstrate some of the problems discussed

above. The chapter will then move on to review a number of theoretical approaches that have explicitly attempted to resolve some of these problems, highlighting their strengths and limitations.

The organisational experiences of men and women

1. Inclusion as the problematic

A number of studies that have examined women's work experiences suggest that women in male-dominated organisations have difficulty "fitting in" to the dominant culture (Kanter, 1977; Marshall, 1993; Davidson and Burke, 2000). For instance Sheppard (1989) examined the experiences of female managers in Canada, and found many of her participants experienced contradictions in the way they were treated relative to their male colleagues. However, while the experience of being treated differently to men was notable as a collective experience of women managers, the way in which women dealt with such contradictions was highly individual. Some women for instance, tried to be "feminine enough and business-like enough" in an attempt to "blend in" whereas others adopted a more confrontational stance.

Robinson and McIlwee (1991) in a study focusing on the experiences of female engineers in the U.S. argue that in organisations where engineers have a lot of power, that is where they are perceived as central to the organisation's goals, the culture promotes male-typed aggressive displays which serve to minimise or devalue female-typed attitudes. Conversely, where engineers have relatively little power, female-typed attitudes and skills are valued more. They go on to argue that the reason why

female engineers progress best in organisations where engineers have less power is due to the fact that they have less difficulty in conforming to the types of behaviours required to successfully "impression manage". Taking a different perspective, Kerfoot and Knights (1996) argue that management in many 1990s organisations is defined through masculine discourses that are preoccupied with "rational control". They argue that such discourses are reproduced by male managers through enactment of their gender identity. They further suggest that due to shifts in the nature of organisations, from "hard" systems of managerial control to softer more human-oriented philosophies, this type of discourse may lose some its currency.

2. Socialisation practices as the problematic

Another body of literature that has focused on women at work, has concentrated on how social context affects women's work experiences. For instance, theorists have argued that male domination of organisations is reinforced through broader socio-cultural values that associate women with "domestic" life and men with "public" life (Bilton et al. 1983). Nieva and Gutek (1981) suggest that these sorts of values enter the organisation via the process of "sex-role spillover", whereby the behaviours and skills seen to be associated with "femininity" and "masculinity" have implications for the work that one does that are not inherent in the job itself. Effectively, this means that women and men are likely to be perceived differently in terms of the types of role for which each is deemed most suitable. The general effects of these types of assumptions are in filtering women into a specific range of occupations that mirror domestic responsibilities such as cleaners (e.g. domestics), carers (e.g. nurses) and food preparers (e.g. canteen assistants) (Barron and Norris, 1976). However, in any

specific organisation, these assumptions become embedded and are reproduced due to the fact that they are supported by these broader cultural assumptions.

With regards to the police, early research suggested that police officers tended to see the job as both dangerous and violent and believed their most important function to be crime fighting (Flynn, 1982; Worden, 1993). This perception led male officers to assume that women would not be able to cope with the physical rigours of the role (Martin, 1980; Wilson, 1982). However, the notion that policing is an inherently dangerous job has been challenged by researchers on both sides of the Atlantic (Brown, 1981; Sykes and Brent, 1983; Shapland and Vagg, 1988; Southgate and Crisp, 1993). For example Brown (1981), in a study of three police departments in Southern Carolina, found that police officers in those departments were involved in crime-related incidents less than one third of the time. Similarly, Shapland and Vagg (1988) surveying police forces in Britain, found that in rural policing, less than half the calls received by police were to do with crime, and that in an urban area, the calls received were so diverse as to almost elude categorisation. Morash and Greene (1986), in their review of police research in America suggest that the dominance of the perception of policing as dangerous, is attributable to the fact that men dominate the organisation and tend to conduct most of the research on policing. Nonetheless, the effects of these perceptions appear to be that women are less frequently deployed to potentially violent incidents, more frequently deployed to 'safe beats', and are more likely to be accompanied while on patrol (Brown, 1998).

There is also evidence to suggest that policewomen are differentially deployed to tasks and incidents that mirror socio-cultural constructions of femininity, such as

dealing with children and domestic incidents (Brown et al, 1993; Brown, 1998), and that they are more likely to be found in departments that deal with administration, support, community issues and crime prevention (Jones, 1986; Heidensohn, 1992; Fielding, 1994; Brown, 1997). Holdaway and Parker (1998), in a survey of police women, found that they expressed more interest in such duties than men, but suggest that is an effect of differential deployment, rather than its cause.

These studies are particularly valuable in showing that women's collective experience is different from that of men. They are also useful for drawing attention to those processes operating in organisations and in society more generally that influence this collective experience. However, they are limited in a number of key areas.

The pitfall of universalism

While these studies suggest that women do experience organisational life and their organisational colleagues in different ways to men, they also indicate that all females do not experience life in male dominated organisations in similar ways. For instance in Sheppard's study, she found that some women tended to 'laugh off' sexual politics and did not see them as necessarily unpleasant. And Marshall (1984) found that some of the women managers in her study reported never to have experienced any form of discrimination.

Research into the experiences of policewomen shows similar inconsistencies (Jones, 1986; Brewer, 1991; Reiner, 1992; Walkgate, 1996; Brown, 1998). Some studies have examined sexist attitudes in the police force, often from the perspective of the so-

called "canteen-culture": the sub-culture that permeates grass-roots policing. The general assumption in these studies, is that the 'macho' nature of this sub-culture operates to exclude women and to discourage them from applying for either promotion or secondment to specialist departments like CID and Traffic.

For instance, it has been suggested that policemen are hostile to policewomen (Flynn, 1982; Balkin, 1986; Young, 1991) and that women are subjected to sexual harassment by their male colleagues (Martin, 1990; Brown, 1998). These studies suggest that such attitudes have deleterious effects on women's job satisfaction, commitment and experience of stress. However, some studies suggest that women do not report higher levels of stress or lower levels of commitment, compared to their male counter-parts (Fry and Greenfield, 1980; Davis, 1984). Holdaway and Parker (1998) further suggest that women themselves sustain aspects of the police culture which, it is argued, operate to exclude them. For instance, in their study, they found that both policemen and women tended to emphasise the crime related aspects of their work as being most important and enjoyable, even though other authors have suggested that such emphases sustain the 'masculinity' of the police culture, and therefore the likelihood that women will experience exclusion (Morash and Greene, 1986; Heidensohn, 1992).

So while these studies are extremely helpful in enabling women to articulate their experiences in meaningful ways, they can sometimes dismiss or downplay the less controversial experiences of those women who do not construct their experiences as problematical. Indeed, this diversity of experience is difficult to explain within the theoretical frameworks adopted in these studies, where there is an implicit assumption that the researcher's interpretation of organisational reality is 'correct'.

The pitfall of realism

There are a number of limitations associated with treating 'masculine' values as the problematic for women. First, the notion that values can be seen as a reflection of masculinity or of femininity implies that these categories can be differentiated on the basis of characteristics that are relatively unique to each, and which are therefore pre-given. As Leidner (1992), Kondo (1990) and Gheradi (1994) suggest (see discussion below), while there are cultural discourses that broadly define what it means to be 'masculine' or 'feminine', these are drawn upon in different ways and in different interactional contexts to invoke a gendered identity for motivated reasons. Suggesting that values can somehow be objectively ascribed a specific label, collapses back into realist assumptions that the majority of these studies implicitly eschew.

Second, many studies that have examined the way that women construct their experiences of work have not included male participants. Although this can be justified on feminist grounds, it nevertheless sidesteps the problem that men might put a different gloss on the experiences that women report. In these studies, the experiences of women tend to be treated as if they are a reflection of an actual reality which again resurrects the realist ontology that these researchers are seeking to subvert. Within this sort of explanatory framework, it is difficult to reconcile the differences in experiences that women report (e.g. Sheppard, 1989), without recourse to theoretical approaches that privilege the individual as the cause of these differences and the researcher's interpretation of them as authoritative. For instance, Sheppard (1989) argues that the women in her study who "laughed off" sexual politics are

experiencing a form of "false consciousness", implying that they are failing to see things as they really are.

The neglect of context and stake

A further limitation of this position is that the circumstances that lead women to resist 'sexist' practices are largely understood in terms of agency, and the social conditions in which resistance is manifested are afforded little attention. For example, Sheppard (1989) and Mills (1989) argue that changes in the position of women are only likely to come about when more and more women become conscious of the inequity of their work experiences and actively confront and resist the practices that reproduce it. This is unsatisfactory, because resistance is consigned to human agency and the conditions which facilitate resistance are played down. For example, 'women's liberation' has had a major impact on the behaviour, attitudes and aspirations of many women this century, and in turn 'women's liberation' was located in a broader cultural context that evolved between and after the two world wars (Hollway, 1984). Thus, women's resistance to their socially defined roles cannot simply be ascribed to agency, but must be located in its historical and cultural context.

Further, in treating the status quo in universalist ways, the stakes involved in constructing the world in certain ways are neglected. For instance, what stake do men have in 'enacting' a certain type of masculinity (Kerfoot and Knights, 1996)? Leidner (1991) addressed this issue directly in her study of the gender identity of men and women working in MacDonalds and in Combined Insurance in the US. Employees in both organisations were required to behave in fairly submissive ways towards

customers, which Leidner suggests is often associated with "femininity". She found that men and women interpreted their work very differently. For instance, she found that male sales representatives working for the insurance company emphasised those aspects of their work that required "manly" traits such as control and self-discretion. She goes on to argue that women do not feel the same urge to define their work as "womanly" largely because *"adult female identity has not traditionally been regarded as something that is achieved through work"* (p173). Leidner's work not only shows that masculinity and femininity are categories whose content is subject to local negotiation (Gheradi, 1994), but also that gender acquires its subjective meanings through the context in which it is enacted.

Kondo's (1990) work sheds further light on this issue. Working as a participant observer in a sweet factory in Japan, she noted how the female part time workers would "mother" the younger male full time workers, often developing eroticised relationships with them. Kondo argues that these gendered displays served to provide these women with greater power in their social relationships with the young men, though at the same time reproducing cultural notions of femininity and their subordination within the organisational hierarchy.

Both Leidner and Kondo, therefore, show that while there are broad cultural definitions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity', the actual meanings of these categories are actively constructed by individuals through their work practices. Further, these studies indicate that the enactment of identity is 'motivated'. That is, constructing and performing a certain type of identity, such as being masculine or feminine, has a purpose.

To summarise this section, a relatively large body of literature has examined the ways

in which women experience organisational life using theoretical approaches and

methods grounded in social-constructionist assumptions. However, some of these

studies are limited due to the fact that they treat the constructions of their research

participants as reflections of an underlying reality, while other studies have treated

variations in the experiences of research participants as attributable to

'misperceptions'. Furthermore, a social constructionist epistemology is partly

premised on the notion that constructions are motivated i.e. that there is a 'stake' in

constructing the world in certain ways, and this issue has been neglected in studies of

gender in organisations. Finally, the historical and cultural context in which certain

constructions of the world are located is also neglected with the consequence that the

reasons why individuals resist or accept certain social conditions are attributed to

agency.

Dealing with the agency-structure problem

As the preceding review suggests, many of the limitations manifested in research into

women's experience at work are a consequence of oversimplifying the relationship

that exists between individuals and the social context. For instance, while it is clear

that the social context has effects at the collective level (e.g. producing women's

desire for a career), it does not universally affect individual women (e.g. some women

do not want to have a career). Similarly, while some women have actively

campaigned to improve women's lot, other women are content to accept the status

quo. If the relationship between individual action and the social context is not

explicitly theorised, then it becomes very difficult to address the types of questions with which this thesis is concerned. For example, Reiner (1992) suggests that the idea that policing is essentially a crime-fighting task emerged during the 1950s and 1960s, transforming the police officer in the eyes of the public, from a 'plod' to a 'pig'. Such constructions have material as well as ideological effects. Not only do they affect the identity of the police officer, but they influence the allocation of resources and the types of resources deemed appropriate for policing (e.g. squad cars and firearms). How is this to be explained?

The relationship between agency and structure is even more fundamental to the second of the thesis questions: why women express contentment with a status quo that, on paper, appears to oppress them. The criticisms that police organisations receive on account of the extent of vertical and horizontal gender segregation has been well documented (Adler, 1990; Brown et al., 1991; HMIC, 1992; 1996; Martin, 1996; Brown, 1998; Holdaway and Parker, 1998; Prime et al, 1998). However, it is difficult to envisage how this situation is to change, given that many policewomen, like those in my own study, express high levels of satisfaction with the 'way things are' in the organisation. Indeed, the whole issue of increasing the presence of women in the organisation raises a whole host of problems related to the relativist debates in social constructionism: if policewomen are happy with their lot, why should female academics, like myself, presume to know what is best for them? If police officers get a great deal of satisfaction out of constructing their roles and identities in specific ways, why should anyone try to persuade them that 'things could be different'?

I believe that theorising the agency–structure dualism is vital in reaching an understanding of why it is important to challenge any construction of the world or way of being. Challenging any dominant construction of the world can sometimes result in alternative constructions becoming available. The women's liberation movement is a clear example of this process. Most women now understand themselves, their aspirations and their relationships through the constructions of the world made available by women's liberation, and I, for one, am happy with the life that such constructions have afforded me. However, to understand both how women's liberation as a movement originated and why women have chosen to live according to some of its philosophy requires a theory that can explain the complexity of the process, and not reduce it to simple matters of the activities of 'agents' or to changes in social structures. With respect to women's liberation, it is clear that women (as agents) have engaged in certain forms of action, and that changes in social structures as well as in human agents have occurred both prior to and as a consequence of these actions. However, there is clearly no straightforward cause and effect relationship.

This chapter will now go on to explore various theoretical attempts to overcome some of the problems associated with the agency-structure dualism, drawing attention to the strengths and limitations of each.

Social psychology's response to agency-structure dualism

Social psychology's attempt to bridge the agency-structure dualism is based on the notion of 'interaction'. From this perspective, the individual and the social context

are seen to be involved in a reciprocal relationship, with each affecting and affected by the other. One of the first attempts to theorise this position was made by Mead (1934). In Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism, language is the medium through which individuals come to represent themselves to themselves. It is through the use of language that acts and objects acquire meaning to individuals. Behaviour is therefore not a passive response to various social stimuli, but is an intentional response to objects and situations which have acquired a specific symbolic meaning. In the theory of symbolic interactionism, meaning is related to action: the basic premise is that human beings are essentially planful in nature and that events and objects acquire meaning to the extent that they are instrumental in the achievement of plans. The self identity develops through the process of role-taking which is essentially the positions people adopt in various social interactions e.g. son to someone else's father. These interactions convey expectations of appropriate behaviour which are eventually internalised such that individuals learn the behaviours expected of them in certain roles i.e. how sons behave towards fathers. In a similar way, individuals learn to develop expectations regarding the behaviour of other people in interactions. However, these sets of expectations are not fixed and stable, but are open to negotiation as people interact within various contexts.

Goffman (1967) extended symbolic interactionism by suggesting that the roles that individuals take on vary according to interactional context. For Goffman, individuals engage in conscious impression management with other people in their social environment, attempting to influence the impression others have them. However, because interaction is essentially dynamic, the roles individuals take on are seldom definitive, but change and evolve as the demands of the interaction situation evolve.

In addition to the interactional level of social action Goffman (1983) proposes that there is also an institutional level of interaction. By this he means fairly stable aspects of the social world on which we all draw to make sense of ourselves and others. Gender might be one example, class and educational background others. Goffman argues that the human agent, while creatively able to shrug roles on and off in any given interaction situation, is nevertheless constrained by the realities of the institutional order. For example, a working class person will not find it easy to carry off a role as an upper-class person due to the realities of, say, accent, educational attainment and professional status.

Strengths and limitations

The idea of interactionism is very attractive because, as individuals, we perceive ourselves to be discrete entities existing and acting in a social milieu. Further, as individuals we experience feelings and motives, we do learn and we do think about what we do. Furthermore, Goffman's idea of the institutional and intercactional orders can be thought of as a 'nested' social ontology (McLennan, 1989) in which society is conceptualised as stratified, though the different strata are seen as closely related. As Reed (1997) argues, such an ontology enables the notion of 'real' and enduring social structures, such as the family or organisations, to be considered as analytically relevant, which is rather more satisfactory than social theories that implicitly deny the 'real' existence of social structure: an accusation often targeted at proponents of a social constructionist ontology. Finally, interactionism explicitly recognises that social contexts do not yield universalist effects. For example, while organisations might, at the collective level, prescribe certain behaviours as more

appropriate for men than women, the creative capacities of individuals ensure that they need not necessarily experience these prescriptions as restrictive. Within different interactional contexts, these prescriptions can be negotiated and sometimes changed.

However, because interactionism necessitates the idea of an already constituted social context acting on, and in turn being affected by an already constituted human actor, the cultural and historical specificity of individuals' self-beliefs and actions are neglected. Even Goffman's notion of the 'institutional order', while emphasising the importance of social structure and cultural knowledge, does not provide an analytical framework that enables the content of this order to be understood in terms of its historical origins and its continual reproduction or transformation (Giddens, 1984). Layder (1994), nevertheless, argues that Goffman's work goes a long way to explaining the agency-structure connection, largely by its focus on the ways that the creative capacities of individuals can, in some contexts, overcome the constraints of the institutional order which, Layder argues, does enable an understanding of both the reproduction and transformation of social structures. While this may indeed be the case, Goffman's theory does not make explicit those features of context that might influence 'creativity', and implicit in his work is the idea that individual 'cognitive' differences are implicated in the extent to which individuals are able to modify their behaviour and transform their social environments. For example, class membership has been transformed over the last three decades, with increasing numbers of people seeing themselves as, and acting like, the middle-classes. While Goffman's theory is useful for explaining why an individual may attempt to negotiate her class membership in some interactions and not others, it does not explain why the category

'middle-class' has assumed such popularity, nor can it help us analyse and therefore explain the content of that category and its likely functions at both the individual and societal levels.

Habermas

According to Layder (1994) Habermas's theory of system and lifeworld offers one of the most useful accounts of the link between agency and structure. One of the key premises of Habermas's work is the idea that the aim of social interaction is the achievement of 'shared understandings', that enable interactants to decide upon suitable actions.

In any given interaction, individuals attempt to reach a shared understanding by attempting to convince the other party of the validity of their own point of view. According to Habermas, these 'validity claims' correspond to three analytically distinct (and real) aspects of the social context, that he calls 'worlds'. The first world is the real world of 'facts' which we can draw upon to justify what we say. For instance, it is common for researchers interested in gender inequality to draw attention to the relatively low numbers of women at the top of organisational hierarchies. The second world is the interpersonal realm that is regulated by the specific norms and regulations of any given social context. Thus, in academic writing, it is usual to support any statements of 'fact' with evidence, usually in the form of previous research. The third world is the subjective world of the individual, where the claims we make are justified by appeal to our own disinteredness or authenticity. Again, in academic conventions it is usual, as I am doing here, to set out a rational case for why

certain issues are worthy of investigation in the first instance.

While all social interactions draw upon these three worlds to attempt to achieve a shared understanding, the interaction takes place within the general context of what Habermas calls the 'lifeworld', the background assumptions that underpin what we say and what we believe. The lifeworld in this sense, is similar to Goffman's institutional order.

According to Habermas, as societies evolve and become more complex, social systems, such as governments and the economy come into existence, replacing the role of validity claims that occur in more primitive societies. Across large sectors of society, social integration is achieved not by reaching mutual understandings through communicative action, but through the operation of system mechanisms, specifically money and power. Thus for example, ideas about right and wrong are no longer debated but are determined by the law, and those doing 'wrong' are punishable through it. Habermas refers to this process of the replacement of social by system integration as the 'uncoupling' of the system from the lifeworld.

After having uncoupled itself from the lifeworld, the system re-enters it through he process of 'colonization'. Simply put, in areas of society that should be distinct from the systems of government and the economy, such as culture and education, communicative action is severely constrained by the 'common-sense' operation of economic and administrative considerations. For example, the collapse of the mining industry in the early 1990s was justified by claims that pits were no longer profitable, which served to stifle some of the debate about the ethical and social implications of

pit closures. Habermas argues, nonetheless, that social resistance can be and is marshaled against the colonizing tendencies of the system, because the operation of the lifeworld ensures that debate is part and parcel of society.

For Habermas, therefore, the individual's essential creative capacities are repressed by the rationality of the operation of social systems. Transformation in any society is therefore contingent on the mobilisation of collective action to disrupt and question taken for granted assumptions about the operation of social systems. From this perspective, therefore, consciousness raising and debate would be two essential processes in mobilising support for social transformation.

Strengths and limitations

Like Goffman, Habermas's work has been praised on the grounds that social systems are vested with ontological reality. The economy and governments are real entities that yield tangible effects at the level of the individual, and at the level of society. Again, this is seen as important by so-called 'critical realists' (Bhaskar, 1979; Reed, 1997). The importance of theorising the social domain as ontologically real is summarised by Bhaskar as follows:

"Society does not exist independently of human activity (the error of reification). But it is not the product of it (the error of voluntarism)........Society then provides necessary conditions for intentional human action, and intentional human action is a necessary condition for it. Society is only present in human action, but human action always expresses and utilises some or other social form. Neither can, however, be

identified with, reduced to, explained in terms of or reconstructed from the other."
(Bhaskar, 1979: 46)

Habermas's work provides a clear account of how society is separate from, yet imbricated in, all human action. Like interactionism, Habermas's notion of the contextualised nature of the creative human agent enables him to circumvent problems of universalism that can stem from affording social structures the status of ontological independence.

However, Habermas's work does have limitations, especially when applied to the sorts of questions that this thesis seeks to address. The first limitation is associated with Habermas's notion of communicative action. The idea that humans are automatically programmed to engage in co-operative interactions does neglect issues of power. For example, the basis for consensus for future action might be just as likely to be a consequence of the effect of unequal power relations, as of rational understanding. Thus, the way policing is constructed, for instance, is clearly not a straightforward effect of the resolution of different validity claims about the nature of policing, as the variety of different constructions available lend testimony (Reiner, 1992). Nevertheless, the dominance of some constructions of police work have clear effects on some groups, in particular, ensuring the organisational subordination of women.

A second and related problem in Habermas's work is his neglect of hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). Hegemony refers to the way that ideology operates to secure consent or compliance and, in the process, reproduces unequal relations of power. For

example, Fairclough (1992) argues that Thatcherite ideology in the 1980s represented part of a hegemonic struggle over how economic reality was to be constructed. Thatcherite discourse was aimed at securing a belief that market forces were 'natural' and somehow beyond the control of human agents. While it could be argued that 'free market' ideology was accepted in the form constructed through Thatcherite discourse by some sectors of society, it was under constant challenge by others (e.g. the Labour party). However, Thatcher's constant reelection throughout the 1980s also shows that 'free market' ideology secured consent from some of the groups it subordinated (e.g. people in manufacturing industries who lost their jobs due to the operation of the 'free market'). Habermas's emphasis on rational consensus leaves little space for considering how and why different and contested views of the world prevail and compete.

Giddens' structuration theory

Giddens (1979, 1984) theory is an attempt to dissolve the agency-structure divide and to conceptualise the individual-society relationship in the ways envisaged by Bhaskar (ibid.). A fundamental idea in Giddens' theory is that structure should not be considered as one part of a dualism, but as a duality. By this he meant that structure can be conceptualised both as action and as structure i.e. both action and structure are different sides of the same coin. According to Giddens, people's actions are ultimately constrained by the rules and resources that are available to them. Rules and resources can be thought of as any cultural or material product such as beliefs, values, money or property. Nonetheless people can creatively draw on resources in any given interaction, thus enabling the creative and highly individual aspects of human action

to be incorporated into the theory. The resources we draw on to engage in any social activity are therefore both the medium of that activity and at the same time, its outcome. For example, Riley (1983) studied political behaviour in two professional companies in the US. She found that the resources her participants drew upon to conduct their activities (such as justifying 'game-playing' or attempting to manipulate the 'boss') resulted in these resources being continually reproduced and therefore taken for granted as appropriate methods of acting.

Agency plays an important role in Giddens' structuration theory. Not only is our capacity to act constrained by our own physical and cognitive resources, but also by the structural resources that are available to us. In turn, the structural resources that are available to us depend on the context in which we find ourselves. Thus for example, I might be able to persuade someone to do my will at work, because I am their manager and can draw upon the structural resources of my hierarchical position and the rules governing that position. However, if later, myself and the individual concerned are at a social function in a non-work context, then my desire to make friends might be constrained by the fact that the individual uses his contacts in that context to marginalise me. In this respect, power is never a stable attribute in any given relationship, but shifts according to the context in which it becomes available due to the use of structural resources.

Strengths and limitations

One of the main analytical strengths of structuration theory is its explicit focus on the way that agency can reproduce or transform social structures. However, for Giddens,

structure only exists in as much as it is instantiated in human action. As Layder (1994)

points out, this does not actually resolve the agency-structure problem, it rather

sidesteps it by suggesting that structure is not what it is usually taken to mean in

social theory (durable systems, such as, say, the family). Further, it seems untenable

to suggest that certain structures (such as the family) only exist in so far as they are

enacted by individuals, since this suggests that social structures are nothing more than

the creations of individual psychology (ibid.)

With regards to the research questions that this thesis seeks to address, Giddens'

theory does not provide an appropriate theoretical framework for a number of reasons.

First, one of the chief concerns of this thesis is to explain why people construct

policing as both a profession and an identity in similar or different ways. Giddens'

theory would suggest that the commonalties in such constructions represent the

resources that people draw upon to explain their actions, and that differences in such

constructions are manifestations of creative agency. However, this rather broad-brush

approach makes it difficult to explain the fact that the same people may construct the

same object (e,g. the police organisation) differently at different times (Potter and

Wetherell, 1987), as well as providing a rather thin explanation of why different

constructions are produced by different people. Simply put, structuration theory does

not provide an adequate account of the nature or effects of the context in which

'resources' are deployed.

A second and related issue, is that while structuration theory actively attempts to show

how structures are reproduced, it does not account for the origin of these structural

resources. For example, a structurationist reading of Holdaway and Parker's (1998) study would suggest that the 'crime related aspects of police work' are perhaps organisational cultural resources that are used by police officers to explain their actions, while at the same time justifying the crime related activities in which officers engage, thus reproducing those aspects of policing. However, what it does not explain is why the crime related aspects of the role have assumed such central importance in police officers' accounts of their role, given that other (different) constructions of the police role are clearly available (e.g. Shapland and Vagg, 1988).

Conclusions

This thesis aims to explain why the police role as an activity and an identity is portrayed by police officers in the ways that it is. A second and related aim, is to explain why policewomen express contentment with an organisational status quo that, on paper, appears to oppress them. In seeking to address these questions, I have argued that a social constructionist epistemology is likely to be most appropriate, due to its emancipatory concerns. However, I argued that social constructionism can be criticised on a number of grounds. First, is the problem of universalism, in which it is assumed that a particular construction of the world is the 'correct' construction, leading to difficulties in accommodating differences in constructions. Second is the problem of realism where, contrary to the stated epistemological position, researchers assume that a given construction is a reflection of an ontological reality (e.g. masculine values). Third is the neglect of context where changes in dominant constructions of the world that that have been reproduced over substantial periods of time are difficult to explain without recourse to explanations that privilege either

people or structures as the cause of such changes and, as a consequence, neglect the context (both cultural and historical) in which such constructions are reproduced or transformed. Finally, is the neglect of stake where, because of social constructionism's emancipatory aims, the stake that some 'subordinate' groups have in constructing the world in certain ways is not examined, possibly for fear of undermining their position still further.

I went on to review a number of theories that have attempted to resolve agency-structure dualism and thus overcome some of the problems of a social-constructionist epistemology discussed above. The approaches I reviewed have retained the distinction between the individual and the social, attempting to theorise the relationship between the two. While this relationship is theorised in different ways, it is fair to say that these approaches have the following in common:

1. The notion of the individual and social structure as ontological realities
2. The idea that action is embedded in the context of specific interactions
3. The idea that structure and action are in a dialectical relationship mediated by interactional context.

While these ideas go some way to resolving some of the problems discussed, they also raise a number of theoretical and methodological concerns.

First, although social constructionist approaches are often criticised for rendering the world ephemeral, which runs counter to our actual lived experiences of both ourselves and the contexts in which we live, this is often because, as Burr (1998) argues, there is

a lack of clarity over what a constructionist approach actually says about the nature of reality. Burr (ibid.) argues that there are three different meanings of reality as it is popularly used in social science. These are:

- Truth vs falsehood

- Materiality vs illusion

- Essence vs construction

Many social constructionist approaches are in fact concerned with the first and last of these dimensions, yet it is the second that is most often used by its critics to argue against its viability as an epistemology. A social constructionist approach need not mean a denial of an ontological reality, such as, for example, the police organisation, its formal hierarchy, and its divisions and roles, but it does suggest that while these entities are real they are both the product and producers of social constructions, and could, therefore, be different. For example, CID was developed to deal with the investigation of crime, but what is constituted as crime has been different at different epochs (Foucault, 1977), and thus while, as Giddens suggests, the activities of CID reproduce ideas about what constitutes crime, it is the broader social context in which the police organisation is located that transforms ideas about what activities are classed as crime. Domestic violence is one example of a social practice that was once deemed not to be a crime.

Thus, a useful approach would be one in which the material reality of the world is acknowledged, but which enables such realities to be deconstructed so that their historical and cultural specificity can be located. Although all the theoretical approaches to the agency-structure dualism reviewed above emphasise the dialectical nature of this relationship, none focuses on the historical and cultural specificity of the

ontological 'reality' of people and structures. However, if the processes of social construction are neglected, there is a danger that social structures and individuals are conceptualised as possessing 'essential' attributes, and then theorising both individual and social transformation becomes very difficult (Henriques et. al, 1984).

Second, the idea that action is embedded in specific interactional contexts is an antidote to the problems of universalism that some social constructionist approaches produce. The work of Goffman (1983) and Habermas (1984; 1987) is especially useful in this regard. However, while both these authors acknowledge that structural factors influence the nature of any given interaction, neither account for the effects of power in any given interactional context, and how this operates to reproduce unequal power relations. For example, Goffman's notion of impression management is extremely useful, but neglects the possibility that those under most pressure to impression manage in any given interaction may be those with the least power. Simply put, Goffman does not consider that the motivation to impression manage is not a function of some essential quality of humans but of the demands of the interaction situation (Antaki et al.,1996). While structuration theory deals directly with the issue of power, this is more in relation to its exercise than its distribution in the social body.

For an emancipatory project, however, an analysis and understanding of how power relations operate to influence the actions of individuals and the reproduction or transformation of social structures is critical.

In the next chapter, Foucault's work on power and identity will be reviewed in order

to show how an approach that is based on the idea that both people and society are constituted (though real) entities, is particularly appropriate for understanding the research questions that this thesis seeks to address.

Chapter 2 Foucault, discourse and power

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I set out the case for using a social constructionist epistemology as the basis for exploring the thesis questions. However, I argued that in using such an approach, there are dangers of universalism and realism, largely because research has neglected the contextualised and motivated nature of social construction. I further argued that in order to understand these issues, the relationship between individual action and the social context needed to be adequately theorised and I went on to review a number of approaches that have explicitly dealt with this. I argued that these approaches were extremely useful for dealing with problems of 'realism' and of 'universalism' but in neglecting the processes through which human actions and the social context acquire their meanings, there is a danger of assuming that individuals and social structures possess essential attributes.

In this chapter, I will argue that Foucault's work provides the most appropriate theoretical framework for dealing with the thesis questions. The chapter will begin with a detailed account of Foucault's ideas on how discourse operates to constitute the individual and society, before moving on to consider some of the criticisms that have been levelled at Foucault's ideas. The chapter will then consider studies that have used Foucauldian principles, focusing on the degree to which they resolve some of the problems associated with social constructionism generally, and Foucault's ideas specifically.

Foucault's view of the agency-structure relationship

Foucault's prime concern was in explaining how power in society operates as a highly productive, rather than oppressive force. Foucault's conceptualisation of power is quite different to the usual conceptualisations, which tend to view power as a commodity, something which one person possesses to get other people to do things. Foucault sees power as producing:

"reality.... domains of objects and rituals of truth". (Foucault, 1977).

Secondly, Foucault sees power as a relational concept and not something that resides in a particular individual. Where there is power there will also be resistance, and this balance shifts about, resulting in the transformation of both individuals and social structures. Foucault's concern, however, is not to explain the relationship between agency and structure, but to show how both are constituted through 'discourse', the term he uses for systems of knowledge that develop through the operation of power.

Power/knowledge

In "Discipline and Punish", for example, Foucault (1977) describes how shifts in the balance of power in the feudal epoch, resulted in the change of the penal system from one primarily focused on torture in the seventeenth century to one based primarily on imprisonment in the eighteenth. In this analysis, Foucault

describes how sovereign power, that is power exercised by the King in seventeenth century France, was increasingly challenged by revolts from the people, who more and more identified with the criminal as a victim of feudal practices. Noting the correlative advent of capitalism, the increase in wealth throughout the population, coupled with increasing discontent with the sovereign, Foucault explains how the emphasis in punishment shifted at the turn of the eighteenth century, from the crime itself to the criminal. He argues that this was not because of any change in basic humanitarianism per se, but as a response to these shifting power processes, and the need to invest the people of society with a stake in maintaining social order.

By shifting the focus from the crime to the criminal and simultaneously "civilising" the penal system, Foucault argues that what was achieved was a change in society's view of the criminal. From being someone one could identify with and from time to time exalt, the criminal came to signify one who had committed a crime not against the sovereign, but against the state, and one who was therefore to be mistrusted and punished by everyone in society. This, Foucault argues, could only be achieved by reducing the severity of the punishment, thus making it more difficult for people to emotionally engage with it in ways they had before; by reforming the laws such that crimes against property became more important than crimes against rights; and lastly by rendering the process of investigation into the crime more visible, such that people could judge for themselves the fairness of the punishment. In this way, the criminal is made "the enemy of all".

However in reforming the penal system in this way, there arises an attendant need to monitor the effects of the punishment, since the punishment is now intended to signify to all persons, both criminal and potentially criminal. Foucault refers to this dual process as the "objectification of criminals and crime." Thus, his thesis is that "the criminal" becomes defined as such through the production of knowledge, and that knowledge production is an effect of the exercise of power. Power and knowledge are therefore seen to be indistinguishable in a Foucauldian analysis: the one presupposes the other.

Discourse

According to Foucault, the knowledge which develops from power relations is discursive in nature. That is, the knowledge so produced is regulated according to specific rules and statements and thus, knowledge is not conceived as some sort of objective truth, but as historically located. For example, in The History of Sexuality Vol 1. (1979), Foucault argues that eighteenth century governments in the West became interested in sex as a consequence of a growing concern with the population, specifically about its economic state, health and other aspects related to population control.

Foucault argues that these specific conditions led to the emergence of a plethora of discourses regarding sexuality in the fields of medicine, psychiatry, pedagogy, and others, whose principal aim was to regulate and control the sexual activity of the population so as to confine it to the *"legitimate heterosexual couple"* (Smart, 1985). In fact the result was *"a multiple implantation of 'perversions'"*, which

arose as a direct consequence of this increased interest in sexuality (ibid p. 97). In effect, the increased "gaze" of the state into the sexual activities of the population had the effect of increasing the overall knowledge about sex within the population, thus providing new ways of thinking about it, practising it, and thinking about oneself in relation to it. Thus Foucault's argument is that discourses are productive and have "positive" effects in that they result in the emergence of new forms of behaviour and knowledge.

Constitution of the subject

In various works, Foucault (1973; 1977; 1983) describes at some length the processes, or *"techniques of power"* which are used to render the individual knowable in modern societies. Power, in modern society operates by acting directly on the subjectivity of individuals, as this is the most effective method of social regulation in complex societies, like our own. The operation of power in these circumstances is highly discreet, yet extremely effective, because it operates through consent, not coercion. Foucault describes three techniques that enable power to operate in these ways:

- Hierarchical observation

- Normalising judgement

- The examination

Hierarchical observation

If people are to regulate their own behaviour, they need to be rendered 'visible' so that there is always the potential for every action to be observed and judged. While this is literally possible in some institutions, like prisons and schools, in modern society, observation takes place more subtly, through the network of relations that constitute it. According to Foucault, this network functions as follows:

"....although it is true that its pyramidal organisation gives it a "head", it is the apparatus as a whole that produces power and distributes individuals in this permanent and continuous field." (ibid: 177).

Because power is distributed throughout the social network, its operation is neither unidirectional nor stable. Power is productive of 'discourse' (knowledge) and because discourse is always targeted at some or other group or individual, there is always 'resistance', which results in the production of new or counter discourse. Thus while power is rendered impersonal, as it does not operate from a central point, it as at the same time contestable, even when it is codified in, for example, rules and regimes and job descriptions. Its operation is however, continuously productive of subjectivity, due to its dispersion throughout the social network.

Normalising judgement

In disciplined systems, the focus is on the correction of behaviour, which is generally achieved through rewards and punishments. For example, children who play around in class may be given "lines" as a means of inculcating them with the idea that this behaviour is not "correct". Foucault suggests that punishment in this sense is aimed at "reducing gaps" in performance, to bring each person in line with the other. This process of continual correction, results in the production of "norms": standards of acceptable behaviour. What is attended to most specifically is not the person adhering to the norm, but the person deviating from it. Additionally, hierarchies can help draw attention to deviants and to those who excel at the "norm", by the processes of relegation and promotion. Thus we come to judge ourselves in terms of these normalised judgements, and are able to locate ourselves and others along a continuum of "good to bad" with regards to various standards of behaviour. However, because discourse is never unitary, we always have choices about the norms to which we adhere, as well as alternative ways of explaining our behaviour if we fail to conform to a given norm.

