Talking gender and sexuality: conversations about leisure

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Talking Gender and Sexuality: Conversations About Leisure

By

Susan A. Speer

A Doctoral Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
Doctor of Philosophy
of Loughborough University

November 1999

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Abstract

This thesis is a discursive and conversation analytic study of how people talk about gender in the context of discussions about leisure. The data comprise a corpus of over 600 pages of transcribed talk-in-interaction from a variety of sources, including dinner discussions, focus groups, informal interviews, newspaper and magazine articles, television talk shows and documentaries. In contrast to most feminist leisure research, I take participants' talk as my starting point. I explore how gender is made relevant by participants and constituted in the course of their discussions, and what these constructions are used to do interactionally.

The thesis works on two levels. First, it provides a distinctive contribution to leisure research, sport sociology and psychology. It explores what leisure theorists have themselves constructed as 'the problem' in leisure theory, and demonstrates how a discursive, conversation analytic approach can help transcend some of these theoretical and methodological 'problems' - including the way that the concept of leisure itself might be conceived and studied. It identifies three structuring concerns in feminist leisure theory, and provides a discursive and conversation analytic reworking of each of them:

(i) Justifications for the Non-Participation of Women in 'Male-Identified' Activities;
(ii) Hegemonic Masculinity; and
(iii) Heterosexism.

Second, it provides a distinctive contribution to discursive and conversation analytic approaches to gender, by problematizing and developing our understanding of the way femininity, sexism, masculinity and heterosexism 'get done' in talk.

It concludes with a discussion of the implications of this approach for feminist leisure theory, discursive psychology and conversation analysis, and challenges researchers with an interest in 'ideology' and 'power' to take this approach seriously. It finishes with some questions for future analysis.
Acknowledgements

Since I never do things the easy way, thanks must go, first of all, to my three supervisors: Jonathan Potter, Celia Kitzinger, and Angela McRobbie. To Angela McRobbie, for helping me get to Loughborough in the first place; to Celia Kitzinger, for providing just the sort of support and encouragement I needed at a particularly traumatic stage of the Ph.D process, for her sheer enthusiasm for the subject, and for continuing to engage with my work, to motivate (and provoke!) me; special thanks must go to Jonathan Potter, for taking me on half way through my second year, for ‘spot-on’ advice and feedback, and for helping my confidence grow in ways I never thought possible. Thanks also to members of the Loughborough Discourse and Rhetoric Group, who have all contributed in various ways; particularly Charles Antaki, Malcolm Ashmore, Mick Billig, Derek Edwards, Mary Horton-Salway, Sharon Lockyer, Kevin McKenzie, Darren Reed, and Sue Wilkinson; and finally, to all of my participants, especially Mike, who sadly died during the course of this research, but whose quick-wittedness made the process of transcription and analysis an incredibly entertaining one.

Thanks to a variety of special people who have played a part in where I have got today, and who will continue to shape the path that I take in the future: To Frances Wharmby, for proving to me - despite much resistance - that this psychology lark might work after all; to Dave Wallace and Tim Peck, for first nurturing my interest in the social sciences, and for making sociology seem such a hip and funky subject, to Dick Hobbs, for being one of the coolest academics I know, and finally, to my undergraduate supervisor, Robin Williams.

Victoria Clarke deserves her own paragraph. Knowing you has been a right old adventure. Thanks for teaching me more than a thing or two about politics, for your friendship, endless kindness, simply brilliant editorial skills (that’s £10 you owe me, please), and mutual love of nice wine, and all things fluffy - not forgetting ‘B’, and ‘T’ (that’s another £10). My work (and life) is richer and more informed because of your contribution to it.

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Material based on the research undertaken for this thesis has been published in various forms elsewhere:

ARTICLES


REVIEW ESSAYS


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Chapter One: Introduction

Introducing This Thesis

Extract One: SAS 28/12/97: 19

Participants: P: Pamela, K: Keith, A: Alice

1 P: I mean, I think (.) I think one of the
greatest leisure activities is conversation.
2 K: Oh yes.
3 A: Mm.
4 K: Yes.

This thesis is a discursive (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) and conversation analytic (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998) study of how people talk about and construct gender in the context of discussions about leisure. The data upon which this thesis is based comprise a corpus of over 600 pages of transcribed talk-in-interaction from a variety of sources, including dinner discussions, focus groups, and informal interviews (collected between December 1996 and February 1998), newspaper and magazine articles, television talk shows and documentaries (collected from December 1996 to date).

Leisure

'Leisure' is a broad and diffuse field of study, which permeates a number of disciplines across the social and human sciences, including cultural studies (Clarke and Critcher, 1985; Featherstone, 1991; Urry, 1990), sociology (Dunning and Rojek, 1992; Elias and Dunning, 1986; Rojek, 1995), social psychology (Argyle, 1996; Haworth, 1997; Mannell and Kleiber, 1997), the sociology of sport and leisure (Jarvie and Maguire, 1994; Kelly and Godbey, 1992; Nixon and Frey, 1996), and sport psychology (Gill, 1986; Horn, 1992; Morris and Summers, 1995). Therefore, in this thesis, I conceive of ‘leisure research’ in an inclusive and encompassing way, as incorporating insights and cutting across concerns from a variety of disciplines.

Many leisure theorists argue that the post-war years have witnessed a massive

1 In fact, Rojek describes leisure theory as a subject which is 'basically parasitic' (1997: 383).
expansion in the service and leisure industries, and in the provision of ‘institutionalized’ leisure: public and private recreational facilities, sports and fitness centres, theme parks, night clubs, and shopping malls. There is an increased visibility of sport and leisure on television, a growth in new technology and an associated expansion of the tourist industry, and the mass marketing and acquisition of leisure commodities. For some, leisure has become the *raison d'être* of modern life, not just an adjunct to the working week, but a ‘thing’ sought in and of itself. Some sociologists and cultural studies theorists, for example, argue that we are developing into a ‘consumer society’, where the satisfaction of ‘wants’ rather than ‘needs’ drives social life (Outhwaite and Bottomore, 1994: 109-110). Others, however, are rather more pessimistic, arguing that ‘there is little evidence’ of the ‘society of leisure’ coming (Parker, 1997: 543).

While such (constructed) histories inevitably do the business of legitimating academic inquiry (and I expand on the nature of such disciplinary histories in chapter two), the sheer importance given to leisure in both lay and academic settings, the (constructed) centrality of leisure to modern social (and psychological) life, and the institutions that have developed in its name, provide a ready-made rationale for studying it.

**Gender and Leisure**

While leisure (broadly defined) is the *topic* which structures this thesis, the *particular* theoretical and analytic focus will be on the relationship between *gender* and leisure. Research on leisure has a long history (Veblen, 1925), but feminist leisure research has emerged only in the last decade, and is experiencing rapid theoretical and methodological development. Much of this research has centred around redressing the ‘malestream’ by showing how leisure is a problematic concept for many women (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw and Freysinger, 1996; Wearing, 1998). Indeed, the relationship between gender and leisure is a particularly interesting topic for research, for at least two reasons:

First, leisure is one of the few areas of social life that remains largely untouched by equal opportunities legislation. The rules and practices of private sports clubs (which often bar women from membership), are not affected by the UK Sex Discrimination
Chapter One: Introduction

Act (1975). A Women’s Sports Foundation document argues that this legislation ‘currently permits single-sex sporting competitions where the strength, stamina or physique of the average woman puts her at a disadvantage to the average man’ (‘Equality in the 21st Century’, 1999: 11). There is some consensus that the Act provides ‘legal support’ for the division of activities into those traditional to a child’s sex (1999: 11).

It is only eight years since the Football Association voted to rescind Rule 37, which ‘effectively banned mixed football in schools for the under-11s’ (Green, 1997: 6), and six years since the Women’s Football Association was incorporated into the Football Association (1997: 6). However, researchers argue that significant gender disparities remain: There will be a total of 28 sports in the 2000 Sydney Olympics, 115 women only events, 169 men only, and as few as 12 mixed (Byrnes, 1998). There is a massive under-reporting of women’s sporting achievements. Burgess, for example, argues that the media ignore women’s sports (1998: 22): The women’s world cup - purportedly ‘the biggest female sporting event in history’ (Knightley, 1997: 7) - received little, if any, coverage.

Several recent events have generated controversy, gaining much public and press attention. These included the long-awaited vote by the Marylebone Cricket Club to admit women as members, for the first time in its 211 year history (Joseph, 1998: 1), the battle by the female boxer, Jane Couch, to become professional (Buncombe, 1998: 5), and the record crowds at the 1998 Gay Games in Amsterdam (Mitchell, 1998: 7). These milestones represent a changing climate, but are also testament to the argument that normative conceptions of appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour are fundamental structures in our leisured lives.

There are a whole host of institutions and organizations which have been set up to redress the inequities in leisure, such as the International Female Boxers Association (formed in 1997), the Women’s Sports Foundation (UK and USA), the International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women, Womensport International, and the International Olympic Committee’s ‘Women and Sport Working Group’ (formed in 1995).2 There have been two World Congress’ on women and

2 This group ‘endorsed recommendations that National Olympic Committees (NOC) and International Federations (IF) appoint women to 10% of all decision making posts by the year 2000 (Byrnes, 1998), and has urged the International Olympic Committee to discontinue the current practice of sex testing at the Olympic Games.
Chapter One: Introduction

sport, in Brighton in 1994, and in Windhoek, Namibia, in 1998. These culminated in
the 'Brighton Declaration: An International Covenant, Strategy and Working Group on
Women and Sport', and the 'Windhoek Call for Action' that aims to build on strategies
implemented via the Brighton Declaration (Council of Europe, 1999; Mascagni
Stivachtis, 1998). In all of these organizations and activities, the relationship between
gender and leisure is discussed and/or problematized on a routine basis.

Second, leisure and gender are contingently related to one another. That is:

(a) Leisure makes the concept of gender problematic:
Leisure defines and structures the boundaries of appropriate masculine and
feminine behaviour. The institutionalized division of sports into men's and
women's events polices the limits of appropriate masculinity and femininity.
Moreover, the controversial practice, since 1968, of sex-testing female (and not
male) Olympic athletes, literally constructs the boundaries of sex (Burton
Nelson, 1994: 69ff; Byrnes, 1998; Hood-Williams, 1995; see also, chapter
two, Box 2).

(b) Gendered (feminist) approaches make the concept of leisure problematic:
Feminist leisure theorists argue that definitions of leisure as separate and distinct
from (paid) work, are hardly applicable to many women's experiences in the
home, or to those women who juggle a 'dual role'. It is suggested, for
example, that many women 'lose out on leisure', because of the combined
pressures of paid work and domestic obligations (Utley, 1998: 5; see also,
Betschild and Green, 1994)

Gender and Sport

For many leisure theorists, it is sport which plays a central role in constructing and
perpetuating gender inequality, and maintaining an ideology of dichotomous sex
differences. Indeed, research on women and sport (Birrell and Cole, 1994a; Clarke and
Humberstone, 1997; Costa and Guthrie, 1994; Hall, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994),
sexuality and sport (Cahn, 1994; Griffin, 1998; Lenskyj, 1986), and men,
masculinities and sport (Messner, 1992, Messner and Sabo, 1990; and Pronger,
Chapter One: Introduction

1990a), has developed particularly rapidly during the 1990s.

According to Griffin, sport ‘is perhaps the last arena in which men can hope to differentiate themselves from women’ (1992: 263). Indeed, out of all leisure activities, sport stands out as one of the most provocative sites for discussions about the biological, and/or social determinants of sex and gender. One’s sex is the basis for the institutional organization of sport and the separation of teams and tournaments into ‘men’s’ and ‘women’s’ games, and, as Willis (1982) points out, sport ‘naturalizes’ differences that are elsewhere more easily thought of as socially constructed:

Sport and biological beliefs about gender difference combine into one of the few privileged areas where we seem to be dealing with unmediated ‘reality’, where we know ‘what’s what’ without having to listen to the involved self-serving analyses of theorists, analysts, political groups, etc. Running faster, jumping higher, throwing further can be seen - not interpreted. ‘The natural’ is one of the grounds of ideology because of its apparent autonomy from ‘biased’ interpretation.

(Willis 1982: 117; also cited in Kane, 1995: 192)

Sport is a particularly pertinent topic for an exploration of the constitution of gender, since, like science, it represents a hard case for a discursive, constructionist approach. How can such differences, which appear so ‘natural’, ‘inevitable’, and ‘unbiased’ be discursively constructed artifacts of the way we talk about them? Any analysis of how gender and gender differences are described, and inequalities justified and legitimated in discourse, then, is of central importance, not only to the sociology and psychology of sport and leisure, but also to feminist debates about the relationship between essentialist and constructionist theories of sex and gender.

Discourse, Conversation, Gender, Leisure and Sport

For many feminists and others with an interest in equity issues, there is a need to

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3 It is, for example, particularly hard to argue that women can, or ever will be able to out-perform men in the Olympic 100 meters final (Messner, 1992: 167). Bailey certainly doesn’t risk hedging the issue when he says ‘send Gail Devers and Carl Lewis out of the starting blocks at the same moment, and Lewis will win the 100 meters every time’ (1994: 18, cited in Kane, 1995). When such assumptions are challenged - as they were in 1973, when Billie Jean King beat Bobby Riggs in the ‘Battle of the Sexes’ tennis match in Houston, Texas - such events attract world-wide interest (Hahn, 1998: 22-25).