The examination.

Foucault argues that the examination of individuals, through various written or verbal tests, combines the techniques of hierarchical observation and normalising judgement: *"....it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected."* (ibid. p185). The examination and the way it is used to classify individuals is therefore a means of

hierarchical observation because the knowledge people produce through the examination is observed by someone higher up the hierarchy, and it normalises judgements in that the results of the examination are used to place individuals into specific categories. This process, according to Foucault, renders individual differences as highly relevant.

Alongside this gradual diffusion of normalising judgement has arisen a further technique of power which has rendered individual's more "knowable" - the confession. While the examination produces the means through which the individual is rendered "knowable", the content of that knowledge is generally deduced from the confession. Foucault (1977) describes its role thus:

"The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console and reconcile...."

Through the confession, therefore, the individual engages in self-analysis and produces "truth" about him or her self, and at the same time, the content of the confession is used to make judgements and decisions about the individual and thus serves to "objectify" the truth obtained form the individual. Knowledge, therefore, is derived from two sources: the individual confessing and the individual or individuals who make judgements about the confession.

Techniques of the self.

In thus describing the ways in which individuals become constituted as objects and subjects, Foucault's focus is on only one aspect of subjectivity, the processes through which individuals are rendered knowable and known. A further consideration is how subjects are constituted and transformed by themselves. Foucault refers to these processes as "techniques of the self", by which he refers to the means by which individuals can affect their own bodies, souls and thoughts, so as to form and transform themselves (Foucault, 1990). Foucault argues that these techniques are closely tied to particular "obligations of truth" in Christian societies, specifically, the idea that one should be moderate, truthful to oneself and ready to renounce oneself for submitting to temptation and excess. Foucault discusses these techniques with reference to sexuality and the emergence of sexual ethics but his main argument is that there has developed a "culture of the self" which encourages individuals to be self-disciplined.

From a Foucauldian perspective, agency should be approached by attempting to understand the conditions in which certain ideas regarding the behaviour, attitudes, values, etc. of a given category of person (e.g. the criminal) have arisen. According to Foucault, these conditions can generally be thought of as those which are related to the exercise of "power over the body". In other words, as society becomes increasingly complex, social control increasingly relies on the exercise of power over individuals. This exercise, however, cannot be thought of as domination, because, as Foucault demonstrates in Discipline and Punish, it carries with it risks of opposition and resistance from those groups at whom

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power is targeted. It is at these points of resistance and opposition that power

needs to be analysed since it is here that the conditions for the emergence of

discourse will generally be found and where knowledge itself is produced and

exerts its "positive", constitutive effects.

Discourse as an analytic focus

In Foucault's approach, the primary focus of analysis is discourse and the way

that it constitutes both individuals and the social domain. In so doing, he

dissolves agency-structure dualism (Henriques et al., 1984). According to Layder

(1994), Foucault's focus on discourse reflects his desire to de-centre the human

subject as the source or centre of social analysis, while also eschewing

structuralism i.e. the idea that human action is determined by social structure.

Discourse, in Foucault's analyses, is entirely social in origin and does not

emanate from human consciousness. Foucault's concern is with the effects that

discourse has at the level of the subject and at the level of the social. It is this

aspect of his work that has attracted a great deal of criticism (Layder, 1994, Reed,

1998). Reed makes the following comments:

"....social actors become the products, rather than the creators, of the discursive

formations in which they are trapped. This 'backdoor' determinism arises from

the assumption that the production and reproduction of discursive formations, as

systems of thought which inform material practice, has a logic of its own

independent of the social action through which it is made possible. As a result,

the potential for people to influence, much less control, the construction and

*reconstruction of the discourses which define **their** lived realities, identities and*

*potentialities is virtually extinguished by a **sui generis** process of discursive*

reproduction in which they become the biological and cultural 'raw material' to

be 'worked on and through' the latter's constitutive practices. (Reed, 1998: 209:

original emphasis).

Reed also suggests that Foucault's focus on discourse is "deaf" to the ontological

reality of "institutionalised forms of domination" (ibid: 208). Thus, like other

social constructionist approaches, the essence of this particular criticism seems to

be that the focus on discourse denies a material reality to both people as agents

and society as structures.

However, this is not necessarily the case. As Fairclough (1992) argues, discourse

has a dialectical relationship with both agents and structures. For example, he

argues that the 'family' has a real material existence, but, what we take to be 'the

family' is discursive. For instance, some discourses prescribe the family as a unit

consisting of mother, father and one or more children, but there are other

discourses especially, perhaps, homosexual discourses that challenge this view.

In turn these discursive challenges have produced different forms of 'the family'.

For example, gay couples can now give birth to their own or adopt children.

Foucault's avoidance of specifying the source of discourse in any other terms

than originating in power relations, is also a major strand of criticism, because he

seems to imply that human agents are the passive victims of the deterministic

effects of discourse. However, in defence of Foucault, it is not that he is denying

the role that humans play in shaping discourse, but rather that he is attempting to show that its construction is a social rather than personal phenomenon. For example, Mama (1995), argues that the identity of black people is partly constituted through 'black radical' discourse, in which the beauty and integrity of black people is celebrated. However, Mama argues that this discourse does not have its origin in a particular black person, but in the system of power relations in western democracies, in which black people have traditionally been subordinated and inferiorised. Black radical discourse is a collective response to and negation of these power relations.

Another major focus for criticism in Foucault's work, has been his deliberate avoidance of totalizing ideas or grand theory (Alvesson, 1995, Layder, 1994). Foucault's emphasis has been on how power operates at the local level rather than at the macro level of the state or the institution. As Reed (1998) argues, this preoccupation with power/discourse as 'open' and 'dispersed' makes it very difficult to understand how discourses succeed in becoming so dominant. However, a Foucauldian analysis does not rule out providing this level of explanation. For instance, Hollway (1984) argues that the dominance of the 'male sexual-drive' discourse, which positions many heterosexual adults, is successfully reproduced due to the way that it signifies to individual men and women. For instance in our society, to be an attractive woman (i.e. one that is desired by men) is prescribed as a highly desirable state. Similarly, sexually active men are constructed as being 'virile' and 'manly', again, states that are prescribed as highly desirable. Thus men and women are continually motivated to take up positions within the male sexual drive discourse, because of the gender

differentiated meanings that that discourse produces. Thus it is continuously reproduced, even though from a feminist perspective, this serves to subordinate women and relegate them to the status of sex objects.

Having presented Foucault's approach to understanding how discourse is produced and reproduced and how it yields constitutive effects at both the level of the individual and the social, this chapter will now go on to review a number of studies that have used Foucauldian principles, drawing attention to the extent to which they resolve some of the problems and criticisms levelled at social constructionism generally and Foucault in particular. This review will focus on studies that have examined identity and the issue of the reproduction and transformation of discourse, largely because these are most relevant to the thesis aims.

Utilising Foucauldian principles to understand identity

Gendered identity

Hollway (1984, 1989) examined how discourses operate to produce gender differences in the ways that adult heterosexual relations are experienced. She identified three dominant discourses used by both men and women to render their experiences meaningful: the male sexual drive discourse (a discourse that suggests that men *need* to have sex); the have-hold discourse (which suggests that women require commitment from men); and the permissive discourse (which suggests that men and women can have casual sexual relations). Hollway argues

that these discourses have their origin in the unequal relations of power that exist between men and women. For example, the have-hold discourse originates from a time when women were required to secure a marriage partner to enable their economic survival. In her analysis, Hollway shows how these discourses are drawn upon differently by men and women to make sense of their experiences. For example, she shows how men often justify their apparent lack of commitment to a relationship through the male sexual drive discourse and how women tend to understand their relationships through the have-hold discourse.

To explain why men and women are motivated to use these discourses (and hence to reproduce a sexist status quo), Hollway draws on psychoanalytic theory. For example she argues that needs for intimacy are experienced by both men and women, but that due to the way that discourses signify, men are not as able as women to express such needs. A man who expresses needs for intimacy will find it difficult to construct himself through the male sexual drive discourse, because the latter signifies power and status for men, whereas the former signifies weakness (for men). She goes on to argue that men suppress their needs for intimacy with the consequence that they project them onto their female sexual partners.

Racial identity

Mama (1995) examined the identity of black British women. She identified two discourses that were used by her participants to construct their identities: colonial-integrationist discourse, in which the black person is constructed as

someone who ought to try to conform to white norms, and black radical discourse, in which the beauty and integrity of being a black person is celebrated. In Mama's analysis, she shows the origin of colonial-integrationist discourse as located within the power relations subsisting between whites and blacks in the post-emancipation era. She also shows how this discourse inferiorises black people, such that they have difficulty in accepting their own black identity. For example, many of the women in Mama's study reported that they had tried when younger, to straighten their hair and bleach their skin in order to attempt to comply with the western ideal of feminine beauty (the blonde, blue-eyed, pale-skinned woman).

Mama also shows how consciousness raising groups, in which minorities share their experiences, lead to resistance to the dominant order and to the production of new discourse, such as black radical discourse. She also argues that resistance is an effect of being targeted with discourses that denigrate or devalue core aspects of the individual's identity. Black people are motivated to produce discourses to celebrate their colour, due to way that being black is inferiorised in dominant discourses.

Work identity

Within the specific context of organisations, Casey (1995) has examined the transformation of 'shop-floor' organisational identity from one that, in the first part of the twentieth century, was tied to the products and processes of manufacturing, to one in the latter part of the century, that is tied to the company

itself. Using an ethnomethodology in a company manufacturing high tech. products, Casey argues that workers used to experience cohesion and solidarity through union membership, and that since the decline of the unions, these feelings are secured through corporate identification.

Casey identifies a number of discourses that position workers within the corporation. Among those workers that express high levels of company loyalty and identification with corporate values and culture, a discourse of self-actualisation dominates, in which the importance of work as a meaningful activity is emphasised. Other workers use a more instrumental discourse to explain their relationship to the company, in which they express more personal and self-interested reasons for being loyal.

One of Casey's central arguments is that discourses of self in modern organisations are riddled with contradictions due to their location in a broader capitalist context. For example, she suggests that discourses that emphasise the importance of self-actualisation through work, compete with those discourses that position all members (including workers) of capitalist societies as consumers.

She identifies three 'strategies' that workers use in relation to the company's efforts to encourage them to identify with corporate values and which help them deal with the contradictions inherent in modern discourses of the self at work: defence, which is where individuals are highly critical of the company but co-operate with its management in order to secure their jobs; collusion, where

individuals express high levels of belief in and support of corporate values; and capitulation where the individual gives the impression of having bought into corporate values while expressing a 'low-key' cynicism in private. Casey concludes that the new corporate self is *"at its worst....a narcissistic, confused, weak and diffuse self, drawn back into the narrow embrace of the corporation and the restoration of an old ethic"* (Casey, 1995: 197).

Kondo (1990) examined work identities within a small Tokyo business (a sweet factory). Using an ethnomethodology, like Casey, Kondo's research involved a largely experiential and interpretative account of the working lives, experiences and self-expressions of the sweet factory workers.

Kondo is concerned to show how the broader socio-cultural context in which the factory is located has a profound effect on the discursive production of the self. For example, women in Japanese culture self-define through the 'uchi' or home. Work, for part-time Japanese women (for whom, incidentally, part-time work is in excess of 30 hours a week!), is interpreted through discourses of 'uchi': women explain their motivation to work as being concerned with securing a better home or improvements in the life-style of their family. Conversely, Japanese men are culturally constructed through discourses that emphasise the importance of work as a central expression of masculinity. It is not uncommon for Japanese men to spend the night at work, due to the excessive hours they work each day.

Like Casey, however, Kondo shows how discourses within the social and organisational context compete to produce contradictions in the identities of the workers. For example, while Japanese women's identity is constituted through discourses associated with 'uchi', in Japanese workplaces, there are dominant discourses in which the work ethic is celebrated and encouraged. Kondo found that women would often disrupt these discourses by, for example, taking time off to look after a sick child, and justifying their actions (and thus deflecting criticism) by referring to discourses of 'uchi'. Kondo argues that the act of taking time off is an expression of resistance to the power relations within the factory where the activities and importance of part-time (mainly) female workers are devalued and marginalised.

Other studies of work identities have examined the extent to which organisations support cultural constructions or discourses of masculinity (Alvesson, 1998; Knights and Morgan 1991). Alvesson (1998), in a study of Swedish advertising companies examined how male workers constructed their work identities in a work place that demanded the enactment of what are culturally constructed as 'feminine skills' e.g. using intuition and emotion. He found that their identity construction was partially achieved through highlighting workplace sexuality, specifically in the way the men behaved towards, and articulated their accounts of, female employees. Alvesson notes that the existing power structures that exist in the organisation facilitate men's gendered construction by, for example enabling the men, who are traditionally in positions of power, to recruit and hire attractive young females.

Knights and Morgan (1991) focused on corporate strategy and the ways this acts to construct the subjectivity of male managers. They argue that the discourse of corporate strategy, with its emphasis on rational control and predictability, enables men to secure an identity in a working environment that is so riddled with uncertainties and contradictions that the identity is constantly 'under siege' (Casey, 1995).

The strengths and limitations of using a Foucauldian conception of discourse as an analytic focus

The chief strength of these studies lies in their explicit focus on the way that discourse operates to reproduce the status quo. As discussed in the previous chapter, much of the research into gender issues in the workplace, has tended to treat the status quo as a pre-given, albeit problematic entity that can be accepted or resisted by individuals dependent on their own 'consciousness' of their environment. This perspective limits an understanding of the processes through which the status quo is reproduced.

Conversely, the approaches reviewed above treat the status quo as a contested and contingent domain, because of its effects at the level of the individual. Mama (1995) for instance, shows how black people do not, contrary to Reed's (1998) reading of Foucauldian approaches, passively construct their experiences through discourses that inferiorise them, rather they challenge these ideas through counter-discourses, such as black-radical discourse. However, neither does Mama's analysis privilege the individual as the agent of resistance. Rather, she

shows that the ability to resist the dominant order is tied to the availability of discourses that question it, and in turn, how the availability of such discourses is an effect of unequal power relations. Mama's study is a clear exposition of the dialectical view of discourse proposed by Fairclough (1992). Kondo (1990) and Alvesson (1998) also draw attention to the active nature of identity construction and how it is motivated and facilitated by existing structures of power relations.

A further strength of these approaches is that discourses are not treated as ahistorical. As discussed in the previous chapter, theoretical approaches to women's position at work have tended to treat so-called 'masculine' values as if they are simply a reflection of the actual nature of men. In contrast, Foucauldian approaches see discourses as historically located and produced within specific relations of power. Discourse is always constitutive and regulatory, and it is these features of it that lead to the production of new discourses or to the challenge of existing discourses.

Thus, for instance, the permissive discourse identified by Hollway (1984), is used by both men and women to explain their experiences of casual sex. However, at the time Hollway produced her thesis, the permissive discourse signified differently for men and women. Men, for instance, could justify casual sex through the male sexual drive discourse. However, women who practised casual sex, risked being targeted with discrediting discourses in which they were constructed as a 'tart' or an 'easy lay'. In 1999, it is clear that women have resisted this double-standard. Many of my female students do practise casual sex, and reject the idea that they are 'tarts' by suggesting that if this is the case, then

the same label applies to men engaging in similar practices. Thus these studies also demonstrate that discourse does have material effects on the actions of individuals and on social structures: marriage is no longer seen as the chief social institution in which sexual relations between heterosexual adults is permissible.

The limitations of these studies reside in three main spheres.

Psychologism and the neglect of interactional processes

First, Hollway and Mama believe that it is necessary to explain why different individuals are motivated to use certain discourses to construct accounts of their experiences, using psychoanalytic theory. Yet as Rose (1996) argues, this is paradoxical because in seeking to challenge the dominant social-psychological view of the self they

".....seem inescapably drawn to a particular theory – of the subject – psychoanalysis – to account for the inscription of the effects of subjectivity on the human animal." (pg. 8)

Effectively, therefore, while seeking to displace the individual as the central focus for analysis, both Hollway and Mama resurrect this tradition by suggesting that intra-psychic processes are the motivational force behind the self-construction in discourse. Moreover, their reliance on psychoanalytic theory rather puts the cart before the horse. Social constructionism asserts that experiences are constructed through discourse. As Widdicombe (1995) points

out, this means that individuals who are asked to explain their actions or their attitudes, or any other aspect of themselves, have been placed in a situation in which they are being expected to account for themselves. In Gergen's (1990) terms, this means that they are keen to establish warranting voice. As such therefore, their choice of discourse is delimited by both available discourses and by the accounting situation. Thus for example, an individual asked to account for a mistake at work, may well draw on different discourses if the account is requested by her manager, rather than by her colleague. From this perspective it is the accounting situation that motivates the use of particular discourses, rather than intra-psychic forces motivating the production of the account. Drew and Heritage (1992), Antaki et al. (1996), Antaki and Widdicombe (1998) and Wooffitt and Clark (1998) address this issue directly in their studies of talk in interaction. They show how individuals' identities that are invoked in talk, are in part a response to, as well as an anticipation of, the ways that the interactional context evolves. For example, the status of the individual can be important in determining the discourse used, depending on whether that status is being threatened or taken-for-granted. Wooffitt and Clark (1998) show how the medium Doris Stokes, draws on a variety of 'common-sense' discourses about the paranormal to defend and support her identity as a medium.

From a different perspective, Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Wetherell and Potter (1992) show how the discursive goals of interactants are pivotal in the types of discourses that are mobilised. Their analysis focused on the ways that discourses are used to justify what they call a dominant 'racist' order. They argue that some discourses operate as 'clinching' arguments due to the dominance of

the ideas they contain. For example, some of their participants discredited the motives of protesters against racism, by suggesting that they had behaved inconsistently. Wetherell and Potter argue that this is often a successful clinching argument, due to the dominance of ideas in western culture about the importance of rationality.

They also show how constructing a credible argument to persuade an interlocutor of a specific point of view, relies heavily on the need to establish proper motive for presenting that account. Among the cultural resources drawn upon to impute proper motive are 'proofs' of disinterest, and the provision of 'evidence' for any claims that are made. Gergen (1990) argues that the motivation behind the construction of a credible account is that of "warranting voice" or the desire to have one's own version of events to prevail against competing versions.

Realism

Second, while both Mama (1995) and Hollway (1989) argue that accounts of experiences cannot be taken as a reflection of an objectively verifiable reality, they both treat the accounts generated in their research as if they are a reflection of actual events. Similarly, Wetherell and Potter (1992) argue that some of the accounts generated by their participants are "racist" and "offensive". Effectively, therefore, they are treating themselves and the way they construct their own accounts of their research as separate from the accounts they generate. This actually reproduces the positivist assumptions they are seeking to avoid. Specifically, the idea that the researcher is an objective expert.

For instance, Mama (1995) analyses an extract in which one of her participants is describing how annoyed she feels with herself for having tried to deny her blackness as a child by avoiding having friends home from school so that they did not see her father eating 'black' food. Mama treats this extract as if it is an account of 'real' experience, when she goes on to develop her theoretical position. She argues, for instance, that this an effect of the way that black people are inferiorised in racialised societies, and the expression of self-contempt reflects the take-up of positioning in black radical discourse, that has been motivated intra-psychically. While this could be the case, what Mama neglects in her analysis is the role that she herself, as the researcher, has played in generating this particular account. As Mama explains, she stated her research agenda explicitly to her participants: that she was interested in understanding the identity of black British women. As such therefore, while the extract may well reflect an actual experience (though that is not verifiable), it has been produced within a specific accounting context: a black female researcher asking about the experiences of her participants from the perspective of being black British women. The reason that the participant discussed above expressed self-contempt, might just as likely be due to the fact she is talking about this particular event to a researcher who has explicitly stated her own stake in hearing about such experiences. A similar argument is used by Antaki et al (1996) to explain the contradictory identities that can be invoked during informal conversations.

Casey (1995) in her description of the strategies used by workers to 'manage' their relationship with the company falls into a similar realist trap, by assuming

that the accounts that her participants construct to explain their behaviour to her, reflect an ontological reality of their actual behaviour. As Potter and Wetherell (1987) point out:

"....the researcher should bracket off the whole issue of the quality of accounts as accurate or inaccurate descriptions of mental states. The problem is being construed at entirely the wrong level." (p 178)

However, in their own research, Wetherell and Potter (1992) label the accounts of some of their research participants as 'racist', which implies that their construction of the status quo is authoritative and as a consequence they fail to consider how they, as researchers, might have influenced the accounts their research participants constructed. In the research process, participants draw on culturally available resources to make sense of the research experience itself. Although Wetherell and Potter (1992) do not go into much detail about how they introduced themselves to their participants, it is not unreasonable to suppose, given the content of their discussion (the position of indigenous Maoris), that their participants had a fair idea about Wetherell and Potter's position on racism. Given that this may well have been the case, the accounts they analyse, in which the white dominant order in New Zealand is justified, are grounded within the research context. In other words, accounts are not simply generated to justify the status quo, the motivation to justify the status quo proceeds from the necessity of believing that it is being challenged (Wooffitt and Clark, 1998).

I should make clear, that this criticism of 'realist' assumptions is not intended to imply that there is no material reality. In terms of Burr's (1998) dimensions of reality, my criticism is concerned with reality as 'truth' or 'falsehood', and my specific argument is that it is not possible to verify the 'truth' or 'falsehood' of an account. What is analytically important is the function that the account fulfils within the specific grounded context in which it is generated.

Essentialism

Third, some of these studies imply that humans beings possess certain essential attributes that influence their positioning in discourse, which is problematic from a Foucauldian perspective. For instance Casey (1995) argues that the motivation for workers to take up positions in discourses that emphasise corporate identification, stems from their needs for cohesion and solidarity, which have been undermined by the decline of the trades unions. Similarly, Knights and Morgan (1991) imply that human beings are ontologically insecure, thus explaining the desire of managers to construct their identities through discourses that confer a sense of control and predictability. While the participants in their studies may well possess such attributes, in essentialising them, attention is deflected from the power relations that a Foucauldian perspective would suggest has discursively produced them.

Combining different analytic approaches

In sum therefore, a Foucauldian analysis of the social construction of individuals and the social context involves a focus on discourse, defined as 'culturally available repertoires of knowledge'. In general, Foucauldian analysis attempts to identify specific discourses that are in use and to understand them as part of a hegemonic struggle that is played out in the local narratives of individuals. Not only does this local or micro analysis avoid the pitfall of universalism discussed in Chapter 1, but it also, as Mama (1995) and Hollway (1984) in particular demonstrate, enables an explanation of how discourses gain dominance in society.

The weakness (in my opinion) of their analysis is that they find it necessary to place psychoanalytic theory as central to explaining individuals 'motivation' to construct identities using the specific discourses they identify in their analyses. Though in their defence, it must be said that this is a theoretical attempt to address the criticism of Foucauldian analysis as being unable to account for the active role that individuals play in their self-constitution through discourse.

Part of the problem here appears to be that the researchers have not considered their own role in the generation of the accounts of their research participants in sufficient analytic detail. I will use the following extract from Hollway (1989) to illustrate this argument.

Beverley: I really feel like my life's being made too easy for me, and I've turned into a kind of – I've turned incredibly lazy because of it. No really, yes, and that's one of the reasons – I feel completely weak and helpless. I feel like when I'm around you, I lose all resolve. I do [*Will:* Yep] But I mean I don't know why it happens, why I let it happen.

Hollway analyses this account as a straightforward account of 'what is going on': that Will's support to his partner Beverley has produced in her the experience of helplessness. She further argues that this has happened because Will is projecting his needs for intimacy onto Beverley. Further Beverley is able to construct the account in this way, because there are discourses available that position women as the weaker sex.

Potter and Wetherell's approach, would be to focus on the goals of the account. What does Beverley want to achieve? Taking the account as it stands, it appears that Beverley is constructing herself as someone who has become lazy, but rather than attributing this to her own volition, she suggests that Will makes her lose all her resolve. However, in saying that she loses all resolve, she is also constructing herself as rather weak. She therefore excuses herself, by suggesting that this is irrational "I don't know why I do it".

A potential difficulty with Hollway's analysis is her assumption that Beverley's account is an accurate reflection of her experiences, because, as I have discussed previously, this is unverifiable. Although Wetherell and Potter's analytic approach avoids this difficulty, they do not explain why certain statements would need to be justified or discredited. For example, why might Beverley want to

avoid constructing herself as weak and why might she want to avoid attributing her laziness to some attribute of herself?

However, if we look at Beverley's account using both a Foucauldian analysis and one that focuses on the interactional context, it is clear that she is drawing on discourses that are *culturally prescribed* as desirable. For example, culturally, being 'lazy', has negative connotations. However, as a woman, if Beverley can persuade her interlocutor that this laziness is a product of Will's effect on her, she can 'get away with it', because culturally, if a woman is weak with a man this is seen as legitimate (Greer, 1969). As Antaki et al (1996) argue, in interactions, adjectives (like 'lazy) acquire meaning in the context of the identity that the interactant (in this case Beverley) is trying to invoke. So, for example, I know from Hollway's work, that Beverley is a well-educated professional woman. Being weak with men could be frowned upon in a feminist context (Hollway's research) because it might mean (in terms of feminist discourse) that she is colluding with male oppressors. Therefore by drawing on the notion of acting irrationally, she avoids this potential accusation by suggesting that her 'laziness' is beyond her rational control.

Theorised in this way, the motivation to construct oneself through certain discourses is not an effect of intra-pyschic processes, but simply the product of constructing accounts of self through discourses that are culturally prescribed as desirable, thus demonstrating Foucault's thesis about the constitutive effects of discourse. Further, the discourses used are delimited by the context in which the account is generated, because the individual is drawing on cultural resources to

anticipate ways in which the interlocutor might interpret (and potentially

discredit) the account given. The 'motivation' to avoid being discredited is like-

wise discursive, because achieving 'warranting voice' depends on constructing

credible accounts. As Wetherell and Potter (1992) argue at some length, a

credible account tends to be one that conforms to western values of rationality i.e.

it is logically consistent and potentially verifiable.

The advantage of this position is twofold. First identity or subjectivity can be

theorised within the terms of discourse effectivity. That is, as Rose (1996) argues,

"The question of agency as it has come to be termed, poses a false problem. To

account for the capacity to act, one needs no theory of the subject..............agency

itself is an effect of particular technologies of subjectification" (p186-187)

Discourses fulfil regulatory functions, and they achieve this regulation through

the prescription of desirable positions. However, discourse is never unitary,

because, as Mama (1995) shows in her research, individuals who are unable to

make sense of their experiences through discourses that are culturally prescribed

as desirable, tend to produce counter discourses or to disrupt the terms of those

that are targeted at them. Thus for instance, black women who are unable to take

up positions in western discourses that prescribe the norms of female

attractiveness can take up positions in black radical discourse as an alternative.

Mama psychologises this, by suggesting it is the 'feeling' of inferiorisation that

motivates this positioning. However, from the perspective I am setting out, the

'desire' to take up positions in black racial discourse is a straightforward effect of

broader discourses in which the integrity of individuals and their rights to be

valued *because* of their differences is promoted. Rose (1996) argues that such

beliefs are part of the vocabulary of "autonomy" articulated through discourses

that have their roots in liberal democratic governance. Democracy as a system of

power relations "obliges people to be free" so that:

"Each attribute of the person is to be realised through decisions and justified in

terms of motives, needs and aspirations of the self." (ibid. pg. 100)

Analytically, therefore, the focus is in understanding the discourses that

constitute the status quo and identifying the cultural prescriptions articulated

within them.

This analytical framework is similar to that proposed by Fairclough (1992) when

he argues that discourse should be analysed at three levels:
subjective, interpersonal and ideational. At the subjective level, the concern is

with analysing the constructions of the world and self that are being constructed

by the individual. At the interpersonal level, the concern is with understanding

how the interactional context is influencing the production of the account. And at

the ideational level the concern is with understanding the discourses used in the

account construction as products of broader relations of power within which the

individual and the interactional context are located.

Theorising agency as a discursive effect avoids the problem of privileging the

individual in understanding acceptance or resistance of any given status quo,

without displacing the individual as an actual person who reflects upon her existence and acts on her environment. However, resistance or acceptance is, in these terms, not a psychological effect but a consequence of being able to construct a coherent account of ones' experiences within available discourses.

Second, this approach uses the non-unitary nature of discourse to analyse those sites at which the dominant order is questioned, by theorising the researcher or other interlocutor as integral to the production of the account. An accounting situation, for any individual, opens up the possibility that there are competing interpretations of the account one gives (Gergen, 1990). To produce a credible account, therefore, individuals need to be able to anticipate the types of cultural resource that the interlocutor might use to potentially discredit it. The argument I am developing is that the research situation is often one where, whatever the researcher might attempt to do to equalise the relationship or perhaps render the research aims opaque, the participant is able to draw on a stock of culturally available information to both make judgements about the researcher's probable motives and to second-guess how the researcher might interpret responses. The idea of equalising the power relationship is simply not feasible in a society where academics are afforded considerable status in terms of their intellect.

To illustrate this idea vividly, consider the following extract from one of my participants with whom I had established an excellent relationship:

D: You don't get many people joining the police who are very sort of laid back, popular with a large circle of friends.

P: But why have you changed? Why can you afford to be different from so many others?

D: Well maybe I am – it's only me talking. Maybe there's a load of people out there saying "look how sad D is" or "how much sadder he is". I don't know what people think.

P: Why can you admit these things to me?

D: Well I know you a little bit, I know what I say there isn't going to played in the next bloody lecture on sad bastards who join the police.

P: What would stop other people from telling me?

D: They don't trust you.

This extract illustrates the cultural knowledge that can be drawn upon to construct an account within a specific context. Dave and I have a good relationship, we have met several times over the last three years. We construct each other as "a good laugh" and "calling a spade a spade" type of people. Dave is constructing an account in which the police officer is defined in rather disparaging ways. However, studying psychology himself and being familiar with the theory I am developing, he avoids my potential accusation that his self-construction as different from other police officers is a product of 'ego' or of the take-up of a position in an anti-police discourse by suggesting that other people might construct him as *sad* or *sadder*, thus acknowledging that his self-view is only one possible version of himself.

Then when I ask him why he is prepared to say such things about himself, which I do from the perspective that it is unusual for individuals to self-denigrate in these ways, he suggests that this is because he *knows me a bit*, whereas other officers will not trust me enough to disclose the truth. At face value, this extract appears to show Dave constructing himself through discourses that would be culturally prescribed as undesirable (that he is a sad bastard). In fact, however, because of our relationship, he is actually constructing himself through a

discourse in which being honest about oneself, even if that means admitting to the possession of undesirable traits is prescribed as an honourable act (Foucault, 1977). Dave is pretty safe in doing this with me, because he constructs me as someone who would appreciate that kind of straight talking and as someone who is unlikely to think ill of him for disclosing such information.

Thus Foucault's power-knowledge thesis is theorised through the specific context in which an account is produced.

Conclusion

In this chapter I reviewed Foucault's ideas on power/knowledge and discourse before moving on to consider a number of studies that have used Foucauldian principles to theorise subjectivity in work and non-work contexts. I argued that these studies add considerably to our understanding of the reproduction or transformation of the status quo because they transcend the agency-structure dichotomy by focusing on discourse as the main unit of analysis. Discourse, defined as a cultural repertoire of knowledge that can be located historically within specific relations of power, constitutes both the individual and the social domain. In a discourse analysis, therefore, the individual and the social domain are seen as discursive products that are mutually reinforcing. Neither is privileged nor essentialised.

I went on to argue that Mama's (1995) and Hollway's (1989) theorisation of subjectivity resurrects the individual as the central focus for analysis, due to their

reliance of psychoanalytic theory to explain why individuals use the same discourses in different ways, and why individuals use different discourses to explain similar situations. I presented an alternative explanation, in which the individual presents accounts that are logically consistent in order to achieve warranting voice (Gergen, 1990). From this perspective the interlocutor is key in influencing the discourses that are used and the way they are used. The individual's reading of the interlocutor's nature and motives is of particular importance. Where the individual reads the interlocutor as having the potential to successfully discredit their account, it is likely that they will use discourse to justify and excuse. However, the extent to which the interlocutor is able to discredit any account is delimited by the availability of discourse.

In the next chapter, on methodology, I will explain how I set about addressing the thesis questions using the analytical and theoretical frameworks that I have developed in Chapters 1 and 2.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Introduction

The aims of this thesis are to describe how policing as a profession and an identity is constructed by police officers and to explain why it is constructed in these ways. Secondly, to explain why policewomen express satisfaction with a status quo that, in many (feminist) accounts of the police organisation, is constructed as oppressive.

In the first two chapters I argued that social constructionism is the most appropriate epistemology for addressing these questions. In these chapters I identified a number of potential problems in using such an epistemology which include:

- making universalist assumptions about the status quo

- assuming that accounts of research participants reflect rather than construct reality

- neglecting the interactional context as a key factor in the production of a spoken account

- neglecting the researcher's identity as pivotal in invoking the type of construction that participants produce in a research interview

The purpose of this chapter is to set out in detail the methods used to investigate the thesis questions, justifying both the techniques of data collection and analysis, and explaining how they relate to the broad epistemological and ontological positions set out in chapters 1 and 2.

Developing an appropriate methodology for understanding collective experiences

In chapter 1, I argued that research that has examined the collective experience of women in organisations has been methodologically flawed in two key respects. First, is the tendency for researchers to neglect those experiences that do not fit with the researcher's views or expectations of women's experiences, and second is the tendency not to include men in the research sample.

In attempting to address the question of how women as a collective view policing as both a profession and an identity, I was keen to address these flaws. I wanted to understand similarities in women's experiences, but I also wanted to understand whether these were different to, or the same as, men's. I also wanted to be able to explain differences in the experiences of women as a collective, but again, I wanted to contrast such differences with the experiences of men. I therefore decided to use two separate methods of data collection and analysis that would allow me to focus on both similarities and differences.

In looking at the collective experience of women and of men, I wanted to use a method that was underpinned by social constructionism, yet would allow me, analytically, to identify similarities and differences between men and women. For this reason, I used repertory grid technique to explore the ways that policing as an identity was constructed. Before giving details of the repertory grid method, I will provide some background detail about the police organisation in which the research took place.

Research Setting

The constabulary in which the research took place is a large rural force, policing an area of around 831, 247 Hectares and a population of approximately 702,000. The constabulary consists of seven geographic divisions and twelve functional departments that straddle each division. These are: CID, support services, traffic, information technology, policy and research, complaints and discipline, inspectorate and performance review, finance, administration, community affairs, administration of justice and personnel and training.

The hierarchy in the constabulary mirrors that across police forces in the country, comprising the ACPO ranks (chief constable, deputy chief constable and assistant chiefs), chief superintendent and superintendent, chief inspector and inspector, sergeant and finally constable. At the time of the fieldwork, the constabulary employed around 1500 uniformed officers of which 11% were female. Table 3.1 gives a breakdown of the uniformed establishment by rank and gender. The constabulary had, just prior to the start of the fieldwork, been reprimanded by HMI for the vertical and horizontal segregation of female officers. Apart from the underrepresentation of women in the ranks above sergeant, they were overrepresented in the Family Protection Unit (comprising more than 80% of that department), and underrepresented in all other specialist departments, especially Traffic and CID.

Table 3.1 Proportion of Female Officers in Uniformed Establishment (expressed as a percentage of the total numbers of officers in each rank)	
Total (Constabulary)	11%
Constables	26%
Sergeants	3%
Inspectors	4%
Chief Inspectors	0%
Superintendent	6%
Chief Supt.	0%
ACPO	0%

Research participants

Repertory grid interviews (see below) were held individually with a total of 50 police

officers, 34 male and 16 female, in positions at different levels in the organisation.

This rather skewed sample reflects the constitution of the police constabulary. Table

3.2 shows a breakdown of participants according to gender and rank. The mean

service length of the male police officers in the sample was 17.39 years, with a range

of 6 to 28 years; mean service length of the female officers in the sample was 3.0

years, with a range of six weeks to 9 years. All the female respondents were in the

rank of constable, while the male respondents occupied all five ranks studied. Rank

was considered to be an important social category to explore because, as women are

not represented in the rank structure, it was important to demonstrate that any

differences between men and women in the way that policing was constructed could

be attributed to collective experiences on the grounds of gender, rather than rank.

Table 3.2 Number of participants by rank and gender		
	Males	Females
Constable	12	14
Sergeant	6	0
Inspector	6	0
Chief Inspector	5	0
Superintendent	2	0
Chief Superintendent	2	0
Total	34	16

The interviews were conducted between October 1993 and April 1994, at a variety of locations across the geographic area within which the police constabulary was situated. All interviews were conducted at police premises. The time of day at which interviews were conducted varied as did the number of people seen at any one time. On average, however, the interviews lasted between 1 and 2 hours, with each participant interviewed separately. Up to 4 participants were seen on any one day. The interviews were completed by two researchers. One researcher acted as the chief interviewer with the other making notes or prompting the interview at points deemed appropriate.