4 I quote Willis here, then, not because I necessarily ‘buy into’ his approach to ‘ideology’, but rather, because he constructs sport as a ‘hard case’ to deconstruct (see Collins, 1985, in Potter, 1996a: 17).

5 See Butler (1993), Hollway (1994), and Kitzinger (1994a), for recent discussions about the sex/gender relationship.
disrupt and challenge traditional assumptions. One way in which this process might begin is through a closer examination of the manifestation of gender in the mundane conversational practices of participants. To date, however, there has been little research on the discourse of sport and leisure (excepting Beard, 1998; Hansen, 1999; Kops, 1997; Kuiper, 1996 and McHoul, 1997),\(^6\) and virtually no research on the relationship between gender and leisure which takes everyday conversations, and the detailed study of talk as its starting point. Indeed, what better warrant for a conversation analytic approach than that provided by Pamela’s reflexive ‘one of the greatest leisure activities is conversation’, in the extract opening this chapter?

In talk about sport and leisure, what it means to be masculine or feminine is argued about, debated and contested. Talk about leisure (and specifically, sport), is an ideal vehicle through which to obtain participants’ views, arguments about, and constructions of normative masculine and feminine behaviour. Therefore, in contrast to most mainstream and feminist research on leisure, in this thesis I take participants’ talk as my starting point. I explore how gender is \textit{made relevant} by participants and constituted in the course of their discussions, and at what these constructions are used to do \textit{interactionally}.

Discursive studies which have a strong element of conversation analysis (from here-on ‘CA’) have proven particularly useful in their application to, and deconstruction of, the arena of the ‘natural’ or the ‘factual’\(^7\). It is precisely the sorts of issues raised by Willis, above, which discursive psychologists have relativized and dismantled so successfully - in their studies of fact construction and quantification, for example (see Potter, 1996a; Potter, Wetherell and Chitty, 1991). This is just one reason why the relationship between gender and sport is such a challenging site for a discursive and CA study. To explore participants’ practices and constructions of gender, to open up what we commonly perceive as ‘natural’ and demonstrate its fundamentally ‘constructed’ nature, one opens up a wealth of possibilities for challenging the gendered ‘status quo’.

It is for this reason that discursive psychology (and CA) could be regarded as

\(^6\) Alec McHoul is possibly the only researcher to offer an explicitly ethnomethodological approach to sport and leisure issues.

\(^7\) I use the term ‘discursive psychology’ to refer to the approach developed initially by Potter and Wetherell (1987), and elaborated in Edwards and Potter (1992), Potter (1996a), and Edwards (1997). I use the term ‘discourse analysis’ (or ‘critical discourse analysis’) to refer to research which adopts a more ‘Foucauldian’ understanding of ‘discourse’. In this thesis I will be arguing for the former approach, but advocate a stronger focus on ethnomethodological and conversation analytic ideas than researchers within this tradition originally emphasized (see ten Have, 1999; Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998).
inherently political (Potter, 1997a; 1998a).8

Aims

This thesis works on two levels, reflecting its potential contribution to two different audiences - moving from the general to the more technical and specific:

First, it provides a distinctive contribution to mainstream and feminist leisure theory, sport sociology and psychology. It offers a discursive and CA reworking of three key structuring concerns within the feminist leisure literature:

(i) Justifications for the Non-Participation of Women in ‘Male-Identified’ Activities;
(ii) Hegemonic Masculinity; and
(iii) Heterosexism.

These three concerns map onto the themes covered in each of the analytic chapters.

Second, it provides a more technical contribution to debates at the intersection of feminism, discursive psychology, and CA. In particular, it contributes to research on the relationship between gender and talk (Edwards, 1998; Hopper and LeBaron, 1998; Wetherell and Edley, 1999), and the conversational construction of femininity, sexism, masculinity and heterosexism. It considers how these features of talk are constructed, oriented to, and/or managed by speakers. In addition to having a thematic, or topical focus, each analytic chapter addresses key debates within the discursive and CA literature. For example, I consider the relationship between the ‘inference rich’ and ‘indexical’ properties of gender categories, and their rhetorical and contrastive usefulness; the extent to which masculinity and femininity are fluid and variable accomplishments; the analytic tractability of ‘macro contexts’ and ‘prejudice’, and the extent to which an analysis of participants’ orientations might help us to answer ‘why’ questions.

On a more general level, the thesis sets about transcending dualistic constructions, such as the distinction between ‘macro’ and ‘micro’ contexts, and the ‘realms’ of ‘social

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8 I bracket ‘CA’ here, because the focus on fact construction (and relativism) has been a particularly strong theme within discursive psychology. Discursive psychology has also traditionally been more explicitly political than CA. This thesis, in part, sets about changing that.
structure' and 'individual agency'. It also works to oppose the idea that the context somehow determines what gets said (or who says what) in an interaction, and/or inevitably effects the distribution of ‘types’ of talk (institutional/mundane etc.).

Overview of Chapters

Chapter Two: Formulating ‘the Problem’ in Leisure Studies

Chapter two outlines the problems that leisure theorists have had defining leisure, and the methodological concerns this has generated. Leisure scholarship is distinctive in its explicit attention to the concept of ‘leisure’ itself, to explicate its dimensions and ‘meanings’. It charts the different amounts of leisure individuals have, and the types of leisure activities they engage in. While a variety of activities, times and feelings have been treated as leisure (OPCS: 1987), the issue of definition, is, for leisure theorists, a perennial problem, and source of much debate. Indeed, as I will be showing, leisure is an ‘essentially contested concept’ (Gallie, 1956), whose definition defies precise classification, and depends on one’s theoretical perspective. The first section of this chapter, then, works rhetorically to justify the concerns of this thesis, by showing how leisure theorists themselves construct the methodological and theoretical ‘problems’ in leisure studies. This sets the scene for chapter three, where I demonstrate how a discursive and CA approach can help offer a ‘solution’.

Many leisure theorists argue that the problem of definition is closely related to their methodological approach. I consider the contours of the alleged ‘paradigm shift’ (Kuhn, 1970) said to have taken place within leisure studies, from functionalist, positivist and ‘quantitative’ to more interpretivist, phenomenological, and ‘qualitative’ research, and the corresponding (constructed) shift in emphasis from absolute, objectivist definitions of leisure, to notions of leisure based on contingencies (and which allow for multiple, diverse subjectivities).

Drawing on Potter (1988b), I argue that notions of scientific or scholarly progress are rhetorical constructions which simplify and caricature what may be a rather messy landscape of ideas, obscuring problematic areas of overlap and disagreement. Debates
about whether a field *has* or *has not* entered a new paradigmatic phase ultimately prevent dialogue with alternative approaches.

I explore the way feminist leisure theorists have approached the concept of leisure. For them, the 'problem' has been less about definition and more to do with simply making women visible. I outline three concerns which structure their most recent research: (i) Justifications for the Non-Participation of Women in 'Male-Identified' Activities; (ii) Hegemonic Masculinity; and (iii) Heterosexism. These map onto the concerns of the later analytic chapters, and are intended to give the reader a clearer sense of the issues, methods and findings within feminist leisure theory, and the larger body of work that this thesis contributes to.

I end by pointing to five problems associated with all non-discursive, CA leisure research, the problem of definition attended to in this chapter being just one of many closely related ones.

**Chapter Three: Transcending 'the Problem': A Discursive and Conversation Analytic Approach**

In this chapter, I explicate the distinctive contribution that a discursive and CA approach can bring to leisure research, and the implications of adopting such an approach. I provide a critical review of the work of the feminist leisure theorist, Betsy Wearing (1992, 1998), and demonstrate how each of the five problems introduced in chapter two are manifested in her work.

I introduce the basic features of a discursive and CA approach, and describe how a discursive approach with a strong element of CA might help leisure researchers *transcend* these five problems. I emphasize how such an endeavour involves a radical questioning of what we mean by the object, topic, or theme of our research (in this case, 'leisure'), and ultimately, about what we mean by the nature of 'reality'.

The discursive and CA approach also problematizes some of our most basic assumptions about data collection and analysis. Unlike most leisure researchers, for example, discursive psychologists and conversation analysts treat talk (and participants' practices of definition) as a fundamentally action oriented and indexical phenomenon.
Using some of my own data, and following Gilbert and Mulkay’s (1984) arguments about scientific ‘consensus’, I demonstrate how defining leisure is not just a problem for the analyst, but is also an issue for the participants. Indeed, the lack of consensus in participants’ accounts displays the difficulty of treating leisure as an abstract, definable ‘thing’ whose meaning is or could be shared. Descriptions of leisure are intrinsically variable. They can be ironized and used to perform moral work.

In the final part of this chapter, I introduce some discursive and CA work on gender that will frame the later analytic chapters. I contrast this with the approach advocated by some feminist linguists, who treat gender as an independent variable that determines or can explain what is said, or who speaks on any given occasion. Following Schegloff (1997), I problematize the reifying tendencies of critical discourse analysis, and the treatment of context in the ‘top-down’, or more eclectic ‘repertoire’ style of analysis in other approaches which claim the label ‘discursive’. I argue for an approach which is more attentive to the Sacksian (1992/1995) notion of membership categorization, and the way in which gender is constructed and oriented to in talk. I argue that gender categories can be used as flexible, interactional resources. This contrasts with the static approach to gender identity exemplified in the feminist leisure research on justifications for non-participation, hegemonic masculinity, and heterosexism, described in chapter two.

I conclude with a consideration of the implications of this approach for feminist leisure theory, and consider the questions that one might ask in light of the claims made here.

Chapter Four: Research Methods

This chapter does two things:

First, I describe the methods and procedures used in this thesis, and the rationale for using such an eclectic range of data sources.

Second, I address the issue of ‘bias’ in research, and compare the traditional and discursive/CA approaches to it. As I show in chapter three, leisure theorists such as Wearing treat research bias as a problem to be overcome with better measurement techniques, or by improving the research instrument. In contrast, the discursive and CA
approach to the action orientation of talk, means that such bias is unavoidable, and may be theoretically interesting. This insight has prompted some researchers to treat the interview as a piece of interaction in its own right, and to analyze it as such (see Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995).

Despite this approach to the ‘contaminating’ effects of extraneous factors, within CA, and increasingly in discursive psychology, researchers advocate the use of ‘naturally occurring’ data, and claim that it is somehow ‘better than’ ‘artificial’, ‘got up’ or ‘contrived’ data (Potter and Wetherell, 1995b). CA researchers make a further distinction between ‘mundane’ and ‘institutional’ talk. They argue that ‘mundane’ conversation is the ‘primordial’ form, against which other ‘institutional’ forms of talk or speech exchange systems deviate (Drew and Heritage, 1992).

Drawing on insights from Holstein and Gubrium’s (1997) notion of the ‘active interview’, and Heritage and Greatbatch’s (1991) research on the ‘news interview’, I argue that my data problematizes and disrupts the natural/contrived, and mundane/institutional distinctions. I consider the extent to which my own data maps onto or departs from (i) the turn-taking system, and (ii) neutral stance, which have been identified as normative features of the news interview. For example, in my data, there is no obvious asymmetry between questioner and answerer. The participants ask questions and hold the interviewer accountable for views, just as the interviewer answers questions and offers views. I suggest this makes classifying my data (as ‘natural’ or ‘contrived’, ‘mundane’ or ‘institutional’) problematic.

I argue that in spite of CA’s own claims about the local production of context, the natural/contrived and mundane/institutional distinctions have been exaggerated. These distinctions have a tendency to reify the method (the interview, for example) as a ‘thing’ which will determine what gets said, and the type of data and interaction one will obtain on any given occasion. Instead (and in line with the CA approach to ‘context’), I argue that if we treat method as just one of many potentially relevant contexts to an interaction, then the status and relevance of any activity as method, interview, focus group, mundane conversation, or whatever, and participants’ ‘roles’ within ‘it’ (focus group moderator, participant, co-conversationalist, and so on), has to be worked up in the course of that interaction, and attended to as such. This allows for variability in the appearance of any one piece of data as ‘natural’ or ‘contrived’,
'mundane' or 'institutional', and for the indexical usefulness of certain roles and methodological contexts as resources that can be exploited for interactional purposes. The argument for natural data (which is made by both discursive and CA researchers), may, therefore, be useful for pragmatic reasons, but can not easily be sustained on a theoretical level.

The emphasis on the local production of context considered here, is a theme developed throughout this thesis. It will be particularly evident in the concerns of chapters five to seven, where I treat gender as a flexible and variable resource, rather than as something which determines what participants say.

Chapter Five: Constructing (the Limits of) Femininity

Many feminist leisure theorists argue that women's participation in the traditionally 'masculine', violent, team oriented pursuits, represents a powerful challenge to ideas reinforcing biological reductionism. In this chapter, I demonstrate how a discursive and CA approach can address the first of our structuring concerns introduced in chapter two: justifications for the non-participation of women in such 'male-identified' pursuits. I extend my discussion of the work on sexism in sport described in chapter two, and the discursive and CA work on gender, sexism and inequality introduced in chapter three. I describe the mechanisms of 'continuum containment' identified by Kane (1995), which, she argues, are used to reinforce dualistic assumptions. I consider how just one of these mechanisms - injury arguments - are used by participants to justify women's non-participation, and to construct (what they take to be) the limits of femininity.