Repertory grid technique

According to Kelly (1955), individuals make sense of their social worlds by developing and testing hypotheses about themselves and others. These hypotheses are based on our experiences and those we find consistently useful for making sense of what we experience become organised cognitively as personal *constructs*. As new experiences occur that either disconfirm or change our hypotheses about the world, our personal construct system changes in accordance. Repertory grid technique attempts to identify the personal constructs that any given individual uses. Originally,

the technique was developed for exploring the self-concept (Kelly, 1955;1991);

however, the technique has also been used for a variety of research purposes,

including the exploration of organisational 'reality'. For instance, Wacker (1981) used

repertory grid to investigate how organisation members both make sense of their

organisational worlds and how such constructions differ between employees. Langan-

Fox and Tan (1997) used the method to explore shared perceptions amongst

employees working in an organisation attempting to change its culture, while others

have used it to study the processes occurring in performance measurement (Edmonds,

1986). Tyson (1979) used the technique to identify four different kinds of personnel

manager role as a function of the form of ownership (public sector versus private),

and Jankowicz (1996) has examined the values that inform the judgements public

sector employees make about clients.

The technique involves the researcher requiring the respondent to generate a list of

'elements' i.e. objects, people, or processes (about which the interviewee is likely to

have constructs), that exemplify the realm of discourse of the topic in question. When

exploring the self concept for instance, it is usual to have the self, ("Myself as I am

now") and the ideal self, ("Myself as I would like to be"), as two of the elements, and

other elements would be generated by negotiation with the interviewee in order to

best represent the topic in question.

Personal constructs are elicited by asking participants to consider triads of elements

and to articulate the ways in which any two differ from the third (Fransella and

Bannister, 1977). Constructs are bipolar, in that they represent an opposition. The

construct "Good" -as -opposed- to "Poor" (as when talking about a student essay) is a

very different construct to "Good" - as - opposed - to "Evil" (as when making a fundamental moral judgement), and it is a fundamental part of Kelly's theory that both poles of the construct, (the "emergent" pole, and its opposite, or "implicit" pole) have to be identified in order to obtain an accurate specification of the interviewee's construct system.

Different interviewees have different constructs with respect to any particular topic, and the purpose of a set of repertory grid interviews is to identify the constructs which different individuals use in giving personal meaning to their experience.

Given that I was interested in understanding how policing as both an activity and an identity was constructed, I decided that the focus for the repertory grid interviews would be effective and ineffective performance as a police officer. This particular focus was chosen because I felt that performance is a concrete area of organisational practice that people in general find easy to relate to and talk about, thus increasing the chances of obtaining rich data. Furthermore, performance as an area of practice, tends to generate ideas about activities and identities (Sackmann, 1991; Coopman et al., 1997). Also, the assumptions about construct bipolarity in Kelly's theory provide a natural analytic framework for a discussion of constructions of effectiveness, as opposed to ineffectiveness, in performance: a framework that has been used successfully in grid studies of other occupations (Stewart and Stewart 1982; Jankowicz and Walsh,1984; Hisrich and Jankowicz 1990)

There are a number of advantages to using repertory grid. First, it is a method that avoids the use of a priori categories, but since research participants are asked to

construe the same phenomena (i.e. effective performance) it is nevertheless systematic enough to allow the identification of shared constructs. Second, the technique allows participants to articulate their experiences in their own words, yet, due to its systematic nature, enables the researcher to probe participants' responses such that they are rendered intelligible. Finally, the data obtained from repertory grids is both rich enough to enable a thorough examination of the content of each individual's construct system, yet sufficiently parsimonious to allow shared constructions to be identified through content analysis.

A further attraction of repertory grid technique is that it does not frame the respondent's world view, a critical component in a method informed by social constructionism.

The repertory grid interviews

The elements of the grid were agreed by asking subjects to think of colleagues, at the same rank as themselves, with whom they were highly familiar and whom they considered to be good, average or poor performers: two of each for a total of six elements per grid. Clearly, different interviewees would have been thinking of different individuals, but the realm of discourse (the *range* of performance within the organisation, rather than typical, or solely exemplary, performance) was thereby made common to all respondents. Constructs were then elicited by presenting subjects with triads of the elements and asking them to indicate which of the three were perceived as different in terms of their performance and to then explain the basis for this difference. This procedure resulted in the elicitation of a total of 542 bi-polar attribute

descriptions. It should be noted that, in grid work of this kind, the unit of analysis is the construct, rather than the individual: in sampling terms, the 50 respondents were a typical sample size (Jankowicz 1996; Smith, 1986), and the 542 constructs more than sufficient for content analysis (Honey, 1979). The procedure used to content analyse the repertory grid data is presented in chapter 5.

Content analysis and social constructionism

In chapters 1 and 2, I presented a lengthy argument as to why we ought to consider 'reality' as constructed rather than reflected in accounts of research participants and, additionally, critiqued research that treated any given status quo as universal. Having presented these arguments, I am aware that the method of content analysis I used and the techniques to establish reliability of that analysis (see chapter 5) must seem somewhat at odds with the positions set out in the first two chapters. In this section, I want to provide a justification for using these techniques and to explain why I believe they are important in addressing the thesis questions.

Assumptions underpinning content analysis

Any method of content analysis involves the researcher making judgements about the extent to which statements, words or descriptions within spoken or textual material are similar or different to each other. Clearly, this involves the researcher ascribing meanings to these objects and then categorising them on the basis of these meanings. Thus, in the first iteration of the content analysis, I produced a category that I labelled 'affability' into which I placed phrases such as 'likeable' and 'easy to get on with'.

Although this could be read as reflecting the assumption that my view of the meaning of these phrases is authoritative, I would argue that in fact, and in the spirit of the epistemology underpinning this thesis, I am simply drawing on a cultural stock of knowledge to 'make sense' of these phrases. It is possible that someone else could take the repertory grid data and arrive at a totally different set of categories. I accept that this is probable. However, the content analysis is an attempt to make a generalisation about the reality of the police organisation as it is constructed through the accounts of police officers. If I am to do that, I must have some means of ensuring that the generalisations I make actually do reflect the reality that is constructed by police officers. Like any construction, it is probable that those generated in the repertory grid interviews could have been different at different times, and I accept that this is indeed the case. However, as Kilduff and Mehra (1997) argue:

"...from a pragmatic perspective, contexts can be considered relatively stable, and this relative stability allows for a coherent interpretation. At the same time, there is always a "margin of play, of difference" that opens the possibility of new interpretations within the limits of context." (Kilduff and Mehra, 1997: 463) .

As I have argued in chapters 1 and 2, while it is not possible to assert that any given account is an accurate version of reality (if such a thing were possible), it is possible to assert that certain constructions of reality do become dominant and frame what we take to be true. This, indeed, is the essence of Foucault's thesis. Therefore, while I accept that the constructs produced in the repertory grid interview are amenable to being analysed in any number of different ways to that performed by myself, my

analysis is an attempt, within the conventions available to the social scientist, to say something about dominant constructions of police work. Further, the cultural 'stocks' of knowledge on which I have drawn to make these interpretations were drawn from my 'insider' knowledge of police organisations from the perspective of both a researcher and former employee.

Finally, I should say that in producing categories in which to place the elicited constructs, my colleague and I attempted to use our cultural knowledge of the police as an organisation. That is to say, we did not overlay the constructs of participants with constructs of our own. This was done so as to avoid falling into the trap of assuming that our own constructions of policing were the 'correct' constructions.

The measure of reliability is concerned with establishing the degree of agreement between the judgements of two or more individuals. Again, while this could be read as running counter to the epistemological position I have adopted, it has been used to address the extent to which the constructs elicited by the men and women who participated in the interviews are similar or different. Addressing this issue requires a technique that enables my particular judgements about the extent of that similarity to be checked against other competing judgements. The reliability check is a technique that enables the quantification of the extent to which two or more judgements coincide, and within the convention of making generalisations, this is an important measure. The researcher who helped with the content analysis of the repertory grid data had also had considerable experience of the police organisation, and I felt that any agreement between us was likely to reflect that local stock of cultural knowledge. Furthermore, we examined the extent to which we agreed about what police officers

were saying about the nature of policing, not the extent to which our own views of policing coincided.

Different levels of social analysis

As I have explained, the repertory grid interviews were used to examine the extent to which men and women drew on similar or different socks of cultural knowledge to construct policing as both a profession and an identity. However, as I have also explained, my chief methodological concern was not to make universalist assumptions and indeed to find a way of analysing and accounting for the diversity of experiences that people report. Clearly, while repertory grid technique and content analysis are extremely useful for examining collective experiences, they are much less useful for examining the "margin of play" (Kilduff and Mehra, 1997) or diversity within the experiences of individuals in any research setting. Further, repertory grid technique is largely decontextualised, in the sense that the analysis does not involve any examination of the context in which the constructs were elicited. From a social constructionist perspective, however, context is pivotal in making sense of the nature and function of any account. Repertory grid analysis also tells us little about the significance that the various constructions of policing hold for individuals. As I have argued in chapters 1 and 2, this is of critical importance in attempting to understand why policing is constructed in the ways that it is, and why some policewomen express satisfaction with the status quo. In summary, repertory grid technique provides a useful snapshot of the surface knowledge that is used by organisational members, but tells us little about the deeper processes that reproduce, transform and contest this

knowledge at the level of both the individual and the organisational context. A more sensitive and phenomenological technique is required for these purposes.

Discourse analysis

Having used repertory grid technique to examine how policing as both a profession and an identity is constructed by both male and female officers, I now needed a means of exploring why policing is constructed in the ways that it is, and of enabling me to understand the diversity of experiences that individuals report within this broad set of constructions. In developing an appropriate method, I needed a technique that would be sensitive to variations in constructions of policing used by the same individual and also one that would allow a careful deconstruction of the accounts generated by the research participants. Further, having used repertory grid to identify the relatively 'stable' aspects of the organisational reality, I needed a technique that would enable me to examine how these constructions were negotiated and transformed within specific interactional contexts in order that I could explain how certain constructions of policing succeed in becoming dominant, as well as identifying those sites at which dominant constructions were challenged and resisted. Finally, I needed a technique that would enable me to understand constructions of policing as having a specific cultural and historical origin, as well as performing a constitutive effect at the level of the individual and the organisation.

With these aims in mind, I decided to use discourse analysis. The technique I developed will now be explained at some depth, before I move on to explain its actual deployment in the field work.

Methods of discourse analysis

Discourse analysis has its orgins in socio-linguistics (Fairclough, 1992), ethnomethodology (Heritage, 1984) and semiology (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). In all of these traditions, language is posited at the focus for any social analysis, on the basis that it both constructs the world in which we live and that it is through language that the world acquires its meanings. Furthermore, language is itself a form of social action, and as such is an appropriate analytic focus for the study of the relationship between agency and structure (Drew and Heritage, 1992).

Early studies focusing on discourse, used what is known as speech-act theory (ibid.). The focus was on understanding how talk was organised and constructed in and of itself. While this is important for understanding certain conventions in talk, such as how people present arguments, make excuses, blame or accuse or establish turn-taking rules, to deal with the issues central to this thesis requires a discourse analysis that is contextualised both in specific interactions and in the broader socio-cultural environment.

Fairclough (1992) presents a framework for discourse analysis that is consistent with this focus. The first distinction he draws is between the constructive effects of discourse, which he describes as identity, relational and ideational. That is to say, discourse constitutes the identities of individuals, the relationships between individuals and the social context in which both individuals and their relationships are

located. In addition to these constitutive aspects of discourse, there are also three levels at which discourse can be analysed: discourse as text, as discursive practice and as social practice.

Discourse as text

Fairclough suggests that in analysing discourse as text, the focus should be on vocabulary (the words used in a text), grammar (the description of clauses in a text), cohesion (the analysis of the link between clauses in a text), and text structure (e.g. monologue, dialogue), force (what the text is achieving e.g. threats, promises, excuses), coherence (the way a text hangs together, so as to make sense) and intertextuality (the extent to which texts draw on previous texts and anticipates future texts).

Discursive practice

This analysis involves the processes of text production, distribution and consumption. Text production can refer to the methods used to produce a written text, such as how a newspaper article is produced, but additionally, and relevant to the context of this thesis, it can also be used to examine the roles adopted in the production of a narrative. For instance Drew and Heritage (1992) argue that the institutional context plays a significant part in the production of discourse by, for example, orientating the participants in a conversation to some specific goal, task or identity. For example, in a doctor-patient conversation, the talk that is produced is delimited by the demands of the roles each are ascribed by the other.

Distribution and consumption are concerned with the effects that the potential 'audience' of the text has on its nature and content. For example, a speech prepared for a formal conference will be entirely different to an informal description of the same general content to a circle of friends. However, some texts are produced with a specific distribution in mind (e.g. a political speech) but can be consumed in unintended ways (e.g. by an ethnomethodologist).

Social practice

This aspect of discourse analysis is concerned with the ideological and hegemonic functions of a text. Fairclough defines ideologies as *"...significations/constructions of reality (the physical world, social relations, social identities) which are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices, and which contribute to the production, reproduction or domination transformation of relations of domination"* (Fairclough, 1992: 87).

Hegemony is concerned more with the processes through which ideology secures consent and so with understanding how contested views of reality are dealt with in order to secure ideological consent. Hegemony is an explicit analysis of the contradictory ideas or discourses that can constitute any given individual or social domain.

In addition to these broad principles of discourse analysis I have used two further analytic techniques developed from the work of Mama (1995) and Hollway (1989).

Identification of cultural repertories

In addition to the micro and macro analyses of discourse suggested by Fairclough, I was also concerned with identifying those relatively stable aspects of local reality (partially achieved through the repertory grid analysis) that were used by my participants to construct accounts of their experiences at work. This is a level of analysis that I would suggest is midway between analysing the specific components of a narrative (words, clauses, cohesion) and analysing the ideological components of it. Examples of this type of analysis can be found in Hollway (1989), Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Mama (1995).

The key focus for this analysis involves a similar process to that used in repertory grid analysis: the identification of broad blocks of ideas that construct the local reality of the world, in this case, policing. As such, this level of analysis is a useful check (and in that sense triangulation) of the validity/usefulness of the categories identified through the repertory grid interviews. To reiterate an earlier point, in talking about validity, I am not suggesting that there is an external standard against which the 'truth' of my own analyses can be judged, rather, following Kilduff and Mehra's (1997) contention about the relative stability of some social realities, I am referring to the extent to which my judgements about this relative stability are supportable or not.

Used in combination with the other levels of analysis advocated by Fairclough (1992), this is a useful way of examining how both hegemony and ideology intersect at local

levels, to produce specific constitutive effects at the levels of identity, interpersonal

relations and the social context.

Tracing the origins of 'cultural repertoires' in power relations

A final level of analysis that I adopted for use in this thesis was the Foucauldian

notion of genealogy (Foucault, 1991). As I discussed in chapter 2, for Foucault,

discourses are not a reflection of an inner subjective reality, nor are they are the

consequences of the domination of social structures, they are the product of local

power struggles that occur due to the continuous operation of power in the social

body: its regulatory focus is continuously resisted by some of those at whom

regulation is targeted.

To understand the constitutive effects of discourse and its non-unitary nature requires

an analysis of those sites at which discourse is produced, so that the functions that

discourse plays in the reproduction or transformation of power relations can be

understood. Discipline and Punish (Foucault, 1977) is a key text in this sort of

genealogical analysis

Clearly, a genealogical analysis within a thesis of this nature is constrained by both

the availability of resources (appropriate historical information) and the word limit of

the thesis itself. Nonetheless, I have performed a partial genealogy of some of the

cultural repertoires I identified.

This chapter will now go on to describe how I collected 'discourse' for the purpose of analysis. Before I do this, I would like to clarify some of the terms that I intend to use in my analysis.

1. By **discourse analysis** I am referring to the **totality of techniques** I used to analyse the spoken narratives of the research participants.

2. By **narrative,** I am referring to the totality of the **spoken conversation** produced between myself and the research participants;

3. By **discourse,** I am referring to the **cultural repertoires** used by my participants to construct their narratives,

4. By **discursive resources,** I am referring to the **general cultural stock of language** on which people can draw to produce a narrative. These include words, discourses, grammatical and syntactical devices, etc.

Producing narratives

Discourse analysis requires the production of substantial pieces of narrative, be they textual or spoken (Coyle, 1995). I followed the procedure adopted by both Hollway (1989) and Mama (1995) and used conversations as the source of narrative production.

Research participants

I decided, for the sake of consistency, to return to the original police organisation in which the first stage of the research was conducted. I contacted the officer who had at

that time, been the force equal opportunities officer. I had established an excellent

relationship with him, and he was interested in what I was doing, in part because he

was studying psychology with the Open University. I had an initial meeting with him

and brought him up to date with what had happened since the first stage of the

research. In selecting research participants, I wanted to work with individuals who

were likely to have an interest in what I was doing. My contact therefore spent some

time canvassing his colleagues and arranged for me to speak to some individuals who

had agreed to take part. From this initial group, I was referred onto other people by

my research participants.

This method of sampling is entirely different to statistical sampling commonly

adopted in social psychological research, where the objective is to obtain data from a

representative sample of the population. Sampling in discourse analytic studies

typically uses smaller numbers of people, and there is no assumption about

representativeness (Coyle, 1995; Potter and Wetherell, 1995). This is because the

units of analysis are various aspects of the narrative (vocabulary, cohesion, discourse,

ideology), not people themselves. However, while discourse analysis seeks to

understand diversity in the discursive resources used by individual, it also seeks to

identify stabilities in such use that can be explained by reference to the social category

to which individuals belong. For example, Mama (1995), focused on the experience

of black British women, explicitly recognising that the categories black and British

were likely to have a significant influence on the discursive resources used by her

participants. However, the goal is not to attempt to identify the extent to which

members of social categories share experiences, but to examine the types of

discursive resources available to that group and to provide an explanation both of their availability and usage.

Furthermore, epistemologically, discourse analysts see narratives as grounded within and specific to the relationship within which they are produced. From this perspective, the narrative that is produced by the research participant and the researcher is perceived as being simply one of any number of infinite narratives that might have been produced at different times (Hollway, 1989).

Henriques et al (1984) further point out that the research relationship is an exercise of Foucault's power-knowledge thesis. Effectively, the researcher is acting as the role of the confessant, someone to whom the research participant confesses, producing knowledge about themselves. Hollway (1989) and Mama (1995) addressed this issue by equalising the research relationship as far as possible, which they achieved in three main ways:

- A full explanation of the research was given to the participants as an introduction to the conversations that followed.
- The researcher introduced herself as being as much a participant as the research participant.
- Avoidance of the term interview, so that the participant understood that a set format would not be followed.

However, as I argued in chapters 1 and 2 and in earlier sections of this chapter, there are a number of problems with this approach. First, the equalising of the power

relationship is rendered especially problematic in research where, generally, participants will read the researcher as an expert. While I agree that researchers should, in the name of emancipation, attempt to engage in equal relationships with research participants, the extent to which this is possible is probably limited due to the cultural repertories that exist about academics, namely that they are knowledgeable and middle-class.

Second, the role that the researcher herself plays in the type of narrative that is produced is probably pivotal, though this is a neglected area in this type of research. However, Antaki et al. (1996), show how the identities of different parties in a conversation have a distinct effect on the narratives produced by each. To some extent, therefore, equalising the research relationship is probably not feasible in some circumstances, and indeed the effects of attempting to do so may have quite distinct effects themselves on the narratives produced.

I, nevertheless, emulated the research design of both Hollway (1989) and Mama (1995) by following the three steps presented above. I introduced myself and explained the fully the aims of the research and gave some background to it. This varied for each participant because I was purposefully avoiding following a set script, in order to subvert the idea that standardisation will result in the production of 'truth'. I asked the participants if they had any questions before moving on to explain the method. I told participants that I did not intend to ask any set questions but that I hoped we could have a full and frank discussion around the questions the research was aimed at addressing. Typically, therefore, all conversations began with a discussion of the police organisation and what it meant to them as an individual. From

here, I found that conversation flowed very freely, and all ended due to the constraint of time, rather than running out of topics for discussion.

All conversations took place at the participants' place of work during the summer of 1997. All participants were on duty during our conversations, though arranged for me to see them during times where they free to talk (typically over lunch). Each conversation lasted for between one and three hours and all were tape recorded with the permission of the participant. Nobody refused to have the tape recorder switched on during our conversation.

In total, I spoke to 16 individuals, and two groups of officers. Brief biographical details of each participant are given in Table 3.3. Their names have been changed to protect their identity. Men were deliberately included as participants because I needed to understand whether there were any notable differences or similarities between men and women in the types of discourses used and the way they were used. I was also keen to note similarities and differences within the narratives of individuals of both genders.

Table 3.3 Brief biographical details of participants

Location 1 – Specialist department				
Name	*Age*	*Rank*	*Service Length*	*Part-time or Full-time*
Jim	39	Inspector	20	F/t
Dave	50	Superintendent	28	F/t
Fred	47	Inspector	24	F/t
Brian	44	Chief Ins.	22	F/t
Jack	45	Chief Ins.	25	F/t
Nick	35	Sergeant	13	F/t
Charles	56	Inspector	29	F/t
Ray and Phil	38 and 36	Constables	8 and 12	F/t
Terry	48	Chief Ins.	22	F/t
Location 2 – Operational police station				
Cathy	44	Chief Ins.	24	F/t
Sophie	35	Sergeant	5	F/t
Rachel	32	Sergeant	9	F/t
Wendy	34	Constable	9	P/t
Martin	47	Chief Ins.	26	F/t
Location 3 – Training school				
Sally	36	Constable	18 mnths	F/t
Judy	22	Constable	18 mnths	F/t
Mick	38	Sergeant	18	F/t
Group (9 men and 1 woman)	Mixed	Constables	I year	F/t

Transcribing and analysing the data

I transcribed all the conversations myself, which was an extremely time consuming

procedure. As I transcribed the material, I made notes of things that interested or

perplexed me, and would often bring these up during subsequent conversations. This

proved to be a very useful procedure, as I was able to challenge my participants about

particular issues that were being taken for granted. This process is similar to

theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), where the themes for the direction of

the research are suggested by the data themselves.

Once all the tapes were transcribed, I was faced with an almost unbelievable quantity of data: over 500 pages of typed script. This is typical of discourse analytic methods, and since variability in accounts as well as a close reading of the data is required, content analysis is simply not consistent with the epistemological position underpinning the method. The method I adopted for analysing the transcripts was based on procedures used chiefly by Mama (1995) and Potter and Wetherell (1995), called 'coding' or 'data sampling'. This involves repeated close reading of the transcripts for the identification of particular themes or discourses that were being used.

Coding and the identification of discourse

Coding is guided by the aims of the research (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). In my case, therefore, I looked for cases in the data where the individual was speaking self-referentially or where they or I were talking about other police officers. I did not use data that was more generally biographic, such as family details or details about school and college. I also looked for cases where the police as an organisation was discussed or the actual role of a police officer. I then closely read and reread the data, until I formed a clear idea of the actual content of the different discourses I identified. Following Potter and Wetherell's (1987) recommendation, I followed the principle of inclusivity, which involves attending to border-line instances of a particular discourse in use. I identified eleven different discourses in use by my research participants. These are set out in Table 6.1.

Not everyone used the same discourses, though several were used by all, and each individual used discourses in very different ways. In labelling the discourses, I was guided by my knowledge of work-related discourses, particularly discourses of enterprise, management, career and bureaucracy (discussed by Ferguson, 1984; 1987; Rose, 1990; 1996; Du Gay, 1997); by my own knowledge of the police force gained both as a researcher and a former employee and by extensive reading on the police; and by culturally available information about the police picked up from the TV and newspapers.

My analysis focused on the five areas described in detail above: text, discursive practice ('production' or the effects of the interactional context), discourse (cultural repertories), social practice and genealogical analysis of discourse (where possible).

In practice, these analytic areas are not separate. In the analysis that follows I will show explicitly how each analytic focus is employed.

The data analysis (both of the repertory grids and of the 'narratives') is organised into six separate chapters. In chapter 4, a history of the police force in Great Britain is presented, which is used to conduct a partial genealogy of the discourses identified from both the repertory grids and the narratives. In chapter 5, the repertory grid analysis is presented. In chapter 6, discourses that are used to construct the police role are examined. The concern in this chapter is to understand how context influences the discourses used, as well as to compare the constructions of the role produced through the narratives with those produced through the repertory grid interviews. The role that organisational practices play in the reproduction of discourses is also considered. In

Chapters 7 and 8, the discursive resources that are used to produce accounts of first negative and then positive experiences as a female police officer are examined. The aim of these chapters is to analyse how the context in which positive and negative accounts are produced influence both the discourses mobilised and the way the account is constructed. The aim is also to provide a theoretical account of why policewomen express relative satisfaction or discontent with the 'status quo'. In chapter 9, I move on to look at the way that both the research and the broader socio-cultural context influence the way that policing as an identity is constructed and reproduced. In this chapter, the key aim is to identify how the non-unitary nature of discourses produces hegemonic struggle and attempts to identify those sites at which dominant constructions of policing are resisted and transformed.

Chapter 4 The historical evolution of policing as an activity and an institution

Introduction

In chapters 5 and 6, discourses that are used to construct policing as both an identity and a profession are presented. As I argued in chapters 2 and 3, understanding these discourses as the product of specific relations of power is essential to any emancipatory project. An analysis of those sites at which discourse is produced shows how competing 'versions' of reality are continually contested as power seeks to regulate those who resist its exercise. This chapter is therefore concerned with an examination of the history of the police force in the United Kingdom, charting its beginnings and developments through to its present day form. This chapter will be used to perform a partial genealogy of those discourses identified in chapters 5 and 6.

The history of the police service in the United Kingdom up until the Metropolitan Police Act (C9th to C19th)

The origin of the police force appears to be stem from the time of King Alfred, when groups of families were mutually responsible for law and order (Critchley, 1978). Families were organised into groups of about ten, and were known as "tythings", each tything being headed by a "tythingman". In turn, groups of tythings were organised into a "hundred", headed by a "hundred man" or "royal reeve". The next rank was the "shire reeve" or sheriff, who had overall responsibility to the King, and for the conservation of peace in the community. Communities who failed to conserve law and order were held mutually responsible, and could be fined if individuals who

created a disturbance of any kind were not dealt with adequately (ibid). Fines were levied at a "hundred court" which met quarterly, and after the Norman conquest in the eleventh century, a body of twelve men were responsible for deciding the action to be taken against communities or members of communities, probably constituting the origin of the jury. The name "constable" appears to have replaced the name tythingman, at around this time.

In the thirteenth century, the "Statute of Windsor" served to standardise and legitimate the activities of the new constables which, up until that time, were fairly ad hoc. The statute set out three conditions:

1) Towns were responsible for electing a body of watchmen, the number of which depended upon the size of the town. These men were responsible for guarding the gates of the town, and had powers of arrest. It was compulsory for all men in a town to be available for watchmen duties on a part-time basis, though this was not a paid role.

2) The whole town was responsible for pursuing felons who evaded arrest, using hue and cry.

3) Everyone in the town was required to keep arms.

The parish constable's role was to roster watchmen and additionally to "police" the community. This not only involved reporting people who committed crime to the hundred court, but also reporting people who were considered in breach of civil

duties, such as failure to maintain a highway, or refusal to work. Constables were elected by hundred courts and were part-time and unpaid.

Critchley states that by the sixteenth century, the constable's role had become considerably degraded. In part, this was due to the fact that men who were elected to the role of constable were already in reasonably well paid, full-time employment. As a consequence, they were unwilling to perform their compulsory duties and began to pay "deputies" to perform their roles for them. Since these "deputies" were often drawn from that sector of the community which was relatively unskilled and usually unemployed, they generally lacked status or power, and many, according to historians of the time were corrupt.

According to Critchley (1978), law and order in the United Kingdom was maintained using the system of constable and town watchmen for nearly 1000 years, without changing much in form or role, up until the nineteenth century when the increase in crime in London and the surrounding area, began to escalate and to spread to the Northern parts of Britain. At this time, Critchley argues, politicians became aware of the desirability of creating a national police force to deal with this "problem". Critchley's view of the impetus behind the formation of the national police force, however, differs from those historians who take what Reiner (1992) calls a "revisionist" view of history. According to these historians, the impetus for the police force stemmed not so much from a rising tide of crime, but from the need for the increasing number of capitalist employers to protect their interests by creating a group of people who could protect their property and wealth from an increasingly "alienated" working population. Reiner, argues in fact that the impetus for the

creation of the police service probably lies between these two extremes of

perspective, with at least a proportion of the impetus for the creation of a national

police force attributable to the political motives of the time in establishing local

authorities in the United Kingdom.

The conflicting perspectives on the impetus for the creation of a national police force

are interesting, since each place the intended role of the police in very different lights.

The orthodox view described by Critchley (1978), implies that the police were created

to protect people and property, no matter what their status, power or wealth. The

latter, revisionist view implies a more sinister perspective, with the police being

created to protect the vested interests of a powerful wealthy group. The police

themselves, certainly appeared to perceive their intended role as that espoused by

Critchley (Robinson, 1979) and an analysis of the users of the "new police force"

after it was formed in the nineteenth century shows that the majority of users of the

police were the working class and unemployed sectors of society (Reiner, 1992).

However, what is also clear is that when the idea of a national police force was being

discussed in parliament, there was massive public opposition. Several explanations

exist for this, though interestingly it appears that opposition was expressed by all

sectors of society, lending doubt to the revisionist historians view of the police as a

capitalist tool (Reiner, 1992). Nevertheless, it is apparent that the national police force

which was first created in 1829, faced considerable suspicion and dislike from

sizeable sections of the community (ibid.).

The foundation of the police force, however, coincides with the change in the penal

system throughout Europe which occurred in the early part of the nineteenth century

(Foucault, 1977). At this time, the penal system was reformed and involved a shift away from public torture and execution to imprisonment. In Foucault's analysis of this change, it is argued that this shift occurred primarily as a need for more effective forms of social control over criminals and the population more generally, which the old system of torture and public execution was failing to meet. Foucault argues that the old system of torture and public execution was effectively a show of sovereign power to the people. While it therefore conveyed a loud and clear message regarding the sovereign's attitude to criminal behaviour, the ritual of public torture was also a dangerous one because of the amount of public discontent it could sometimes arouse. This danger was multiplied when crime against property became more prevalent at the turn of the nineteenth century due to increasing industrialisation and prosperity, and the relative poverty of the working classes. Public displays of torture were more likely to encourage the public to sympathise with the criminal and to take the law into their own hands. For example, people would often 'save' criminals from the gallows by cutting them free, despite the presence of guards (Foucault, 1977). It was these conditions that helped to create a situation in which sovereign power was shifted to the state. This shift meant that crimes were punished, not because they affronted the sovereign, but because they affronted the state, and therefore the population of which the state is composed. Foucault argues that this was achieved by abolishing most forms of torture which placed the emphasis on the crime itself, and replacing this with a more refined set of punishments which placed the emphasis on the criminal:

"The right to Punish has been shifted from the vengeance of the sovereign to the defence of society" (Foucault, 1977, p90).

According to Foucault, therefore, the creation of police forces throughout Europe served to support the reform of the penal system, whose focus was on the social control of the criminal and whose maintenance required a number of systems to engage in the monitoring and surveillance of public behaviour.

While "local" explanations such as those offered by Critchley (1978) and Reiner (1992) offer insights into the micro-motives which served as the impetus for the creation of the police in the UK, Foucault's analysis offers a macro perspective, which allows the activities of these newly created institutions to be analysed within a specific context: that of social control. It is possible that this particular set of conditions are those that produced the discourses on the nature of policing that remain dominant in the organisation today. Specifically, the competing ideas of policing as service versus policing as conflict management (see chapter 6). The relations of power between the state and the community appear to be those that were responsible for producing these competing ideas. The idea of policing as service, can be seen to be an attempt to legitimise the police role in the face of massive public opposition, and the idea of policing being concerned with conflict management, the police forces' own attempt to justify their existence (Manning, 1977).

The impact of the "new police": the creation of a professional police force

In 1829, Robert Peel succeeded in gaining parliamentary acceptance of the Metropolitan Police Act, despite public opposition. When the first professional police were recruited and began their duties, the public demonstrated the strength of their opposition in the nick-names they used for the new police e.g. "Crushers", "Peel's

Bloody Gang", and in extreme cases by committing acts of violence against, and even murder of policemen. Despite these levels of hostility, the police quickly gained public acceptance and legitimacy. Again, accounts of why this occurred differ, with orthodox historians such as Critchley (1978) taking the view that the professionalism and "good work" of the police quickly became apparent to the public, and more contemporary historians such as Reiner (1992), arguing that this acceptance was largely the result of political manoeuvring from the power holders within the new police force, coupled with a conducive social context. Specifically, Reiner argues that acceptance of the police was constructed out of the need to defuse the hostility with which they were faced by the establishment of specific policies. Reiner lists these as:

1. Bureaucratic organisation: the principle underlying the formation of a bureaucratic organisation was to present the image to the public of a group of disciplined professionals who obeyed orders.

2. The rule of law: this was a set of policies relating to the powers of the new police: they were presented to the public as obeying the law to the letter, and the public were encouraged to bring complaints about police abuses of power to the police commissioners.

3. The strategy of minimal force: this was a deliberately chosen strategy to quell public fears that the police would operate similarly to the French "gendarmerie" and behave oppressively. This belief, according to Reiner formed the greatest basis for public opposition. As a consequence the only weapon with which police were issued was the truncheon.

4. Non-partisanship: policemen from the beginning were not allowed to join a political party, and this rule continues today. In fact police men were not allowed to vote up until 1887.

5. Accountability: the new police were not formally controlled by any elected body, but were accountable in two ways: firstly by the rule of law, as judged by the courts and secondly by their identification with the public. Policemen were drawn from ordinary members of the public and were thus presented as "citizens in uniform".

6. The service role: the service role in Victorian England differs in meaning to the way service is used now. The services performed by the new police included inspection of weights and measures and knocking people up for work. These duties were introduced as part of the policeman's role in order to legitimate some of their more coercive activities.

7. Preventive policing: the idea of the police uniform was so that they could operate a "scarecrow" function, and there was much opposition to the idea of a plain clothes policeman. The idea of the uniform was therefore emphasised since the public feared that if police wore plain clothes they would function as undercover spies.

8. Police effectiveness: the architects of the new police were keen to present an image of effectiveness to the public, but it appears that the public quickly began to perceive the police as effective, since they were able to help resolve difficulties for working

class people, such as robbery and assault. At times, however, this perception was threatened by the police's riot quelling activities.

The latter strategy was in particular facilitated by a social context in which increasing numbers of people were becoming upwardly mobile in socio-economic terms, and required the services of the police to protect their property.

However, the story of the development of the national police force reveals that while active steps such as those described above were taken to legitimate the police, other police activities were potentially damaging to this carefully constructed legitimisation. For example, the police were used to quell the Chartist riots of the 1820s to 1830s in which working class people were rioting for their rights for a better standard of living. It is clear that the police activities during these riots served to alienate them from the poor working classes, but did in fact win them acceptance from the landed gentry who stood to lose the most should Chartism have continued unabated.

The police themselves must surely have been aware of the apparent contradictions within their role. On the one hand, they were presenting themselves as the champions of the working classes, performing services with the minimum of force designed to protect working class people and their property, and on the other they were regularly (at least in the 1830s) involved in oppressing the working classes by preventing them from expressing their dissatisfaction with low wages and poor conditions of employment. Indeed, these contradictions are still present in recent history, as testified by the policing of the 1983 miner's strike (Reiner, 1992). It is notable that many of the discourses that construct policing as a profession (see chapters 5, 6 and 9)

emphasis professionalism, respect for the public and an abhorrence of force and brutality. Again, the relations of power that continually operate to contest the role of the police are perhaps key in understanding the dominance and origin of these ideas.

The police force in rural and provincial Britain 1835 to 1860

The "new police" created by the Metropolitan Police Act were appointed only in the London area at first. Up until 1835 policing in the provinces was left to the discretion of the local politicians and, in the main, the old system of watchmen and constable remained in operation up until this time. In 1835, however, the Municipal Corporations Act was passed and became the mechanism by which regular police forces were established in the boroughs of England and Wales. This coincided with the push for democratic reform and the establishment of the new town councils (Critchley, 1978) who were made responsible for the recruitment of full-time paid constables, though no central government stipulations were made regarding pay or hours.

The borough police were not under the authority of the home secretary and the question of whose authority these forces were under remained ambiguous up until the Police Act of 1964. Because of the untidiness of the 1835 Act, in 1856 when the first inspectors of constabulary were appointed, thirteen boroughs had failed to appoint a police force at all. Even those that did, reluctant to spend the rate payers money, did not always appoint enough policemen. Coinciding with the establishment of the inspectors of constabulary was the 1856 County and Borough Police Act, which compelled all counties to establish a police force, effectively governed locally, but

subject to inspections of constabulary which were to report to the Home Office on inefficiencies. Additionally, the treasury was to provide one quarter of the cost of the policemen's uniforms and costs. Small forces, such as those with responsibilities for areas populated with less than 5000 people were not to receive any such treasury aid. This eventually served as the incentive for different county forces to amalgamate.

When the first report of the inspectors of constabulary was presented to government in 1860, it revealed much diversity between forces in terms of efficiency and discipline. The inspectorate strongly recommended greater central standardisation of practices and policies, but vested interests within the new councils were threatened at the prospect of increased government intervention and opposed such suggestions vigorously. As a consequence, it was not until the twentieth century that a more uniform police force began to emerge on a national basis. As such, therefore, the notion of professional policing is relatively recent in historical terms.