However, in contrast to the approach advocated by Kane (1995), and most of the sport and leisure research described in chapters two and three (and in line with the approach to context developed in chapter four), I do not assume that gender categories work in uniform ways to reinforce dualistic thinking, or that gender is an independent variable which determines or constrains what participants' say. Instead, I build on the early discursive studies of sexism by developing a more technical, CA approach to gender in talk.
Chapter One: Introduction

I explore how injury arguments work in practice, in specific interactional situations. I examine the ways in which injury arguments are used as a resource in participants’ accounts, and their local, interactional organization. I identify a range of features of such talk which bolster and sustain speaker’s arguments, and which work to deflect accusations of prejudice/sexism. There are, for example, a number of rhetorically effective contrasts which exploit the inference rich and indexical nature of gender categories, and which reify or ironize the factual status of descriptions.

The chapter ends with a consideration of three deviant cases, which demonstrate the ironic uses of injury arguments. Their constitution as ironic works as a display of (and, at the same time, undermines) their normative and moral nature. This focus on the ironic uses of arguments is an important theme developed in the thesis, which demonstrates the indexical nature of just what counts as ‘prejudiced’ talk.

Chapter Six: Constructing Masculinity

In chapter five, I explore the way injury arguments are used to sustain or ironize normative accounts of femininity. In this chapter, I consider the way gendered identities are constructed and deployed to manage the speaker’s own stake and accountability. The particular focus will be on ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and leisure, introduced as the second of our structuring concerns in chapter two. Much research has emphasized the close relationship between masculinity and certain sport and leisure activities, and has argued that such activities contribute to male ‘hegemony’ and female disadvantage.

The chapter opens with a consideration of the way in which the relationship between masculinity and leisure has been articulated and problematized in some recent popular texts. I argue that both popular and academic texts have, to date, failed to explore the interactional circumstances in which such a relationship is constructed, and the reasons why men might position themselves in relation to certain conceptions of the masculine. Why, for example, might some men, under certain circumstances, align with or distance themselves from a form of idealized machismo?

with Wetherell (1998) (and subsequently, with Billig, 1999a, 1999b), and, again, in line with the approach to context developed in chapter four, I problematize the assumption that we need to venture further than the limits of the text to explain why participants say what they do, and go beyond participant orientations to be able to say anything politically effective. Using data from two semi-structured interviews, I explore the way participants construct ‘leisured’ masculinities and situate themselves (and others) in relation to those constructions. I argue that we do not necessarily need to combine poststructuralism with ethnomethodology to be able to offer politically efficacious answers to ‘why?’ questions.

In line with the approach I began to develop in chapter five, I adopt a more technical, CA sensitivity to my data (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998), and an analysis which is more attentive to participant orientations (Schegloff, 1997), and gendered category membership (Edwards, 1998), than that used in the analysis of masculinity so far. I show how ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is not necessarily something that exists inside the heads of individuals, or as a shared representation in ‘the world out there’ that men can aspire to or reject. Rather, participants construct masculinity in a range of different ways, and align with or distance themselves from those constructions for variable interactional purposes.

Deviant case analysis shows how participants do not always differentiate themselves from potentially extreme or negative gender identities, but can also invoke them to manage alternative or commonly ‘othered’ identities. This provides further support for the discursive and CA argument developed in chapter five, that gendered identities and gender categories are fluid resources whose meaning is not fixed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of this approach for feminist leisure theory, discursive psychology, and CA.

Chapter Seven: Heterosexism in Action

This chapter develops chapter five's demonstration of the indexical usefulness of injury arguments, and chapter six's exploration of the indexical construction of and alignment with certain gendered identities, by considering the indexicality of (what counts as) 'prejudiced' talk. It explores the concept of 'heterosexism', the third of the structuring concerns introduced in chapter two.
Feminist leisure theorists argue that heterosexism is pervasive in sport and leisure. While it is made manifest in a number of different and insidious ways, it is particularly noticeable (and challengeable) in its discursive form; in the labelling and stigmatization which is central to lesbian and gay oppression. Such labeling not only polices the boundaries of appropriate (i.e. normative) sexuality, but also reinforces what counts as appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour.

This chapter offers a discursive and CA reformulation of the way that heterosexism might be studied. I explore how ‘heterosexism’ has been operationalized in mainstream and some discourse analytic research, arguing that its characteristics have been reified and presented as self-evident prior to analysis. It is often assumed, for example, that ‘heterosexist’ individuals empty out pre-existent attitudes from within themselves, and that they are unlikely to show any (interactional) awareness of their talk as problematic in some way.

Using data of actual instances of heterosexism in action, I examine what happens when sexuality is made relevant (in labelling someone a ‘poof’ or ‘dyke’, for example). I consider:

(a) Whether participants do indeed attend to something one might call ‘heterosexism’, or some from of trouble in their talk and, if so,
(b) Examine what such ‘attending to’ is doing interactionally.

I argue that ‘heterosexist talk’ is not a straightforward emptying out of preformed homophobic ‘attitudes’ by the ‘heterosexist person’. Instead, statements are often produced in ways which show a concern for the accountability and identity of the speaker.

As I demonstrate in chapter five, talk which may be considered ‘prejudiced’ is indexical, and can be used ironically as a comment on normativity, exploiting, and at the same time disrupting traditional assumptions. This chapter ends with an analysis of a deviant case, where ‘heterosexist’ talk is used ironically. This further disrupts the idea that certain constructions are intrinsically prejudiced, sexist or heterosexist. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the implications of this approach for feminist
leisure theory, discursive psychology and CA.

Chapter Eight: Questions and Conclusions

In chapter one, I argue that this thesis works on two levels, reflecting its potential contribution to two different audiences. I suggest that it will make a general contribution to mainstream and feminist leisure theory, sport sociology and psychology, and a more technical contribution to debates at the intersection of feminism, discursive psychology, and CA.

In the concluding chapter, I draw together some of the threads of the arguments developed in the thesis. I consider their reflexive and epistemological implications, and set out some questions for future research. The chapter is divided into three sections:

(i) Contributions and Implications 1: Feminist Leisure Theory
(ii) Contributions and Implications 2: Feminism, Discursive Psychology and CA
(iii) Questions and Issues for Future Research

I conclude by challenging researchers with an interest in gender and ‘ideology’ to take this approach seriously.
Chapter Two: Formulating 'the Problem' in Leisure Studies

Introduction

This chapter does three things, which are intended to lay the necessary ground work for the rest of this thesis. First, I outline the way in which both mainstream and feminist leisure theorists have talked about 'the problem' of defining leisure. Rather than entering the debate or taking up a position, however, I treat it 'symmetrically', (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984: 83),1 demonstrating how leisure theorists themselves construct ‘the problem’ in leisure studies. This is a powerful rhetorical move that enables me to go on, in chapter three, to detail how a discursive and CA approach can help offer a 'solution'.

Many leisure theorists argue that the problem of definition is closely related to their methodological approach, and the degree of consensus within the field as a whole. Therefore, I explore the contours of the alleged ‘paradigm shift’ (Kuhn, 1970) said to have taken place within leisure studies, from functionalist, positivist and 'quantitative' to more interpretivist, phenomenological, and 'qualitative' research, and the corresponding (constructed) shift in emphasis from 'absolute', or 'objectivist' definitions of leisure, to notions of leisure based on multi-faceted contingencies. I introduce the definitions of leisure currently offered by feminist leisure researchers. For them, the ‘problem’ has been less about definition and more about simply bringing women into the equation.

Drawing on the work of Potter (1988b), I consider the rhetorical business talk of such shifts achieves. I argue that notions of scientific or scholarly progress are rhetorical constructions which simplify and caricature what may be a rather messy landscape of ideas, obscuring problematic areas of overlap and disagreement. Debates about whether a field has or hasn’t entered a new paradigmatic ‘phase’ may ultimately prevent dialogue with alternative approaches. Leisure researchers seem preoccupied with

1 A symmetrical approach is one which is not concerned with establishing the truth or falsity of an argument (in this case, the extent or nature of any alleged ‘problem’ in leisure studies), but treats all positions as having the same status, and thus as equally legitimate.
achieving consensus at the expense of actual research.

Second, in order to provide a wider sense of the issues that feminist leisure researchers are currently debating, and an indication of their methods and findings, I offer a descriptive overview of three structuring concerns in feminist leisure research:

(i) Theorizing Women’s Non-Participation in ‘Male-Identified’ Activities;
(ii) Hegemonic Masculinity; and
(iii) Heterosexism.

These three concerns provide the thematic focus of chapters five to seven.

Third, in order to set the stage for the discursive and CA approach developed within this thesis, I introduce five problems associated with all non-discursive and non-CA leisure research - the problem of definition outlined in this chapter - being just one of many closely related ones:

(i) Leisure ‘Meanings’ are Reified
(ii) The Action Orientation and Indexicality of Talk is Ignored
(iii) Dualistic Constructions of Macro and Micro ‘Contexts’ (and ‘Structure’ and ‘Agency’), are not Problematized
(iv) Analytic Conceptualizations Overlook or Distort Participants’ Orientations
(v) The Problem of Realism

It will become apparent that these problems are not mutually exclusive but are closely related, meshing with and implicating each other.

Defining Leisure

(i) The Mainstream Perspective

A recurrent question preoccupying leisure studies theorists since the topic initially won recognition as a legitimate focus for scholarly inquiry in the 1960s\(^2\), is ‘how can

\(^2\) Although Veblen’s seminal study *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1925) was written long before this. Generally, however, before the 1960s, leisure was marginal to mainstream sociology, emerging only as a footnote to discussions of work and productivity (Rojek, 1985:2).
leisure be defined and operationalized?' Where, for example, on our theoretical map of society should we choose to locate it? And what is the social and psychological significance of leisure for individuals and groups?

Indeed, leisure is an ‘essentially contested concept’ (Gallie, 1956), whose definition defies precise classification and depends largely on one’s theoretical perspective. Thus, for functionalists, leisure is a positive societal institution which contributes to the ‘consensus, harmony, stability and equilibrium of the society’ (Wearing, 1998: 3). For marxists, however, leisure is an ideology which promises freedom while obscuring ‘inequalities and class conflicts’ (Wearing, 1998: 22). Dissatisfied with the determinism of both these perspectives, interactionists offer a more ‘microsocial’ focus on the potentially positive, creative and rewarding experience of leisure (1998: 39). Postmodernists and poststructuralists, on the other hand, focus on diversity, fragmentation and difference. For them, any one definition of leisure cannot capture the very different experiences of men and women from different classes, ethnic origins, abilities, sexual orientations, and so on.

Many texts on the subject of leisure now begin with the statement that it is a notoriously difficult concept to define (see Esteve, San Martin and Lopez, 1999; Haywood et al., 1995; Stokowski, 1994). Henderson, for example, points out that ‘one of the major problems in the study of leisure... is the inability to describe what it is that is being studied’ (1991: 14). To date, she argues, research on leisure has been ‘a hodgepodge of ideas and methodologically weak because no consensus on its measurement and conceptualization exists’ (1991: 14). In a book devoted entirely to ‘decentring’ leisure, Chris Rojek argues that ‘there have been many attempts to define leisure’, most of them ‘inadequate’ (1995: 1). He goes on:

Most follow the practice of common sense and associate it with ‘freedom’, ‘choice’ and ‘life-satisfaction’... But a moment’s reflection shows that this approach is inadequate. In much of our leisure experience we are unsure whether we are satisfied or not, and the freedom and choice that we have is obviously contingent upon place, time and, above all, the actions of others.

(1995: 1)

Some researchers suggest that ‘common sense’ interpretations of leisure are problematic because they cannot account for the way in which the ‘meaning’ of leisure varies according to the social, cultural, historical, and economic context. Therefore,
many theorists now argue that that 'sport and leisure may mean different things to different people' (Jarvie and Maguire, 1994: 2), and 'one person’s work is another person’s leisure' (Haworth, 1997: 1). Likewise, Henderson states that 'what may be perceived as leisure to one person may not necessarily be leisure to another' (1991: 14; see also Slater, 1998).

Stokowski touches on this issue of individual and contextual variation in her assertion that common sense perceptions 'fail to capture the social character and significance of leisure behavior' (1994: ix). According to Stokowski, leisure cannot be located solely or exclusively in the feelings and experiences of the individual. Rather,

> Missing from our understanding of leisure is knowledge about how people construct leisure behaviors and meanings within the social contexts of their daily lives, how behaviors and meanings are socially structured and organized, and how the extended social structures of leisure subsequently exert influence on individual choices and experiences.

(1994: ix)

For Stokowski, then, leisure is both socially constructed and structurally constrained.

(ii) The Feminist Perspective

Since the mid 1980s, feminist leisure theorists have been concerned with exploring the gendered dynamics of leisure ‘experience’ (see for example, Deem, 1986; Green, Hebron and Woodward, 1990; Henderson, 1994a; Henderson et al., 1996; Wearing, 1998; Wimbush and Talbot, 1988). Some of them have found it particularly difficult to address the ‘neglect of ‘context” (Stokowski, 1994: x), referred to by Stokowski, above - of linking the ‘macro’ with the ‘micro’, ‘structure’ and ‘agency’. They suggest, for example, that they have had the added difficulty of redressing the bias of the androcentric ‘malestream’. Indeed, Henderson et al. (1996) argue that ‘understanding the meanings of leisure may be particularly important, and especially difficult when we think about women’s leisure’ (1996: 99). For many feminists, claims about leisure cannot be based exclusively on white, male experience, but vary according to gender and a multitude of other variables (1996: 95). Nonetheless, before the 1980s, the majority of leisure theorists ignored the fact that women’s experiences might be different from men’s, or that they might need additional study in their own right:

Work was conceptualized as paid work or labor market participation, while leisure was conceptualized as time away from paid work including family time and home-
Chapter Two: Formulating ‘the Problem’ in Leisure Studies

Based activities. Thus, women’s unpaid work in the home, as well as women’s experiences of leisure, remained invisible.

(1996: 218)

Therefore, feminist leisure theorists have tended to retain the work/leisure distinction, but have argued that, for women at least, the relationship between work and leisure is fuzzier than has hitherto been assumed. Moreover, they found that when gender was brought into the equation, they had to be careful not to imply female essentialism, or a ‘common world’ of women’s experiences. For theorists influenced by the postmodern turn (with its associated epistemological destabilizations), what it means to be male or female, like the meaning of leisure itself, varies contextually and over time (1996: 232).

(iii) Methodological Problems

With this maze of conceptual and definitional problems it is hardly surprising that leisure theorists such as Gloor have argued that ‘scientific work in this field is stagnating. Both the theoretical and methodological approaches are seen to be at an impasse’ (1992: 39). However, ‘solutions are hardly in sight’ (1992: 39). These ‘problems’ have prompted both mainstream and feminist leisure theorists to call for ‘the improvement in the quality of leisure research both substantively and methodologically’ (Henderson, 1991: 14). Henderson, for example, argues that ‘agreement seems to exist among leisure researchers all over the world that complex, multi-faceted, and dynamic approaches are needed in recreation, park, and leisure research’ (1991: 16).

Indeed, research on leisure has been criticized for being ‘methodologically myopic’ due to its almost exclusive reliance on surveys, and researchers’ ‘particular fascination with statistics and ‘number crunching’’ (Henderson, 1991: 15). According to Hemingway, for example, leisure research is lagging behind methodological advances elsewhere in the social sciences. He says

The field continues to cleave a surprisingly orthodox view of research programmes ... At a time [when] continental thinking, particularly phenomenology, hermeneutics, and deconstructionism, has been making inroads elsewhere in social science thinking, leisure studies has remained largely untroubled by the challenges raised to empiricism.

(1995: 32-33)

Henderson suggests that this unwillingness to consider alternative methods has forced leisure research onto a ‘plateau’, where research based on ‘extant theoretical and...
methodological modes' can no longer offer inroads or broaden our understanding of leisure (1991: 15):

The enormous complexities of leisure can no longer be simplified in positivistic and quantitative terms (Gunter, 1987). While statistics are helpful, they do not provide explanations. A diversity of researchers pursuing a multitude of topics within a variety of methodologies is needed.

(1991: 16)

There does seem to be some agreement, therefore, that 'new' approaches are needed.

Constructing Histories of Definition: A Paradigm Shift?

As discursive psychologists have shown, reviewing the literature is an arbitrary, constructed, and highly subjective enterprise (Ashmore, Myers and Potter, 1995). Nonetheless, a brief scanning of the journals devoted to leisure studies indicates that despite, or perhaps because of the worries of a number of leisure theorists and the apparent 'crisis' in leisure research, some researchers are beginning to argue that there has been a paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1970) over the past 20 years, from a positivist, to a more phenomenological (Glancy, 1993; Howe, 1991; Langkeek, 1996; Schmitz-Scherzer), or interpretive/hermeneutic (Hemingway, 1995; Kelly, 1994; Samdahl, 1988) framework. This shift, it has been argued, is a result of the widespread criticism of survey based, questionnaire approaches, and is associated with the wider move in the social sciences towards more interpretative forms of social inquiry. Henderson, for example, states

Researchers in the area of recreation, parks, and leisure are beginning to acknowledge the limitations of the traditional framework of positivism. As a community of researchers, we are moving away from the 'method-idolatry' that suggested that survey research was the best (and only) way to study phenomena to an appreciation of a variety of methods that may be used to address recreation, parks and leisure questions.

(1991: 15)

Leisure research, then, appears to have its own methodological 'narrative'. According to this narrative, until recently, with the method to some extent dictating the research

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3 It could be argued, for example, that the body of literature that forms the focus of my critique here was chosen as a result of an 'ad hoc' meandering through the library, where I accidentally stumbled across some interesting 'stuff' on leisure (as opposed to a representative slice of all the potentially useful approaches to leisure research). It could also, more dangerously (according to the supposed rigours of academia), be said that I have selected only those books and articles that help me construct my version, my argument, my thesis: the 'fictional' debate or problem that I will not only elucidate, but also help solve.

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questions asked - or the ‘methodological cart driving the conceptual horse’ (Howe, 1985: 221, cited in Henderson, 1991: 15) - leisure research has addressed only a limited set of questions. The ‘emerging paradigm’, however, with its focus on interpretive, qualitative research, has proven to be ‘a useful means for addressing some of the questions left unanswered by past recreation, park and leisure research’ (Henderson, 1991: 16). Many researchers argue that there has been a gradual shift in the types of research questions asked, a transformation in techniques of data collection and analysis, and the way in which leisure itself has been defined and operationalized.

According to Stokowski (1994), for example, researchers have traditionally operationalized leisure as a particular activity or time period that is distinct from work, and which generates a positive emotional response or feeling amongst participants. It was regarded as having ‘absolute’ definable qualities, a ‘self-evident’ essence. It was essentially functional, progressive, and of value to the individual and society. Dumazedier, for example, defines leisure as

the time whose content is oriented towards self-fulfilment as an ultimate end. This time is granted to the individual by society, when he has complied with his occupational, family, socio-spiritual and socio-political obligations.


Likewise, for Kaplan, leisure

is a relatively self-determined activity experience that falls into one’s economically free-time roles; that is seen as leisure by participants; that is psychologically pleasant in anticipation and recollection; that potentially covers the whole range of commitment and intensity; that contains characteristic norms and constraints, and that provides opportunities for recreation, personal growth, and service to others.

(1975: 26, cited in Rojek, 1995: 40)

In contrast, and as a result of the (constructed) shift ‘via an objective paradigm to a subjective one’, ‘more recently, researchers have begun to conceptualize leisure as a state of mind’ (Lee, Dattilo and Howard, 1994: 195; see also Ingham, 1987: 12). According to these theorists, what we mean by leisure is contingent upon a number of factors. It is elusive, transitory, multi-dimensional and multi-phased (Lee et al., 1994: 195-196). It is ‘multifaceted, subjective...dynamic, and value laden’, a ‘polysemic’ (Esteve et al., 1999) and ‘complex personal and social construction’ (Howe, 1991: 49).
Rojek offers a postmodern ‘decentring’ of leisure. He states ‘one cannot separate leisure from the rest of life and claim that it has unique ‘laws’, ‘propensities’ and ‘rhythms’’ (1995: 1). ‘Leisure experience’, he suggests, is a lot ‘more messy’ than has traditionally been implied (1995: 1). For Rojek, leisure ‘is prosaically constructed through social means and its meaning varies historically so that commonsense, essentialist definitions and treatments are unsustainable’ (1995: 191). Henderson offers a clear summary of the ‘new’ trajectory in conceptualization and research:

Some researchers have been looking for a conceptualization of ‘pure leisure’ that fits the model of a universal operational definition necessary to conduct rigorous positivist research. A dynamic, organic, transformative concept like leisure is difficult, if not impossible, to operationally define in a way that all scientists, let alone the public, can use. A movement among leisure researchers exists toward an interpretive paradigm for the research with an emphasis on subjective states or experience.

(1991: 32-33)

Some leisure theorists argue that this apparent ‘paradigmatic’ change in emphasis and conceptualization has seen a move from ‘quantitative’ approaches, which ask ‘how much leisure do people have?’, and ‘what activities do different groups of people engage in?’, to questions about the ‘quality’ of leisure, such as ‘what is the nature of leisure experience?’, and ‘what does leisure feel like?’ (see Esteve et al., 1999, for example). In his analysis of the contribution of psychology to the study of leisure, Ingham suggests there has been a move away from defining leisure ‘by some set of external criteria’, towards an approach which gives ‘serious consideration to how the activity and/or experience is perceived by the participant’ (1987: 1, and see Jackson, 1995). Accordingly, they argue, what is important is that we explore ‘individual perceptions rather than utilize activity-based criteria’ (1987: 12).

Some of the theoretical reasoning behind this move is derived from poststructuralist and postmodern critiques of the unified subject, which deconstruct apparently bounded, ‘objective’ categories and collectivist notions that there may be a ‘common world’ of leisure experience (see, for example, Henderson et al., 1996: 85-86; Kelly, 1997a; Rail and Harvey, 1995; Rojek, 1995; Rojek and Urry, 1997; Urry, 1990).5

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4 The assumption being that we can still gain access, if not to one coherent meaning of leisure, to its many ‘dimensions’ in subjective experience.

5 This poststructuralist approach to leisure, however, does not consider the way that the institution of ‘leisure theory’ and its associated organizational frameworks, may itself be implicated in the constitution of leisure meanings (cf. Rose, 1996).
This apparent 'paradigm shift' is referred to (directly or indirectly) by a number of leisure theorists (including Burton, 1996; Glancy, 1993; Hemingway, 1995; Howe, 1991; Hultsman and Anderson, 1991; Kelly, 1994; Lee et al., 1994; McCormick, 1996; McLean, 1996), and sports psychologists (Jackson, 1995; Sparkes, 1998; Strean, 1998). Moreover, this essentially abstract 'shift', seems to have taken on the quality of something which can be seen or measured. Chris Rojek, for example, divides the history of the development of leisure research into three 'moments': The 'moment of functionalism' (with its absolute conception of leisure as time, activity etc); the 'moment of politicization' (represented in the British cultural studies framework), and the 'moment of postmodernism' (demonstrated in Rojek's own work) (1993: 277; 1997). Likewise, Glancy suggests that 'a subjectively informed science of leisure has met with gradual acceptance during the eighties' (1993: 45).

(i) Feminist Paradigm Shifts

For feminist leisure researchers, the 'paradigmatic shift' has been less about 'definitions', or the critique of positivism and its associated methods, and more about bringing gender into the equation, using whatever methodologies will elicit data (see Henderson et al., 1996: 15). Thus, while they have highlighted the different emphasis in British and North American research traditions (there is, they suggest, a greater emphasis on quantitative techniques in the USA (Deem, 1992)), feminist leisure researchers continue to use methods associated with both the positivist and interpretive 'paradigms' (Henderson and Bialeschki, 1992: 69; Henderson et al., 1996: 223-224).

In an adaptation of Tetrault's (1985) five-phase model of the ways women's leisure has been studied, Henderson (1994b; see also Henderson et al., 1996: 217ff), argues that there has been a move through 'five common stages of thinking about women'. These are 'Invisible (Womanless) Scholarship'; 'Compensatory (Add Women and Stir) Scholarship'; 'Dichotomous (Sex) Differences Scholarship'; Feminist (Woman-Centred) Scholarship; and finally 'Gender Scholarship', which incorporates the idea that gendered behaviour 'is a process of individual and social construction' (1994b: 128).

Shaw (1994) offers an alternative approach to theorizing the development of feminist
leisure scholarship. She argues that it is possible to thematize three standard feminist approaches to women's leisure:

(i) Constraints to Women's Leisure:
From this perspective, women, by virtue of their subordinate position within a patriarchal society, have less leisure and face more constraints to participation in leisure than men. The most common constraints cited include lack of time, money, transport and facilities (Henderson and Bialeschki, 1993).

(ii) Constraints Through Leisure:
The constraints through leisure framework is similar to that described above, but differs in the respect that it is argued that certain activities may themselves be constraining through their reinforcement of stereotypical gender roles and expectations surrounding 'appropriate' masculine and feminine behaviour. Women and men are channelled into activities and sports that reflect their supposed masculine and feminine attributes (Deem and Gilroy, 1998; Hultsman, 1995; Jackson, 1993).

(iii) Leisure as Resistance or Empowerment:
A 'rapidly developing' approach treats leisure as a potential site for women's resistance and empowerment. From this perspective, leisure offers women the opportunity to subvert societal constraints and transgress traditional gender norms and ideas about appropriate femininity (Freysinger and Flannery, 1992; Green, 1997; Shaw, 1994; cf. Rowe, 1998).

While Shaw (1994) is keen to point out that these approaches do not represent chronological changes in definition, but exist alongside one another, she argues that in recent years, there does, nonetheless, seem to have been an increasing emphasis on the latter 'leisure as resistance' framework.

(ii) Paradigm Shifts as Caricatures

One danger of the whole 'emerging paradigm' debate, is that it risks creating the illusion of consensus and scientific 'progress' where there might be none (Potter, 1988b). The use of such metaphors ignores the extent to which disagreement within, as
well as between disciplines, might be a pervasive—indeed—productive feature of research. Talk of ‘paradigm shifts’, then, may overlook potentially provocative areas for debate. Leisure researchers seem to be preoccupied with achieving consensus about their subject matter, at the expense of actual research. Moreover, they treat consensus (about the ‘meaning’ of leisure) as an analyst’s and not a participant’s problem.