CID

The historical development of the police force reveals that detective work was perceived as the "Cinderella" of police activities up until quite late into the 20th Century (Critchley, 1978). In fact, for a considerable period of time, police forces were unwilling to deploy police officers as plain clothes detectives due to the degree of public concern with undercover spies. However, the steady rise in public acceptance of the police enabled the establishment of the Special Irish Branch in 1880. The origins of detective work within the police can, however, be traced back to the early part of the nineteenth century when a Bow street magistrate set up a select

group of men to act as mounted police responsible for policing the roads leading into London (Critchley, 1978). This patrol evolved within a few years into the "Bow Street Runners" described as *"a closely knit caste of speculators in the detection of crime, self-seeking and unscrupulous, but also daring and efficient when daring and efficiency coincided with their private interest"* (ibid.). It appears that this image of the detective has persisted throughout the years, with historians arguing that the methods of detection (which invariably involve the cultivation of relationships with criminals) meaning that detectives *"operate perennially on the borderline of legality"* (Critchley, 1978). Thus it appears that while the detective role took time to evolve into the elitist status it now has (Reiner, 1992), the activities and behaviour of detectives has always been seen as unorthodox, and shrouded in a degree of mystique. Dominant discourses in which the crime related aspects of policing are constructed continue to 'mythologise' this aspect of the work (see chapter 8). However, Waddington (1999) argues that

*"..the occupational self-image of the police is that of 'crime-fighters' and this is not just a distortion of what they do, it is virtually a collective **delusion**. A mountain of research has indicated the police have little impact on crime rates, are responsible for discovering few crimes and detecting fewer offenders, do not spend much duty-time on crime related tasks and so forth."* (Waddington, 1999: 299. Original emphasis).

As Waddington suggests, the function and origin of this discourse is most likely ideological, in the sense that an emphasis on crime and the rendering of detective work as the province of the elite, promotes the idea that policing is concerned with the highest ideals of the law in a liberal democracy. This discourse not only legitimises

the police organisation, but it also enables police officers to constitute a self that renders their access and use of authority as justified, an aspect of self-constitution that, as I show in chapter 9, is highly problematic.

The national police force: 1860 to present

A fundamental change in the image of policing was brought about by the 1964 Police Act, the purpose of which was to bring the police more closely under central government control so as standardise practices nationally. This move was thought necessary due to a number of discrepancies which were apparent between forces in the way crimes were handled, and also due to mounting public anxiety about rising crime. Following the Police Act, the Unit Beat System of patrol was introduced into the police organisation and was concerned with the use of technology, specialisation and managerial professionalism to fight the rising tide of crime. Effectively, this meant that police officers would be involved less with foot patrols and instead would focus on rapid response in panda cars, collating information which could be used by patrol officers to detect crime, and generally providing a more responsive emergency service. Reiner (1992) describes this as shift in image from "Dixon to Barlow".

Up until the mid 1950s, therefore, the police officer's image was one of the honest, reliable working class "Bobby", who relied on common sense and physical presence to resolve crime. From the mid 1950s onwards, however, the emphasis appears to have shifted, and the officer was perceived more as detective, recast as "tough and dashing" (Reiner, 1992). It is interesting to note that the decline in public confidence about the police appears to date shortly after this transformation, when the image of

the police as a disciplined bureaucracy was severely tarnished by the corruption scandals which affected Scotland Yard after 1969 involving the Drug Squad and the Obscene Publications Squad. Following these incidents public confidence continued its descent due to scandals such as that involving the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad, and the bad press the police have received over its handling of rape victims coupled with the continued rise in property crime. While the police have done much since that time to attempt to regain public confidence with internal policies such as 'putting bobbies back on the beat', community crime prevention departments, and more sensitive handling of rape cases, the police organisation has never again enjoyed the extent of public approbation and legitimacy as it did in the early 1950s. The repercussions of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (1999) show that the police continue to struggle to gain legitimacy (Waddington, 1999). These shifting relations of power are key sites at which discourses of policing as both a profession and an identity compete. The instability of the hegemonic struggle over what policing actually involves is clearly demonstrated at these sites and, as I argue in chapters 6 to 9, are where the main opportunities for the transformation of practices and discourses exist.

The police organisation today could best be described as a divisionalised form (Minzberg, 1979), retaining a highly bureaucratic structure, and large numbers of specialist departments. While many chief constables persist in glorifying the "beat bobby" as the mainstay and most valued function of the force, it appears that this function is seen by the rank and file as an apprenticeship for specialist posts (Reiner, 1992) and in fact officers working within specialist departments who do commit misdemeanours are often threatened with being "putting back in uniform", both the language and context suggesting that this role is not highly valued.

The history reveals the various contextual factors that have influenced the evolution of the police officer's role and shows the nature of the power relations that have been productive of the various discourses on policing that exist. However, the entry of women into policing is relatively recent, and this chapter will now discuss this historical period and specific issues related to the police woman's role and their integration into forces.

The history of the police woman

The police woman is a relatively recent development, and one that appears to have been achieved with difficulty. The first female "police" were volunteers from three separate women's organisations: the WPS (Women's Police Service), the WPV (Women's Police Volunteers), and the WVP (Women's Volunteer Patrols). The WPV was founded by members of the Women's Freedom League, suffragettes who gained women the vote. The WPS was founded by a wealthy philanthropist, Margaret Damer-Dawson. These two organisations joined forces at the start of the First World War (1914), perceiving that it was an expedient time for women to establish themselves as useful, and called themselves the WPV. The WPV eventually persuaded the Metropolitan police to recruit women volunteers, and this success appears due to the fact that Damer-Dawson took control of the negotiations and was not associated with the militant feminist style of the founder of the original WPS (Lock, 1979). The co-operation between the two organisations was short-lived, however, and in 1915, following a disagreement between the founders of the WPS and the WPV, the two organisations separated, the WPS resuming its original title.

The volunteer police women were largely responsible for dealing with prostitution, in particular, "counselling" female prostitutes to reform their ways. The third organisation, the Women's Voluntary Patrols, were especially popular with the military during the first world war, as they helped deal with the problems of prostitution and indecent acts, which were especially prevalent around army camps. Another useful role which the early volunteers fulfilled was the policing of the munitions factories, particularly in the prevention of petty pilfering and ensuring safety. Despite the fact that the volunteers were welcomed by some sectors of society (the public and the military authorities), the police organisations themselves were largely opposed to women police. The position of the volunteers was also compromised by the fact that volunteers were drawn from the three organisations described above, who appeared to vie with other for acceptance by the police themselves (Lock, 1979). The Women's Voluntary Patrols in particular were keen to dissociate themselves from the WPV who were widely unpopular due to their militant feminist image. This competitiveness was used against them by the police who, when referring to the work of the volunteers in publications, appeared to deliberately confuse the three organisations, perhaps to help blur the different images of each.

In 1918, a Home Office enquiry was undertaken looking at the feasibility of employing women police as members of the police force proper. At this time the WPV had virtually disappeared as an organisation, so that women from the WPS and Women's Volunteer Patrols were chiefly involved in the enquiry. Lock (1979) suggests that the latter group played a political game at this time, utilising the unpopularity of militant feminism, and using this to discredit the WPS, whilst

promoting themselves as an essentially feminine and co-operative group who did not

want power, simply to be useful to the men. Thus, when the enquiry was over, it was

decided to employ some women patrols but these were largely drawn from the

Women's Voluntary Patrols. Later on, however, women from the WPS were

eventually recruited. According to Lock (1979), the new female police were treated

with open hostility by their male counterparts.

The majority of the events described above took place in the Metropolitan police, the

borough police being much more reticent about the use of volunteers and the

employment of salaried women's patrols. Where women were employed outside

London, it was largely to take statements in sex crime cases. Even in the Metropolitan

police, however, the salaried females had very little power. They were paid half of

what their male counterparts received, were not given power of arrest and were not

allowed to be promoted to ranks where they would be in charge of men.

In 1920, the Baird Committee was set up to look into the conditions and utility of

female police, and the report which followed recommended the employment of police

women, but left it up to the discretion of individual forces as to whether they chose to

follow this recommendation. Following this, a large number of forces did recruit a

small number of females, again, mainly deployed for dealing with women and

children. In 1922, however, the Geddes committee was set up to review the matter

again, since the treasury was under pressure to cut public expenditure and the

recommendation of this committee was that women police be axed. However, a

number of influential female lobby groups appear to have been instrumental in

persuading the Home Secretary to maintain a core of female officers within the

Metropolitan police, and the local discretion recommendation of the previous Baird committee ensured that not all borough forces were forced to axe their female police. Nevertheless, about half of them did so. This situation remained static until the second world war when, due to recruitment into the army, it appears to have been politically expedient to once again recruit female police, to fill posts left vacant by men who had been called up for service.

In 1944, the then Home Secretary ordered all police forces to recruit female police, and this eventually happened. Women, after this time, became gradually more accepted into the police organisation, deployed mainly in dealing with crimes against women and children, and operating "undercover" in CID, though they remained a separate branch of the UK force up until 1972. Their integration was perhaps facilitated by the anticipation the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975, when law would have made it necessary for females to be deployed in more general police roles (Heidensohn, 1992).

What appears to stand out from the history of women police, is that their acceptance was largely due to the demands imposed by the two world wars. Although Lock (1979) presents a view of the history of the police women which suggests that much is owed to the early activities of the volunteers, it is clear from her own account, that police women were seen as largely dispensable, by both politicians and police forces, and it was only during the world wars that significant developments occurred. Another feature of the history which appears worthy of comment is the anxiety of the early volunteers to be dissociated from other militant feminist organisations, and their keenness on "co-operating" with the male officers. A final feature which is of interest,

is that the deployment of women police into roles involving women and children appears to have been initiated by the early volunteers themselves as a means of carving a niche for themselves within a male dominated organisation. In chapter 8, I argue that the insecurity that policewomen continue to experience as marginal members of a male dominated organisation is largely responsible for the high levels of satisfaction that many policewomen express with regards to the status quo.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, policing as both a role and an institution has been located within its historical context. While the activity of maintaining law and order is more than 1000 years old, the institution of the police dates from the early nineteenth century. Historical analyses suggest that the conditions of possibility for the formation of police forces include capitalism and the devolution of power from the sovereign to the state. These analyses also suggest that the legitimacy of policing as an institution and as an activity has been contested from its inception. As Waddington (1999) points out, it is inevitable that the police occupy a marginal role in a society *"that has pretensions to liberal democracy"* (page 302). The subjective effects of this marginalistion are discussed in Chapter 9.

The entry of women into the police is more recent and can be traced to the period during and between the two world wars. Women were seen to have very specific functions in the early days, specifically deployed to crimes involving sex and children. Their acceptance as 'real' police officers has been a difficult achievement and it is only since the abolition of the separate policewomen's department in 1972

that they have been allowed to perform general police duties. Historically, therefore, policewomen have occupied marginal roles in a marginalised occupation, a situation that, as I will show in Chapters 7 to 9, has specific subjective effects.

The next chapter of the thesis presents an analysis of the repertory grid data which, as I argued in chapter 3, provides a surface or two dimensional view of the reality of policing constructed by police officers.

Chapter 5 Results of the repertory grid analysis

Introduction

In chapter 3, I explained that repertory grid interviews were chosen to analyse those relatively stable aspects of the social context constructed by police officers. The focus for the repertory grid interviews was perceived differences between effective and ineffective police officers. From the perspective of the thesis questions, this focus was chosen in order to examine how policing as an identity is constructed by police officers, specifically whether the categories of gender or rank influenced the types of constructions produced. In this chapter, I want to explain why gender and rank may be salient in influencing constructions of policing, as well as showing how these constructions produce specific effects for some groups in the organisation, particularly women.

Analysing the repertory grid data

Given that the aim of the analysis was to identify similarities *and* differences between constructs used by policemen and women, I decided to content analyse the grid data using a method of constant comparisons taken from grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This method of analysis involved a close and repeated reading of the personal constructs elicited from each participant, and the identification of categories to which constructs could be allocated. This process involves a comparison of each construct with every other, to decide whether they are the same or different, and to define and refine the basis for this similarity or

difference progressively. For example, the construct 'Appreciates the job done by staff' was considered to be similar to the construct 'Acknowledges efforts of subordinates' but different to 'Puts in extra effort'. Thus, to continue the example, in the first categorisation iteration, the first two constructs illustrated above were put into a category labelled 'Respect for/sensitivity to others' and the third into a category labelled 'Effort'.

Particular care was taken to monitor and improve the reliability of category identification by means of several iterations in category development and, subsequently, to establish an adequate level of reliability of the coding involved in allocating constructs to categories. In the first iteration, a set of twenty-three categories was developed using the procedure described above (see Table 5.1). Myself and a colleague who was highly experienced in repertory grid analysis, then used the 23 categories to code all the personal constructs. This exercise was done separately, and the inter-rater reliability was calculated using the Perrault-Leigh Index, **Ir.** The first iteration reliability was **Ir** = 0.69 (95% confidence interval +- 0.06, i.e. 0.63 - 0.75).

Table 5.1 Results of the first categorisation exercise
Category
Affability
Application of knowledge
Approachable
Committed/dedicated
Communication skills
Effect on others
Efficiency/thoroughness
Effort
Enthusiasm
Experienced
Flexibility
Initiates new ideas
Intelligence
Judgement
Knowledge
Leadership skills
Presence
Professional
Puts needs of job before own needs
..Receptive to new ideas
Respect for/sensitivity to others
Responsiveness
Support

My colleague and I then met to discuss the analysis each had conducted and to further develop and refine the initial categories. This process resulted in the combination of some categories, such that 13 categories were eventually agreed upon. Definitions of each category were also refined and agreed at this time. The final categories and their definitions are given in Table 5.2. Category labels reflect police vocabulary; for example, "Good Citizen" refers to the community of colleagues in the police constabulary as much as it reflects commitment to the wider community.

The content analysis was then repeated by me and my colleague in a second iteration, using the new category labels, and inter-rater reliability was then re-calculated. The (final) reliability was $Ir = 0.96$ (95% confidence interval +- 0.02, i.e. 0.94 - 0.98). The corresponding values of Kappa are 0.49 and 0.93 for the first and the second iterations respectively. This final figure is evidence of a very high degree of reliability of the content analysis.

The number of constructs allocated to each category was then summed and the percentage of constructs assigned to each category on the basis of gender and rank was calculated. This was done by simply tracking back through the grid data to identify the gender and position of the respondent who had elicited the construct that both authors had allocated to a specific category. These figures are shown in Table 5.2.

TABLE 5.2 : Category Descriptions Frequency & Percentage of Constructs by Gender and Rank	Frequency (above) & Percentage (below) of Constructs Assigned, by Gender and Rank						Cat. Totals
Category and Definition (reordered according to frequency)	Constable		Sergeant	Inspector	Chief Inspector	Super./ Chief Sup.	
	M	F					
12. Commitment Committed and dedicated; shows enthusiasm, or is prepared to put lots of effort into work	25 24.8	20 26.0	7 9.6	9 18.4	7 15.9	3 18.8	71 18.7
10. Support Showing concern for fellow-workers; being dependable; behaving equitably, and setting standards of behaviour	11 10.9	13 13.4	11 15.1	7 14.3	9 20.5	1 6.3	52 13.7
11. Easy-Going: Dispositionally inclined to be open, friendly and straightforward. Not having "side"; easy to get on with, not the type to get offended easily	10 9.9	17 17.5	7 9.6	6 12.2	4 9.1	1 6.3	45 11.8
4. Efficiency/thoroughness Competence and speed; doesn't cut corners; able to do a task to a good standard	15 14.9	10 10.3	4 5.5	3 5.1	2 4.5	1 6.3	35 9.2
3. Relating to others Able to communicate in ways that facilitate the building of relationships; showing concern about the effect of own behaviour on others	11 10.9	8 8.2	3 4.1	6 12.2	4 9.1	1 6.3	33 8.7
2. Accuracy of perception & judgement Intellectual skills: able to see wood for the trees; make decisions appropriate to circumstances; choosing considered & appropriate courses of action	5 5.0	6 5.2	6 8.2	6 12.2	5 11.4	2 12.5	30 7.9

TABLE 5.2 contd: Category Descriptions Frequency & Percentage of Constructs by Gender and Rank	Frequency (above) & Percentage (below) of Constructs Assigned, by Gender and Rank						Cat. Totals
Category and Definition (reordered according to frequency)	Constable		Sergeant	Inspector	Chief Inspector	Super./ Chief Sup.	
	M	F					
9. Good citizen Puts needs of job, or team, before own needs; accountable for own actions with principles that underlie those actions; doesn't grab the limelight or take credit for team efforts	5 5.0	3 3.1	8 11.0	4 8.2	5 11.4	1 6.3	26 6.8
5. Effect on Others Has a distinct and positive impact on either the behaviour of others, or the way s/he is perceived; "presence"	4 4.0	6 5.2	10 13.7	2 4.1	2 4.5	1 6.3	25 6.6
8. Progressive Uses methods or ideas that are new, or develops new methods and ideas	0 0	2 2.1	7 9.6	3 5.1	3 6.8	4 25.0	19 5.0
6. Application of knowledge Demonstrates technical or factual knowledge; able to use this knowledge to inform practice	6 5.9	6 5.2	1 1.4	1 2.0	0 0	1 6.3	15 3.9
13. Experienced Experienced through variety of tasks and/or simple long service	3 3.0	5 5.2	4 5.5	0 0	1 2.3	0 0	13 3.4
7. Open-minded Able to think about situations from a variety of perspectives; unlikely to prejudge situations or people	2 2.0	1 1.0	3 4.1	2 4.1	1 2.3	0 0	9 2.4
1. Initiates Looks for work rather than passively waiting for tasks to be allocated; proactive in behaviour	4 4.0	0 0	2 2.7	0 0	1 2.3	0 0	7 1.8
Sums	101 100	97 100	73 100	49 100	44 100	16 100	380 100

Analysis

In order to understand whether gender and/or organisational position influenced the constructions of policing elicited through the repertory grid interviews, a chi square analysis was performed in order to statistically assess whether any such differences existed in the data.

No female police officers were in the ranks above constable. The value of Chi-Square computed over the "constable- female" column versus the summed remaining rank columns of Table 5.2, across all 13 categories (d.f. = 12), is 16.0, which is not significant.

The value of Chi-Square computed over the "constable" column summed across gender versus the summed remaining rank columns of Table 5.2, across all 13 categories (d.f. = 12), is 39.8, $p < 0.001$.

These results suggest that constables used different constructs to describe effective performers than more senior ranking officers, while female and male constables appear to use similar constructs when thinking about effective performers. Table 5.2 provides an explanation of each category used in the analysis that follows.

Cat. 12, Commitment, defined largely as a normative orientation (Etzioni, 1975) to the job appears to be highly valued by officers of all ranks and both

genders, (sergeants excepted: see below); a finding replicated by other studies of policing (Graef, 1990, Brown, 1992). During the repertory grid interviews, officers were asked to exemplify those behaviours they associated with commitment and for many, of both sexes, this involved putting the job before any other personal commitments. One policewoman for example, explained how she had stayed behind for four hours after the end of her shift to deal with a criminal she had arrested. Previous research has suggested that long working hours and the value judgements associated with such practices militate against women, since it is they who are most often the primary care givers in the home (Watson, 1994; Simpson, 1998).

It was commonly accepted among the majority of officers who participated in this research, that the demands of police work were not readily combined with parenthood and particularly, motherhood. Thus, women themselves are actively choosing not to stay in the organisation once they have children, making it difficult for constabularies to achieve adequate representation of females above the rank of constable. The necessity of the sorts of working practices that are perceived as a sign of commitment is nevertheless questionable, an issue that is addressed at some length in chapter 6. More fundamentally, however, the effects of such beliefs and practices are bolstered by discourses in society generally, that suggest that 'real' women do not put their work before their family (Lorber, 1994). Such discourses in effect legitimise a woman's decision to leave the police organisation to have a family. This issue is explored more fully in chapter 6. But what of those male officers who value their home more than their working life? Several male officers in the sample had, in fact, resigned themselves to the

prospect of being unlikely to be promoted due to their decision not to subordinate their families for the job.

Female officers were rather more likely than male officers to construe effective performers as those who possessed characteristics that facilitated good relations **(Cat. 11, Easy Going)**. Previous research has indicated that women tend to place more emphasis on the importance of relationships at work than do men (Marshall, 1984). One possible reason for this is that males and females may draw on different socio-cultural resources when thinking about relationships (Leidner, 1991; Gheradi, 1994). Culturally, women are expected to be naturally good at relationships. If women take these expectations on board, then it is possible that they may become sensitised to characteristics in other people which make them particularly difficult or easy to relate to.

However, both male and female participants used constructs associated with relationships **(Cat. 11 Easy Going; Cat. 3 Relating to Others** and **Cat. 10 Support)** relatively frequently. And indeed, male constables and inspectors were rather more likely than females to use constructs from **Cat 3. Relating to Others**. Thus, while such constructs might be associated with femininity in a broader cultural sense, within the police organisation such constructs are used in the evaluation of effective performance by both genders, and by all ranks of officers.

The emphasis on relationships is probably related to the operational requirements of policing, where reliance on the support of colleagues in potentially dangerous

or violent situations is of paramount importance. It is also noteworthy that these dominant constructions of the effective police officer run counter to the emphasis on policing as an activity being concerned with crime fighting (see chapter 6), and indeed are more consonant with the idea that policing is a service, a construction often 'rubbished' by constables as painting a false picture of the reality of policing (Waddington, 1999). This contradiction is dealt with in chapter 9. However, it is also notable that the female constables who participated in the discourse analytic phase of the field work, used discourses on relationships (especially the idea of team-work) to justify their love of the job. This is possibly related to the way that gender is socially constructed, in that women would find it difficult to express their high levels of satisfaction with the role on the grounds of its conflictual nature, due dominant ideas about female values (Kerfoot and Knights, 1996). However, in chapter 9, I discuss how men too, have difficulties justifying their high levels of job satisfaction through discourses in which the conflictual nature of policing as a profession is constructed as the norm.

Male constables were slightly more likely than female constables and more than twice as likely as all senior ranks, to emphasise constructs from **Cat.4 efficiency/thoroughness**, and **Cat.1 Initiates** (though absolute frequencies in the latter case are low). Again, culturally defined notions of masculinity often contain expectations that men will be determined and persistent. Thus in emphasising such aspects of the role, perhaps policemen are able to achieve a sense of gendered identity (Leidner, 1991). Similarly while commitment is perceived as important by all groups, male constables tend to place rather more emphasis on this than females and ranks above constable. This may reflect the

power relations within the organisation, in the sense that emphasising proficiency and the vocational requirements of the role enables the male constables, as the most subordinate rank, to both bolster and affirm their own professional identity and sense of value . In a society where the male identity is more clearly defined through work than the female identity (Leidner, 1991), it is more likely that men as a group will experience subordination within organizational power relations as a threat (Collinson, 1994). In Chapters 6 to 9, the 'motivation' to construct the police role is specific ways is approached from a more social than individual perspective.

Constables of both sexes were more likely than any other rank to use constructs from **Cat. 4 Efficiency/thoroughness.** With the exception of superintendents and chief superintendents, they were also more likely to use constructs from **Cat. 6 Application of knowledge.** This probably reflects the performance requirements of the constable role, where they are dealing on a day by day basis with various aspects of law enforcement from both an administrative and operational standpoint. Similarly, senior officers also need technical knowledge to enable them to make the sorts of policy decisions required at their level.

It is notable that officers above the rank of constable emphasise the importance of behaving in ways that are altruistic and non narcissistic, as defined **through Cat 9, Good Citizen,** in an organisation where it is widely believed at grass roots level that promotion is most likely to be earned by those who behave in exactly opposite ways.

Police managers, and the processes through which they come to be promoted, are viewed very cynically by grass roots officers. At that level there is a wide-spread discourse that police managers are 'out for themselves' and that those who get promoted do so on the basis that 'their face fits'. Perhaps the circulation of these cynical discourses motivates middle managers (inspectors and chief inspectors) to emphasise behaviours related to fostering good social relations and to altruism, because, by buying in to a belief system which suggests that their success is related to being 'good people managers', they are able to maintain a sense of self-worth (see chapter 9 for a theoretical account of why achieving self-worth may be 'motivating'). Furthermore, this motivation is fuelled by the relative visibility of inspectors and chief inspectors in the rank structure, probably because they are regularly privy to the circulation of cynical discourses. The same argument could be used to account for the fact that inspectors and chief inspectors also emphasise the importance of support, since again, senior officers are not generally seen as supportive by grass roots police officers. These categories appear to lose their salience above the rank of chief inspector, perhaps reflecting the relative invisibility of these ranks within the rank structure. Chapter 9 addresses this issue at greater depth.

The more frequent use of constructs from **Cat. 8 Progressive** by officers above the rank of constable (and particularly among the superintendents/chief superintendents) is reflective of the different cultural requirements at senior levels in the organisation, where being seen as "promotion material" is associated with being innovative and proactive in bringing about positive changes within the role. Similarly, the tendency for more senior officers to emphasise constructs

from **Cat.2 Accuracy of Perception and Judgement** can also be seen to reflect those aspects of the police culture that are concerned with public image. The police organisation is very keen to avoid doing things that will be viewed unfavourably by the public and the government, possibly due to the media attention that situations like the Alison Halford case, and the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry attract. As officers climb up the rank structure, they, as individuals, are held increasingly accountable for any public image problems that the organisation suffers. It is therefore understandable that skills related to making careful and well considered judgements become more salient with increased seniority.

Sergeants as a group appear to place somewhat different emphases on performance expectations than the other ranks above constable. As a group they were far more likely to use constructs from **Cat.5 Effect on Others**. This possibly reflects the visibility of the sergeant role. Unlike more senior ranks, they are highly visible to the constables, being in the immediate supervisory role, but they are also visible within the rank structure, unlike constables, since they do have first line management responsibilities. Like inspectors and chief inspectors, they also emphasise the importance of altruism (**Cat. 9 Good Citizen** and **Cat 10. Support**). This is probably a reflection of the role requirements of the sergeant, where he or she is pivotal in acting as a team leader, and mentor, to constables.

The fact that sergeants are rather less likely than other groups to emphasise **Cat. 12 Commitment** and **Cat. 3 Relating to Others** is more difficult to understand. One possibility is that sergeants occupy a unique position in the sense that they are not seen as part of 'management' nor yet as 'grass roots bobbies'. In this

sense they can therefore afford to relinquish the notion that a sense of mission is critically important, since they are no longer occupying the most subordinate position in the rank structure, and they can afford to be less concerned with the way they relate to others as they are not sufficiently senior in rank to be tarred with the same discursive brush.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have presented the results of the analysis of the repertory grid data. This analysis suggests that rank is the most salient category influencing dominant constructions of the police role, with constables in particular constructing the effective performer differently to more senior ranks. Women constables do construct the role differently to their male counterparts in some minor ways. I have argued that it is the *effects* of these constructions that produce the greatest gender differentiation, and this issue is explored at greater depth in the next chapter.

I have suggested that the power relations in the organisation, specifically those subsisting between different levels in the hierarchy, can account for the significant differences in the construction of the police role. This argument is developed and expanded in the following chapters. In the next chapter, the issue of how these constructions are reproduced and transformed in the spoken narratives of individuals is addressed.

Chapter 6 The construction of policing as an activity and an identity

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that the repertory grid analysis provided a snapshot of dominant constructions of the police identity. In this chapter, I move to a different level of analysis by examining the way the role is constructed as both an identity and a profession during spoken narratives. In performing the discourse analysis, my primary analytic focus in this chapter is on text (see chapter 3), focusing specifically on vocabulary, cohesion, and force. I also identified several discourses in circulation that were concerned with policing as a profession and an identity, some of which coincide and some of which are different to those constructions of policing identified through the repertory grid analysis. I further analyse these discourses at the level of social practice, focusing on hegemony.

In this chapter I will describe the dominant discourses I identified. A partial genealogy of these discourses is presented in chapter 4. I will illustrate how these discourses were articulated in the course of the dialogues between myself and the research participants and will draw attention to differences in their use between various participants, providing theoretical explanations as to why these differences might be apparent. I will also map the way competing discourses on policing as a profession are drawn upon to legitimise and reproduce the status quo. I will further show how dominant discourses are reproduced and maintained. Table 6.1 gives a description of the discourses I identified and

labelled, and also shows where these relate to the repertory grid analysis

presented in chapter 5. The discourses I intend to illustrate in this chapter are:

- Police/parenting incompatibility

- Policing as mission

- Policing as conflict management

- Policing as community service

- Policing as varied and challenging

Table 6.1

Discourse	Content	Comparison with repertory grid data
Police/parenting incompatibility	This is an extremely hegemonic discourse that I first encountered in 1993, when I began the research. I asked the Equal Opportunities officer to explain why there were so few women in the senior ranks. He said "Because they leave to have babies". This discourse quite simply contains the idea that police officers cannot be parents, or more accurately mothers. It is a discourse that is completely legitimised by the *Policing as mission* discourse and the two mutually reinforce and reproduce each other in various ways and more specifically, through various working practices, as I will show. It is a discourse that has its roots in wider society, where a "good mother" is one who stays at home with the 'kids' (Lorber, 1994; Loscocco, 1996), and one that has gendered consequences.	
Policing as mission	Within the terms of this discourse, policing is articulated as being less of a job and more a way of life. It is a sense of vocation and is a profession that requires a great deal of commitment in terms of time and emotion. Within this discourse, the unique and 'special' nature of the police officer's role and task is often emphasised. It is a feature of policing that has been documented by a number of police researchers (Holdaway, 1983; Graef, 1990 and Reiner, 1992), usually in discussion of the so-called 'canteen culture'. This discourse is used repeatedly to legitimise various working practices that, as I shall show have gendered consequences.	'Commitment': Concerned with the vocational aspects of the role

Table 6.1 contd.

Discourse	Content	Comparison with repertory grid data
Policing as conflict management	This discourse suggests that policing is a dangerous and conflictual job, where the focus is on dealing with angry, potentially violent people most of the time. Again, it has been discussed by other researchers in different contexts (Reiner, 1992; Morash and Greene, 1986). The ability to both control a situation and one's own emotions are emphasised	
Policing as community service	This discourse is in very wide use, and competes with the *Policing as conflict management* discourse. Within this discourse, the 'softer' more interpersonally oriented skills of policing are stressed. It is a discourse that suggests the police are there to perform a service to the community and to help people rather than control them. While it probably can be traced back to the last century, its current dominance is probably related to the aftermath of the Scarman report (1981) and the subsequent emphasis in promotion boards and training on the service aspects of the role and the importance of good community relations. This discourse contradicts and competes with the *Police as conflict management* discourse.	'Effect on others' and 'Relating to others' are categories related to this discourse. Within each, the importance of good interpersonal skills is emphasised.
Policing as varied and challenging	This discourse stresses the exciting and unpredictable nature of police work, emphasising an action and results orientation to policing and is very often mobilised to justify and reinforce the *Policing as mission* discourse.	'Initiates' is a category that is related to this discourse. It is an action oriented category that emphasises the importance of proactive rather than passive policing.

Table 6.1 contd.

Discourse	Content	Comparison with repertory grid data
The importance of team-working	Within the terms of this discourse, the importance of being able to work well as part of a team is articulated. Strong themes about dependence and reliability are expressed, often legitimated through the *Policing as conflict management* discourse. For example, officers will suggest that because the job can be so dangerous and unpredictable, one needs to be certain that colleagues will 'back you up'. This discourse also legitimises some police specific idiosyncracies including the tendency for police officers to form sexual attachments and to socialise with each other, and not with people outside the force.	'Easy going' and 'Good citizen' are categories that are specifically concerned with the importance of good relations at work. People were quite explicit about the attributes of the good team-player in the repertory grid interviews.
Anti-pig	Individuals used a variety of discursive resources to suggest that as police officers, they were human, and not forceful or authoritarian. Often, such ideas were articulated through the *Policing as community service* discourse, but other ideas were utilised here as well, including emphasising the professionalism of the role; the authority of the uniform, not the person (see chapter 4 for a discussion of the 'rules' that governed the formation of the police for a possible genealogical root for this discourse); and emphasising good relationships with criminals and the wider community.	'Accuracy of perception and judgement', 'Application of knowledge' and 'Open-minded' are all categories that are concerned with the attributes of the professional police officer.

Table 6.1 contd.

Discourse	Content	Comparison with repertory grid data
Gender differences do not exist	This discourse, used by officers of both sexes, suggests that gender is not a salient variable within the police. Within the terms of this discourse, professionalism is emphasised as the important variable in making interpersonal judgements about other police officers. This discourse is couched within broader socio-cultural notions of pragmatism (Wetherell and Potter, 1992), where what is emphasised is "getting on with things" and not being side-lined by issues such as gender. Within the terms of this discourse, people who see gender as a salient variable are discredited by imputing improper motive to such views, on the grounds of extremism or self-interestedness.	
Banter is a normal process	Within the terms of this discourse banter, be that general 'mick-taking' or sexual innuendo, is constructed as being part of normal work processes. Individuals who are offended by banter are constructed as being so for improper motive, or as being difficult to get along with. The use of banter is legitimated by the *Policing as conflict management* and *Policing as varied and challenging* discourses. Police officers argue that banter is a coping strategy that enables them to deal effectively with an otherwise difficult job.	'Easy going' is the category that is closely related to this discourse.

The discourses illustrated

1. Policing as mission

The *Policing as mission* discourse was mobilised by nearly all the female

participants when the conversation addressed the question of why people had

wanted to become police officers in the first place.

Sally

P: What made you want to join the police in the first place?
S: I always wanted to join the police from being a very young child, but I wasn't
tall enough.
P: What.. Was it just a sort of childhood thing or did you know people who were
in..?
S: No....

Judy

P: Why did you join the police?
J: I joined the police because it's something I've always wanted to do.

Rachel

P: Do you like it? (being a police officer)
R: Oh yeah! I wouldn't do anything else now. It's what I've always wanted to do!

Wendy

P: So what made you want to join the police? Can you remember?
W: I don't know really. It was just something I'd always thought about.

All these women suggest that joining the police was the fulfilment of a

vocational ambition. In contrast, all the men, when asked this question, claimed

that they joined opportunistically.

Mick

M: The essence of why I joined the police force – I was used to the concept of a uniformed service and I wanted to stay in (names town) and could leave with 4 weeks notice. So I thought – well, I'll give it a try.
P: And what was the attraction of the 4 weeks notice?
M: Well you see, if I decided..decided that I'll try the army anyway, you had to sign on for a period of years..and if you found you didn't like it, then you had to buy yourself out. There was a much greater commitment..umm...and my attitude was..4 weeks notice, that's not a problem. I can work out 4 weeks notice If I find I can't bear this...

Ray

P: What made you join?
R: I wanted to go on traffic – I knew what I wanted to do. I served my time as a motor vehicle apprentice and I went through into management – but in my mid 20s I thought "this is the end of the line" and I wanted to come into the police. At that time I wasn't certain – I thought I'd be open minded and go in and make a decision later. The underlying thing was always traffic.
P: Because you liked driving fast cars?
R: No – Yeah – Don't get me wrong – everyone on traffic has to enjoy driving fast or you're going to be dangerous – you've got to want to do it. But that really wasn't it. By that time I think I came in – in the first couple of weeks I had a talk about the traffic department by a Sgt. And I thought "that's what I want to do" because it used the experience that I had. It utilised all the skills that I'd been taught post school –

Jack

P: Is that why you chose to become a policeman in the first place?
J: Right. Honesty here. Failed miserably at school. Got asked to leave before the end of the exams and everything and found myself wandering down the high street and into a careers office and there was this poster about the police showing rock climbing and I thought "that looks like a good life" never thinking where it would lead?

Martin

M: I didn't join the police like a lot of people – I mean I was nineteen and a half, twenty, my girlfriend got pregnant – we needed to get married and therefore needed a house quite quickly and a decent wage. I was working in an advertising agency and art college before that. Never ever in my life considered being a police officer – In fact I kept away from them as much as I possibly could – I hadn't a clue what police work was about!

Only one of the women cited opportunistic reasons for joining the police, Sophie, a woman who was completely dissatisfied with policing and who told me she intended to leave the job.

Sophie

S: *Why did I decide to join the police? Because I was quite dissatisfied with the BBC at the time.*

Why would the female participants position themselves in the *Policing as mission* discourse in the ways I have illustrated? And why not the men? Heidensson (1992) also noticed that the policewomen she interviewed in her study emphasised their determination to enter the job. She attributes this to the difficulties women face in gaining entry to the police in the first instance. However, only one of my participants had had an unsuccessful first attempt at entering the service. All the other women got in at their first attempt.

Within the *Policing as mission* discourse, there are strong themes about 'paying your dues' as an operational officer – basically the notion that to be really competent, you need to have served a long time as an operational officer. The repertory grid analysis reflects this theme in the category **Experienced**, where competent officers were identified as being those who had relatively long service lengths. The following extract from Wendy, the part-time constable illustrates this theme:

W: *Ummm..my own personal thought is that you need to have sort of 10 years service in before you can become a competent sergeant.*

Within the terms of the *Police/parenting incompatibility* discourse, it is widely accepted that once policewomen have children, they will not return to full-time policing. Women apparently achieve an average of eight years service, according to Jim, the former Equal Opportunities officer. There is therefore always a question-mark over the extent to which policewomen are 'serious' about the job. By positioning themselves in this way within the *Policing as mission* discourse, the women are able to achieve the persuasive goal that they are serious about the job. So serious that they have spent much of their lives thinking about becoming an officer. This could be because they are unable to demonstrate this in other ways, such as remaining as full-time operational police officers for 10 years.