Some leisure researchers are sceptical about the extent of paradigmatic change. ‘Paradigm shifts’ are constructed in different ways by different authors, and debate can turn to the factual status of whether such shifts have or haven’t occurred, at the expense of empirical research. Veal (1994), for example, in a critique of Glancy (1993), warns against ‘engaging in ritual war dances’, playing one method off against another (Veal, 1994: 214). He suggests that talk of ‘paradigm shifts’ neglects the very different emphasis in North American and British research traditions:

Unlike the USA, overtly qualitative leisure research was very much part of the leisure studies scene in Britain in the 1970s... The major early single author books by Parker (1971) and Roberts (197[1][sic]) have been accused of all sorts of things but never of being particularly quantitative.

(Veal, 1994: 212)

Other leisure theorists have registered doubts about the degree of ‘paradigmatic’ change. Henderson, for example, states that while the number of studies utilizing qualitative methods has increased over the past decade, they ‘certainly do not predominate’ (1991: 13), (cf. the ‘proliferation’ of quantitative studies). Thus, Henderson doubts, not only whether there has indeed been a paradigm shift, but, the extent to which a new interpretative mode would answer all leisure theorists’ questions:

Many...leisure researchers are currently in a ‘pre-paradigm debate period’ (Kuhn 1970) in the discussion of legitimate methods, problems, and standards of solution. Positivism has been the primary research paradigm but the interpretive paradigm is gaining momentum. It is unlikely that one paradigm or the other can completely define the leisure experience or the recreation and parks field. It is also unlikely that the present positivistic paradigm will fade away. The emerging interpretive paradigm is open-ended and will not create full and complete resolution for understanding recreation, parks, and leisure.

(1991: 20-21)

Discursive psychologists and sociologists of scientific knowledge have explored how paradigmatic categorizations and references to ‘progress’ work in practice (see Potter, 1988b). In fact, referring to one’s membership of a ‘paradigm’ and to the occurrence of
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‘paradigm shifts’ constitutes a powerful rhetorical move, which can work to legitimate one’s own position, at the expense of counter-arguments. Such an approach can ‘facilitate consensus and reduce debate’ (Peterson, 1981: 9; cited in Potter, 1988b). Paradigms give the impression of scholarly, scientific progress, while obscuring misstarts, and failures (Potter, 1988b). They have a tendency to turn what may be a rather messy, unsure landscape of ideas, into something more sterile than is the case, hiding areas of crossover and overlap between different methods and approaches, setting them up as contrasts, or alternatives to choose between. Consequently, many of the assumptions common to ‘both sides’ of the paradigmatic quantitative/qualitative divide (as they are currently expressed), are left intact. The ‘status quo’ remains. As Potter argues, ‘if a debate can be characterized as a disagreement between two paradigms the need for rational discussion is reduced, as is the necessity to explain why traditional ways of thinking are difficult to overcome’ (1988b: 18).

Therefore, talk of paradigm shifts, also obscures the degree to which ‘old’ styles of research, associated with apparently outdated or obsolete paradigms, continue to structure some of the most politically influential areas of leisure research. For example, dictionary definitions, time budget surveys, and government publications of the General Household Survey (OPCS, 1987), are largely responsible for the continuing salience of common sense assumptions which have structured the earliest, functionalist definitions of leisure as occurring within a specific place and time period. According to ‘The Concise Oxford English Dictionary’, for example, leisure is ‘1 free time; time at one’s own disposal. 2 enjoyment of free time. 3.... opportunity afforded by free time....’ (1995: 778). Likewise, until 1987, the leisure section of the Government publication of the ‘General Household Survey’ began with a preamble to all informants stating ‘We are interested in the things people do in their leisure time, when they are not working or at school or looking after the house and family’ (OPCS, 1987: 4, my emphasis).

It has been argued, only recently, that such definitions have the added advantage of objectivity (since the amount and type of leisure different groups of individuals have, can easily be counted, quantified and compared (Stokowski, 1994)), but they neglect the contingent quality of leisure, and simplify ‘reality’ to the level of absurdity. In addition, while many leisure theorists are now highly sceptical of deriving theoretical or
analytic gains from such absolute notions of leisure as 'time', 'activity', 'feeling' or 'experience' (associated primarily - it is argued - with the positivist 'paradigm'), many still regard such definitions, and the assumptions they represent, as both useful and necessary. For example, both Gloor (1992), and Jackson (1993), conduct 'activity' surveys, whilst Iso-Ahola, Jackson and Dunn (1994), allocate leisure activities to categories such as 'exercise-oriented activities', 'outdoor recreational activities', 'hobbies', 'home-based recreation', 'mechanized outdoor recreation', and so on.

Others replace 'absolute' definitions of leisure with an equally problematic set of notions and assumptions. These represent a kind of compromise or ambiguous amalgam, which describes contingency in leisure meanings and its socially constructed nature, on the one hand, and definable features that can be pinned down, operationalized, and subject to research, on the other (see, for example, Harré, 1990; Henderson, 1991; Henderson et al., 1996; Ingham, 1987; Martin and Mason, 1994; Schmitz-Scherzer, 1990).

For example, in a review of Rojek's attempt to 'decentre' leisure from a postmodern perspective, Kelly argues that Rojek's 'earlier writings that have some sense of the self navigating a socially constructed process seem to have been left behind in his fascination with new vocabularies'. He, like many other researchers seems to have fallen into the trap of 'dichotomizing the world into work and leisure' (Kelly, 1997b: 148). Likewise, Harré draws attention to the 'polysemous' nature of leisure (1990: 188), which he regards as both 'historically and culturally relative' (1990: 190). He says, 'clearly, there are some difficulties in taking the existence of the single word 'leisure', as indicative of one readily-definable and uniformly characterisable field of activities' (1990: 189-90). Instead, he says, 'I share the opinion of many of those who have looked closely at the topic that perhaps there is no specific object that we can identify as leisure' (1990: 187). 'However', he goes on:

I am well aware that the word 'leisure' is in use both in everyday language and as the title of departments in universities and polytechnics. So I will take the concept of leisure as I see it and try to show what root ideas are comprehended in it.

(1990: 187) 

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6 Harré, then, deconstructs leisure as object, and then resorts to the titles of university departments to justify retaining a realist approach to that very concept or object!
So, despite questioning the very existence of leisure as object, Harré nonetheless proceeds by dividing leisure into its 'essential varieties', 'amusements', 'hobbies' and 'supplementary lives' - such as 'body building' and 'mountaineering' (1990: 190). He says 'since we can be sure that there is nothing which leisure is and only is, the first research topic, however banal it may seem, is simply to ask 'what are people doing when they are not working?'" (1990: 190). While such statements problematize the idea that we can have once-and-for-all definitions, and thus relativize and deconstruct leisure’s ‘meaning’ (a (limited) form of social constructionism), Harré nonetheless makes the assumption that leisure does have an a priori nature, an essential ‘it-ness’ that can be defined as separate from some other, equally definable realm of work.

As I will demonstrate in chapter three, this approach misses the indexicality and action orientation of participants’ own descriptions of leisure. Attempting to solve the problem of definition by searching for a ‘better’ one that can be applied across contexts, is almost inevitably bound to fail. In fact, it is unlikely that we will ever overcome the problem of definition entirely. Woolgar and Pawluch, for example, suggest researchers often engage in a form of ‘ontological gerrymandering’. They cite the work of labeling theorists and other social problems arguments to show how ‘authors manage to portray statements about conditions and behaviors as objective while relativizing the definitions and claims made about them’ (1985: 216). It is this ‘boundary work’ which ‘creates and sustains the differential susceptibility of phenomena to ontological uncertainty. Some areas are portrayed as ripe for ontological doubt and others portrayed as (at least temporarily) immune to doubt’ (1985: 216).

Part of the problem, then, is that leisure theorists such as Harré, have been seeking solutions to questions which may be essentially ‘unsolvable’. They attempt to deconstruct the ‘meaning’ of leisure, but ignore the way in which their approach to the concept may be thoroughly bound up in, and constituted by the whole discipline and organization of leisure theory itself, its history, and its practices (cf. Rose, 1996). Escaping from this is not necessarily possible or desirable.

As leisure theorists themselves have claimed, the apparent shift to more interpretive, qualitative forms of inquiry and its associated research questions, has not solved their problem of definition entirely. As we have seen, even where leisure is regarded as wholly contingent, it still tends to be treated from within a realist ontology. Rojek and
Urry, for example, suggest that

Lying...behind many claims in this field is a fairly simple-minded realism: that there are clear and identifiable processes 'out there' and these can be straightforwardly described...once they are so described they can then be explained through the use of conventional social science methodology, especially survey-type analysis.

(1997: 2).

Hemingway (1995) makes similar claims. Drawing on Heidegger's (1977) notion of 'enframing' he suggests that a particular methodological technique 'frames the world in such a manner that what appears within the frame is assumed to be an absolute reality, irreducible and inalterable, incapable of appearing in any other fashion except through error'. He goes on:

Exploring leisure through now dominant empiricist techniques - empiricist lenses, as it were[,] requires that leisure conform, or be made conformable, to these very techniques themselves. These are then assumed to have revealed some aspect of an absolute reality of leisure.

(Hemingway, 1995: 33)

Following Heidegger, Hemingway suggests that these techniques both 'reveal' and 'conceal' aspects of the phenomena under investigation. For him, what we know about leisure is at least in part a consequence of how we have studied it. Not only has the empiricist study of leisure 'significantly lost touch with the experience of leisure' but it is unable to 'reestablish contact'. Hemingway asserts that empiricist assumptions actually 'prevent it from overcoming its limitations' (1995: 33).

Therefore, many leisure researchers have turned towards the qualitative method, assuming that it is 'better than' quantitative research. However, they have done so without questioning the premises upon which such a choice is made. There is a tendency to assume that quantitative and qualitative research emanate from very different paradigms and that researchers utilizing the qualitative method can ask questions that researchers working within the quantitative paradigm cannot. Hultsman and Anderson, for example, suggest that a grounded theory approach is a more appropriate method (than quantitative research underpinned by a 'parsimonious' positivistic paradigm (1991: 63)) for understanding the way that 'individuals perceive leisure' (1991: 63), since it is not results, but 'understanding' that is the aim (1991: 66). However, the qualitative approach, as currently formulated, itself contains
assumptions which have been challenged using a discursive approach. Indeed, the very distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is open to question, with all research asking questions such as 'how much?' and 'how often?'. In order to count something, for example, one needs to decide what can be regarded as an instance of a specific category in the first place. As Potter argues: 'that is not something that can be decided by counting but is itself a prerequisite for counting' (1996b: 139). In this respect, discursive psychologists see participants' quantification practices as an interesting topic of inquiry in their own right (1996b: 140; see also, Schegloff, 1993).

For many theorists, then, leisure studies is in 'crisis', and this 'crisis' is exacerbated and set to continue in response to the challenge of postmodernism (Rojek, 1993). Solutions from within the field, however, seem a long way off. Leisure theory is so enmeshed in its own problems that it is hard to see beyond them. It is, then, time for a 'new' (!) approach, which can either address these problems in a unique way, or else transcend them altogether. Analytic tools with transgressive potential are needed.

**Feminist Leisure Research: Three Structuring Concerns**

In the preceding section, I have recruited leisure theorists' own arguments to establish that there is a 'problem' or 'crisis' in leisure studies. Before I demonstrate how this 'crisis' and its problems are manifested in a specific feminist leisure study, and how a discursive and CA approach may help bypass these problems, it is necessary to describe some of the central themes or 'structuring concerns' in feminist leisure theory. This will provide an introductory overview of the field, and will give a clearer sense of the type of work that is currently being undertaken, what it is trying to achieve, and the materials it uses. I have divided this section into three parts, which map onto the analytic concerns of chapters five to seven:

(i) Theorizing Women's Non-Participation in 'Male-Identified' Activities;
(ii) Hegemonic Masculinity; and
(iii) Heterosexism.

This will provide the foundations for the final part of this chapter, where I explicate five key problems with both mainstream and feminist leisure theory, setting the scene for a discursive and CA reworking.
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(i) Theorizing Women’s Non-Participation in ‘Male-Identified’ Activities

Many feminist leisure theorists (especially those with an interest in the ‘leisure as resistance’ framework, described above) are particularly interested in women’s participation in the traditionally ‘masculine’ pursuits: the violent, team-oriented, physical contact sports. They suggest that women’s participation in these activities poses a threat to the gendered status quo, and to normative conceptions of appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour. Messner, for example, highlights what he sees as the mismatch between athleticism and traditional ideas about femininity: ‘Can a woman be strong, aggressive, competitive, and still be considered feminine?’ (1988: 203, emphasis in original).

Examples of such ‘male-identified’ activities include women’s body-building (Aoki, 1996; Coles 1994/5; Lowe, 1998; Miller and Penz, 1991; Schulze, 1990; St. Martin and Gavey, 1996), bull-fighting (Pink, 1996), boxing (Halbert, 1997; Hargreaves, 1997; Rotella, 1999), football (Lopez, 1997; Scraton, Fasting, Pfister and Bunuel, 1999), Golf (Crosset, 1995; Haig-Muir, 1998), rugby (Gill, 1997), wrestling (Sisjord, 1997), and sumo wrestling (Woolston, 1998). It is argued that women, by participating in these activities, can subvert traditional ideas about gender identity, and challenge the gender stereotyping of sport. Halbert, for example, argues that women’s participation in sports such as boxing, poses a ‘triple threat’ ‘to social order, sport, and the boxing industry’ (1997: 8), challenging the very ‘boundaries of femininity’ (Blinde and Taub, 1992), the masculine/feminine binary, and ideas surrounding the ‘natural’ basis of sex. In their violation of gender norms, Halbert argues, these women are considered ‘radically gender deviant’ (1997: 32).

Recently, feminist researchers have expressed concern about women’s non-participation in these pursuits, and have attempted to theorize why some women may be reluctant to engage in such transgressive and potentially empowering activities. In this section, I consider three of the main theoretical approaches to non-participation:

(a) Attitudes Research,
(b) Sports Media Research, and
(c) The Binary and the Continuum of Gender.

(a) **Attitudes Research**

One way in which researchers have attempted to theorize women’s non-participation in ‘male-identified’ activities is through the use of attitude surveys. It is suggested that the attitude survey ‘can provide more insight into sport behavior’ (Gill, 1986: 109, my emphasis). Citing Deaux’s (1985) discussion of the ‘Attitudes Toward Women Scale’ (Spence and Helmreich, 1972; see also Bem, 1974), and ‘The Miller Lite Report’ (Miller Brewing Company, 1983), Gill argues that there has been a ‘trend toward less gender bias’, and ‘away from beliefs in traditional roles for women and men’:

> Generally, males and females hold similar attitudes, parents are equally positive toward the sport participation of daughters and sons, and the trend is toward increasingly egalitarian attitudes toward female and male sport participation.

(1986: 108)

Messner (1992) supports this contention, arguing that ‘there is some evidence that increasing female athleticism has caused many boys and men to adjust, and sometimes radically alter, their preconceptions of what women are capable of’ (1992: 160; see also Harry, 1995). However, Messner writes ‘some men continue to ignore or denigrate female athletes’ (1992: 160), and ‘gender stereotypes persist’. Indeed, Gill (1994), argues that gender stereotypes seem more pervasive in sport than in other arenas. She cites studies by Ostrow and colleagues (Ostrow, 1981; Ostrow, Jones and Spiker, 1981) that have found ‘both sex and age biases when individuals were asked to rate the appropriateness of various sport activities for females and males of various ages’ (Gill, 1986: 108). In a recent study designed to understand the relationship between spectator gender and enjoyment of sport, Sargent, Zillmann and Weaver III (1998) conclude that while men like ‘combative sports’, women like ‘stylistic or beauty-emphasizing sports’ (1998: 61; cf. Metheny, 1965). The account they offer is both deterministic and pessimistic:

> To the extent that...biological and gender-constitutional factors play into the way in which the genders engage in sports and, to a degree, determine their viewing preferences, gender specific sports and spectator sports are likely to remain in existence.

(Sargent et al., 1998: 61)
Metheny’s early (1965) study of gender stereotypes in sport (which Gill suggests ‘could serve as a model today’ (1994: 270)), identifies sports considered most gender appropriate. Metheny argues that individual activities which emphasize aesthetic qualities such as ‘gymnastics, swimming, [and] tennis’ are regarded as those most acceptable for women, in contrast to the competitive, team-oriented sports which are deemed most appropriate for men (Metheny, 1965; cited in Gill, 1994: 270). Similar findings have been reproduced more recently, elsewhere (see Colley, Nash, O’Donnell and Restorick, 1987; Engel, 1994; Kane and Snyder, 1989; and Scully and Clarke, 1997).

Adler, Kless, and Adler (1992) have shown how boys and girls both tend to like different activities, while Selby and Lewko (1976, cited in Gill 1994: 270; see also Plaistead, 1995: 549-550) found that girls tend to be more positive than boys in their attitudes toward women in sport. Only recently, however, the press reported research by Claudia Cockburn: a ‘PE teacher-turned-researcher’, who argues that girls are put off sports participation for fear of the ‘tomboy taint’ - preferring to stick with the ‘girlie’ stereotype of seeking romance (Smithers, 1999: 7). They want to be desirable to the opposite sex, but felt boys would be ‘tuned off by the ‘sweaty and unattractive “tomboy” image associated with sports’ (1999: 7).

Waddington, Malcolm and Cobb (1998) have explored whether the National Curriculum for Physical Education (DFE, 1995) - which involves games, gymnastics, dance, swimming, outdoor ‘adventurous’ activities and athletics - is being applied equally to girls and boys. The changes in the curriculum were intended to promote equality. However, the authors found that the attitudes of physical education teachers actually reinforce gender stereotyping. Male teachers regard activities such as dance as ‘female-appropriate’, while female PE teachers perceive the outdoor ‘adventurous’ activities as ‘male appropriate’ (see also Evans, Davies and Penney, 1996; Penny and Harris, 1998; Scraton, 1993; Talbot, 1993).

Referees may also perpetuate such stereotypes. Cooper reports research by Patterson, who has shown that male referees treat women’s football matches differently from men’s. They are reported as having yawned during matches and as having made ‘unprintable’ comments. They treated women’s call of ‘fouls’ as ‘overreacting’,
believing that women would not foul deliberately, or that they were rather clumsy and could not cope with the demands of the game (Cooper, 1998). These women were simply not regarded as nasty or skilled enough to 'play dirty' (Frean, 1998: 13). In sum, Patterson says 'the image was that men's football was the real thing and women's was not as good' (cited in Cooper, 1998).

(b) Sports Media Research

These findings are reinforced in sports media research. For some time now, researchers have highlighted the differential treatment of male and female athletes in the media, both in terms of the amount of coverage each receives, and with respect to the nature of the coverage itself. Many of these studies conclude that the media, sports commentators and cameramen, play a central role in constructing and perpetuating gender inequality, and maintaining an ideology of dichotomous sex differences. Duncan, Messner, Williams and Jensen (1994: 249), for example, argue that the attitudes presented in the media shape and reflect societal attitudes and sex role stereotypes: 'The way in which television covers, or fails to cover, women engaged in athletics affects the way in which female athletes are perceived and also tells us something about the status of women in our society' (1994: 249).

The influence of social constructionism and Foucauldian poststructuralism has led many sports theorists to talk about 'discourses' in sport (Duquin, 1994). Duncan et al. (1994) analyzed six weeks of media coverage of men's and women's sports on a Los Angeles television station during the summer of 1989. They analyzed both verbal and visual commentary, using both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The findings revealed that women's sports received far less coverage than the men's sports. However, they also uncovered certain 'linguistic patterns' (1994: 270). For example, broadcasters often referred to women as 'ladies', which portrayed them as delicate, or 'girls' which infantilized them. Men, on the other hand, were hardly ever referred to as 'gentlemen' or 'boys' (see Box 1, below).

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7 The problems with such cognitivist notions as 'perception', and 'attitude' will be discussed in chapter three.
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Box 1: The Differential Media Coverage of Men’s and Women's Sport

Duncan et al. (1994) report that:

(i) Where women were depicted, it was frequently in their role as ‘scantily clad female spectators, accompanied by verbal sexual innuendo by the commentators’. The ‘framing of women reinforced the image of women as non-athletic sex objects on the sidelines’.

(ii) Whereas women were likely to be referred to only by their first names, men were called by their first and last, or just their last names.

(iii) In tennis and basketball the women players were regularly verbally ‘marked’ by presenting the game as ‘the women’s game’. In contrast, in the men’s basketball there were ‘no instances of gender marking... Men’s games were always referred to as universal, both verbally and in on-screen graphic logos (e.g., ‘The NCAA National Championship Game,’...). The result of this, argue Duncan et al., is that ‘the men’s games and tournament are presented as the norm, the universal, while the women’s continually are marked as other, derivative (and by implication, inferior) to the men’s’.

(iv) Women were also commonly referred to as ‘girls’, and ‘ladies’ whereas the men were never referred to as ‘boys’ [or ‘gentlemen’]. Thus, women are ‘infantilized’, while the language used to describe the men ‘grants them adult status’.

(v) Commentators used different ‘verbal attributions of strength’ for the men and women: ‘In basketball, women’s attributions of strength often were stated in ambivalent language which undermined or neutralized the power and strength descriptor: ‘big girl, she’s tiny, she’s small, but so effective under the boards’, ‘her little jump hook’, etc.’, whereas ‘there was little ambivalence in the descriptions of men; these were ‘big’ guys with ‘big’ forehands who played ‘big games’. The men were constantly invested with ‘power and agency’. The men ‘were framed as active subjects, women reactive objects’.

The authors acknowledge that, despite these findings, there is a noticeable attempt on the part of commentators to move toward more neutral ‘non-sexist’ reporting. They cite an instance from the Tennessee women’s basketball game, where the commentator ‘at times re-named ‘man-to-man defense’ to ‘player-to-player’ defense’ (Duncan et al., 1994: 265).

Similar findings appear elsewhere (see Blinde, Greendorfer and Shanker, 1991; Daddario, 1998; Duncan, 1993; Duncan and Messner, 1998; Jones, Murrell and Jackson, 1999; Messner, Duncan and Jensen, 1993; Tuggle and Owen, 1999; Urquhart and Crossman, 1999), and have been interpreted as overwhelmingly reinforcing rather than challenging the gendered status quo. Research with media audiences, however, has also shown that while coverage may be frustrating, viewers will not necessarily ‘internalize’ negative attitudes. Coverage may encourage audiences to develop their own, more positive interpretations, which challenge those presented in the media.
However, as we shall see, both attitude and media studies researchers work with a rather static conception of discourse, which cannot explain the detail of the strategies used to undermine women’s participation. Indeed, studies such as these seem to imply that sexism in the sports world is a straightforward reflection of the sexist language and attitudes found elsewhere in society. Like many measurement technologies, the measures used in attitudes and sport media research treat gender categories as non-indexical entities which work in stable, uniform ways. They provide circular explanations, mapping ‘attitudes’ and statements onto a person’s gender, using the latter as the explanatory variable.

In a recent article, Kane (1995) argues that a useful way of theorizing women’s non-participation in ‘male-identified’ sports is through the notion of the ‘binary’ and ‘continuum’ of gender.

(C) The Binary and the Continuum of Gender

Kane (1995) argues that one reason why men and women tend to engage in different sports and activities, and, in particular, why it is assumed that women should not participate in ‘masculine’ pursuits, is due to a variety of mechanisms which perpetuate dualistic assumptions regarding appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour. The notion of ‘the binary’ is used to describe these dualistic assumptions, and the way in which sport produces and maintains the idea that ‘all human beings are assumed to fit, by nature, into unambiguous and oppositional bipolar categories of ‘female’ and ‘male’ (Kane, 1995: 191). Kane argues that ‘within this biology-is-destiny paradigm, the apparent given-by-nature dichotomous category of gender forces a polarization between the sexes that ignores overlap; differences are systematically emphasized whereas similarities are ignored’ (1995: 191). Such ‘stereotypic notions of binary gender logic’ (1995: 193) reinforce the idea that sport should be divided into men’s and women’s activities. This separation is justified by reference to the ‘fact’ that women cannot hope to compete adequately with men in ‘men’s’ sports (1995: 196). In contrast, Kane argues that a more accurate description of performance differentials is in terms of a

8 Kane’s (1995) article has been cited particularly favourably by Theberge (1998), who applies Kane’s notion of the sport continuum in an analysis of the accounts of women ice-hockey players.
sports ‘continuum’: ‘in which many women routinely outperform many men’ (1995: 193). According to Kane, for example, there are a wider range of differences in performance among men, and among women, than there are between men and women (Rathe, 1994: 10, cited in Kane, 1995: 201). Acknowledging the existence of such a continuum, would, says Kane, undermine dualistic thinking and beliefs about gender as an ‘oppositional binary’ that is grounded in biology (1995: 193). It could, in Kane’s words, ‘serve as an important vehicle for resistance and transformation’ (1995: 193).

Hall (1990) echoes Kane’s assertions, arguing that assumptions relying on the idea of the binary are fundamentally misconceived. According to Hall, ‘sexual dualism or dimorphism is socially constructed in such a way that it appears to be an immutable fact’. Instead, says Hall, a ‘dichotomous view of sex’, is not supported by biology, where, she argues, ‘we have scientific evidence of a biological continuum’ (1990: 224, and see Box 2, overleaf).

The upshot of these arguments is that societal attitudes and the media reinforce the binary, suppress evidence of the continuum, and reinforce women’s non-participation in ‘male-identified’ sports. It follows that the continuum is regarded as the most appropriate way to conceive of male/female differences in sports performance, and that the way to challenge inequality, and promote women’s participation, is to make the idea of the continuum more widely understood. According to Coles (1994/1995), for example, women’s participation in sports such as body-building gives them the resources with which to resist, transform, and liberate themselves from dualistic gender ideology.
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Box 2: Sex Tests and Chromosomes

Many feminist leisure theorists argue that women’s athletic achievements threaten the assumption that men are naturally stronger and mightier beings who deserve their male privilege. Women with strong and athletic ‘male-like’ bodies challenge the idea that men and women are polar opposites. It is hardly surprising, says Burton Nelson (1994), that at a time in the 1960s when women were making significant gains in athletic achievements, breaking previous records and closing the performance gap with men, that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) introduced sex testing (also known as ‘femininity testing’ and ‘gender verification’) for female, and not male athletes.

In the first year of testing, women were subjected to a what became known as a ‘nude parade’ in front of a panel of male doctors, and in 1968, the ‘Barr body test’ was introduced. This is a chromosome test where cells scraped from the lining of the mouth (a buccal smear) are examined under a microscope for XX (female), or XY (male) chromosomes. However, as Burton Nelson and others point out, ‘not all women have XX chromosomes...and not all men have XY’ (1994: 71). Six women per thousand have XXV chromosomes (1994: 72).