Conversely, the majority of the male participants had already 'paid their dues' or would expect to be able to. They are therefore free from the perception that they may not be serious about policing and can afford to take up the positions they do without running any real risks to their credibility as officers. Likewise, Sophie, who doesn't want to remain in the police force, has no concerns as to whether she is taken seriously or not. Thus she too can afford not to take up the position offered through the *Policing as mission* discourse. This argument is developed further in the next chapter.

2. The reproduction of the *Policing as mission* discourse through its inscription in working practices

The *Police/parenting incompatibility* discourse is reproduced most successfully within the terms of the *Policing as mission* discourse and frequently legitimated through the *Policing as conflict management* and *Policing as varied and*

challenging discourses. The following extracts illustrate these discourses in action.

Sally

S: No, I knew policemen – my uncle was a policeman – but disregarding the height restrictions – I had a young family so I wasn't in a position to apply.
P: What were you doing before you came?

Later in the conversation

S: I find as well though...I mean..you work 6 till 2...you're never guaranteed to get off at 2. Now I've got really good supervision because if I have nobody to look after my children, I honestly say to them "Look – I'm stuck..I've got to be there at 3.30" and they'll say "No problem" ...
P: But what happens when they won't let you off? Why aren't you guaranteed to get off (when your shift finishes)?
S: Because... I mean for instance...I arrested 3 young lads and I should have finished at 2 and I never got away till 9.30 at night.................if it got to 2 o'clock and you had your coat on and you're out the door- you have to question whether you should be in the job, because it's not an 8 hour job.

Judy

P: Right. And do you want to go far (in your career)?
J: I don't know, because my attitude's changed somewhat. When I joined I wanted to go up the ladder and get as high as I can. But now, um.. my values have probably changed and meeting somebody that I've got engaged to and everything..and that I want to spend the rest of my life with and have a family now....so it's....
P: You don't see the family and going up the rank structure as compatible?
J: Well..we've talked about this and what I've said is..if I have a fam...I mean we're going to get married sort of this time next year...so it's in the future, after my probation and everything...but what I've said is..that I wouldn't mind going back part-time, but not on the beat. Cos I don't think that's fair to my family to have two...two parents that are both in a dangerous job....

Group of officers

P: What about the shifts? How has that affected you, because a lot of people have said to me that...
G1: Very unsociable. I do a normal 8 hour shift and it's very unsociable....
G2: I think for single people or people who haven't got children it's probably an excellent system to work. Umm..but if you have a family, it starts to get..
P: What about people with families? How have your families adjusted to that?
G3: I think..the way that I'm living now, as a copper, I...My wife appreciates more...and I think my kids do as well, because they get to see more of me, than when I was in the forces. I was away a hell of a lot. At least now, I get to see

them every day. Um, the shifts..it..it gets a bit difficult cos sometimes the stations are slightly understaffed and you're sometimes...I honestly don't know what shift I'm doing from one week to the next...

Nick

P: What do you think is the reason why policewomen don't stay in the force very long?

N: Well most of them probably have babies

P: Well why are the two incompatible?

N: They aren't. That's why they leave and once they've got out, they think I don't want to go back. I don't think it's an ideal job for a woman, - the shifts and everything

P: You mean for those women with families?

N: No – it's not just that. You come to work – it depends what you want doesn't it? Some women ---- once they get married... Usually police women – if they get married – marry police men. There aren't many who marry somebody outside of the job – and they probably think – "I'll settle down and have a family. We can manage on one wage".

P: Would you not like to be the one who did that?

N: Not really – what else would I do?

P: Well why would the women do it?

N: They're looking after the kids, aren't they.

P: Yes – but lots of women I know with kids want to get back to work after a while...

N: If you've a got a child, or children, you're not going to work nights, 2-10 and earlies, cos how the hell do you get childcare? It's better now cos you can work part-time and job share and all the rest of it which is a lot easier. But the police is so unpredictable. If you're working 2-10 and they're short on nights, they'll say "You're working nights tonight" – ring you up at home. What do you do with the kids? It's not easy. So people say "I'll ...." .....so many obstacles. A lot of women go off on ill health don't they. It's all to do with money and pensions, and who can blame them really.

Rachel

P: Why do you think so few women return to the police after they've had children?

R: Well..they do now...

P: But...

R: They didn't (return)...There was never umm....I think now with Equal Ops and with part-time working and job sharing and umm..the job being that little bit more flexible than it probably used to be...umm..it's now.. it's easier to come back than it used to be. I mean before...y'know..if you had kids.. people left....

Later in the conversation

P: What's your view on part-time policing?

R: Fine

P: You don't have a problem with it?

R: No – I don't mind at all....

P: Why is that other people don't like it then?

R: I don't know really...they don't like...ummm... I don't think they like... I think they'd like to work two or three days themselves. That's probably what it is – y'know, it's not the fact that they (the part-timers) don't do the job or anything... it's the fact they'd quite like to work..quite like to work two or three days. I'd like to work two or three days a week!

P: Well so would I....

R: I think everybody would. Anyone in their right mind would...I'd rather work two than seven...y'know but umm...it is easier...it is easier to come back to work as a woman....much easier. I'd come back to work..I haven't got any kids but umm...I couldn't imagine not coming back to work..I've worked too long to..to come out..

P: So, you'd come back part-time?

R: Oh no – I'd come back full time – I couldn't imagine working part-time. I couldn't imagine being out the job. I couldn't imagine anything more boring than being at home everyday and being a....you know...with kids. And ummm....I mean you don't know, your views might change, but as happy as I am now, as I think now, I would umm..I would come back. I wouldn't not return. I enjoy my job too much..it might be selfish but...

As these extracts illustrate, the *Police/parenting incompatibility* discourse is so hegemonic, that it is completely taken for granted as a self-evident truth, as the extracts from both Sally and Nick demonstrate clearly. Because I was analysing the data as I transcribed it, I was able, in some of the conversations, to challenge the discourse. (Note that I take this completely for granted when Sally tells me she couldn't have applied to be a police officer any earlier because of her young family). This produces various legitimations. Judy for instance, legitimises her decision to return to part-time office work after having children through the *Policing as conflict management* discourse "*it's not fair to have two parents in a dangerous job*". However, research from both Britain and North America suggests that policing is really not as dangerous as officers claim, even in areas like New York city (Morash and Greene, 1986; Heidensohn, 1992).

Nick, conversely, legitimises the *Police/parenting incompatibility* discourse by first of all suggesting that women naturally choose to leave the police because they can: it's a simple question of being able to leave a job if you have a partner earning a good wage (a common practice for women 30 years ago, but far less so now). Then, when I challenge him about his sex-role assumptions, he suggests that shift working makes it very difficult to arrange childcare. (Interestingly, one member of the group discussion suggests that policing is more compatible with parenting than a career in the forces where, as he points out, you are away a lot of the time. However, another group member again suggests that shift-working makes it is difficult for people with families to become officers). Finally, he makes a persuasive discursive move by drawing on the *Policing as varied and challenging* discourse, and suggesting that the inherent unpredictability of the job means it is not suitable for women with children.

Rachel, however, tries to persuade me that she is not positioned within the *Police/parenting incompatibility* discourse, by suggesting that women can now return to policing due to the availability of part-time work. In fact she uses various rhetorical moves to persuade me that she believes part-time work to be very desirable *"anyone in their right mind"* would want to take the opportunity of working part-time. However, in absolutely ruling it out for herself *"Oh no I'd come back full time. I couldn't imagine being out the job"*, she completely contradicts this position by in fact suggesting that working part-time is equivalent to not returning to work at all. Rachel, who throughout our whole conversation was positioned very firmly in the *Policing as mission* discourse, demonstrates that in fact working part-time carries the risk of being perceived as

someone who isn't a 'real' police officer. The following extracts support this argument.

Wendy

P: Do you have a particular career plan in mind?
W: Not up the scale, no.
P:You don't? Why?
W: I'm happy as I am, and I'd like to do um, something towards working in CID, but I think that'll be difficult because of working part-time.
P: Why would that be difficult?
W: Whether they'd accept it, um..because of not being available all the time.

Later in the conversation

P: Have you found any difficulties adapting to part-time work then? Has there been any problems for you?
W: Um..Apart from getting loads of ribbing about it from the lads?
P: You get a lot of ribbing?
W: Not so much now, but when I first transferred I did. It was new to (names police station) as well when I first transferred here. So there was a lot of comments made about it as well.
P: Like what?
W: Like, Oo..it must be nice to work 3 days a week, y'know. And this isn't just from the male officers!
P: Oh no, I can imagine...
W: This is from female officers as well..
P: What do you think they're getting at when they say that? Are they implying that you're not working as hard as them, do you think?
W: I don't think they're implying that. I think they're implying it's the easy option.

Sophie

S: ....there's such an aversion to women coming back and working part-time, y'know. "They should be at home in the kitchen". There is a real problem with policemen about women who return to part-time work – They don't see them as an extra resource – they just see them as a waste of time – playing at it – "they want their shifts to work round their child-care while the rest of us have to work nights", y'know....

Thus part-time working actually reproduces the *Policing as mission* discourse because 'real' police officers work shifts, are available all the time, and would be prepared to stay back after the completion of a shift in order to complete some or

other task. The repertory grid analysis reflect some of these ideas in the category **Commitment,** which is defined in terms of displaying enthusiasm and putting a great deal of effort into the job.

Also demonstrated by the extracts presented above, is the way that the *Policing as mission* discourse is inscribed in inter-related working practices that are not problematised by any of the participants with quite specific gendered effects as I will show. The working practices that I will illustrate include

- Shift-working
- Not finishing a shift on time in order to complete a job
- Being prepared to come into work at short notice or to stay behind because of man-power shortage.

Shift-working itself is not the actual problem. There are female (numerically) dominated occupations where shift working is the norm and yet not seen as a barrier for women who are also mothers. Midwifery and general nursing are two examples. The actual problems are due to the fact that police officers are unwilling to either hand-over or take on jobs that are not completed at the end or the beginning of shifts, and the fact that police officers are expected to show willing to change shifts or commit to extra shifts without much notice. Many officers mentioned these sorts of practices as being common during the repertory grid interviews. As Sally's extract demonstrates, if you question these practices, you run the risk of being seen as lacking 'real' commitment and according to Sally, should question whether you should be in the job at all *"..because it's not an 8 hour job".* The following extracts demonstrate some of the interesting

discursive moves made by participants when I challenge the necessity of these practices.

Wendy

P: I mean it just seems to be something that's done without anybody questioning why it's done. Isn't it? It's like... I was talking to a policewoman a few weeks ago and she was saying that - she had a family as well but she was full time - and she was saying that very often she might umm... be due to finish at two but she would get – something would happen and she wouldn't finish till hours and hours later. And I was saying to her - well is that really necessary? - You know? - And I mean for her it was really necessary - but it wasn't really necessary if you pulled it to pieces - it could have been handed over and yes -

W: But we don't - we don't hand things over - But its because basically you've got all the insight into the job -

P: Yeah - that's what she said -

W: And you know - to hand it over - For a start people don't like having jobs handed over to them - cos they're going in cold and they don't - they've not met the people -they don't know what their reactions are - umm.. and its a bit like Chinese whispers in a way, isn't it? You're better off - you know exactly in your own head - cos you might not have written everything down. It's time consuming to write everything down. So -you might as well deal with it yourself.

P: Right. So you think that practice is probably a good one - that people continue dealing with the jobs that.......

W: If it's not going to be too long. And not unreasonable.

P: But what would happen if..? Like this girl was telling me that she had this particular day - stayed back 8 hours - Y'know that didn't seem reasonable to me. Does it to you?

W: It depends what it is. Like I had one similar - which was a sexual offence one – and ummm--I'd come on nights at 10 o'clock and I didn't get off till 12 o'clock the following day. But once you've started dealing with it, you can't pass it over to someone else - y'know and that was just basically a case of – getting... getting the story and all that type of thing which does take time. It depends what the job is. If it's a criminal job where you've locked somebody up - then you can do a handover and somebody else will deal it....

P: Do people tend to?

W: It does happen yeah.....

P: But people don't like having any job handed over to them.

W: Generally no.

P: Do you?

W: I don't mind it.

P: Why do people dislike it, do you think?

W: Like I say because...you're coming into it cold as well...It's better....If it's the end of the shift people...they do appreciate it if you've done a lock up at half past nine, you're finishing at 10 - then yes, you could probably leave it for night shift if there's more enquiries to be done on it. But if you say it's a lock up at 8 o' clock and you've been getting on with the enquiries and it's just an interview that

needs doing or things like that, then you're better off staying on for an hour - two hours and dealing with it.

Sally

P: What happens when you're not guaranteed to get off though? Because I've heard a lot of policemen say this. Why aren't you guaranteed to get off?"
S: Because you're not..if you arrest...say I finish at 2 in the afternoon and I arrest somebody at 1.30 -and I'm going to have to process them and interview them....
P: Why do you have to do it? Why can't you hand them over to someone else?
S: Probably because of manpower...but you don't...it's very rare you hand it over. You sort of do the interviewing.....usually....I mean...I mean....for instance...I had to... I arrested 3 young lads and I should have finished at 2 and I never got away till 9.30 at night. Because when I arrested one, he gave me information about another one and I had to go and arrest another one...he then mentioned someone else and I had to arrest another one and because it's your case....and it's continuity...y'see because they all had stolen goods and y'know...so And y'know because it's a job that you've got your teeth into you need to see that it's gone through and you need to see that it's done (properly) ...it's not that no one else can do it but you - but if you get someone else to interview for you, you haven't got a full picture of what actually was said..or the body language or anything in an interview. All you do is listening to a tape...you don't see people's reactions and you get so much from.... I don't know whether you know but my sergeant...this is another thing my sergeant always says .... "Y'know if you come in as a 2nd officer sit slightly behind them because if you hit on a nerve or on on the truth, they start twitching their feet" ...and I laughed at that...but it's true. They start... their body language starts to move and their defence tactics ... sitting down, crossing their arms and you don't get that on a tape. So.....
P: So you think it helps with processing the crime? And preparing the file or whatever you've got to do. Do you write those things into it? Y'know about the body language and that?
S: No. Cos that's not evidence is it? It's just ...it's just something that you pick up yourself.....
P: Well how does it help then?
S: Well because..if I was to ask you a question and you started dodging and dithering ... I'd probably continue to talk to you but my colleague would have picked up on that and written down at one point you'd started edging around and then he'd come in and use challenging questions. Now that doesn't happen with everybody ...this is just the sort of thing that I picked up from like my sergeant. And because he's telling other people on the shift about how we should sort of look for these things..you know, the body language and.....

The force (see chapter 3) of these narratives is concerned with legitimising these

working practices. Wendy and Sally draw on similar discursive resources to

achieve this. Sally starts off by blaming 'manpower' but they both draw on the *Policing as varied and challenging* discourse to suggest that a lot of jobs are simply too complex to enable them to be handed over. Furthermore, Wendy uses the idea that *" it's too time consuming to write everything down'* to further reinforce the idea that the individual who started dealing with the job is the best one to finish dealing with it. By suggesting that writing everything down would be too time consuming, she is persuading me that there are more important things to do than making notes that might assist someone who took the job over afterwards, and also reinforces the idea about the complexity of the task. Likewise, Sally implies that handing a job over might result in it not being carried out 'properly' which would clearly be a concern in terms of law enforcement.

Sally also mythologises the interview with the criminal by suggesting that much of what is achieved in an interview is through careful reading of the interviewee's body language and other non-verbal cues present in the situation. I am not suggesting that these are invalid sources of information, but discursively, the effect is to both reproduce the *Policing as varied as challenging* discourse and to persuade me that these tacit areas of knowledge in police-work are not easily shared with someone coming in 'cold'.

Sally and Wendy also use the idea of continuity to legitimise these practices. They are both drawing on common cultural discourses about work here, where the idea that it is better for us to see jobs through completion is a 'common-sense' assumption. Wendy and Sally also use details about the job to convince me that these practices are sensible. Wendy tells me she was dealing with a

"sexual offence" which conveys immediately the idea of having to be extremely sensitive and again achieves the goal of normalising the practice. Sally conveys the idea of a domino effect in her arrests, suggesting that she has started something which she would need to follow through because *"they all had stolen goods"*. She achieves a sense of being someone who has to fit the pieces of a complicated jigsaw together, like Inspector Morse.

Because the *Policing as varied and challenging* discourse is commonly used to justify and bolster the *Policing as mission* discourse, these practices serve to continually reproduce the status quo. The job is vocational, and it is vocational because it is so special, unique, challenging and unpredictable, which in turn means that you must be prepared to put up with and even relish working practices that 'normal' people would find unacceptable. A person who is not prepared to do the sorts of things described by Wendy and Sally, is not someone who could take up a subject position in the *Policing as mission* discourse. As a part-time officer, Wendy relinquishes any ideas of going up the career ladder or entering a specialist department like CID because she cannot engage in the sorts of working practices that would enable her to be perceived as a truly competent and committed officer. Nonetheless, Wendy is positioned within the *Policing as mission* discourse, though she has not invested in this position as strongly as Sally or Rachel (she would stay back after a shift as long as it wasn't an *"unreasonable"* length of time). This demonstrates that Wendy constructs herself as someone who is not prepared to accept her colleagues' attempts to undermine her professional identity, which she suggests they are trying to do through the *Policing as Mission* discourse.

What is most notable, however, is that these practices are not problematised, yet

it is these that perpetuate the *Police/parenting incompatibility* discourse, and will

continue to do so in a society where high quality child-care and family life are

highly valued. Furthermore, while it remains traditional for women to be the

primary care-giver at home, these practices yield specifically gendered effects,

though clearly, as evidenced by the extract from the group discussion, they affect

men as well. As the analysis shows, the dominant discourses available on the

nature of policing operate hegemonically to produce and reproduce the idea that

police work and parenting are not compatible.

3. Sites of resistance and challenge – competing discourses on the real nature of policing.

The Scarman report (1981) and its aftermath had a massive impact on the police

and on debates about what the nature of policing should be (Reiner, 1992).

Undoubtedly, the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry will continue to fuel these debates.

However, a clear discursive consequence of them is the dominance of the

Policing as community service discourse. This discourse is in wide circulation,

though it was used far more frequently by senior officers as a subject position in

its own right, tending to be used as a legitimating device by officers below the

rank of Inspector. This reinforces the differences in constructions of policing that

I discussed in chapter 5 as attributable to power relations in the rank structure.

There were also some disillusioned officers who took great pleasure in disrupting

the dominant discourses discussed in the last two sections. The following extracts illustrate these ideas.

Sally

P: Is it always the case that you get a result?
S: No. No. Definitely not. That's a bonus when that happens!
P: So you still enjoy the job, even when you don't get a result?
S: Yeah! I think to myself, when I go to a job I always think to myself, "How would I want somebody to speak to me if I'd come in these circumstances?" I think if you can empathise and speak with people, they're ok.

Wendy

P: So (joining the police) was something that you had always fancied doing?
W: Yeah! But it's basically that, at the time, you think of it like as a job where you're helping the community, and things like that. It's quite different when you join it, cos you don't particularly. I mean you give some people assistance, but you're also getting a lot of people's backs up by what you're doing. But I think that was it initially, cos I thought you know, you'd be helping the community and doing something, and talking to people. Which was what I wanted to do...

Mick

M: I worked for a long time as a beat officer. I enjoyed going to a decent scrap and getting people out of it who I felt deserved to go down and put them in a cell. Um...the job I did before this was as a custody officer....but I actually took a lot of pleasure in doing a good job with the punters. Cos they'd come in...and by the way I treated them, I think I made them more co-operative.

Ray

R: There are times when you do get pissed off, when you don't get the backing from those above you. The good side, the satisfaction, is the idea that you've helped someone in very tragic circumstances. It can be the simple things too – the fact that you've changed a tyre for someone. But, they take the time and effort to write and thank you. And you might have forgotten all about it. It's times like that when you think "there is a value to all this after all". It's perhaps not police work per se, it's ... I don't know.

Martin

M: That's part of the culture change that I'm trying to make at the moment – is that we're trying to move from a reactive to a proactive style of policing.

P: Why?

M: The easy answer is that the Force says we have to. But I believe very much in it and I think it's very much about trying to base police instructions in community language so that the community understands. The problem with the community is that they tend to worry about what's happening on the doorstep – so if the vast majority of people don't have burglaries, they don't worry about them. You need to balance out the vagaries and passions – but I believe strongly that – I react against any (policing activity) that has a smack of patriarchal control.

Charles

P: Do you like being a policeman?

C: Yes

P: Why?

C: You grow to the fact that you're actually serving the public

Cathy

C: I think it's more - this was a male job - this is a rufty tufty - at that time - again the whole ethos of the job has changed now - we're not seeing ourselves as a rufty tufty beat them over the head type outfit. It's a community service which helps people and maybe that's why the big change has come because we're now a helping service and the skills of women to assist the help are acknowledged, whereas the only skills you had was who could fight, who was big, who was rufty tufty, who could, y'know, grapple with a prisoner and bring 'em in and it was all to do with physical strength - in a word strong.

Jim

P: How does the culture encourage people to become arrogant?

J: You just get embroiled into it, initiated into it. And if you don't, you're not accepted. I see recruits coming in with all kinds of ideals. They want to help people. They get it hammered out of them. They marginalise and sideline people, ignore them, make them feel worthless.

Sophie

S: But then people like the security..it's very..y'know the security of being...is a big thing for the police. And the more insecure the outside world gets, with people being made redundant and short-term contracts, the more they hang onto the security in here and become possessive about it and perhaps..perhaps that's why they fight harder to maintain the culture. Out there it's a big, big, wide world and it's a jungle and you don't know if you're going to have a job tomorrow – if you don't meet your targets. But here, you don't have to worry about hitting your targets. You just have to worry about doing a decent job and that's it. You don't have to worry about how many people you've arrested and

there are a lot of people just carried..I let myself be carried for a while, while I was doing my....I came up here for 3 days a week and wandered around town and I was bored out of my mind..And I didn't do any decent work at all. And I got away with it! And in any other organisation, I'd have been given the sack..you know..it's so very easy to just kind of drift along..

P: Do you think a lot of people actually like the tasks of policing?

S: I think walking around the beat is brain death..there's no variety and it's just boring and dull and you're meeting the same people with the same problems and there's just no..there's no intellectual stimulation at all!

Officers below the rank of Inspector tend to use the *Policing as community service* discourse to justify their love of policing, which can be difficult to do within the *Policing as conflict management* discourse without appearing to be someone that likes conflict and using force and aggression. This issue is dealt with fully in chapter 9, when I discuss what I have labelled *pig* discourses. The categories **Effect on others** and **Relating to others** from the repertory grid analysis reinforce some of the themes from the *Policing as community service* discourse, emphasising the importance of good interpersonal skills as a means of creating good impressions. Nonetheless, the *Policing as conflict management* discourse dominates the lower ranking participant's descriptions of policing, a fact noticed by other researchers (Holdaway, 1989; Waddington, 1999). However, some of the more senior officers I spoke to, like Cathy, Martin and Charles, constructed an account in which they suggested policing should be about serving the public, and in Cathy and Martin's cases, that this would involve utilising skills and attitudes that are not concerned with control and force.

This fact would undoubtedly be attributed to senior managers' lack of understanding of "real" policing by the lower ranks, except that, as I have already discussed, the extent to which the *Policing as conflict management*

discourse is a reflection of what police officers actually do in day to day

operational policing has been challenged by many researchers on both sides of

the Atlantic. For example, Brown (1981) in a study of three police departments

in Southern Carolina, found that police officers in those departments were

involved in crime-related incidents less than one third of the time. Similarly,

Shapland and Vagg (1988) surveying police forces in Britain, found that in rural

policing less than half the calls received by police were to do with crime, and that

in an urban area the calls received were so diverse as to almost elude

categorisation. Other authors, notably Morash and Greene (1986), in their review

of police research in America, conclude that one of the reasons why the

conflictual aspects of policing are emphasised is due to the masculine gender of

research participants and researchers, implying that the emphasis on conflict is an

essentially masculine characteristic. Clearly, however, as my own research

demonstrates, this is not the case. Women utilised the *Policing as conflict*

management discourse as much as the men.

What are the functions of the *Policing as conflict management* discourse? One of

the chief functions is the portrayal of police officers as being guardians of the

public and protectors of life and property. It is also one that can help bolster

cultural constructions of masculinity (rough, tough and aggressive). However, its

use is probably related more to the power relations that exist in the organisation

than to gender. By investing heavily in the subject positions offered through the

Policing as conflict management discourse constables are able to achieve a sense

of distance from management who are generally constructed by lower ranks as

"out of touch" and "soft". The following extract from the group discussion

illustrates this idea;

Group

G4: Talking to the older PCs – management used to be good PCs who'd worked their way up. They'd arrested lots of people and stuff like that, done lots of cases and worked their way up, and got there eventually. And now.. from what they say, it seems to be, you go on a fast track and spend a minimum amount of time on the streets arresting people and the maximum amount of time in an office working out plans and filing forms...

As Collinson (1994) argues, distancing of this sort might be a response to

working in a subordinated position within a power hierarchy. For men, the take-

up of these positions might be further motivated by the fact that the adult male

identity is more generally constructed through work rather than, as is the case for

women, through motherhood. Thus, in emphasising the dangerous and

conflictual areas of the job, in which cultural notions of masculinity are

inscribed, men are able to achieve a sense of gendered identity. These ideas are

also supported by the repertory grid data which are discussed in Chapter 5.

(Though see chapter 9 where the contradictions involved in self-constituting

through this discourse are discussed).

Senior officers tend to adopt subject positions within managerial discourses that

emphasise commitment to the organisation rather than the job itself. This may

illuminate the finding in the repertory grid analysis that showed senior officers

were less likely than constables to use constructs from the category

Commitment. In the repertory grid interviews, commitment was generally

defined in terms of commitment to the actual job of a police officer. The *Policing*

as community service is part of the managerial discursive repertoire, which therefore accounts for its take up by Martin, Cathy and Charles.

However, the extent to which senior managers like Martin and Cathy will actually be able to bring about 'culture change' at grass-roots level is questionable, given the important role in organisational power relations played by the *Policing as conflict management* discourse. Indeed, the fact that the *Policing as a community service* discourse is in use among upwardly mobile senior managers, is more likely to act to further reproduce the *Policing as conflict management* discourse, and resistance to *Policing as community service,* since such positioning will facilitate the denigration of management's views of grass-roots tasks as being wrong and out of touch. As I have shown, constables do draw on the *Policing as community service* discourse, but my participants used this to justify the love of a job, which, because of its (supposed) conflictual nature, would be difficult to explain otherwise.

Officers like Jim and Sophie, who are no longer invested (at least in the context of this specific interaction) in maintaining their identities as 'real' police officers use dominant discourses to subvert ideas about the nature of policing. Jim, for example, suggests that service ideals get *"hammered out"* of people. Unlike Wendy and Ray who argue that these ideals are not usually maintained due to the reality of policing, Jim suggests that they are simply not something that colleagues will allow. Jim's remark that people who try to maintain this position are *"marginalised and side-lined"* suggests that the nature of policing is something that is constructed by groups of police officers colluding to maintain

their own version of reality. Similarly Sophie, suggests that the reason people like policing is not because it is challenging, varied or dangerous, but simply because it offers security in an increasingly uncertain world. In Sophie's account, the police officer is constructed as an insecure and not particularly gifted person who is clinging to a job that offers little more than protection from unemployment and a reasonable salary. This coupled with her description of police work as *"brain-death"* and as *"not all intellectually stimulating"* completely subverts the *Policing as conflict management* and *Policing as varied and challenging* discourses.

Conclusion

For lower ranking participants, the sense of being a 'real' police officer is largely achieved through the *Policing as mission* discourse. As I have illustrated, this discourse, which is inscribed within various taken-for-granted working practices, has quite specific gendered effects in that it makes it difficult for some people with family commitments (most often mothers) to take up subject positions in this discourse. The consequence is that mothering and policing are generally assumed to be mutually exclusive categories. Part-time working reproduces the *Policing as mission* discourse since the activities of 'real' officers are difficult to undertake as a part-time police officer. The part-time police officer that took part in my research was nevertheless positioned within the *Policing as mission* discourse, but not as invested in this position as the full-time women.

For women, an added advantage of being positioned within the *Policing as Mission* discourse is that it enables them to be taken seriously in an organisation where there is a wide-spread belief that 'real' police officers 'pay their dues' by remaining as operational constables for several years, and that women are likely to leave the job as soon as they have children.

Subject positions offered through the *Policing as conflict management* enable constables to achieve feelings of worth in an organisation characterised by a strong emphasis on rank and hierarchical power. As the most subordinate rank in the organisation, constables are subject to considerable exercises of power by more senior ranks. More senior officers are positioned within the *Policing as community service* discourse, which competes directly with the *Policing as conflict management* discourse. The take up of this position possibly reflects their positions in the power hierarchy (see chapter 5). However, 'resistance through distance' (Collinson, 1994) may paradoxically operate to reproduce the *Policing as conflict management* discourse at grass roots level, thus rendering efforts by senior managers to change the status quo, problematic.

Subversion of the dominant discourses on policing is a task undertaken by officers who, in any given interactional context, are no longer invested in their police identities, and who express no particular desire to remain a police officer. Like many people who express discontent with any given organisational status quo, however, neither are in positions of power.

Are there any sites or points of resistance at which alternative discourses might be produced that could serve to challenge the status quo? Part-time working is perhaps one such site. As increasing numbers of women (and men) take this up, they may, as Wendy has done, resist attempts by their colleagues to undermine their professional identity. It will take time, but it is likely that eventually, part-time officers will be become more the norm, since there is evidence that increasing numbers of officers are now part-time (Stone et al. 1994). For instance Sussex constabulary currently have two part-time female Inspectors. However, the practices that at present serve to reproduce a status quo that is potentially disadvantageous to women's careers need to be challenged. Other human service professions, like nursing, manage to work shifts without placing the sorts of demands on people that shift-working in the police imposes. Perhaps one obvious starting point is the dissemination of research such as this which challenges the taken-for-granted nature of these practices and the discourses that support them.

Other potential sites of resistance may be opened up by the competing discourses on the 'real' nature of policing. This is a contested and highly political domain. The pressure on the police to change the status quo, most recently exemplified by the aftermath of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry will fuel the debates in this area and perhaps operate to reproduce the *Policing as community service* discourse. Officers do take up subject positions within this discourse, though the idea that 'real' policing is more conflictual is extremely dominant at grass roots levels, as demonstrated by recent research (Holdaway and Parker, 1998). Seeing the answer to changes in the status quo as residing in particular 'progressive'

managers is hugely questionable, since, as I have argued, it is the power structure itself that serves partly to reproduce the dominant discourses.

In the next two chapters, I want to consider at some depth, the processes that operate to motivate some officers to take up subject positions in discourses that reproduce the status quo, while others take up positions in discourses that appear, at face value, to resist and challenge it.

Chapter 7 Constructing negative accounts of experiences as a female police officer

Introduction

A consistent and puzzling feature of the literature on gender and organisations, is the variability of the accounts that women working in male dominated organisations produce. For example, research suggests that in the same organisation, some women experience sexism and others do not; some experience exclusion, and others do not; some women give accounts of acts that they interpret as sexual harassment and others interpret the same acts as jokes. Such differences could be attributed simply to individual differences, but such an explanation would be wholly unsatisfactory for the reasons I have elaborated in Chapters 1 and 2. Post-structuralist authors, such as Hollway (1984; 1989) and Wilkinson and Kitzinger (1995) suggest that this variability should be the focus of study and indeed take such a focus in their own research.

One of the problems, however, with much of this research, is that while these authors maintain that accounts of experiences need to be understood as discursively produced, they tend to play down the fact that any dialogue that is generated in the research process is essentially one in which the participant is presenting the researcher with a particular narrative for a particular purpose, no matter how carefully the relationship between the two is managed (Widdicombe, 1995). Culturally, in dialogue, people are continually using the discursive repertoires available to them to present particular pictures of themselves and the world for **motivated** reasons (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). In ignoring this process, some post-structuralists are in danger of reproducing the very

methodological practices they claim to avoid (see chapter 2 for a detailed discussion of this situation). Largely this is where a particular account is analysed in terms of the discourse in use and the subject positions being taken up, but the actual reasons for the production of that particular account are left out of the analysis. The danger here is that the researcher tends to be positioned within a particular discourse her or himself, which s/he is failing to account for analytically. For instance, Wilkinson and Kitzinger (1995) talk about how discourse can render sexual harassment invisible. The problem is that from a discursive perspective, sexual harassment is itself an idea produced within feminist discourse and is therefore not an event that somehow transcends discourse, as is implied in this research.

In the following sections I want to show how sexist discourses are used to construct accounts of negative experiences and to argue that such accounts are 'motivated' by the take up of subject positions that are prescribed as desirable at the ideational level of discourse (see chapter 2 for a discussion of how this position is theorised). The discourse analysis deployed in this chapter focuses on text, on discursive practice (particularly production in the context of interaction) and on the intersection between discourse and ideology. (See chapter 3 for definitions of the various terms used in the analysis).

Constructing accounts of negative experiences

1. Sophie

Sophie and I got on together really well on meeting. We had a lot in common and

we both believed we had had unpleasant experiences at work, experiences that

we felt had led to us becoming depressed. This aspect of our relationship had a

significant impact on the narrative production (see the section on discursive

practice in chapter 3). Sophie, at the time of my research, told me she had

decided to leave the police. I was, at that time positioned in discourses in which I

constructed the police as a group and an organisation, as sexist, racist and macho.

My own inputs to the dialogues reflected these positions. In the following extract

I am explaining the first stage of the research to Sophie. What is established

(within the first few minutes of our dialogue) is that she has as negative a view of

the police as me:

P: My working hypothesis was that if you've been in the police long enough,
you're going to start seeing yourself in a stereotypically male way..So I sent all
these questionnaires out and they came back and the reverse happened...What I
found was that the females all saw themselves as very feminine and the male
officers saw themselves as androgynous. So um....
S: But that's their opinion
P: But that's their opinion..

By saying *"But that's their opinion"*, Sophie communicates the idea to me that

this is not her opinion, and by parroting this sentence, I communicate the same to

her. This point of mutual interest is immediately established and flavours the

whole dialogue. After explaining the research and its aims I asked Sophie

whether she thought the police force had affected her identity, and very quickly

after this Sophie told me she had been bullied. Thus we are both positioned in a

highly critical discourse about the police from the start, and we are motivated to

produce accounts in which the police are constructed negatively. To do this we

have a wealth of discursive resources at our disposal. In the following extract

Sophie is constructing an account of why she felt from very early on that she did

not fit into the police. In this account she is describing her reaction to some

postcards on the wall of a CID office showing women in scanty bikinis:

*S: But I remember thinking, "This is a professional office! I've never seen
naughty post cards in a professional office before". And I was foolish enough in
retrospect to say, "My Goodness me! What are those doing on the wall? That's a
bit off isn't it? Having pictures like that in a CID office?" Cos y'know, you
wouldn't walk into a solicitors and see that, or most places. I mean I equated
that kind of calender girl stuff with garages!*
P: Absloutely. That's where I would have expected to see them!

In this extract Sophie draws on a discourse of professionalism (a common

discourse used by the police about themselves (Heidensohn, 1992)), to imply that

having such material on the walls means that the police cannot be really

considered professional. Then, by introducing the account of her protest against

this material by saying *"I was foolish enough..to say "My Goodness""*, she

indicates that she is going to provide an account in which her protest had

negative implications for her. In saying this, she doesn't need to provide an

account of what happened (though she does later), because, since I am clearly

positioned in discourses that construct the police as sexist, I do not expect her to

account for this. In saying that she would expect to see such material in garages,

she constructs an image of the police as working-class. This is reinforced by

juxtaposing this clause with the idea that such material would not be found on the

wall of a solicitor's office. Thus she further reinforces the argument that the

police are not really professional since professionalism is culturally constructed as middle-class (Walkerdine, 1996). I reinforce this idea by saying *"absolutely"*. Thus Sophie produces an account imbued with negative images that can explain why she experienced difficulties when she joined the police and also why she no longer wants to stay in the police.

In the next extract Sophie produces an account of why she found the environment of a school more to her liking:

S: ...because I think walking round the beat is the most boring and dull thing that anybody could ever do and um..I was mixing with people in staff rooms that had their own politics as well, but um..they were all graduates. They were all unfazed by the fact that I was a graduate. There were a lot more women and it was a completely different culture because in the staff rooms, there's a lot more of a caring attitude, because I mean everybody cares about the kids."

In this extract Sophie disrupts the *Policing as varied and challenging* discourse by suggesting that beat-work is *"the most boring and dull thing...ever"*. Then, by juxtaposing this with, *"But..They were all graduates"*, she constructs the idea that her feelings of exclusion are caused by her educational status. She avoids the potential accusation that she is idealising the teaching profession by saying *"but they have their politics as well"*. Idealising is commonly cited as demonstrating a person's failure to grasp reality (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Then, by saying *"There were a lot more women"* and *"there's a lot more of a caring attitude"*, she draws on dominant discourses in which women are constructed as the more caring sex, and also implies that the police are uncaring (because there are a lot of men). Thus again, she provides a convincing justification of why she wants to leave the police.

In the final extract Sophie is responding to some comments I have been making, in which I have expressed surprise that a female officer had told me she didn't mind officers making comments about her body.

S: I think I can appreciate that. It didn't used to bother me and when I realised that it did bother me and I was just pretending it didn't... and now it does. And I'm beginning to confront it. Somebody sent me an obscene e-mail and it was somebody I get on with very well. And I said to him..."Actually, you offended me". And you do get people making comments. They make comments about your....sexual activities...and expect you not to mind..y'know..or other people's sexual activities..and it's very difficult to confront that sometimes without looking like you're a fucking prude..y'know? And you can't say anything without it being misinterpreted...and I was joking with somebody that I wanted my belly button pierced..and immediately they started saying – "Oh well, you could have your clitoris pierced"..And I was thinking – "Oh, for God's sake"....

Sophie suggests in this extract, that everybody is offended by such comments, but that they *"pretend"* not to be. In doing this she is further establishing our rapport by reinforcing my position (that people should be offended by such comments) and by providing a coherent explanation of an apparent disagreement with me (*I think I can appreciate that......I was just pretending*). Here she is drawing on a feminist discourse, in which women who do not mind receiving sexual attention are constructed as colluding with male oppressors. Second, in saying *"I'm beginning to confront it"*, she draws on a common discourse in which individuals are expected to take responsibility in drawing attention to unfair or unlawful acts perpetrated on them. In this discourse, failure to react to an event that one constructs as offensive, is often taken to mean that the offensiveness of the event was a retrospective judgement, which is then imputed as inconsistent and therefore improper motive (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). She reinforces this by telling me that she did confront *"a friend"* suggesting that she

is prepared to make sacrifices to protect her principles, thus establishing that these principles are disinterested and therefore reputable (ibid.). She defends the lack of resistance to sexual comments by suggesting that you look like a *"fucking prude"* if you confront people about it. But by using the word *"fucking"* she is suggesting to me that her motives for confronting are not "prudish" and therefore not discreditable motives. Finally, she suggests that the joke about having her *"belly-button pierced"* is taken to too great an extreme with the suggestion she has her *"clitoris pierced"*, implying that any joke will be sexualised, thus drawing on discourses of the police as macho and sexist. The use of these discursive resources is essential for both the force and coherence of her narrative. Using the vocabulary she does and structuring her clauses in the ways I have shown, produces a highly convincing account, facilitated by our relationship and the tacit acknowledgement that we have developed a good level of rapport that neither of us would wish to disrupt.

There are two main features of these extracts and my analysis of them that require explanation and further exploration. Firstly, whether I am implying that Sophie is not telling the truth about her experiences and secondly whether I am suggesting that sexism is in the "eye of the beholder"

There is no way of knowing, verifying or establishing whether Sophie's accounts of her experiences are "true" or reflect the reality of the situation, and as I have already discussed in chapter 2, is a position that I have explicitly rejected on epistemological grounds. However, what can be established from the extracts is what Sophie achieves in constructing these versions of events.

Sophie's main achievement in this account is to produce a picture of herself as very different from the average police officer. Further, in producing this picture, she constructs the average police officer in largely "negative" ways. However, having done this, Sophie has produced an account that is inconsistent: she is in a job that, by her own account, she does not like. Socio-culturally, inconsistency in self-accounts is prescribed as highly undesirable, largely because it is associated with irrationality (Hollway, 1984).

Thus in using discourses in which she constructs the police as sexist, working-class, not very bright, and uncaring and the job itself as dull, boring and intellectually unchallenging, she produces an account in which her critical position on the police is rendered completely intelligible. This move is completed by her self-construction as the opposite of all these things. Thus a coherent account is generated in which all these unpleasant aspects of policing are revealed in a series of biographical snapshots that are all underpinned by one common thread: I am too good for the police. Having achieved this move however, she is left with the accounting 'problem' of why she remains in a job that she dislikes so much. This is dealt with as follows:

S: I think I can take it (the job) or leave it now. And it's served its purpose cos I earn a decent salary. I – I..At the moment, I work nine to five and eight to four, flexi-time, y'know...mm...I'm working in a particularly nice office at the moment. My line manager's great; the colleague I work with's great...so I'm in a cushy little number at the moment...ummm...And I don't work shifts and umm...So I'm quite content at the moment but I'm bored. Above all things...y'know. And it's just not the right environment for me and I knew that the minute I joined. It seemed the wrong place for me, y'know. I should not..not, ...it does not suit my personality at all. And I can't be bothered, cos I don't love it enough to stick it and be a role model. Do you know what I mean? I suppose if I had enough fight in me I would..

Sophie rejects a position in the *Policing as mission* discourse, which is incompatible with the critical position she has adopted in this narrative, in favour of a position in a discourse in which work is constructed as a means to an end. This effectively justifies her position. However, throughout the narrative she has constructed herself as someone who is bright, educated and professional, a self-construction not readily aligned with an instrumental orientation to work in cultural constructions of work identity (Wilmott, 1993). Thus she suggests that she will not stay in the job, and to fence any feminist criticism, that she should stay and be a role model, she says she does not *"love it enough"* and has not got enough *"fight"*, drawing on a discourse that suggests one has to really believe in something to be prepared to sacrifice things for it.

I wish to point out that I am not attempting to criticise Sophie. I am trying to point out that her narratives achieve positions that are prescribed as desirable in socio-cultural discourses, namely a consistent account in which she is constructed as bright, professional and well-educated. At the ideological level, Sophie is reproducing discourses about the relationship between class, education and status.

The second issue I want to address, is the question of whether, through this analysis, I am suggesting that sexism is in the "eye of the beholder". This is a crucial issue because of its political implications.

I am suggesting that sexism is in the "eye of the beholder", in that the construction of an experience as sexist represents the take-up of a subject position in sexist discourses for specific reasons. Sophie's motivation to

construct certain events as sexist is related to her need to account for her critical

stance on police and policing, as I have shown. However, it is impossible to say

whether her constructions of certain practices as sexist made her take this stance,

or whether it is vice versa. In accounting terms, Sophie is highly unlikely to

suggest that it was the latter case, because this would not be a proper motive.

But it is not analytically relevant or possible to establish cause and effect. The

key point is that Sophie, in this particular interactional context, no longer has a

stake in constituting her identity through discourses in which police and policing

are constructed positively. In this sense she can afford to take up the subject

positions she does, because she is able to constitute herself in socio-cultural

discourses that are prescribed as desirable. Further, my equally critical stance on

the police facilitates such an account since I am highly unlikely to challenge her

(and indeed, do not).

I will further develop these arguments in the following extracts from Cathy.

2. Cathy

Cathy was, at the time of my research, the highest ranking officer in the force.

Cathy and I got on quite well, but didn't develop the sort of rapport I had with

Sophie. The major effect of this relationship was in the area of discursive

practice: Cathy's narrative was more of a monologue than a dialogue, a fact I

would impute to her very senior position in the organisation and that in this

particular interaction, I was positioned by both of us as the less powerful party.

Such positioning has been shown to have these sorts of effects on turn-taking

conventions in previous research (Drew and Heritage, 1992). However, Cathy's

narrative was rich and complex and contained much that was of interest to me,

because it was replete with examples of what I constructed as sexism, as did

Cathy. After explaining the research aims, my opening gambit with Cathy was to

ask her to tell me what she did and didn't like about being a policewoman. Very

quickly after this, Cathy told me that she had experienced sex discrimination

early in her career. These experiences formed the bulk of Cathy's narrative.

In the first extract Cathy constructs an account of her first real 'brush' with

sexism.

C: They made life very difficult. I can sum it up without going into detail by saying at one pub....they (the male officers) went off on their own - because they just kept turning their back on me - so I was like ostracised, y'know I wasn't part of a group. And er I stood at the bar with them and their backs just turned away talking amongst themselves and this guy came up and he propositioned me - he thought I was a prostitute. And I said "I'm not - I'm actually with these two gentlemen here" And he turned and he recognised them as being drug squad and he nearly had a fit and I thought "that's the last straw". So that was it.
P: What was it about that incident that you found so...disturbing?
C: I ... the fact that they didn't want me - um - the fact that there was no way I was going to survive - and they'd do a strategy so that I was going to have to go. And then to be propositioned as a prostitute was just the last straw Talk about degrading - I was supposed to be there as an undercover police officer - and (laughs)

In this extract Cathy suggests that her colleagues deliberately wanted to ostracise

her by turning their backs on her and going off *'on their own'*. This is juxtaposed

with the description of an improper proposition from someone in the pub,

suggesting that the actions of her colleagues exposed her to this situation. She

then suggests that she handled this situation with dignity by saying *"I'm actually*

with these ...gentlemen", but implies that this event was epiphinal when she says

"that's the last straw". This implies that this was the culminating event of a long series of events that she had previously managed. Thus she conveys the idea that she wasn't being unduly sensitive. In accounting for why she found this event so disturbing, she implies that her colleagues were conspiring to exclude her, thus imputing motives of intention to their actions. She also indicates that this event had an impact on her self-esteem *"talk about degrading"*, drawing on common cultural valuations of integrity.

In the next extract, Cathy is relating how she eventually got promoted to Inspector, following further 'sexist' incidents. In this extract, Cathy is describing her first post as an Inspector, which was concerned with data-protection.

C: Right. So I had had no idea, couldn't switch one (a computer) on - don't know how they worked - and I was particularly chosen for my auditing computer skills.
P: What was going on then?
C: God knows. I can't work it out. My suspicion is – "we'll promote her because we can't find a reason not to and let's give her some little non-job". That's what I got told –"it's a non-job - it's a new post- the data protection act - you have to work a job out for yourself within 12 months – it might be a big job, it might be a little job "- whatever. It was really to give me a little office, on my own, in HQ. Out of the way with nothing to do. So as a result of that....

In this extract Cathy imputes improper motives for the post she was given on promotion, by suggesting that the post required specialist computer skills, which she did not possess, and which, she told me earlier in the dialogue, she communicated to the senior officer who offered her the position. Then when I ask her what was going on, she first of all says she *"can't work it out"* before moving on to say *"my suspicion is"*. So, what she achieves is a picture of herself in which she is not always interpreting every thing that happens to her as sexist, but as someone who is reasonable enough to accept that there are other

interpretations of such events. Such a move is rooted in discourses in which rationality is seen to be very important (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Cathy then suggests that what was going on, however, was sexist, "*a non-job*". But again, to protect herself from accusations of over-sensitivity, she says "*That's what I got told*", thus providing 'evidence' for her suspicion, which is again grounded in discourses of rationality. At the end of the extract she suggests that the real intention of putting her in this post was to give an appearance of having promoted her, when in reality, she was actually being kept on her own, "*out of the way with nothing do*". This imputes intention to their actions, and the intention is to make her uncomfortable and lonely, with perhaps the goal that this would make her give up on her career or her promotion aspirations.

Cathy's narrative moves on to describe several more unpleasant experiences, all of which lead up to the epiphinal narrative event which is constructed as follows:

C: Oh I knew there was something else. Right then. Oh - this is hilarious this is. I was very upset at the time (when my marriage split up - as marriages do these days) because he ran off with my best friend – she wasn't in the job - so it was a big trauma for me at the time. I came to work, very very upset as you can imagine and took a few days compassionate leave - came to work and I was really absolutely beside myself and this was the end of November. Now, I was, as Inspector, the only woman Inspector, the most senior woman in the Force - so there was no one else for me to go - I couldn't talk to anybody - nobody would talk to me. But because we hadn't got any women, the Force advertised, just prior to all this happening, for a Chief Inspector - preferably a woman - though they worded it differently and they interviewed 4 people. 2 women and 2 men. A woman got the job and she was actually excellent – Thank God - that was one mistake they made - we actually got somebody who was brilliant but they didn't know that – (laughs) - I'm quite sure. So I'd never heard of her or met her - well I'd met her in the photocopying room - shook her hand - I thought "God - you seem bit of a tartar" and off she went. So this thing happened - came to work - sat in this office doing data protection– didn't have a job – office was empty - and I was seriously thinking about jumping out of the window and I thought no - and then I thought "Oh - there's that new woman. she's the boss - I'll go and see her". I don't know why I wanted to go and see her. I think I just had to talk to

somebody or cry on some bugger's shoulder or whatever - I don't know what I expected.

Cathy's major discursive achievement in this extract is the construction of a convincing account of the effect her marriage break-up had on her. This is achieved in the following ways: first the event itself is constructed as traumatic *"he ran off with my best friend"* and *"she wasn't in the job"*. Culturally, female friends are expected to be loyal and to be trustworthy when it comes to one's own sexual partner. And a best friend is culturally constructed as being the person to whom one is closest and with whom one shares secrets and concerns. Thus, the break-up of the marriage is constructed as a double trauma: the loss of her husband and the person to whom she would normally turn in a crisis. By saying *"she wasn't in the job"*, the event is rendered even more traumatic due to its unintelligibility. In the police service it is quite common for policemen and women to leave their partners for other police officers. Thus if he had left her for another policewoman, this would have reduced the legitimacy of her distress, because these events happen often enough to render them rather more predictable than other cases of infidelity.

Second, an account is constructed in which Cathy has no one to talk to about this event. Drawing on ideas about the importance of talking through traumatic experiences, produced through humanistic discourses, her account suggests her distress was compounded by having no one to talk to, which is legitimised by pointing out that she was the most senior woman in the force. She clarifies that this situation was caused by other people *"nobody would talk to me"* and in

doing so avoids an accusation that she caused this situation by being rank-conscious.

Constructing a convincing account of her distress is done in order to legitimise the next part of the extract, which describes how she turned to help from a newly appointed senior officer. Later in Cathy's narrative, she produces an account in which her friendship with this woman is presumed to be a lesbian relationship by other people. Thus, in telling me the story of how she became friends with this senior officer, Cathy is already paving the discursive way for this part of the narrative. Because, by convincing me that she was distressed, and in constructing an account in which this friendship was not entirely voluntary *"I needed some bugger's shoulder to cry on"*, this heads off any potential accusation that she became friends with this woman because she was a lesbian. A motive that might be considered improper, because it is self-interested. Interestingly, in making this move, it is apparent that if she constructs an account in which her motives for befriending this woman are constructed as being related to her sexuality, she is, by implication, inferring that this might justify the subsequent ill-treatment she constructs in her account.

Within Cathy's narrative, this particular extract is the pivot on which the whole account turns. She describes moving to different posts where she was constantly having to defend her friendship with the woman referred to above, until she went to work in one particular location where her colleagues supported and did not attack her on the grounds that she was a lesbian. She describes this event as a *"turning point"*. The narrative goes on to describe how she was transformed by the support she received, building her strength to be able to continue the fight by

providing her with a new *"philosophy"* of life. However, her narrative constructs

further accounts of sex discrimination:

C: I was at the officers dining club and I don't know how I didn't glass him - and he said – "You've got to be tested - you need a command and its got to be (name of town) - cos that'll test you" - in other words "That will break you because you'll never cope". And I went to (names town) - and had a wonderful time. I very seriously considered IT (industrial tribunal) at that time - I went through the process very carefully- I knew I could win the case because it was clear cut and I thought the personal cost to me would be so great - what would I achieve? I've always said a woman will take this force. I always thought it would be me - and I got to that stage and thought it's a winner - but I thought "If you win what'll happen - you'll be out on ill health - no career – the stress of taking on the organisation will be phenomenal and they'll summon up everything against you that they possibly can. They'll drag out all this lesbian business again". I thought "I've never had 5 minutes where I could settle down and feel comfortable and calm except the time I was at (names place)". The whole bloody episode was a battle and my nerves were shot. So I took a very hard decision not to take the force to IT

In this extract, Cathy's chief aim to account for why she did not take the force to

an industrial tribunal, possibly partly motivated by my continual verbal and non-

verbal expressions of outrage as she narrated her account. I would also guess that

this is a story that she had told many times and, in constructing an account of

such blatant sexism, not acting against the perpetrators of these events is an

accountable matter. Furthermore, as the most senior female officer in the force

she has no need to guard against the possibility that I might be constructing an

argument in which I suggest that "if things were so difficult, why did she bother

staying in the organisation", because as a stated feminist, I am clearly positioned

in a discourse that celebrates women pioneering their way through oppressive

practices.

The chief discursive resource drawn upon to justify not taking the force to a

tribunal is personal cost. She begins this construction by telling me she was

happy in a role that she has suggested is difficult by saying that she was expected to fail in it. Thus, she lays down the idea that she is actually very strong, so that she could not be accused of not going to a tribunal because she was too weak. Also by saying that she *'thought it through very carefully'* she presents me with a picture in which she has used a great deal of rational thought in arriving at this conclusion. It is more likely that such actions will legitimise any subsequent action, because discursively, impulsiveness in such situations could be imputed as improper motive. She then goes on to describe the personal costs a tribunal might have involved, which centre around the idea that she would be emotionally damaged by it. An idea that has all the more force because of her account of herself as a "fighter". She constructs an account in which the organisation as a whole would be likely to get back at her *"dragging up that lesbian business again"* and achieves a picture in which she is a person on her own fighting a whole system; thus constructing an account in which such efforts would have been futile.

In the final extract, an account is constructed in which the narrative that has preceded this exchange is presented as disinterested.

P: You really have "made it" in exceptional circumstances haven't you?
L: That's for you to judge. I don't see it that way - I see it as a long hard slog. I see it as having ended up where any man would have got. I passed the last Superintendent's promotion board so I guess I'll make it to Superintendent which is where I always wanted to be. So I've got there in the end if you like, and I'm very pleased. It just could have been a little less traumatic.

I begin this extract positioned in a discourse in which people who "win against the odds" are greatly admired. However, Cathy is careful not to position herself in the same discourse *"that's for you to judge"* because if she agreed with me,

she could be accused of exaggerating or embellishing her experiences.

Culturally, people who produce accounts of this sort may be seen as

untrustworthy. She juxtaposes *"I see it as a long hard slog"* with *"I ended up*

where any man would have got" which achieves the suggestion that men would

not have had the difficulties she experienced, thus reinforcing the claims of sex

discrimination. The extract finishes by Cathy saying that although she is *"very*

pleased" to have *"made it"*, she thinks it could have been *"less traumatic"*.

What has Cathy achieved in this narrative? Cathy needs to do two pieces of

discursive accounting: How she became a Chief Inspector (the only female at this

rank in the Force) and, because of the way she accounts for this fact, why she did

not take action against some of the people involved.

Discourses commonly drawn upon to explain the selection of minorities for high

profile roles are:

- Tokenism

- Meritocracy

Taking up a position in the former discourse would be unlikely, because career-

achievement is only constructed as desirable, if it is attributable to ones' own

skills, abilities and efforts. Taking up a position in the latter discourse would

therefore be the more probable outcome. The difficulty for Cathy in attributing

her career success to credit alone is produced by the motivation to produce a

convincing account. Throughout her narrative, she has attributed the causes of

her failure to achieve certain career goals to sex discrimination. So, if she is to

produce a convincing account, she cannot tell me that the reason she didn't get various jobs is because of sex-discrimination, but that on the occasions where she succeeded it was because of her own credentials without the potential accusation that her accounts of sex-discrimination are motivated by peevishness at having failed to get certain jobs. This would be an improper motivation.

So her account achieves the discursive goal of enabling her to take up a position in a meritocratic discourse while at the same time discrediting any potential attempts to suggest that she achieved her position through tokenism. Her account is one in which she continually constructs herself as battling against the odds, but as I have shown is put together in ways that do not make this construction incredible. She uses a wide range of discursive tactics to ensure that her account is convincing and coherent. This is necessary because sexist discourses are frequently discredited using a variety of discursive resources, largely because they challenge the dominant order (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Now, having achieved this goal, she is left with the further accounting problem of why she did not take measures against the practices and people she describes.

This accounting necessity is produced by the same discourse that Sophie uses to construct an account of her confrontation of sexism: individual responsibility to stand up against injustice. Failure to address a situation that is constructed as unfair or oppressive can be used to discredit any protests that are made, on the grounds of inconsistency. Thus Cathy needs to account for not having taken action against the individuals that are part of her narrative of oppression, if she is

to maintain coherence in her account. There are several potential reasons for not confronting such issues, though I would suggest the main two are:

- The individual is too frightened
- The individual has too much to lose

The former explanation would only be credible (culturally) if the situation presented considerable physical danger. It might therefore be a credible reason for not confronting a gang of youths shouting abuse, but not for the sorts of situation Cathy has described, especially since there are resources available to help her confront: the sex discrimination act and industrial tribunals. The second explanation is likely to have more credibility if the person can show that what they stand to lose is emotional rather than material. Thus, for example, it is culturally seen as credible if a woman does not leave a violent husband because she has such low self-esteem that she could not build another life somewhere else, but less credible if the motive is to keep her share of the house. Cathy therefore accounts for not taking measures against the sexism she encountered by using the second explanation. The former explanation, though potentially credible in Cathy's situation (especially since she has constructed an account in which the force has conspired against her), is not readily compatible with her self-construction as a fighter. Thus to maintain coherence in her account the latter explanation is more feasible

Summary

First of all, I want to reiterate that the genuineness of these accounts is something that cannot be established on the grounds that there is no "truth" that can be uncovered. Further, in the argument I am constructing, any account of oneself is "motivated" by the attempt to take up subject positions that are prescribed as desirable in socio-cultural discourses. It is in this way that dominant ideologies of an advanced liberal democracy are reproduced (see Rose, 1996 for a detailed discussion of these ideologies). I have deliberately used scare-quotes around the word motivation to draw attention to the fact that the take-up of these positions is socially prescribed and not driven by an intra-psychic force or drive.

Second, in attempting to take-up such positions individuals are "motivated" to produce coherent, non-contradictory accounts of their experiences, though again this motivation is an effect of socio-cultural discourses in which the expression of contradictions about oneself are seen to be signs of irrationality, and which can be used to discredit such accounts as untrustworthy (Hollway, 1984; Wetherell and Potter, 1992).

Third, constructing acts as sexist is complicated due to the necessity for individuals to present their own motives for constructing acts in this way as convincing and proper. This is because certain discourses, like sexist or racist discourses are targeted with numerous discrediting arguments. This is not the

case for other discourses, such as those on the nature of policing, as I will show in the next chapter.

Where discourses are the regular targets of discrediting arguments, however, a wealth of discursive tactics are available that help establish proper and convincing motives for being positioned in them. Such tactics can be drawn upon by individuals who take-up positions in these discourses very successfully in accounting terms, thus demonstrating Foucault's power-knowledge thesis.

In the next chapter I want to develop the last two arguments further by presenting extracts from the narratives of Sally and Rachel, two policewomen who were very positive about the police and its record on equal opportunities.

Chapter 8 Constructing positive experiences as a female police officer

Introduction

In the last chapter I argued that individual's accounts of negative experiences, such as sexism, are constructed through various discourses that enable the take-up of positions prescribed as desirable in socio-cultural discourses. I further argued that in constructing such accounts, a primary concern is with consistency, due to the fact that inconsistency can often be used to discredit accounts because of the dominance of socio-cultural discourses of rationality. Achieving a consistent and therefore convincing account is complicated if an individual uses discourses that challenge the status quo. This is because such discourses tend to be targeted with a wide array of discrediting arguments that the individual needs to negotiate. However, in line with Foucault's power-knowledge thesis, I have argued that a product of targeting discourses of resistance with discrediting arguments is counter-arguments that can be drawn upon to construct accounts that are not only convincing, but which in their turn, discredit anti-sexist arguments

In this chapter I want to develop some of these arguments by showing that constructing an account of positive experiences is a more straightforward discursive task than constructing negative experiences that challenge the status quo, largely because the individual does not feel the need to produce convincing arguments. Rather, the individual relies more heavily on 'clinching' arguments (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). I will use extracts from Sally, a probationer constable and Rachel a sergeant to achieve this aim.

Sally

Sally was a probationer constable who had taken up subject positions in the discourses on policing I described in chapter 6. She was therefore someone who constructed extremely positive accounts of policing and police officers. Sally was very friendly and we related to each other really well. However, she clearly saw me as an expert, despite my attempts to equalise the power relationship. This, I think reflects the cultural tendency to construct university academics as 'brainy' (sic) and middle-class. So the fact that I was doing research, was enough for Sally to construct me in these ways. The consequence of this was that Sally, while defending the police on various grounds, showed more deference to my opinions that Rachel, the sergeant whose narrative is discussed below. I also display far more confrontational tendencies in this dialogue than I did in those with Cathy and Rachel.

Our dialogue began by me asking Sally why she had wanted to become a police officer, and from there we moved on to talk about her husband and family. Sally used a variety of discursive repertoires to convey her satisfaction with the job, the organisation and her colleagues. The following extract is the first accounting dialogue of Sally's narrative.

P: Do you find that you're treated any differently as a policewoman by your male colleagues.
S: No, never.
P: Never? You've never noticed any...

S: No. I honestly feel that - again, I don't know whether it's because of my age - but you're just part of the team. You're never treated any different when you go to a physical confrontation or anything like that. If - I mean - we were called to one two weeks ago - umm- it were fighting and one had kicked our Sergeant in his face and it took two officers to umm hold this lad down and restrain him and this other kid came in and I got him to the floor and you just - you work as a team - it's not as if- "Oh, we're female, I can't do that". Y'know - you're getting paid the same money; you're having the same training; you've just got to... To me, I think it's unfair for me to say – "Oh - I'm female - I can't do that".
P: Do you think females do that?
S:: I think some of them - some do.
P: And what do you think happens to them?
S: I don't think anything happens to them - I think society accepts that female the female has always been seen as the weaker sex - when I say weaker I mean physically weaker and things like that. But I think times have changed. I mean if we were sat having this interview ten years ago, I'd have a different line to make

I open this exchange positioned in a sexist discourse in which I am reproducing the idea that women in the police have a difficult time due to their 'sexist' male colleagues. Sally's response is a straight refutation *"No, never"*, because, as the extract demonstrates, she is positioned in the *Gender differences do not exist* discourse (see table 6.1). I then produce an accounting expectation when I express scepticism *"Never?"* Sally justifies her position in the following ways: First, she allows that sexism might be admissible by saying, *"maybe it's because of my age"*, which suggests that she is neither being naïve nor has an interest in denying sexism exists for improper reasons. She then draws on the *Importance of team-working* discourse when she says *"you're just part of the team"*, implying that everyone is treated equitably, which she further reinforces by arguing that even in physical confrontations, she would act in similar ways to the men. She then suggests that being treated differently would be unfair on the grounds of sexual equality, because *"you're getting paid the same money"*.

My next two questions construct another account of the police that Sally needs to defend: that if a woman dared claim that she should be treated differently, something would happen to her. Sally again produces a direct refutation of this position, and goes on to suggest that any treatment of women as different is something that has its source in society where it is accepted that females are the *"weaker sex"*. However, she avoids feminist accusations of colluding with men, by saying *"I mean physically weaker and things like that"*. This exchange concludes by Sally again establishing her own credibility by saying *"Times have changed"*, a discursive strategy in which people (like me) who believe that sexism still exists are constructed as behind the times, though in using the third person *"times have changed"*, she avoids accusing me of this directly.

In the narrative, we move on to talk in more detail about the job. Again, Sally's narrative is replete with examples of how much she enjoys the work and how nice her colleagues are. The next extract is an exchange in which I make an attempt to discredit Sally's positive position:

P: Do you ever feel aware that you're a female in a very male organisation though?
S: No -
P: I often wonder myself - because y'know I've been talking to policemen for a fortnight now, and I haven't seen any policewomen at all apart from one. And it is a very male environment, isn't it? You're struck by all the men around. Doesn't it make you think about your own femaleness?
S: No. Not at all. To me you're a police officer. If I was on a station or on a shift where all the lads went for a drink at 2 o'clock and I wasn't asked to go then I'd feel as if I wasn't accepted or perhaps ...but it's never like that.
P: But you do feel accepted?
S: Very...Well I'm always asked to go. I think that's about you ... I mean I don't know how to put this across. I think ... If you want to be classed as an individual or whatever... or seen to be a female ...you'll be treat as a female - you will detach yourself. If you want to be treat as police officer, which is what you are, you get the rough and the smooth, you make a point at going for a drink at 2 o'clock. No every time, but if you don't go, you never get asked.

I open this exchange by trying to suggest that awareness of one's gender is inevitable in a male-dominated organisation, a position I have adopted within feminist discourses on women's experiences at work (e.g. Sheppard, 1989). Sally's direct refutation leads me on to be more explicit about why one should be more aware of one's gender in a male-dominated organisation: visibility. Sally, again positioned in the *Gender differences do not exist* discourse, counters this suggestion by drawing on discourses of pragmatism *"to me you're a police officer"*, in which what is important is getting on with the job. She also suggests that being part of the informal social relations is a sign of being accepted. When I ask her whether she feels accepted (implying that she might not), she replies that she does. She then goes on to suggest that people who want to be seen as females, will be treated like females and will *"detach"* themselves. This is qualified when she says *"if you want to be treated like a police-officer, which is what you are.. "*. This juxtaposition produces the idea that people who act like a female, are not motivated on professional (and proper) grounds. This further suggests that any act motivated by gender, would not be proper. She further suggests, in this account, that people who do *"detach"* themselves only have themselves to blame if they are not invited out for a drink, suggesting that the causes of exclusion are located in individuals not in the social fabric of the police.

In the next extract I reveal more of my feminist credentials by asking Sally to account for why she is working in an organisation that has a reputation for sexism.

P: One of the things that I often wonder about is, as a woman, if I was considering a career, I wouldn't consider a career in the police because, among many things I'm not suited to being a police officer but among other things....one of the things that I think would put me off, is what you hear about it being such a sexist organisation and yet you say you've never had any experiences....

S: If you're talking the sexual innuendoes and things like that.....

P: Does that happen?

S: It happens in every job you're in

P: Does it? (Laughs) Every job you're in? Did you get it in Social Services?

S: Yeah! It's every job you're in and I think it's how you deal with it. If something was said that offended me I would say.....

P: What sorts of things do you mean? I actually have never experienced that I have to say....

S: Right. Well....I can't really explain it...I mean there's things like... the nick names you get...things like that. D'you know what I mean?

P: What sorts of nick names?

S: Well I mean - I get called all sorts - y'know.. I mean like...not nasty names but..I mean my surnames' (gives surname and a nick name) I mean, to me that's not derogatory. Now somebody might find that offensive, but it's how a person sees what is said to them. And to me if it's said in a ....a way that is not derogatory...

P: What would you call derogatory

S: If anything was said to undermine or dismiss me as a person or if something was said about me as a person or any sexual innuendoes or 'owt like that, I'd find that derogatory and I'd say "Excuse me!"

P: So they can't make sexual innuendoes to you then

S: No. No. Not at all. But the thing is as well, I'm on a shift where I think the majority of us are married

P: That makes a difference?

S: Well I think it does. . I mean you hear about people having affairs and people going off....

I start off by suggesting that wanting to join an organisation that has a reputation for being sexist is not an appropriate desire, and because Sally is positioned in the research relationship as the less powerful member, I am able to produce an accounting situation through implying improper motives for anyone wanting to join the police. Sally, here positioned in the *Banter is normal* discourse, suggests that *"sexual innuendo"* can be seen as sexism, but that this is not only trivial *"If you mean sexual innuendo and things like that"*, but something that is a natural part of life in organisations. When I express scepticism at this, she re-states the

idea that sexual innuendo happens in "every job" and goes on to suggest that it is

an individual's perception of whether something is sexist that is important.

Further, she suggests that because this is the case, it is the responsibility of the

individual concerned to resist or oppose any 'sexism' that offends them (see

chapter 7, in which both Sophie and Cathy have to 'defend' themselves against

such potential accusations). She draws a distinction between trivial comments

and derogatory comments, defining the latter as something that "undermines or

dismisses" me. Thus she re-asserts the primacy of the individual in deciding

what they would consider to be comments of this nature. She then goes on to

suggest that she herself would neither accept sexual comments, not has she had

any experience of them, probably because she is "married". Thus she suggests

that sexual comments are the domain of the young and single, a suggestion that

effectively normalises such comments, as they are seen to be something that

occurs in the process of sexual attraction (people having affairs). There is also a

contradiction, because at the beginning of the extract she constructs sexual

innuendo as being natural and trivial, but then towards the end of the extract,

suggests she wouldn't accept such comments being made to her. I suspect, that

this is because she is producing this account for me, a self-constructed feminist.

In the final extract Sally and I are discussing her career goals.

P: Do any of the specialist departments attract you?
S: No. Not yet. I want to do my 2 years and become a good police officer. And I think the only way you can do that is getting experience.
P: Why do you want to be good?
S: Well what's the point of doing it if you're not good.
P: Well I don't know..... I mean a lot of people view work as a means to an end.
S: I don't. To me..like I said before...I like to treat people, I'd want somebody to come and...If I'd been burgled...I'd want somebody to come through that door and offer me a service that I felt comfortable with...I wouldn't want somebody to think I can't understand much point of doing checks on this....
P: When you say you want to be good ...good in whose eyes?

S: My eyes. It doesn't bother me what people think. Y'know...well that's a lie isn't it ...cos you always have some concern but ..my priority is it's me as a person - myself as a person. You're paid to do a job and so why not do it to the best of your ability.

P: So it's more than a means to an end for you. Your whole sense of self-worth is wrapped up in doing it well?

S: Oh yeah. Because I think to myself - it's a service - it's a service that is difficult to get into You..y'know I mean... the application form takes you a month to fill in...to me..I think you've got to want to do the job.

P: Do you feel proud of yourself for having got in?

S: Yes I am proud of myself. I got knocked back the first time because they said... I was too nice to be police officer.

P: What did you think to that?

S: Well I questioned it. I said.."Can't you be nice and be a police officer?" But y'know I came back and...they said I should have told this lad to shut up in the interviews. They do all these tests with you... and this lad ....every time I spoke... he challenged me.....and I thought he was doing a good job of making a fool of himself....and they were quite right in what they said because a police officer has to tell that person to shut up at some point and I didn't.

P: Why does a police officer have to do that?

S: Because you've got to take a leader role don't you? If you've got to take control in a situation .....so when I came back the 2nd time, I thought.....

Sally starts off by reproducing a dominant idea that is produced within the

Policing as mission discourse, that officers need to 'pay their dues' before they

become capable of moving into specialist roles or up the career ladder. When I

ask her why she wants to be good, she reproduces a dominant work discourse in

which the idea of fulfilment is perceived as a more noble motive for work than

money (Rose, 1990): *"what's the point of doing it if you're not good"*. Sally goes

on to suggest that people who have an instrumental orientation towards the job,

may be less effective as an officer, again reproducing the *Policing as mission*

discourse. When I ask Sally who she would like to be perceived by as *"good"* she

stresses the importance of being 'true to yourself', again positioning herself as an

individual in pursuit of self-actualisation. Sally then justifies her position in the

Policing as mission discourse by suggesting that it is *"difficult"* to become a

police officer, and by taking up a position in the *Policing as community service*

discourse. Her narrative moves on to describe her first unsuccessful application in which she was *"knocked back"* for being *"too nice"*. Because this is potentially a difficult accounting scenario (why would she want to work for an organisation where you needed not to be very nice?), she qualifies this by saying that this is actually referring to the necessity of assertiveness, which she says *"is quite right"*. The *Policing as conflict management* discourse is drawn upon to justify this necessity.

In the argument I am constructing, every account will involve the take-up of subject positions that are prescribed as desirable in socio-cultural discourses. So how does Sally achieve this? In taking up positions within dominant police-specific discourses, Sally is a constructing a self who is very content with the job, her colleagues and the organisation. Such a self-construction is related to socio-cultural discourses in which personal fulfilment through work is prescribed as desirable (Rose, 1996). Also, the normalising effects of these discourses at the organisational level means that she does not feel she has to defend her position within them, because they are not targeted with discrediting or discounting discourses. Indeed, there is a wealth of discursive repertoires available to justify the take up of positions within these discourses. As such therefore Sally's narrative contains far fewer examples of defensive moves against potential accusations when compared to Cathy's narrative.

However, in line with Foucault's power-knowledge thesis, because I target these discourses with feminist counter-discourses, her account needs to discredit or discount them if it is to retain coherence. Thus, for instance, Sally cannot easily construct a position in discourses that suggest sexism does not exist, because this

is a position that feminists often discredit by suggesting that such positions are motivated by the desire to be found attractive by men (improper motive). Thus her account is constructed carefully to avoid these sorts of accusations.

Second, in attempting to construct sexism as the product of an individual's perceptions and actions, Sally is hoisted by the discursive petard from which this idea is drawn. The discrediting of sexism is achieved through enterprising discourse (Rose, 1996; Du Gay, 1997), in which individual freedom and choice are emphasised. For example, page three models will often complain that feminists are infringing their rights. Feminists, however, have used this same discourse to construct arguments in which certain acts are seen to compromise individual freedom and autonomy, notably pornography, and also sex-discrimination. Within the terms of these arguments, certain acts are constructed as degrading or unfair in and of themselves. Thus, the common discursive move to discount sexism as misperception of intentions is not easily achieved because of the dominance of these arguments. Women, in attempting to discount or discredit feminist discourses in any narrative, must therefore avoid the subjective pitfalls of constructing accounts in which they could be accused of being in "mens' pockets". This is why Sally is careful to distinguish between "sexual innuendo" and "degrading comments".

However, because of the hegemony of some discourses and their normalising effects, other pieces of accounting are more readily achieved. For example, my position in a discourse about women being treated less fairly than men is easily discredited by Sally in two discursive moves: she mobilises an argument in which gender as an issue is dismissed as being something taken up by extremists

or other interested parties, while the 'normal' majority simply want to get on with important practical matters. Wetherell and Potter (1992) cite both these arguments (extremism and pragmatism) to be common resources used to justify the status quo. Both are "clinching" arguments, because they emphasise the importance of rationality and practicality, dominant discourses of western culture.