There are a number of factors which determine a person’s sex: chromosomes, internal and external gonad structure, hormonal dominance, secondary sexual characteristics, apparent sex, psychological sex, and sex of ‘rearing’ (Bing and Bergvall, 1996: 8). While in most births, the particular combination of these characteristics will result in clearly sexed males and females, there are, nonetheless, as many as seventy possible types of intersexed individuals (1996: 8). To complicate matters further, different doctors often use different criteria when assigning sex. An intersexed child is more likely to be classified as female by an endocrinologist, and as male by a urologist (1996: 9).

In 1992 the Barr body test was replaced by the ‘polymerase chain reaction test’. Both tests miss steroid users and the ‘one naturally occurring condition’ which might give women a ‘male-like’ advantage: ‘adrenal hyperplasia’. This condition is a hormonal imbalance in which women with XX chromosomes develop muscle patterns and genitals similar to men’s. Adrenal hyperplasia affects 1 in 1000 women, and it is likely that it will have affected some women who have won Olympic gold medals (Burton Nelson, 1994: 74). In addition, while the polymerase test may be accurate 99 per cent of the time, this nevertheless means that in the Summer Olympics of 1992, 30 of the 3008 female competitors would have been wrongly informed that they were not female (1994: 74).

The Olympic committee continues to justify such testing on the grounds that it will ‘ensure femininity’, it will ‘establish physical equality’ and will ‘prevent unfair male-like physical advantage’ (1994: 71). However, as Burton Nelson points out, despite this apparent quest for equality, in twenty five years the tests have failed to identify any male impostors (1994: 72):

but, like people who fish for lobster but keep catching eel, test-takers keep uncovering people with genetic anomalies...each year, about twelve women fail the test and are banned from competition for life...There is no reason to believe that any of these were male impostors.

(1994: 72)

Moreover, in some sports it is women who have an advantage over men, yet men are never tested to see if they are masquerading as women (Burton Nelson, 1994: 69). As Burton Nelson argues, ‘simply being a man would not give one an advantage over the best women athletes’ (1994: 69). By questioning the gender identity of women who excel at sport, the myth of female athletic inferiority is reinforced: Exceptional athletes can’t be women (1994: 70).
(ii) Hegemonic Masculinity

Since the early 1990s, research on masculinity has developed rapidly - in leisure studies, and across the whole of the social sciences. Research on masculinity and leisure can be grouped around several themes:

(a) The contribution of men's sport, and/or the media representations of men's sport, to the social construction of masculinity and the reproduction and legitimation of male hegemony and female disadvantage (Bryson, 1994; Messner, 1990, 1992; Sabo and Jansen, 1998; Whitson, 1990).
(b) The social and physical practices that surround men's sport and their effects on gender relations (Jackson, 1990; Klein, 1990; Sabo and Panepinto, 1990).
(c) How socialization or the development of the male psyche affirms the relationship between men and sport, and how sport itself affects male gender development (Dunning, 1994; Fine, 1987).
(d) The relationship between gay male identity, masculinity and sport (Pronger, 1990a; 1990b).

Most texts on masculinity point to the centrality of sport and leisure in defining male identity. Edley and Wetherell, for example, argue that, throughout history, 'the dominant definition of masculinity has equated manliness with physical strength and vigorous activity' (1996: 106), and 'men's leisure and sporting activities have... been shown to be inextricably related to their identities as men' (Edley and Wetherell, 1995: 161-163). According to Lorber, organized sports are 'a source for vicarious competitiveness and for the creation of symbolic icons of masculine strength and beauty' (1998: 469), while for Messner and Sabo, sport sustains what might otherwise be regarded as a 'sagging ideology of male superiority' (1990: 9).

While it is generally acknowledged that it makes more sense to speak of 'masculinities' rather than 'masculinity', what all of these studies share is a tendency to talk in terms of dominant 'forms' or 'types' of masculinity. One of the central theoretical concepts used in this endeavour is that of 'hegemonic masculinity', which has been developed by

This notion of 'hegemony' originates with Gramsci (1971), and has been applied to masculinity to describe what Edley and Wetherell gloss as 'the power of certain groups of men to force an interpretation of what masculinity should be and, thus, to subordinate or repress other styles of masculine expression and women more generally' (1995: 129). Therefore, in this society, at this moment in history, dominant or 'hegemonic' masculinity equals white, heterosexual, successful masculinity.

Our understanding of what is 'hegemonic' hinges on and defines what is 'other'. Bryson, for example, suggests there is a dialectical element to the ideology of modern sport, in which dominant masculinity depends for its interpretation on 'what is not approved':

> Each cultural message about sport is a dual one, celebrating the dominant at the same time as inferiorising the 'other'. The inferiorising of the 'other' is most frequently implicit, though it is also explicitly and graphically conveyed when, for example, coaches, supporters, and commentators chastise their team for playing like girls or poofers.

(1990: 173)

The term has been used widely in sport and leisure research, where it is argued that male sporting prowess, 'toughness and competitiveness' is culturally exalted. As Connell argues, there is no better symbolic enactment of contemporary hegemonic masculinity (1990: 94). Likewise, Bryson suggests that 'sport is a major arena in which physical force and toughness are woven into hegemonic masculinity and the resultant ideology transmitted' (1990: 173). The athlete 'may embody all that is valued in present cultural conceptions of hegemonic masculinity - physical strength, commercial success, and supposed heterosexual virility' (Messner, 1990: 108).

Bryson argues that male hegemony in sport is maintained by four processes: direct control of women's sport (with those in positions of power being mainly men), defining sport as predominantly for men and boys, ignoring women's sport, and trivializing women's sports participation (see Box 3, below). The result is to exclude women from direct competition within men's territory (1994: 59).
Box 3: Hegemonic Masculinity in Sports Illustrated: A Case Study

Davis’ recent book, The Swimsuit Issue and Sport (1997), offers an examination of the discursive textual construction of the gender order in and through sport. Sports Illustrated is a popular North American sports magazine. For over thirty years it has produced an annual ‘swimsuit issue’ which contains images of female models in revealing swimwear. The issue - along with its spin-off calendars and videos - is highly profitable, and generates a massive advertising revenue (sales reach 6 million compared to 3.3 million for ‘regular’ issues). Davis describes the swimsuit issue as a ‘masculinity-text par excellence’ (p.97). Described by one producer as ‘a phenomenon’ with ‘a life of its own’ (Davis, 1997: 10), it has become - for many (and particularly for men) - a popular cultural icon; a truly American institution. For others, however, its meaning is more controversial. As one swimsuit issue models says ‘what you’re really showing is not bathing suits, it’s bodies...it’s about bodies’ (p.22). The issue is about ‘tits-and-ass’ (p.25, interviewed producer), a thinly disguised form of pornography - ‘like having a book of naked women with the Good Housekeeping seal of approval’ (p.38, interviewed consumer). The issue then, is a catalyst for controversy, generating widespread media debate and copycat issues in other sports magazines.

Davis aims to understand why ‘the swimsuit issue [is] so popular with so many’ (p.2). Ultimately, she says, ‘the central meaning of the swimsuit issue’ (p.47) is not about sport but centres around some version of mandatory, universal heterosexuality. Her ‘central organizing concept’, however is ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (p.8), which is the concept that, for Davis, best captures these multiple forms of oppression. Her theory of a political backlash suggests that recent challenges from feminism prompt men to ‘use Sports Illustrated to celebrate hegemonic masculinity’ (pp.117-118) and support the current gender order.

The images of able-bodied, ‘beautiful’, and usually white women in swimsuits - of ‘hegemonic femininity’ - are said to further complement hegemonic masculinity and ‘serve men’ (p. 79). Thus we are told that ‘Sports Illustrated producers attempt to increase their profit by fashioning Sports Illustrated to be a magazine about hegemonic masculinity rather than a sports magazine’ (p.117).

From Speer (in press b).

(iii) Heterosexism

As both Kane and Davis have shown, notions of appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour are closely linked with ideas about sexuality. Many researchers argue that where gender norms are subverted through participation in gender ‘atypical’ activities, women (and men) are deemed so gender ‘deviant’ that they must be lesbian or gay (Cahn, 1994; Fox-Rogers, 1994; Griffin, 1998, 1999; Lenskyj, 1986).9

In sports such as rugby, for example, women tend to embody characteristics such as physical strength, aggression and toughness. They develop muscles which are typically associated with men, and other characteristics usually understood as differentiating

9 The majority of this research focuses on women athletes and their participation in ‘male identified’ pursuits. Men’s participation in ‘female identified’ sports, such as ballet and synchronized swimming, is largely ignored (excepting Pronger, 1990a).
women from men. As Brownworth puts it: ‘the equation has always been simplistic: sports are masculine; therefore, women in sports are masculine; therefore, women in sports are lesbians’ (1994: 80). Indeed, Hicks says that women’s sports participation may pose such a threat to the gender order that ‘lesbian athletes may be the ultimate articulation of women’s liberation’ (1994: 71).

The boundaries of appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour, however, are stringently policed. Feminist leisure researchers have shown how pervasive heterosexism is - particularly in the sports community. In their recent analysis of print media discourse, Wright and Clarke note that ‘the dominant sporting script still requires a large degree of sexual and social conformity from women players’ (1999: 241). This conformity is assured through a variety of overt and covert means. According to Griffin

Women in sport endure intense scrutiny of our collective and individual femininity and sexual identities. Innuendo, concern, and prurient curiosity about the sexual identity of female coaches and athletes come from coaches, athletic directors, sports reporters, parents of female athletes, teammates, fans, and the general public.

(1992: 255)

Regardless of their sexual orientation, women who display ‘mannish’ characteristics, or who participate in traditionally ‘male-identified’ activities, are labeled ‘man-hating lesbians’ or ‘freaks’. They ‘look like men’, are ‘ugly’, ‘sexually unappealing’ and ‘unfeminine’. According to Griffin, ‘when a woman is called ‘masculine’, ‘unfeminine’, or a ‘dyke’, she knows she has crossed a gender boundary or challenged male privilege... homophobia serves as the glue that holds traditional gender role expectations in place’ (1998: 19-20). This labelling ultimately reinforces what counts as ‘normal’ masculine and feminine behaviour.

For Blinde and Taub (1992), such labeling is a powerful and effective means of undermining and controlling women’s participation in ‘male-identified’ sports. However, one typical response to the ‘accusation’ that female athletes are lesbians, is to deny the lesbian presence (or to say that there might be lesbians, but they don’t know of any), and deflect the ‘stigma’ associated with such ‘false’ labelling. However, this portrays such assumptions as mythical or improbable, and actually serves to intensify curiosity and determination ‘to find out who and where these mysterious women are’ (1992: 254). This has the effect of marginalizing and censoring lesbian athletes,
resulting in a silent ‘culture of the closet’ (Griffin, 1992, cited in Wright and Clarke, 1999: 229 and Sykes, 1998). According to Cahn, for example, lesbian athletes feel they must demonstrate feminine and heterosexual characteristics to deflect attention from their lesbianism, and promote a ‘heterosexy image’ (Griffin, 1992):

They made sure to display outward signs of femininity in dress and demeanor. They took special care in contact with the media to reveal ‘feminine’ hobbies like cooking and sewing, to mention current boyfriends, and to discuss future marriage plans.

(Cahn, 1997: 51)

Ultimately, then, this research shows how the lesbian label works against all women in sport, and creates an intimidating culture of suspicion (Griffin, 1999).

Research into physical education shows how the pressure to conceal one’s sexual orientation is felt most strongly amongst lesbian physical education teachers (Lenskyj, 1991: 62). These teachers are effected by Section 28 of the Local Government Act (1988) which has made unlawful the promotion of homosexuality as a ‘pretended family relationship’ (Clarke, 1997). Lenskyj argues that lesbians face a ‘chilly climate’ in sport and physical education contexts (1991: 62). They risk verbal abuse from pupils and accusations of the sexual abuse of children (1991: 63). This, again, says Griffin, reinforces the necessity for lesbians and bisexual women ‘to make their contributions to sport from the closet’ (1999: 53). Alternatively, they attempt to protect women’s sport by emphasizing to critics ‘how sport helps develop healthy and happy (heterosexual) wives and mothers’ (1999: 53).

Burroughs, Ashburn and Seebohm (1995) argue that the media are ‘preoccupied’ with the extent and nature of the lesbian presence in sport. Much of the sports media research described earlier in this chapter, for example, has explored the gendering of sports coverage. Research has shown that the media frequently emphasize the heterosexual, feminine credentials of women players. According to Wright and Clarke (1999) the media engage in a process of normalization to construct them as, ‘proper’ (ie: heterosexual) women. Hamer (1994) argues that a further way in which lesbians are marginalized as the perverted demons of sport is through assertions that they make predatory advances on other heterosexual athletes. Griffin cites a range of justifications used to support fears about lesbians in sport, including: ‘lesbians are sexual predators’, lesbians are immoral and are therefore poor role models for young women’, ‘cliques of
powerful lesbians band together to discriminate against heterosexual women and men in sport and finally, ‘lesbians have an unfair advantage over other women in sport because they are not ‘normal’ women’ (1998: 55). Such myths are perpetuated in the news media. Only recently, for example, a newspaper headline about a particularly muscular lesbian tennis player, Amelie Mauresmo read: ‘She’s rather burly, but still a girly. Tell that to the ladies in the locker room’ (Bradshaw, 1999: 19).