Thus, although the take-up of positions that are prescribed as desirable are more easily accomplished through discourses that reproduce rather than challenge the status quo, close analysis of accounts in which this occurs reveal tensions and contradictions that represent the discursive resistance and challenge to the dominant order. Rachel's narrative contains further examples of these sorts of contradictions.

Rachel

Rachel is a sergeant who, like Sally, constructed an extremely positive account of her experiences in the police. She had been a sergeant for 4 years and employed as a policewoman for 10 years. She constructed herself as a highly pragmatic, no-nonsense policewoman, who had achieved her position as sergeant through hard work and merit. It was the latter construction that created most difficulties for Rachel in accounting terms, as the following extracts reveal.

In the first extract Rachel and I have been discussing Equal Opportunities policies. Rachel has been constructing an account in which the police record on

Equal Opportunities is presented in a very positive way. She does, however, have

some criticisms of them:

*R: You get....you get job applications and you read them and they say -
applications are particularly invited from female officers cos they're
underrepresented which always galls me....*
P: Why?
*R: Simply because you...I understand all the reasons why they do it...about
positive discrimination and ...they have to have...and I think most jobs are the
same...they have to have a certain percentage of women in the job and then from
that percentage you have to have- you're supposed to have a certain percentage
of those women in posts like in supervisor's posts and in specialist posts...and
they positively discriminate...But the reason it gets on my nerves is that you may
well have...you know...If you have an interview for a job you do the work for
it...and if you have a good interview then you get the job. But you will always get
the percentage that say - "Oh you only got it because you're a woman" - and the
fact that they put that advert in a lot of job applications makes it twice as bad.
Because it's more or less saying –"If you're a woman apply for it - cos you've
got a very good chance". But they always stick a paragraph on the bottom which
counts as sorts of - countermands it - that'll say y'know – "However, the final
selection will be on merit". Well it should be on merit anyway, regardless of the
sex you are....*
*P: So it annoys you because basically other people may not think you got it on
merit..they may think you got it because you're a woman.*
R: Exactly.
P: Have you had that in this.....
*R: No...Nobody's ever said that to me...I mean people say it jokingly or whatever
and I just sort of think - think what you like...you know..it doesn't bother me
really cos I'm confident in my own ability - always have been and I think you've
got to be. There's no two ways about it..you have to be to survive, I think.*

In this extract Rachel constructs an argument in which positive discrimination is

constructed as being an inappropriate policy, because it leads to accusations of

tokenism. This Rachel says *"galls"* her, which she justifies by suggesting that

she *"works hard"*. Thus, in this account she is persuading me that her own

promotion was due to her own hard work and not due to filling some quota of

women. However, because this is a potential criticism of the police, and is

therefore a contradiction in her overall positive positioning, she says she

"understands why they have to do it", suggesting that this an imposed and not a

voluntary practice, and to completely avoid criticising her own organisation, suggests that this is a practice that happens in *"most jobs"*, thus normalising it.

She further justifies her position on positive discrimination by saying that all jobs should be awarded on the basis of *"merit"*. When I ask whether anyone has suggested that her own promotion is an example of tokenism, she first of all refutes this *"No"*, and *"Nobody's ever said that to me"*, but then suggests this has been said, but only as a joke. Thus she persuades me that this was not a 'real' attack. She then uses a common discursive tactic in which the judgements of others are dismissed as being inferior sources of information to ones' own self-judgement. A tactic that probably originates in enterprising discourse.

In the next extract, the discussion moves on to the concept of merit and Rachel has difficulty maintaining the coherence of her account:

P: Why is it important that you get things on merit do you think?
R: Well you should get things on merit.
P: But in lots of organisations people would, and I think the same goes for the police from people I've talked to..that they don't often believe that promotions are on merit...
R: I'm sure they're not .... a lot of them. You should get it on merit..at the end of the day if you're the best person for the job, then you should have it. But what you tend to find is umm...nowadays, everything's done on..whereas before in the old school it was – "Oh there's a job coming up in this department" - you know - a phone call to somebody they fancied having on – "Do you want a job" – "Yeah! I'd like that – Thanks very much"...then you just moved and went onto that job...that doesn't happen any more. All specialist posts particularly, you've got to be interviewed for against these criteria to see if you match that criteria and umm..none of it is on your past work...so you could be absolutely, on paper, the best candidate for the job, and you go for an interview and have a bad interview and somebody else gets that job.
P: What do you think to that system?
R: Well I...its got to...I think, personally, it's got some flaws in it, But then again, I don't exactly know what...y'know I don't exactly know how they can get around that to be fair....y'know...you've got to interview.
P: Why?
R: You can't.....I think you've got to do it simply because, you know, you'll have cries of nepotism and God knows what else. I mean it used to happen....

P: But doesn't the interview just kind of put a smoke screen in front of that. Won't nepotism still go on but people can justify it by saying - well you didn't meet that criteria - and people can find all manner of reasons to back up that judgement...

R: Maybe....I mean, I'm...I'm convinced in my own mind..although you probably...you know.....it would probably be denied.....further up the structure in that..people talk...if people are putting in job applications, you know people within departments will talk and people will have their own opinions about who they think should get the job for whatever reason and I'm almost certain that the people who are doing the interviews will have a rough idea about what's been said about certain candidates. It's just human nature...and that's not indicative of the police service...that's.....

P: Oh Yeah! I think that happens everywhere when there's internal posts...

R: It's human nature.....they'll be saying – "We don't want him because of...We don't like him because of....Oh, we like him; we prefer him...we prefer her...she's really good and really competent...or she's alright or he's not bad....or she's awful or...."

P: But the decision's half made before people get in maybe....

R: I...I don't know whether it's half made but I honestly think it has a bearing on it...and I think it must be....I mean I haven't got any experience of actually sitting on and doing and conducting an interview with somebody on a job - being on a panel, but I think it must be very difficult to ummm....sit there and look at somebody and assess somebody, completely and utterly without sort of any thoughts of what you've heard about them...being completely independent - ummm...unless you don't know them...unless you get people from other forces, interviewing them, who've got to know..who know nothing about you apart from what you've written (on your application form)...and that doesn't happen very often. It does happen, but not very often.

At the beginning of this extract, Rachel attacks the position I take, in which selection is constructed as an inherently biased practice, by suggesting that this is a consequence of attempts to make the selection system more fair. She suggests that in attempting to remove the bias of subjectivity, selection boards base their judgements on the way an individual performs at interview. I then construct an argument in which I suggest that this practice does not render it less subjective, but simply masks the subjective processes that occur. Rachel, who has constructed herself throughout the narrative as very much a common-sense individual confronts a contradiction at this point. She can disagree with me, but that would be quite difficult because I am positioned in a discourse that suggests

that it is 'human nature' to be subjective and to allow our feelings to influence our judgements. Wetherell and Potter (1992) suggest that such ideas are very powerful clinching arguments due to their hegemony in liberal discourses. Alternatively she can do what she does, agree with me. However, now she has completed a move that potentially undermines the point she made about meritocracy. If she is arguing that positive discrimination is wrong on the grounds of meritocracy, she cannot maintain this position unless she manages to convince me that selection decisions are usually based on meritocratic principles. A position she has just rejected. In fact the narrative changes direction at this point but this is a real accounting problem.

One of the main challenges for women who have gained positions of seniority in an organisation like the police is the accusation that they gained the job because of tokenism and not merit. As I showed with Cathy's account, such accusations are likely to motivate the take-up of positions in meritocratic discourse because career achievement is only constructed as desirable within discourses of personal effort and abilities. I have frequently heard minorities in organisations complaining against positive discrimination and I feel I now understand why. Positive discrimination is frequently discredited as unfair because it undermines equality of rights. The regular argument used here is that used by Rachel: jobs should be gained on merit. Thus Rachel cannot agree with positive discrimination without compromising her position in meritocratic discourse. In accounting terms, however, this position is difficult to maintain, because a common sceptical discourse within organisations is that people are promoted on the basis that their "face fits". Women therefore have the double jeopardy of

being constructed as someone who was promoted because their gender, as well as their behaviour, put them in a highly favourable position.

Summary

In constructing an account of positive experiences, the individual takes up subject positions that are prescribed as desirable in socio-cultural discourses. However, positive experiences are rather more easy to construct than negative experiences because the individual does not need to employ the range of discursive tactics necessary to counter the many discrediting discourses targeted at those within which negative experiences are constructed, particularly, sexism.

Discrediting discourses are most likely to be targeted at those discourses that challenge the dominant order, like sexist discourses. However, this has given rise to the production of counter-discourses. Thus any individual constructing an account that reproduces the dominant order, may in certain accounting situations, such as that represented in my own research, become conscious of the need to discredit or discount such counter-discourses. Because counter-discourses, such as feminist discourses have succeeded in prescribing certain subjective positions as highly undesirable, this is not a straightforward affair.

Women in the police service who achieve positions of authority are always challenged in taking up desirable subject positions because of discourses of tokenism. The discursive repertoires used to discredit tokenism arguments, however, place women in a difficult accounting position. If they do use meritocratic counter-arguments, their motives for doing so can be discredited on

the grounds of self-interest. This is because in most organisations there is a dominant discourse which constructs the idea of a meritocracy as a sham, that covers the "real" state of affairs: nepotism and favouritism.

Conversely women who do not achieve positions of authority could account for this by drawing on discourses of sexism. However, doing so carries considerable subjective risk, because there are so many discrediting arguments that need to be refuted in credible and convincing ways. Two of the seven women I spoke to constructed their experiences through such discourses. However, this was a task facilitated by my own self-construction as a feminist, also positioned in sexist discourses. A different account could be produced with different people for different reasons. Nonetheless, it is clear from these narratives, that constructing a sexist account is not as straightforward an achievement as the construction of a non-sexist account. This is a possible reason why many women in male-dominated organisations express contentment with the status quo.

Constructing a sexist account is, like any other, produced through the take up of positions, prescribed as desirable in socio-cultural discourses. However, since, as I have shown, these are rather more difficult to achieve than accounts that do not challenge the status quo, it begs the question of why people would use such discursive resources. In Sophie's case this is possibly because she can "afford" to in identity terms. If she intends to leave the police, then she does not need to constitute her identity within dominant police-specific discourses, and indeed if she is to successfully account for wanting to leave the police to herself, she is

much better off in subjective terms if she can construct herself as being very different from the average police officer.

For Cathy, sexist discourses enable her to construct a meritocratic argument that accounts for her achievement of a senior rank. As I have shown, these arguments are easily discredited and are not easy to maintain if, like Rachel, one wants to also maintain a position in a non-critical organisational discourse. Further, constructing a sexist account may be far less risky at higher levels in the organisation than at lower levels, because seniority frees individuals from the discursive shackles that tie the grass-roots officer's identity so firmly to the organisation as a site of self-construction. This idea will be developed in the final chapter of the discourse analysis.

Chapter 9 Challenges to self-construction: the influence of context

Introduction

In this chapter I want to further develop the argument that the take-up of subject positions in organisational discourse is tied to the achievement of positions prescribed as desirable in broader socio-cultural discourses. I therefore want to make explicit the link between text (narrative) and social practice (Fairclough, 1992). In this chapter I want to demonstrate how discourses on policing are used constitutively to achieve such positions, but how, due to the power relations that operate within the organisation and in society more generally, such an achievement can be rendered problematic. Further, to argue that senior women police officers are potentially more constrained than senior men in the achievement of desirable discursive positions, due to the nature of organisational discourses on promotion. Finally, I want to argue that sexist discourses are highly unlikely to be used by women constructing positive accounts of the work-place. Further, that if a researcher expresses scepticism of such experiences on the grounds that sexism really does exist, that this motivates the participant to discredit or discount the researcher's arguments due to the implications such scepticism poses.

In this chapter I will be using those discourses presented in table 6.1 as the basis for the arguments developed in this chapter.

1. Challenges to the achievement of culturally prescribed positions through organisation-society power-relations

As I have already discussed in chapters 4 and 6, a dominant discourse used to constitute the identity of the police constable is the *Policing as conflict management* discourse. In this section, I want to show how this discourse compromises the take up of socially prescribed subject positions.

The *Policing as conflict management* discourse constructs a subject in which the ability to both control a situation and one's own emotions are central characteristics. This discourse however is, and has often been, used to resist police power by different groups in society. For example, Reiner (1992) argues that the 1960s were a key historical period in which the police were transformed in the public eye from "plods to pigs", related in part to accusations of the use of improper force from different "youth" groups, such as beatniks and hippies (see chapter 4 for greater detail on this particular period in police history). As I also discussed in chapter 6, the Scarman report and the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry have been two further historical points at which this discourse has been used to express resistance against the activities of the police..

The *Policing as conflict management* and *Policing as mission* discourses play an important role in maintaining subjective distance between grass-roots "bobbies" and management, a situation motivated by the power relations within the organisation (see chapters 5 and 6). The take-up of a position in the *Policing as*

mission discourse is rendered intelligible through socio-cultural discourses in which work is constructed as a site for self-fulfilment, and where self-fulfilment itself is prescribed as desirable (Rose, 1990). However, the *Policing as mission discourse*, and the practices that reproduce it are frequently justified through the *Policing as conflict management* discourse and, as discussed, it is this latter discourse that is also used by groups in society to resist and challenge police power. A strong counter discourse constructed from the *Policing as conflict management* discourse that is culturally dominant, is that the *Police are pigs*: people who are bullies, brutal and use excessive force (Reiner, 1992). A dominant socio-cultural discourse, however, promotes Christian ideals of pacifism, gentleness, tolerance and care (Foucault, 1990). The *Police as pig* discourse, therefore provides a direct subjective challenge in accounting terms.

The following extracts illustrate these tensions in the accounts of some of my research participants

Sally

S: Oh well - I'm working with many of the same people I worked with in Social Services. I think you've got to be able to speak to people, not be condescending - your whole nature -
P: Why does experience give you that.
S: Because I think you have an understanding of where people are coming from. I mean we've got younger officers in service and one in particular gets into this (unintelligible) box straight with them - do you know about that?
P: No
S: Well they raise the level - if you go to speak to somebody they'll shout at you - and she'll shout back - well if you keep yourself at this level - they then come down and you take the control. It's not about going in and saying - "We're here" -It's just "Calm down and let's listen" and she's aware of it herself and she says - "Y'know - I just can't help it - they shout at me and I shout back" - but y'know I think that comes with time as well and experience. I mean when I worked in a children's home, you got loads of verbal abuse and y'know it wasn't just directed at yourself it was directed at your family. But that was because you were actually in control of things and kids don't like you being in control - some

of those kids had never had boundaries set for years - do you know what I mean? So by raising your level and screaming at them, you're actually coming down to their level - so I think that for me...

P: And is that a similar thing when you're dealing with the criminal fraternity?
S: Oh yeah. I mean like, to me, when I arrest somebody, y'know, you've actually taken their liberty away from them so that in itself, I think, is degrading. So to me - if they're kicking off and fighting, you're in a different position and you've got to wait for them to calm down - but as soon as you arrest someone what's the point of being balshy with them? You've done what you've been authorised – you take them back to the station and you explain to them and I always try and say to them – "Do you want a cup of tea or anything before we go ahead with the interview" - that's not because you're sweetening them - but - to me - they're going to be more co-operative with you if you treat them as a human being rather than just as throwing your collar around. It's unnecessary I think - and I don't see that a lot, which is what I thought I would do. But we've got a lot of experienced officers who I'm working with as well and you learn from them every day.

Rachel

P: You think crime and poverty are linked?
R: Absolutely. Yeah. Without a shadow of a doubt. And drugs.
P: Do you think poverty's linked to drugs?
R: Not really.....I don't think poverty is...
P: What do you........
R: I think crime is linked to drugs, as in burglary and things like that....I think burglary is associated to drugs but I don't think drugs are poverty related.
P: So what do you think causes..what's causing the drugs thing at the moment do you think?
R: I've no idea really. I've absolutely no idea. The majority of people that are druggies, we deal with, have got absolutely no hope of...they're the sort of people that have no education...they come from..they come from sort of very ......you know...low class........lower class backgrounds and they.........
P: Well aren't they the poorer people?
R: Well I suppose yes they are.......But you tend to find that ....that they grew up like that ...it's what their life is. You know.....they invariably have parents that are criminals...and they've all been that same...I mean you see the majority of our offenders here - y'know - they have 2 or 3 kids by different fathers or y'know - fathers you get in have got 2 or 3 kids - never done a days work in their life -
P: And you think it's bred into them?
R: I think it is, yeah.
P: And would you say that anything could ever be done to change those people?
R: No I don't. I don't see how you can. You know...they don't want to work. I mean it's quite cynical of me, but they don't want to work. They wouldn't do y'know a good days work if they tried. you know, they're just not interested and they just filch off....they just filch off the system. Alright....I mean a lot of people...you know, not everybody's like that. Not everybody that comes from a poor background ...it's the people who are ...who are from a poor background, they have no family values, they have no, they have no value, you know, they

don't know right from wrong. They're not taught right from wrong because their parents go out thieving.....

Mick

M: I suppose.....that by virtue of experience and the authority I've been given I've become more prepared to tell other people what to do...I feel more confident in the way I'm prepared to relate to other people...because I'm not just...I mean..I'm part of the organisation. When I say "Do this..." it isn't me telling you to do this, it is me, sergeant and ultimately, the whole organisation that stands behind me telling you to do this...so I wield the organisation's authority and ultimately the state's authority. Umm....when people say - you're doing this to me..I say - No I'm not...you've done it to yourself and I'm not doing this for me I'm doing this for society as a whole. This is what you've acquired....

Ray and Phil

Ph: As a traffic policeman – you've got to be able to talk to people. Quite often you meet people who you've never ever seen before. They don't know you and it's a cold meeting and to get these people to talk to you you've got to put them at ease. They expect big butch traffic men and hopefully they don't get that when we meet them. There are these (butch men) around but .... One of the things we used to do was approach a car with kids in with a puppet of Gordon the Gopher or Sooty – and the kids thought this was great. But it took the driver completely off guard because they weren't expecting it. The other side of it was - and no doubt the bosses wouldn't agree was – that it focuses that person on his responsibilities to his family as the person who drives that vehicle. But there are plenty of authoritarian traffic policemen about
P: Why are you two different then?
R: I think a lot of these people have joined to the force and gone to the larger cities where they're under a lot of pressure and I think some of them forget just how.....You can do anybody – but you don't have to be nasty about it. You can be pleasant and well mannered and you think "I wouldn't want to be spoken to like that"
P: You think it's a product of where you've done your policing?
R: It certainly helps. I think there's a lot of them – and I'm probably stereotyping myself at this point – most of it – if I were to take 10 bobbies with an authoritarian attitude – I bet 8 of them came directly from school or college to the police. I worked on the (names estate) with the grass roots characteristics, and it's worth a lot to be just out there being Jo average ... and just being out there earning a crust

In Sally's extract, she is constructing a position in the *Policing as conflict management* discourse, but within it, control is constructed as humanitarian and non-forceful. Sally suggests that force is both unnecessary and something she has

encountered less frequently than she anticipated. Thus she is constructing an account in which I would find it difficult to discredit her account of police control as non-forceful (perhaps by talking about cases where people have died in police custody), because she doesn't deny that it happens, rather that it happens less frequently than might be suggested by the *Police as pig* discourse. She implies that such behaviour is possibly the result of inexperience, thus justifying such actions because culturally, young people are held less accountable for their actions. She also suggests that when she treats prisoners with what could be constructed as *"sweetening"* tactics, this is actually something that is done to win their co-operation, thus maintaining her subject position within the *Policing as conflict management* discourse as someone in control.

Rachel is also positioned in the *Policing as conflict management* discourse, but within the terms of this discourse, a frequently constructed police attitude is cynicism, which officers claim is a consequence of dealing with the worst aspects of society and the helplessness that they experience at being unable to change it (Reiner, 1992). This type of attitude, is, however, inconsistent with the types of attitudinal changes recommended in the Scarman report (1981), such as greater tolerance and understanding of the ethnic community. Such attitudes need, from this perspective, to stem from a social-psychological understanding of why some groups commit crime in the first instance. So, at the beginning of the extract, Rachel attempts to construct a position within social-psychological discourses on the causes of crime. However, as the extract progresses, she finds it difficult to maintain this position because she moves to a subject position within the *Policing as conflict management* discourse, within which cynicism is

justified by arguments such as those Rachel presents to me, which are basically centred on themes of heredity and choice. It is only by being positioned in discourses that privilege the human being as the cause of social ills, that she can maintain her self-construction as a "cynical copper" and thus her position within *Policing as conflict management* discourse.

Mick uses similar discursive tactics to Sally. He is positioned within the *Policing as conflict management* discourse, but needs to avoid a self-construction in which *"telling people what to do"* is produced as something he enjoys, since this would enable me to place him in a *"pig"* discourse. As such, he uses a tactic, whereby he indicates that this activity is rendered a duty, and not an individual motivation *(Anti-pig discourse)*. Further, it is a duty not only to the police force but also to the whole of society. Foucault (1977) noted the use of this tactic in discourses accounting for the transformation of the penal system at the end of the seventeenth century (see chapter 4 for a discussion of the possible genealogy of police specific anti-pig discourses).

Ray and Phil, conversely, suggest that there are *"butch"* policemen around, but that they deliberately try to disrupt this image by behaving in ways that surprise the public. Their description of how they strive not to appear as *"butch"* is potentially one that could be seen as non-professional, so the next move is to justify this action which they do by saying *"it focuses the responsibility of the driver...to their family"*. They do need to account for the fact that they have constructed some officers as *"butch"*, which they do in the same way as Sally, by suggesting that this is related to youth and inexperience. They also suggest

that this might be related to the environment in which policing takes place, implying that in some urban areas, *"butch"* behaviour is necessary to cope with such high levels of crime, leading officers to *"forget"* how to be pleasant to people.

These extracts demonstrate that achieving positions that are prescribed as desirable within local (organisational) discourses is compromised by the webs of relationships within which such discourses are reproduced and challenged. Moreover, the motivation to navigate one's way through such compromises is contingent upon the relationship within which the self-narrative is produced. Being positioned in the *Policing as conflict management* discourse produces a subjective compromise because, due to the questions I am asking and the responses I am receiving, I could construct these participants as *"pigs"*; a construction they avoid in the ways I have shown. However, the possibility that I could construct these officers in this way, is itself a product of the power relations that exist between the police and society more generally.

2. Challenges to self-constitution produced through the research relationship

As I argued in chapter 6, taking up a subject position in the *Policing as mission* discourse can be difficult to achieve for a woman, because it is widely believed, due to the hegemony of the *Police/parenting incompatibility* discourse, that no matter what a policewoman might say, she will eventually leave to have children. Policewomen like Sally, who joined after having had her family are rather more "free" than other policewomen to position themselves in the *Policing as mission*

discourse, because their seriousness about the job is less likely to be challenged. The same probably applies to Rachel, on the basis that having made it to sergeant, which relatively few women do, she has "proved" her seriousness. This then accounts for the high degree of investment that both Sally and Rachel have in the *Policing as mission* discourse.

Another potential problem policewomen have, which dates back to their introduction into the police in the early part of this century, is a discourse based on gender differences, that suggests that policewomen are best suited for the "softer" aspects of policing involving interpersonal skills, such as defusing potentially violent situations; dealing with children and victims of sexual crime; and acting as undercover prostitutes (see chapter 4). To successfully construct an account of oneself within the *Policing as mission* discourse, however, means needing to be positioned in the *Policing as conflict management* discourse, because, as I have shown in chapter 6, it is this that partly legitimises the *Policing as mission* discourse. To successfully construct a position in the *Policing as conflict management* discourse, however, means that a woman needs to be able to demonstrate that she can handle the physical aspects of policing. Now clearly, this is a position that would be compromised if a woman were to take up a position in a discourse that suggested that there were definite gender differences between men and women.

In the following extracts, I want to show how Sally and Rachel, because they have constructed an account in which they have constituted themselves as firmly positioned in the *Policing as mission* discourse, need to defend this position through the *Gender differences do not exist* discourse.

Sally

P: Do you feel as if there's any ... any of these skills or the jobs that police officers are required to do that women are better at than men?
S: No - I think the specialist men feel ....what I would say is sometimes they have a preference for the police officer to be a female.
P: In a sex crime?
S: Yeah ..... Sex crime, children ... But I think people should be entitled to that choice. And I think there's jobs that men can do - y'know that maybe a female couldn't. Everybody has got qualities and I think the secret is to bring out your own.

Rachel

P: You don't think there are any gender differences in the way that....
R: No I don't
P: Yet there's a lot written about that isn't there?
R: There is. But I don't think there are (gender differences). You know...I er...Y'know for example, I can't see ....say for example you have a rape victim....it used to be the old – "Get the nearest available policewoman" - the nearest available policewoman might not be the best person for the job - might not be the best person who's got the experience to talk to that person. Y'know, that's what used to happen. It doesn't happen as much now. The police service is changing, There's no two ways about it. It's changed a lot since I've been in it and I'm probably more adept at actually getting the best person for the job instead of like saying – "Oh it's abuse - let's have a woman to talk to them" - When I first joined and when I was younger that used to irritate me to death, you know.

Wendy

W: It's just differences in sexes isn't it.
P: You think we're naturally predisposed to probably want approval more? Do you think that's what it is?
W: And we're probably more bothered about wanting to be part of a team – probably wanting to be liked more....But it's always going to be like..you were saying, like ...do you get treated differently being a female....there's always going to be a difference in sexes and I think we communicate differently, we talk differently and we act differently and I think we're just as capable of doing this job as what any bloke is....but we do it differently.....

Both Sally and Rachel are firm in refuting the suggestion I make through a

gender difference discourse, that there may be jobs for which policemen and

women are differentially suited. Sally suggests that if women are called upon to deal with certain incidents that this is because the victim has made that choice. She reinforces this idea by drawing on a liberal discourse that emphasises freedom of choice. Rachel, like Sally, discounts my position in the gender difference discourse by suggesting that times have changed, thus arguing that the force is now too progressive to be sexist, and that there are no essential differences between men and women; just differences between people. This argument is similar to nationalist arguments, which are used to suggest to that even in a multi-racial country, racial differences are not an issue (Wetherell and Potter, 1992).

In firmly refuting the notion that there are gender differences that count for carrying out the police officer's role, Rachel and Cathy are able to affirm their positions in the *Policing as mission* discourse. They have achieved this by constructing an account within which men and women officers are produced as individuals, whose differences transcend gender. In achieving this position, they are able to construct themselves as "real" police officers by suggesting that there are no tasks, practices or situations, which render gender differences salient.

As I showed in chapter 8, both Rachel and Sally are committed to constructing a very positive account of their experiences within the police. What they achieve by doing this is to discount the tacit suggestion that I have constructed throughout the dialogue by questions I have asked and responses I have made, that the police is an inherently sexist organisation. The question that arises, is why are they so motivated to produce such an overwhelmingly positive account. I would suggest that this is because in challenging their accounts through

feminist discourses, I am producing a situation where they *need* to discount or discredit my arguments.

Mama (1995) suggests that being conscious of being black is a feature of living in a white dominated, racialised society, where one is reminded of this through different events that occur. Thus, Mama argues, black people, are motivated to affirm their black identity, because it is threatened by the dominant order. In asking questions that infer that a woman in an organisation should and ought to have certain experiences and feelings (which is effectively what my questions are doing), I am making them conscious that *their* accounts could be discounted or discredited. Thus they are motivated to affirm the police identity and to discredit and discount "feminist" discourses that threaten that identity.

However, I would argue that this can be explained without recourse to psycho-analytic theory (Hollway, 1984; Mama, 1995). By attempting to discredit and discount their accounts (which is what my questions are doing), I am suggesting that they are "fooling themselves", perhaps, or not being "straight with me". Socio-culturally, the importance of telling the truth and being believed, is prescribed as a highly desirable position. Thus the 'motivation' to discount or discredit my suggestions stems from this discourse and not from the psyche. Conversely, Wendy, the part-time police officer, has constructed an account in which she describes having some unpleasant experiences which she attributes to being a part-time officer. Thus my questions and responses actually assist Wendy in constructing an account in which sexist attitudes can explain why part-time

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working can result in people having a "hard time". As such, therefore, she does not need to discount or discredit some of my feminist arguments.

To summarise, because of my positioning in feminist discourses, Sally and Rachel were motivated to produce accounts that both discounted and discredited feminist discourses targeted at the police, because I was using these positions to construct inferences about the genuineness of their accounts.

The female identity in the police organisation is therefore always potentially insecure due to the challenges produced by feminist discourses; by dominant discourses on the "nature" of the real police officer; and by discourses of tokenism.

3 Gendered consequences of subjective challenges

I want to complete the development of this argument in this, the final section of this chapter. I want to argue that the identity of the male police officer who has achieved promotion is not as insecure as the female identity. In these extracts, Martin, a Chief Inspector is talking about his promotion in the early 1990s.

M: Y'know we're talking about the late 70s early 80s. We were talking about very very powerful people, who, by and large, (my personal view) didn't really get there because of their skills and abilities – they really got there most of the time through connections; through masons. I don't think it was quite as rife as people are led to believe but the same influences are there, because like could promote like and did and there was little check and no redress. If I failed a board I couldn't go to the boss and say "what happened?" And to the point where even blatant discrimination, which happened in my case - was never addressed. Between 1979 until I finally got promoted in 1991 - I went on 13 promotion

boards. The system is you have to go to the divisional board and if they recommended you - you went to the force board and had to pass that. In all those 13 occasions, I passed every time - the divisional board – but never passed the force board

Later in the conversation

P: How's your career now then? It's obviously picked up.
M: Yeah - I have a very different feeling about where I sit now. I went through a doldrum I suppose - would be the best way of describing it - particularly when I was away. I loved (the job) for the the first time in my life I was actually picked out as the sort of top person in the place and I was groomed and all the things that.....so I was feeling really good. I was feeling tremendously good about myself and about my role. Loved the place but it was a 3 year secondment which had to end. I went right up to the fence on getting promoted so I was looking at going back to sergeant - the guy who was running the place got in touch with my chief and sent a long letter saying - look what on earth are you doing - whether that had any bearing or not I don't know but the next board I had which was 3 months before I came back - in 1992 - but the board was so different. I was last in - they took me through it, smiled all the way through and they didn't or barely took any notes and at the end of it said - we're pleased to tell you you've passed. And that was unheard of...
P: What do you think swung it then?
M: There's a reasonable recognition around of myself and I'm not alone. There's others who you could quite easily pick out who had been deliberately held back - the evidence was there - had I been female or black I'd have been able to take them to a Tribunal - they were discriminating against me because they didn't like what I was and it was an individual based thing

In the first extract, Martin is constructing an account that explains why he failed so many promotion boards during that time in his career (1970s). He begins by suggesting that Masonic influence enabled *"very, very powerful people"* to promote other people who were like themselves. By suggesting that this was a long time ago, and that the Masonic influence was not as rife as some people thought, he constructs an account in which he defends his own credibility by ensuring he is not constructed as a 'conspiracy theorist' (a position often discredited on the grounds of irrationality), and the credibility of the police by suggesting such influences are 'all in the past'. In doing this, he also effectively deflects the potential suggestion that his own promotion is due to Masonic

influence. Secondly, Martin suggests that his unsuccessful attempts to get promoted were on the grounds of discrimination.

In the second extract Martin describes how he made the transition from being unable to achieve promotion to actually succeeding in achieving the rank of Chief Inspector. He describes going through "*a doldrum*", before constructing the next part of the narrative, in which he describes enjoying the job for the first time. He juxtaposes this with the revelation that he was "*picked out as the top person in the place*" and that he was "*groomed*", which suggests that part of the reason for his lack of promotions in the past was due to lack of attention and recognition. His narrative then moves on to describe how he was eventually promoted, which he attributes partly to the mentorship of the person who "*groomed*" him. However, by suggesting that the board was "*so different*" and that their reactions to him were "*unheard of*", he achieves the idea that some quality of his own was also important. This is reinforced by the last part of the extract in which he says "*there's a reasonable recognition of myself around*", but in order not to construct himself as bigheaded, he suggests, "*there are others*" who were also good, but held back. He completes the extract by suggesting that because he wasn't a minority he was unable to seek redress. This is drawing on discourses of equal rights, a common discursive tactic by dominants to discredit actions taken to promote the interests of minorities.

In the second part of the narrative Martin is accounting for his promotion to Chief Inspector following 13 unsuccessful promotion attempts. Because Martin says that he had 13 attempts and that on each occasion he passed the board at

divisional but not force level, he is able to construct a convincing argument of discriminatory treatment. Because this account provides "evidence", it far less likely to be targeted with discrediting arguments due to the "clinching" effect of rational discourse (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Due to the accounting success he achieves, he is able to take up a subject position in meritocratic discourse. Further, because it is highly unlikely that his position in this discourse would be targeted with discrediting arguments from "tokenism" discourses, his position is relatively secure.

In accounting for career success, both to oneself and to any other interested party, the individual will want to take up a position in meritocratic discourse, because socio-culturally, career achievement through one's own abilities is constructed as highly desirable. Women, in organisations like the police, are always compromised in the achievement of this goal when accounting for career success due to the fact that their success is targeted with discrediting discourses, such as tokenism. This means that senior women in particular, in attempting to take up subject positions in meritocratic discourses, need to produce convincing accounts of their achievements.

A woman who does not succeed or is not succeeding in her career goals, is able to take up positions in sexist discourses, within which the reasons for this lack of success can be imputed to discreditable motives on the part of the organisation. Such a position is not available to men. Men, like Martin, instead take up positions in other organisationally available discourses that enable sense to be made of any lack of success without compromising subjective goals. Often such

discourses are those that suggest the power holders in the organisation only promote people whose "faces fit".

However, taking up a position in sexist discourses is not a straightforward matter because they are targeted with so many discrediting or discounting counter-discourses due to the fact they challenge the dominant order. Constructing accounts through such discourse is therefore a highly complex achievement, as I have shown with Cathy's account in chapter 7. However, the production of such an account is facilitated by being in a very senior position because at these levels in the organisation, the individual is not as reliant on discourses on policing to constitute the self (see chapter 6). At senior levels, officers have more subjective "freedom" to take a critical stance against the organisation and other police officers.

Senior male officers who account for their career success through meritocratic discourses need to discredit or discount attacks mounted via "sceptical" discourses on promotion processes, particularly when they use these discourses to account for times when their own career has been at a standstill. However, because they are not having to fend off tokenism attacks, their take up of a subject position in meritocratic discourse is likely to be relatively unproblematic within many accounting relationships, such as with me. A senior male officer who is currently upwardly mobile, discussing this with one who has recently been turned down for promotion would produce an entirely different accounting situation and, probably, self-construction.

For more junior women in the organisation, attempting to gain promotion carries considerable subjective risk. If they do not succeed, they could construct an explanation of this through sexist discourses, but this has to be a very convincing account, and is perhaps less easy to achieve at lower levels in the organisation, where the police officer is more dependent on others (mainly male colleagues) to perform her duties.

If a junior woman does succeed in being promoted, she runs the risk that this could be attributed to tokenism. Because such a situation is constructed as undesirable, she is more likely to account for her success through meritocratic discourse. However, given that "sceptical" discourses on meritocracy are in wide circulation throughout the police, this is a difficult position to maintain. Junior women (i.e. upwardly mobile constables and sergeants) whose identity is largely constructed through dominant discourses on policing, are therefore more likely to experience subjective insecurity (see discussion below) and thus be motivated to affirm their "police" identities so that they can discredit or discount arguments that their gender is the salient success factor.

Summary

In this chapter, I have shown that constructing a coherent self-account that uses discourses that are culturally prescribed as desirable is not a smooth achievement. Due to the non-unitary nature of discourse, there are competing explanations for accounts that are generated. For example, police officers find it difficult to maintain their positions in the *Policing as conflict management*

discourse, unless they can convince the interlocutor that the desire for this position is not related to their own enjoyment of force. However, I have argued that the construction of an account that attempts to justify certain beliefs or practices is motivated by the accounting situation itself. Put simply, a police officer might not need to use the same persuasive tactics if discussing his or her sense of self with another police officer.

I went on to show the influence of the interlocutor on the production of accounts that construct women's experiences in policing as positive. Women do not resist the take up of positions in sexist discourses because they are colluding with men or because they are "blinding" themselves to what is going on, but because this can contradict other subject positions that ordinarily constitute their identities unproblematically. Women who construct themselves as contented at work do not generally need to account for this to their colleagues. However, the research process, due to the questions asked and the way responses are treated, raises the possibility that women expressing contentment are not "seeing things properly" or are "deluding themselves". As I have shown in chapter 8, the questions I asked, no matter how carefully constructed, produced an accounting situation. Thus, the researcher alerts participants to the possibility that their account is being read as untruthful, which motivates them to discredit or discount the researcher's suggestions. Far from consciousness-raising, attempts to persuade women to read certain practices as sexist may paradoxically motivate them to discredit or discount such attempts, so that they can 'prove' they are realistic about their views of the job.

Finally, I argued that men might be able to account for their success rather more easily than women, because senior policewomen are targeted with discrediting discourses that suggest they have gained their rank because of tokenism. Women who do not achieve success can explain this using sexist discourses, though due to the wide range of discrediting discourses that can be mobilised to discount this possibility, constructing such accounts could be precarious if the interlocutor is judged not be to be a feminist sympathiser.

Overall summary and discussion of analysis

1. Power-knowledge

Foucault's thesis was that in any society, power is exercised through webs of relationships. The power exercised within these relationships is productive, not repressive. It produces accounts of "subjects"; descriptions of different types of people. Such accounts or discourses are then used to render people as objects. This occurs as techniques of power are used to produce norms, by the calculation of the average performance within any specific discursive field. Through further techniques of power, deviations from the norm are rendered highly visible and those who deviate are rendered accountable. The norms produced through such techniques are used self-reflexively by people to constitute their own subjectivity and hence account for the apparent docility of the social body.

However, the relations of power within which discourse is produced are not stable. Where there is power, there is resistance and such resistance is productive

of different forms of knowledge or discourse. Thus in attempting to render the
social body docile through normalisation, new discourses may be produced.
These too can be used self-reflexively ensuring that in any society there is a host
of ways of "being".

2. Agency

Within liberal western democracies, social regulation is largely achieved through
discourses of enterprise (Rose, 1996; Du Gay, 1997). These discourses promote
the ideals of liberal democracies: freedom, autonomy, choice and fulfilment.
Within these discourses the individual is constituted as someone who can make
choices about how to live his or her life and who is committed to making a
project of his or her identity (Rose, 1996). Within this discourse, the individual is
privileged as an agent; someone who causes certain things to happen and resists
others. This effect has led to the agency-social divide that dominates social
psychological thinking, in which the individual is privileged as the cause of
social change and inertia (Henriques et al, 1998).

The agency-social divide is inscribed in most studies of work-identity. Studies
take as their focus either the organisation or the individual, and sometimes both.
However, theoretically, these studies are committed to reproducing the individual
and the social as separate and distinct objects of knowledge, but leave the
question of how the one affects the other unanswered. Attempts to bridge the gap
theoretically, inevitably result in privileging cognitivism as the cause of

individual differences in acceptance of or resistance to the status quo (Hollway, 1989).

3. Discourse as an analytical focus

The theoretical position I have adopted in this thesis, is that the individual-social divide has to be dissolved in order to understand how the status quo is maintained or changed. The focus for my analysis has been discourses and how these are reproduced or changed within the act of self-constitution. My aims in the thesis were to explain how policing as a profession and an identity is constructed and to further explain why it is constructed in these ways. Secondly, to explain why women should express positive views about an organisation that is often culturally constructed as 'sexist'.

My definition of discourse is Foucauldian, in that it embraces the idea that any body of knowledge is a discourse that has been produced within specific relations of power for specific reasons. This is a position that has received much criticism, on the grounds of epistemological relativism (Alvesson, 1995). The justification for my position on discourse is set out below.

My theoretical position is that individuals use available discourses self-reflexively to produce accounts of themselves and their actions in specific grounded contexts. This position is one which has been used in other studies that could be defined as post-structuralist, and that are concerned with understanding identity (Hollway, 1984; Mama, 1995). However, in explaining *why* certain

discourses are used constitutively, these studies have drawn upon psycho-analytic theories. I wished to produce a theoretical account of self-constitution that avoided using psychological theories

In accounting for self-constitution in discourse, therefore, I have argued that the discourses used in any account, tend to be those that are culturally prescribed as desirable. Thus the take-up of positions in discourse is not motivated by some drive originating in the psyche (Hollway, 1984), it is a straightforward effect of social prescription.

In my analysis, therefore I aimed to identify local or organisational discourses that were used by police officers to construct an account of the self and to explain how these were related to socio-cultural prescriptions of desirability. This is related to Fairclough's (1992) notion of discourse analysis conducted at the levels of both text and social practice. In this way, I was able to account for why certain discourses were being used and to further explain how they were related to the reproduction of the status quo.

The idea of self-reflection is central to post-structuralist accounts of subjectivity. It is through self-reflection that different discourses are used to constitute the self. Self-reflection is possibly a fundamental attribute of a sentient being (Penrose, 1994) but certain conditions are likely to promote the likelihood of this process. One such condition is the research process itself, because it is asking individuals to reflect upon certain aspects of their lives. In my analysis, I have argued that the researcher needs to be part of the analytic focus. This is because

the methods used by the researcher can result in a situation where the individual is being asked to produce a justification for their answer. It is within such conditions that consciousness is raised (Hollway, 1989) and the individual becomes aware that alternative constructions of their position are possible. Where an individual has committed to a particular subject position during an account, it will be difficult for them to contradict this position without appearing inconsistent. And since inconsistency is culturally prescribed as undesirable, individuals will be 'motivated' to maintain coherence in their accounts. I have deliberately punctuated the word motivated, to draw attention to the idea that this is an effect of prescriptive discourses and not an internal state.

Constituting the self is, therefore, a process that occurs in situations when the individual engages in self-reflection, and the research process is one such situation. In constituting the self, the individual will try to position themselves in discourses that. are, in socio-cultural terms, prescribed as desirable.

4. Gendered effects of self-constitution in discourses of policing

I have argued that socio-cultural discourses on motherhood, render the take-up of local i.e. organisational discourses problematic for female constables. At constable level, the self is constituted through a number of dominant discourses, among which is the *Policing as mission* discourse. This discourse constructs the normal or average police officer as one who sees the "job" as a way of life, and one who is prepared to put the job first. This discourse is legitimated by a variety of other discourses, largely by the construction of police work as unpredictable,

special, unique and dangerous. The *Policing as mission* discourse is inscribed in a number of working practices, specifically long working hours that extend beyond contracted hours and the necessity to come into work at relatively short notice. Policewomen, who are also mothers, therefore find that taking up a position in the *Policing as mission* discourse is not possible if they want to maintain a subject position as a "good mother". This is because discourses on being a good mother have, as their central theme, the idea that children should come first. And a woman who puts her work before her children is often constructed in discourses that are culturally prescribed as undesirable, specifically discourses of selfishness and self-interest. Further, because the adult female identity continues to be constructed in non-work sites, such as motherhood and marriage (Hollway, 1984; Loscocco, 1989; Lorber, 1993), women as a group are less motivated to take up subject positions in local discourses that compromise the self-construction in these socio-cultural sites. Part-time work is now available for women returners to the police, but within the terms of local discourses within which the identity of the average police officer is constructed, such women may have difficulty achieving legitimacy as a "real" police officer.

5. Variability in experiences of female officers

The police is often constructed as a highly sexist and macho organisation (Jones, 1986; Holdaway, 1989; Martin, 1989; Hunt, 1990; Fletcher, 1996). From the first stage of this research, it was apparent that many female officers did not construct the organisation in these ways. Other researchers investigating gender issues

have encountered similar variability (Marshall, 1984; Sheppard, 1989 and Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1995). In interpreting it, researchers have tended to adopt a positivistic stance, maintaining that their interpretation of a practice as sexist is the correct interpretation (e.g. Marshall, 1984), implicitly suggesting that women who do not perceive the same practice in the same way are "wrong". The problem with such a position is that it assumes that there is a correct interpretation or a social reality that exists independently of the individuals producing it. I have developed an argument that the reality, genuineness or truth of any account is not verifiable, because taking up positions in available discourse 'motivate' different interpretations of similar and even the same events. It is the discourse that is being used that determines how the practice is interpreted.

I have argued that producing sexist accounts of the police is an effect of both the situation in which the account is produced and the particular discourses being used to construct that account. For instance, one participant constructing such an account was able to do so, because she was constructing an account of herself as different (and better) than the average police officer and as someone who no longer wanted to work for the police. I have argued that in producing an account that was highly critical of the police, her self-construction as different and as wanting to leave are effects of socio-cultural discourses that denigrate inconsistency. Being very critical of ones own job, colleagues and organisation is inconsistent with liking that job and wanting to stay in it. Further, the need to produce a consistent account is partially a function of the social situation of the

research dialogue. And the production of a critical account was facilitated by my own self-construction in discourses that were critical of the police.

A second participant was also able to produce a consistent account of how she achieved the position of the highest ranking woman in the force without having this achievement denigrated by accusations of tokenism. Thus she used sexist discourses to construct an account in which her journey to this post was produced *as immensely difficult and costly in personal terms, as this enabled her to* construct the reason for her success as meritocratic. Again, this account is a product of socio-cultural discourses in which career achievement is not only prescribed as a desirable personal goal but also where its achievement is only considered worthwhile, if it is attained by individual effort.

Thus my thesis is that sexist accounts are produced within specific grounded contexts to achieve specific subjective goals that are culturally prescribed as desirable. However, constructing a sexist account is not a straightforward matter, because any discourse that challenges the dominant order, such as sexist discourses, may be discredited or discounted by a wide array of counter-discourses produced to protect the status quo. In fact, attempting to consciousness raise by suggesting or implying that certain acts or events are sexist, as I did through my self-construction as a feminist, actually results in the production of discourses aimed at discrediting or discounting such suggestions. However, because of the dominance of feminist discourses and the way that some of these are culturally prescribed as desirable, the discounting or discrediting arguments used are not always convincing.

Police specific discourses are most likely to be taken up as subject positions by officers in the lowest part of the organisational hierarchy. This is probably related to the power relations within the organisation. Producing self-accounts within these discourses enables a psychological distancing from management (officers higher in the hierarchy) on the grounds of difference. Such a move is the effect of dominant socio-cultural discourses that emphasise the importance of power and status as highly desirable goals. In producing a self that is different to and better than the power-holders, the individual is able to avoid the construction of a subordinated and disempowered self.

Women at the lower levels in the hierarchy face difficulties in maintaining subject positions in police-specific discourses because, within the terms of the *Police/parenting incompatibility* discourse, they may be constructed by their male colleagues as lacking seriousness about the job due to the fact that many policewomen leave to have babies. As such their identity within these discourses is more insecure than their male counterparts. The motivation of some policewomen to construct overwhelmingly positive accounts of their experiences as an officer, may be the effect of this insecurity produced through socio-cultural discourses on the importance of self-affirmation (Mama, 1995). Within the terms of these discourses, denigration of the individual is prescribed as highly undesirable and the importance of asserting the self is emphasised.

Women attempting to climb the career ladder are also at greater risk of having this achievement denigrated by accusations of tokenism. This problematises the

take up of positions in meritocratic discourses to explain career success. One response to this is to discredit practices that are widely seen as contributing to tokenism (such as positive discrimination) and to construct a self that is firmly committed to the job.

More senior officers in the organisation are not tied to constructing a self-account through police specific discourses, because their position in the power hierarchy frees them (to some extent) from producing a self that is entirely different from the power holders. Nonetheless, they need to account for their career failures and successes in certain situations, such as the research situation. Senior women can draw on sexist discourses to construct accounts of failures, though as I have shown, they need to do this convincingly. However, men cannot draw on such discourses and may use sceptical discourses available locally, that suggest career progression is related to cronyism or nepotism. Whatever discourse is used, the individual is left with the problem of accounting for their own career success outside the terms of these discourses if they are not to risk constructing an account in which their own promotion could be attributed to tokenism or nepotism. The accounting situation is critical to facilitating the production of a convincing account in these cases. Specifically, sexist discourses are more likely to be successfully mobilised where the other party in the dialogue is also positioned in sexist discourses and meritocratic discourses are easier to use for men when accounting for their success with someone who is not positioned in promotion-sceptical organisational discourses.

Chapter 10 Discussion and overall conclusions

The thesis aimed to examine how policing as a profession and an identity is constructed by police officers and to explain why it is constructed in the ways that it is. It also aimed to explain why some policewomen express high levels of satisfaction with a status quo that is often culturally represented as 'sexist'. In this, the final chapter of the thesis, I want to show how my work builds on previous studies and to review some of the implications and limitations of this thesis.

Addressing the problems of relativism and essentialism

In chapters 1 and 2, I set out an argument for using a social constructionist epistemology to address the thesis questions, on the grounds that the 'reality' of organisational life is more usefully conceptualised as constructed in people's accounts rather than reflected in them. I argued that a social constructionist approach is not only emancipatory, because of the way that different versions of reality can be challenged, but that it is also useful for appreciating that there is never a universally beheld 'status quo'. However, I argued that studies that have used social constructionism to examine questions related to gender in organisations have fallen into the trap of not only assuming that the status quo can be treated as universal, but also, due to limitations in the ways that the relationship between the individual and the social context is conceptualised, assuming that both individuals and the social context possess essential qualities that account for differences in the ways that individuals perceive and act in their social contexts. I presented a number of arguments as to why essentialism is to be avoided, focusing specifically on the ways

this constrains our understanding of the constituted nature of both individuals and the social domain and of the processes that serve to reproduce and transform such constitutions. I argued that a Foucauldian analysis offered the most appropriate framework for addressing the thesis questions due to its explicit anti-essentialism and focus on discourse as the constitutive medium of both individuals and the social context.

In putting forward a justification for the theoretical and conceptual frameworks to be used in the thesis, I reviewed a range of studies that have used similar approaches. I argued that these studies were particularly useful for addressing criticisms of social constructionism in general and of Foucauldian approaches in particular. For instance social constructionism, including Foucauldian approaches, have been vigorously criticised on the grounds of 'relativism' (Reed, 1997). The argument here is that since reality is conceptualised as constructed, and since it is problematical to assess which version of reality is authoritative, social constructionists must be subscribing to a view of the world in which 'anything goes'. A related criticism is that such relativism denies material reality to the world, thus that we can only ever know anything in terms of how it is articulated in narratives or text. I argued that a Foucauldian analysis, while refusing to subscribe to a view that there are authoritative versions of reality, is nevertheless able to illustrate how certain versions of the world do become authoritative. I reviewed the work of Hollway (1984) and Mama (1995) as examples of this sort of analysis. In their work, they show how discourses that operate to subordinate certain groups, have their origins in power relations existing in society that are supported by certain economic and social conditions, and which are reproduced up until those subordinated groups resist and challenge the dominant order

through 'counter-discourse'. I argued that these approaches are able to explain how discourse operates at the ideological level to achieve hegemony. These studies not only deflect criticisms of 'relativism', but also show that social realities such as the economic and physical effects of being a black person, do have material effects, though these are more usefully conceptualised as effects of the dialectic of discourse (Fairclough, 1992).

In chapter 3, I set out the methodological approach that I adopted to address the thesis questions. I set out a case for using two distinct methodological techniques: repertory grids and discourse analysis. I argued that repertory grid interviews are useful for permitting a two dimensional analysis of those relatively stable aspects of the constructed reality of policing (Kilduff and Mehra, 1997). I further suggested that in examining whether constructions of the police identity differed between men, women and different police ranks, the extent to which the materiality of social categories influenced social construction could be addressed.

Repertory grid technique, a product of personal construct psychology (Kelly 1955), seeks to identity the judgements that individuals make about different objects in the social domain. Although this is a cognitive theory, in my analysis I conceptualised the judgements (or constructs) that officers made about their colleagues, as being discursive in nature. Thus, I am suggesting that the shared cognitions that repertory grid (when used on a collective basis) seeks to identify are social rather than individual in origin. In chapter 4, I used texts about police history to account for the origin of some of these dominant constructions, arguing that they can be located in the

system of power relations operating continually between the police, the state and the general population.

The analysis of the repertory grid data, conducted using grounded theory, and which is presented in chapter 5, suggested that there were minimal differences in the way that women and men constructed the police identity, but that there were marked differences between the lowest and highest levels of the organisational hierarchy. I concluded that these differences were attributable to the power relations that exist within the organisation, with the lower ranks motivated to construct effective performers as those who are committed and efficient, and the more senior ranks stressing the importance of interpersonal skills and analytical ability. Such constructions enable the lower ranks to assert a sense of self that has meaning and power within a set of power relations that operates to subordinate them. Conversely the higher ranks, who are targeted with 'cynical' discourses about their reasons for wanting promotion and the means through which they obtain it, are motivated to emphasise the importance of skills that are organisationally defined as being important for promotion.

The repertory grid analysis, therefore, provides a snapshot of dominant constructions of the police identity which, due to the method of analysis used, can be said to represent those relative stabilities (Kilduff and Mehra, 1997) in the social context of policing. In this way, the problem of relativism is addressed because I have shown that there are dominant constructions of policing but, in addition, in chapter 4, I have been able to explain the origin of some of these constructions without recourse to essentialist explanations. However, I also needed to explain how these dominant

constructions are reproduced or transformed, and I thus argued that discourse analysis with its explicit focus on variations both within and between individuals' accounts of their experiences, is a suitable analytic tool for these purposes.

The method of discourse analysis that I employed involved the identification of dominant constructions of policing as an identity and a profession (thus providing an additional check on those constructions identified through the repertory grid interviews) but, in addition, an in depth analysis of how these discourses were deployed within specific narratives. My analytical technique based on the work of Fairclough (1992) Hollway, (1989), Wetherell and Potter (1987) and Mama (1995) involved identifying how discourse operates at the individual, interpersonal and ideational levels of social analysis (Fairclough, 1992).

The discourse analysis is presented in chapters 6 to 9. This analysis suggests that females do constitute their identities through the same discourses as the males, thus supporting the repertory grid analysis. However, because the adult female identity continues to be constituted through discourses that stress the importance of motherhood as a practice and an identity, the take-up of positions in organisational discourses for women with children is rendered problematic, largely because discourses that constitute policing are inscribed in a number of working practices that militate against women with children. Thus, self-constitution at the individual level (e.g. policing as mission) is compromised by discourses at the ideational level (e.g. the role of mothers), and actual material practices in the organisation (e.g. staying on at work after a shift finishes) to continually reproduce both local (organisational) discourses about the nature of policing and police officers, and socio-cultural

discourses about the nature of women. The effect of these reproductions is reflected in the hegemony of the idea that policing and parenting are incompatible and the materiality of women's subordination in the rank structure.

From the same analytic perspective, the differences between senior officers and lower ranking officers that I established both through the repertory grid analysis and the discourse analysis are a product of the need for lower ranking officers to justify their own highly visible subordination (deferential behaviour to senior officers; uniform differences between the ranks, and so on) in an organisation located in a liberal democracy. Promoting ideas about the dangerous, conflictual and vocational aspects at the level of identity, reproduces liberal democratic ideals about the importance of individual autonomy and integrity at the ideational level. Simply put, these constructions enable officers to make sense of their own organisational subordination in a society in which subordination is seen to compromise the integrity and autonomy of the individual. Furthermore, the motivation to construct the role in these ways may be related to the intensification of the gaze of the public and the government onto the police after the 1950s (see chapter 4). Further research is needed to identify the specific genealogies of the discourses I have identified.

Paradoxically, the nature of the senior officer's role would be far more conducive to an alliance between motherhood and policing. Not only are senior officers free from the rigours of the shift-system and other working practices that I have identified as being incompatible with the demands of motherhood, they are no longer as invested in constituting a self through the *Policing as mission* discourse. At more senior levels, officers appear to construct the role through different discourses, that emphasise the

service orientation of the role. This is paradoxical because the dominance of the *Policing as mission* discourse at grass roots level means that females rarely remain in the organisation long enough to enable them to achieve the positions that would permit them to combine their career with their family.

Nonetheless, at more senior levels, there is a distinct lack of consensus about the nature of policing and police officers (though a full exploration of this issue is beyond the scope of this thesis), probably reflecting the way that hierarchical power relations operate to promote or marginalise different attitudes at different times. At present, possibly due to the publicity the police organisation has attracted about racism and sexism, dominant discourses in circulation among those officers whose star is in the ascendancy are those that stress the service aspects of the role. However, officers who are currently marginalised argue that such constructions are a 'sham', a set of espoused attitudes that facilitate the likelihood of promotion. What these different and opposing constructions indicate, however, is that hierarchy produces patterned responses of behaviour, including upward mobility and ambivalence (Ferguson, 1984), and in turn, these patterned responses at the level of identity can be seen to reproduce dominant discourses at the ideational level, in which the importance of material success (in the form of status and wealth) are articulated as core values in a liberal democracy.

Thus, in my analysis, I have shown how dominant constructions of policing are reproduced due to the way that discourse at the level of identity, intersects with discourse at the ideational level. Despite the hegemony achieved through this intermeshing of local (organisational) and socio-cultural discourses, constituting an

identity using organisational discourses is riddled with contradictions for both men and women. Because the police occupy a marginal role in a liberal democratic society like our own (Waddington, 1999), their role is questioned and challenged by different groups at different times (see chapter 4). The notion that the police are 'pigs' is a discourse aimed at police officers that discredits their motives for being police officers, on the grounds that they enjoy using force and exercising power. Such discourses make it difficult to constitute an identity within dominant grass-roots constructions of policing as conflictual and dangerous. To do this satisfactorily, constables need to stress the service aspects of the role, though they need to do this in ways that enable them to continue to construct the role as dangerous and conflictual as it is this that justifies the idea that policing is a mission and not just a job. Thus, these contradictions represent sites of hegemonic struggle (Fairclough, 1992) in the construction of the reality of policing and in the ideological values of liberal democracy. Policing does involve the use of force and the assertion of authority (Waddington, 1999), activities that are difficult to reconcile within dominant ideologies of liberal democracies in which individual rights and freedoms are articulated as core values.

Addressing problems of de-centring the individual

A core criticism of social constructionist approaches informed by Foucauldian principles, is that the deliberate de-centring of the subject in a Foucauldian analysis reduces human agency and experiences to a peripheral and inconsequential status (Reed, 1997; 1998). As I argued in chapter 2, however, a number of studies have actively addressed this criticism, usefully ensuring that the human agent is not

dismissed as the passive target of broader social forces, by demonstrating how individuals actively constitute their experiences and their identities in discourse.

My criticism of Mama (1995) and Hollway (1989), was in their psychologisation of this process. I argued that in imputing self-constitution as motivated by intra-psychic forces, they are reproducing the positivist epistemologies they are seeking to subvert, specifically the idea that the human agent is the centre and source of discourse. I critiqued studies that had taken a Foucauldian approach to identity within the context of organisations on similar grounds, specifically arguing that the tendency to attribute self-constitution in discourse to the operation of essential individual characteristics (e.g. Casey, 1995; Knights and Morgan, 1991) deflects attention away from the power relations in which discourses of self have their origin, and thus limits the extent to which we can understand the processes of discourse reproduction and transformation.

In my analysis, I argued that it is the interactional context that is pivotal in understanding why individuals are motivated to use certain discourses and not others to constitute themselves and their experiences. I argued that the interactional function of discourse acts as the site at which the identity and ideational functions of discourse are reproduced and transformed. I illustrated this idea by showing how first negative, and then positive experiences as policewomen are articulated within the interactional context.

In constructing accounts of negative experiences within the police organisation, policewomen can draw on sexist discourses that are culturally available and credible. However, this is not a smooth achievement, because sexist discourses challenge the

dominant order, and as such are targeted with a host of discrediting discourses. An individual constructing such an account has to be able to navigate through the potential discrediting discourses that might be targeted at them. I have argued that as a feminist researcher, I actually facilitated the construction of sexist accounts, since the participant was able to read my intentions as 'friendly' rather than 'hostile'.

Conversely accounting for positive experiences is easy to achieve using the organisational discourses available. However, because the police organisation has a reputation for sexism, as a feminist researcher, my intentions were read as potentially 'hostile' by those participants constructing such accounts. As such, their accounts had to discount potential discrediting discourses that I might have targeted at them, such as the idea that they were 'colluding' with men. I further argued that female police officers may be motivated to produce highly positive accounts, due to the fact that they are targeted with a host of discourses that discredit their positions. Feminist discourses discredit their motives for joining the police and enjoying the role, and organisational discourses both discredit the degree to which they take the job seriously (due to the fact that many women leave the job to have children), and the reasons behind any promotion they do obtain (on the grounds of tokenism). The female identity within the organisation is therefore potentially more insecure than the male identity, though the degree to which this insecurity is consciously experienced depends on the type of account they are being asked for, and who is asking for it.

I have argued that the truth or falsity of any account cannot be verified. And, in line with Potter and Wetherell (1987) have argued that the focus for analysis should be in understanding what the discourses used in an account actually achieve. However, and

in agreement with Mama (1995) and Henriques et al (1984) it is necessary to explain the motivation to produce certain types of account. In other words, why would an individual want to justify, excuse or persuade and why should they draw on certain discourses to do this? An explanation of this 'motivation' is critical if the human subject is to be accorded an active role in a Foucauldian analysis. I have argued that this motivation proceeds from the awareness (through questions asked and responses given by the interlocutor) that there are alternative explanations for the experiences recounted. When this happens the individual will be motivated to construct credible and creditable accounts simply because, in many situations, an account that is judged not to be creditable or credible can be used to make negative judgements about the person generating the account. Thus, in constructing accounts of experiences, individuals are motivated to produce accounts that are coherent (logically consistent) and credible, because these are primary values of personhood articulated through liberal democratic discourse. However, the motivation to produce a coherent and credible account is tied to the challenges aimed at that account by the interlocutor. And in turn the challenges that can be made are prohibited by available discourses and the status that the interlocutor is accorded by the accountee. In the context of the research relationship, this constrains the extent to which that relationship can ever be truly 'equalised', irrespective of the efforts of the researcher.

I have argued that accounts constructed through discourses that challenge the status quo are those that are likely to be targeted with a wide array of discrediting discourses upon which interlocutors can draw. Working women may be particularly vulnerable in this respect. Because women remain the primary care-giver within the family, the working mother is targeted with a host of discourses that discredit her motives for

working (for example greed or selfishness); if she tries to climb the career ladder she may be targeted with discourses in which any achievements are discredited on the grounds of tokenism; and if she wishes to break out of the 'domestic' mould and perform what has been traditionally seen as men's work, such as policing, she can be targeted with discourses that discredit her motives from a feminist view point (colluding with men) or a 'male' view point ("bike or dyke"). Theoretically, therefore, the reason why women and other minorities may construct their identities using a multiplicity of discourses (Hollway, 1989), may be simply the effect of navigating their way through the sorts of challenges I have identified in this thesis. This may also account for why minorities express annoyance at researchers attempting to uncover evidence of sexism or racism: such research implies that that individuals who do not experience the world in these ways are, in one way or another, untrustworthy.

Addressing problems of universalism

In chapter 1, I argued that one of the key limitations of previous research resides in universalist conceptualisations of the status quo. The effects of this are that variability in the experiences of individuals are difficult to accommodate without recourse to essentialist explanations, and the researcher's interpretation of the status quo, say as sexist, is assumed to be authoritative. The problematic of these positions is set out in chapters 1 and 2. However, if researchers argue that there is no status quo, simply a collection of diverse experiences, then our efforts to understand and act on behalf of some groups that are materially disadvantaged in terms of education, health, property or any other social condition becomes extremely difficult. I wanted to develop an approach that examined the status quo without making universalist assumptions. To

this end, I argued that two different methodological approaches were necessary. First, one that would enable the collective experiences of individuals to be understood as a consequence of their social category. And second, one that was sensitive to the variations both within and between individuals in the ways that these experiences are articulated and understood. The combination of repertory grid technique with discourse analysis enabled these two levels of analysis to be conducted without compromising this anti-universalist principle.

I have argued that policing as a profession and an identity is constructed in relatively stable ways, but that the emphasis on the different constructions of policing available, varies according to rank and gender, with rank exerting the greatest influence on these constructions. I further argued, that different constructions of policing are drawn upon in different interactional contexts to produce accounts of experiences that effectively reproduce discourses at the ideational level of social analysis. Thus, I have demonstrated that structural properties of social contexts, such as rank, gender and role have distinct effects on the discursive resources that are used by individuals, but that these structural properties are themselves discursive.

The reproduction of the status quo

A major issue that needs to be addressed is how discourse operates to reproduce the status quo. In my analysis, I have suggested that individual motivation to take up positions in organisational discourse are 'motivated' by hegemonic socio-cultural discourses on "being". Such discourses prescribe desirable ways of being, and individuals will take up positions in discourses through which those desires are

achieved. Ways of being that are prescribed as undesirable tend to be those that challenge the stability of the status quo. Taking up subject positions in discourses that challenge the status quo is therefore problematic, because quite often, such positions will be prescribed as undesirable. However, people do take up subject positions that challenge the status quo when prescribed positions are unattainable.

For example Cathy, as we have seen, took up a position in a discourse that stressed the importance achievement at work. However, the dominance of this discourse and the problematic of organisations (Ferguson, 1984), means that career achievement is not possible for everyone in any given organisation. Those that can't achieve this could completely change their subject position to a discourse within which career achievement is constructed as completely unimportant. However, because of other dominant discourses on maintaining consistency of motives and intentions (Wetherell and Potter, 1992), such moves are subjectively problematic. It is at these sites that the production of new discourse becomes possible. An individual who needs to both maintain a consistent self-account and to account for her (sic) lack of career achievement without placing herself in socio-cultural discourses that are prescribed as undesirable (e.g. not being good enough) needs to be able to explain this in other ways. Although such explanations are usually proscribed by available discourses, they may nevertheless be new in that context. So for example, an individual might explain her lack of career achievement through sexist discourses. As more and more people take up these discourses to explain their own situation, the status quo is challenged and maybe even changed.

Ethics and discourse

A troubling issue, for me personally, is that I have constructed a position in which I have suggested that sexism is an interpretation of an act, made through feminist discourse. Could the same be argued for rape? I believe that while all acts are interpreted within discourse, that this does not mean that an ethical framework within which people live their lives, cannot be established, though it may change. We live in a western democracy where values of personal integrity and the non-violation of the integrity of others are articulated within discourses of human rights. I therefore take up a position within that discourse as I suggest now, that any act that compromises the personal integrity of any group is unethical. I personally consider sexual innuendo to be one such act, largely because it reproduces a discourse in which the dominant construction is of women as sexual objects, and even though many women themselves may use sexual innuendo in the workplace.

However, I also believe that this is a highly problematic area. A woman who receives a sexual comment from a man she finds attractive is unlikely to read this as sexist, and is more likely to take this as a sign of her own personal attractiveness. Given that attractiveness is a major axis along which the female identity is constructed and which is socially prescribed as highly desirable (Hollway, 1984), then it would be difficult to persuade such a woman that this comment could be read as sexist. However, the same woman receiving a sexual comment from a man she considers repulsive, might be willing to accuse him of sexism, even though his remark was 'motivated' by the fact his colleague told him of his own remark and her positive reaction. So here we have a

situation where men, whose identity is constructed along an axis where attracting women is prescribed as highly desirable (ibid.) are subject to differential treatment due to the availability of feminist discourse.

The danger is that because we all know that these sorts of situations do occur day and day out in many organisations, attempting to legislate for sexism is highly problematic both for those individuals who might want to use this legislation and for some of the individuals it is used against.

As I have shown in my analysis, however, feminist discourse has succeeded in prescribing certain self-constructions as undesirable, particularly, the idea that women who do not oppose (psychologically or physically) being the object of sexual innuendo are only concerned with being attractive to men. This criss-crosses and ruptures dominant discourses on female attractiveness, and does create subjective problems for women who want to be positioned in both (to be found attractive, but not to be seen as someone who thinks of nothing else). As I am typing this sentence, I am conscious that I have been aware of that contradiction in my own identity over the last few years, and so to reflecting on the following question: is it due to my stand on sexual innuendo that I rarely receive any or does the fact that I don't receive any mean that I am unattractive? Clearly, since the former is culturally prescribed as the desirable interpretation (and, yes, that's the one I prefer), then my stand is likely to continue and I would guess the same applies to other women.

Resistance and challenge to dominant discourses in the police

In my analysis, I have shown that policewomen may have difficulties in gaining legitimacy in the organisation for a variety of reasons. However, I have also shown that there are sites of resistance and challenge. Challenging dominant taken-for-granted and, in my view, unnecessary working practices is one potential site of change, and one that might disrupt some of the dominant discourses that at present impede women's career progression. While the *Policing as mission* discourse might be functional in many ways, it is the prime source and reproducer of the working practices that in turn reproduce the *Police/parenting incompatibility* discourse. Clearly, while the female identity continues to be primarily constructed through sites such as motherhood, changes in working practices are essential if the police really do want to encourage women returners.

Part-time work is another site of potential change because part-time women, like Wendy, resist attempts that are made to undermine their professional identity. As more and more women and perhaps men, take up this form of working, it is likely to disrupt the terms of the *Policing as mission* discourse as such people show that policing can be done within relatively "normal" parameters.

The challenge to the police identity produced through competing discourses on the nature of police work and bolstered by power relations both in and outside the organisation is also a site where change might occur. If the police move increasingly to a position in which their work is constructed more as a community service and less as conflict management, it may attract a greater diversity of people.

The availability of sexist discourses and attempts to subjectively fend off accusations of tokenism may result in more and more police women being prepared to challenge the status quo, through available resources, such as industrial tribunals. The downside of these challenges is that they are often used to discredit the motives of those women who attempt to win sex-discrimination cases, but the up-side is that as more and more women do it, the organisation will be forced, by financial considerations, to think more creatively about ways of encouraging women into the senior ranks.

Limitations and areas for future research

The theoretical and analytical frameworks that I have developed and used in this thesis have been helpful in answering the questions that the thesis sought to address. However, there are a number of limitations associated with the approaches used:

1. Explaining individual differences

Although discourse analysis is useful for understanding and explaining why individuals constitute themselves and their social worlds in certain ways in certain contexts, it is less useful for understanding the relative stabilities of individual differences. For instance, some of my research participants were very outgoing, others less so; some were charming, others less so; some were very intense in their approach to the research relationship, others viewed the whole process with a cynical and humorous eye. The analysis I used is not terribly sensitive to this type of individual difference, nor are the theoretical frameworks I adopted useful for explaining such

differences. Of course, it is possible to claim that my constructions of these individuals could have varied across several meetings, suggesting that the idea of a stable construction of an individual is unattainable. However, I would argue that my experience and those of other people, belies such a view. It is the relative stabilities in the behaviour of individuals that enables us to form bonds, friendships and relationships, and while it is true that people are not always consistent, they are rarely radically unpredictable from one situation to the next.

It seemed to me, therefore, that the relationship formed between myself and my research participants varied according to how we assessed one another in the general way that humans make interpersonal judgements. Thus, if I 'liked' someone, I found the whole conversation more enjoyable and energetic than if I didn't. Likewise, my judgements about the research participants were based on my assessment of their character. These issues are of fundamental importance in social analysis, since the extent to which an individual is able to access positions of responsibility and to acquire social status in the first instance is usually dependent on the judgements of significant others.

Thus while a Foucauldian analysis helps us to understand **how** we come to understand ourselves, it cannot explain **why** we are all different in the first place. It may be that combining different methodological and analytical techniques, as I have in this thesis, may be one way of addressing such limitations. Indeed an understanding of how the relative stabilities of individuals mesh with the broader social context may be one possible area that future research could usefully address. In this respect, I would suggest that a nested social ontology (Reed, 1997) would be a useful way of thinking

about this relationship, similar to the way that I have analysed the social reality of policing at different levels. Thus it would be useful to understand why certain people (relative to others) come to be viewed as competent police officers, as well as analysing this from a discursive perspective (i.e. the way that 'competence' is constructed and why).

2. Ethical considerations

As I discussed in chapter 1 and above, a troubling ethical issue in social constructionism, is that of problematising certain social conditions on behalf of other groups. For example, in my own research, I have sought to problematise the status quo from the perspective that it has disadvantages for women's careers. However, as I have made clear throughout this thesis, the vast majority of policewomen I met were contented with their lot, and were happy to envisage giving up their careers in order to have and bring up children.

Even though I have sought to avoid imputing authority to my own perceptions of the status quo in the police organisation, explicit in my analysis is the notion that women are subordinated by it (and should not be). This troubling ethical issue is, in my view, one that warrants much greater attention from both an epistemological and methodological point of view. In seeking to subvert dominant constructions of reality and the social structures and institutions that are produced through them, there is a danger that the alternative constructions and structures that are produced could subordinate different groups to those whose lot, researchers like myself are seeking to improve.

Finally, I should finish by pointing out that I began writing this thesis from a position within feminist discourse, with a distinct belief that the police is a sexist organisation and that those women who denied it, did so for improper motives. However, in producing this account I have produced a new form of self-knowledge. I don't believe that there is a social reality that exists independently of any individual and this has led me to seek to understand, within the theoretical position I have adopted here, why I was motivated both to be positioned within feminist discourse, and to produce this thesis. Indeed, in producing this account of my own research, I am drawing on other discourses, specifically Foucauldian and post-modern discourses on the status of knowledge and experience. Although a potentially problematic area (e.g. see Potter and Wetherell, 1987, pages 182-184), within broad dominant discourses of scientific rationality, the usefulness of any specific scientific discourse lies in the scope of its explanatory power: can it explain a lot or a little according to the ideals of logic and coherence? I have attempted to produce an account that meets these criteria, though I accept that it is one of a potentially infinite array of accounts that could have been produced to explain the data presented here.

In producing this account in the way that I have, I have come to the conclusion that all accounts of ones experiences are motivated by socio-culturally prescribed goals. However, people are real; they do feel emotion and they do want to make sense of themselves and of the world in which they live. So while I believe that emotion, motivation, and so on are, as Rose (1996) argues the effects of discourse they are also its source; it is these effects that push us to be creative, to be outraged and to question the dominant order and ultimately to produce new discourse. We should not therefore

dismiss individuals as unimportant targets of broader sociological processes. As Bhaskar (1979) points out, it is through the individual that the social is reproduced and through the social that the individual is reproduced. Each exists in a mutually contingent relationship and cannot be understood in isolation of each other. Similarly light, according to physicists, can be either a particle or a wave: its nature is contingent on what the scientist is trying to explain. This, in my view, is all that we can ultimately say about ourselves.

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