For many sport and leisure researchers, the only way to challenge heterosexism is to ‘transform the silence’ about lesbians in sport (Vealey, 1994, cited in Krane, 1996: 244), and turn our attention to the language or ‘discourses’ through which lesbian identities are both constructed and ‘constricted’ (Sykes, 1996: 459). For Clarke, ‘we need to take the stigma and power from the word lesbian so that all women cannot be intimidated or controlled by its use’ (1998: 157). Ultimately, then, language is considered central to the maintenance and reproduction of inequality. To date, however, none of these theorists have looked at instances of heterosexism in action - of situated discourse in use.

Five Problems

At the beginning of this chapter, I described the way in which both mainstream and feminist leisure theorists have constructed ‘the problem’ in leisure theory. In all of the leisure studies we have considered so far, there have been some interesting, yet unwarranted claims about the nature of the topic being studied and the most appropriate way to analyse it. Each suffers variously from the five problems set out at the beginning of this chapter and elaborated further below - the problem of definition and conceptualization being just one of many closely related ones.

(i) Leisure ‘Meanings’ are Reified

First, in much leisure research, the analyst adopts a common sense definition of leisure, and/or imposes their definition upon the data. Alternatively, ‘leisure’ is treated as something which can, or must be defined in advance of the analysis, before the ‘research proper’ can proceed. Once defined, the analyst can measure how much, and what types of leisure each individual has. However, in other studies, where the task of the research is to define leisure, the legitimacy of searching for a (consensual) definition
is not problematized. There is a preoccupation with dualisms, dichotomies and binary oppositions (leisure as separate from work, for example) (Burton, 1996), or with ‘locating’ leisure, either as something which occurs within specific times and places, or as something which has multiple, and yet analysable dimensions. Therefore, the concept of leisure is treated as a technical, objectively definable, mapping notion, rather than a contrastive term. Leisure is not treated as something that is constituted by participants and analysts, but as a ‘thing’ which it is possible (indeed - desirable) to define.

(ii) The Action Orientation and Indexicality of Talk is Ignored

Second, talk is treated as reflecting rather than constructing reality. For example, leisure researchers often treat ‘interview talk’ as a vehicle for off-loading beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and opinions, rather than an activity which constructs the world and its objects. In this sense, much leisure research is a cognitivist enterprise, which treats talk as a pathway to ‘underlying’ cognitions: a separate world ‘under the skull’ (Edwards, 1997; Edwards and Potter, 1992). ‘Cognition’, like leisure, is reified, taking attention away from the activities done with descriptions ‘in the settings in which they are produced. Such an approach prevents their reflexive and indexical properties being explored analytically’ (Potter, 1996a: 103-104).

In most leisure research, the mind and the world are treated as separate entities. There is no sense in which mind claims (talk about feelings, opinions, knowledge, and so on), may be used to construct and sustain ‘factual’ claims about the ‘external’ social world (descriptions of actions and events), and vice versa. Since the indexicality of talk is ignored, this approach cannot account for the ways in which participants may tailor their talk to the local interactional circumstances, and that any one utterance can mean different things on different occasions. Consequently, contradictions or variations in what participants say are treated as problematic, or to be accounted for, and/or rectified with better research instruments, rather than something interesting, that is to be expected.
(iii) Dualistic Constructions of Macro and Micro ‘Contexts’ (and ‘Structure’ and ‘Agency’) are not Problematized

Many leisure theorists adopt a model of society which (if only implicitly) divides society into macro-structural (structure) and micro-interactional (agency) ‘realms’ or ‘contexts’. Alternatively, there are attempts to bridge these two realms (thus reinforcing the assumption that ‘realms’ of one sort or another exist in the first place). However, the basis for a theoretical commitment to the macro/micro and structure/agency dualisms remains unproblematized. Even where the researcher rejects such crude distinctions, the ‘external’ context is often assumed to exert a determining force upon the data (usually by employing the Foucauldian notion of ‘discourse’), instead of something which is constituted within that data, text or discourse. This, again, has reifying tendencies. 10

(iv) Analytic Conceptualizations Overlook or Distort Participants’ Orientations

When data is analysed, the analyst’s concerns and analytic categories are often imposed on the data, regardless of the actual concerns that are demonstrably relevant to the participants. Gender, for example, tends to be treated as an independent variable which determines what gets said, rather than as one of many potentially relevant identities that pertain to an interaction, and that the participants may orient towards at any one time (Schegloff, 1997, Widdicombe, 1998b). The analysts’ concerns and concepts, then, unlike those of the participants’, may not always be analytically tractable.

Many researchers employ such an approach because they want to produce an account of what is going on in their data which improves on participants’ own understandings, often building a whole measurement technology of technical, objective categories and criteria to do so. This etic approach contrasts with an emic approach developed in this thesis, where ‘the aim is not to improve on participants’ practices and understandings but to explicate their nature’ (Potter 1998b: 242).

(v) The Problem of Realism

Where qualitative data is provided, it is often meant to stand on its own, as an obvious

10 By ‘reifying’ I mean ‘to turn something abstract into a material thing’ (Potter 1996a: 107).
example of the 'reality' of participants' lives. Descriptions of mind and world are treated as more or less accurate reflections of 'subjective experience' and/or 'the world out there'. In other words, data is treated as a transparent window through which the researcher can gain unmediated access to the objectively measurable 'reality' that lies beyond, or beneath it (Potter, 1996a). Descriptions are treated as separate from the phenomena they purportedly describe. As long as there are no extraneous, biasing influences on the research process, the participants' descriptions of reality can be mapped onto, and used to understand the nature of that reality. This is a realist view of mind and world, where the researcher assumes they can gain access to what participants really think, feel, or believe and the 'facts' of people's lives, and their 'subjective' experiences, simply by asking.

Although realism can be defined in different ways (see Potter 1998a, who outlines four kinds), those who adopt a realist approach generally support 'the idea that there is a reality independent of the researcher whose nature can be known, and that the aim of research is to produce accounts that correspond to that reality' (Hammersley, 1992: 43). Subtle realism, in contrast

retains from naive realism the idea that research investigates independent knowable phenomena. But it breaks with it in denying that we have direct access to those phenomena, in accepting that we must always rely on cultural assumptions, and in denying that our aim is to reproduce social phenomena in some way that is uniquely appropriate to them.

(1992: 52)¹¹

For both the realist and the subtle realist, however, 'reality' or what counts as 'real', is treated as an analyst's and not a members' problem (Widdicombe, 1998b: 195).

These five problems are not mutually exclusive, but are closely related, meshing with and implicating each other.

¹¹ These distinctions are rather deceptive, however, since it is unlikely that many researchers would refer to themselves as a 'naive realist'. As Edwards, Ashmore and Potter (1995) point out, 'naive' realists are probably made of straw.
In this chapter I have ‘gone meta’ and explored the way in which leisure theorists themselves have constructed ‘the problem’ in leisure studies. I have considered the rhetorical work that talk of ‘paradigm shifts’ achieves, and have argued that such talk masks what may be a rather messy landscape of ideas. This, in turn, may prevent a potentially productive dialogue with alternative approaches from taking place. This section has enabled me to construct a rhetorical case that leisure studies is in crisis, and that it needs a new approach, which provides a ready-made rationale for the rest of the thesis.

I have outlined three structuring concerns in feminist leisure theory, which map onto the analytic themes of chapters five to seven. In the last section I set out five problems, which are common to most mainstream and feminist leisure research, and which provide the basis for the ‘solutions’ offered in the next chapter.

In chapter three, I will be expanding on the nature of these problems, showing, with specific examples, how they are manifested in one particular feminist leisure study. I will demonstrate how a discursive and CA approach can deal with each of these problems, offering solutions that transform their very basis. What will become apparent, as Henderson has argued, is that ‘the limits of current recreation, parks, and leisure research...require acknowledgement so that other alternatives can emerge’ (1991: 33). As Rojek suggests ‘something more sustained and far reaching is now required’ (1993: 287).

To stay with the problematic, though rhetorically useful metaphor of a paradigm shift, I will be arguing that the adoption of a discursive and CA mentality needs to be viewed as ‘a reconstruction that changes some of the field’s most elementary theoretical generalizations as well as many of its... methods and applications’ (Kuhn, 1970, cited in Henderson, 1991: 33). It enables us to make a radical epistemological shift in our views about the nature of the world and research into it, from a positivist or phenomenological epistemology to a constructionist one, and from a naive or subtle realist ontology towards a relativist one.
Chapter Three: Transcending 'the Problem': A Discursive and Conversation Analytic Approach

Introduction

In chapter two, I explored what mainstream and feminist leisure theorists have constructed as 'the problem' in leisure theory, and the rhetorical business done with talk of 'paradigm shifts'. I described three structuring concerns in feminist leisure research, and five problems that pervade, not only leisure research, but most research in the social sciences.

In this chapter, I will be doing two things. First, I will demonstrate how each of these five problems are manifested in the work of the feminist leisure theorist, Betsy Wearing (1992, 1998). Wearing's work offers an integrated approach to leisure and sport, which draws together many issues relevant to the three structuring concerns described in chapter two. Second, I will outline the main tenets of a discursive and CA approach, specifying how it might offer leisure researchers a distinctive way out of the five problems described above.

Introducing the Work of Betsy Wearing

Wearing's (1990, 1991, 1995) work is often cited as an example of the 'leisure as resistance' framework described by Shaw (1994: 16), and introduced in chapter two (see also Henderson, 1994b: 129; Henderson et al., 1996: 119, 209). According to Shaw, the 'leisure as resistance' framework is gaining momentum in leisure theory, because it redresses the overly deterministic portrayal of women's leisure implicit within the 'leisure as constraint' framework. Wearing's (1992) paper 'Leisure and Women's Identity in Late Adolescence: Constraints and Opportunities', has been particularly well received by other leisure researchers. Chris Rojek, for example, who is antithetical to much feminist leisure scholarship, cites this paper approvingly. He suggests that, unlike other, rather pessimistic feminist approaches which 'picture women as losers in a zero-sum power game where men always win' (1995: 34),
Wearing’s approach ‘allows for ambiguity in relations between the sexes and variety in the forms of leisure identities that women develop’ (Rojek, 1995: 34, and 1997).

Wearing’s (1992) paper has been chosen for discussion here, since it is one of the few articles which actually provides the reader with a number of data extracts in support of the claims made. Many of the themes within it are fleshed out in Wearing’s recent book ‘Leisure and Feminist Theory’ (1998, reviewed in Speer, 1999b). In order to explicate key points, I will refer to this book throughout.

**Wearing’s Theoretical Approach**

To date, Wearing argues, most research on constraints to women’s leisure has done so primarily from within a ‘macro-social’ perspective, whilst research on freedom and resistance in women’s leisure has done so from a ‘micro-social’ perspective. Wearing suggests instead that ‘were some of the optimism of the micro to be placed within the structuration of the macro, spaces may be opened for challenging some of the constraints on women’s leisure both theoretically and in practice’ (1992: 325). Through this bridge-building exercise, the author attempts to overcome what she sees as the ‘overly deterministic tendencies of much neo-Marxist theory, structure based feminist theory and some discourse analysis’ (1992: 325). For Wearing, leisure is not only a ‘site of male power and female subordination’ but is also ‘a potential site for the construction of feminine identities which resist male definitions and control’ (1992: 323). Thus, Wearing’s aim is to outline the relationship between constraints and opportunities in women’s leisure (1992: 324), and ‘their implications for challenging patriarchy’ (1992: 323). For Wearing, the concept of resistance incorporates the micro, into the macro.

Wearing develops a ‘feminist postmodern interactionist perspective’ (1998: 143), by combining the freedom and constraint implicit in the symbolic interactionism of G. H. Mead (1934), with the Foucauldian, post-structuralist notions of discourse, power, subjectivity, and resistance. She says that ‘some insights of post-structuralist feminist theory pick up ideas of “subjectivity” implicit in Mead’s “I” and place them within the societal constraints of dominant “discourses” implicit in Mead’s term the “generalised other”’ (Wearing, 1992: 326). This is the ‘me’ which is influenced by society and
culture and is thus ‘the socially constructed element of the ‘self’’ (1992: 325). In this way, the concepts of gender, patriarchy and inequality (previously lacking in Mead), can be brought into the analysis. Wearing is able to show how society becomes part of individual identity, without portraying one or the other as primary. Thus, Wearing concludes, ‘in the continuing sociological tension between agency and structure, it seems to me that both must be held in balance’ (1998: 37). The space is open for an exploration of the way identities are constructed through leisure which do not conform to gender stereotypes (Wearing, 1992: 326). Therefore, Wearing hopes this approach will generate fresh insights into the meanings attached to gendered leisure experience.

Wearing’s Methods, Data and Findings

Wearing obtained qualitative data from first year university students regarding ‘the meanings’ that they attached to their leisure experiences (1992: 328). She gained access to these ‘meanings’ via self-report data obtained from group interviews, individual interviews and diaries. All of the participants ‘were invited’ to record their leisure experiences in a diary over the course of a week, and ‘questions were asked concerning the respondents’ leisure activities and experiences... the feelings and meanings attached to leisure activities and subjectivity associated with descriptions of self in terms of ‘I am....’ (1992: 329). The data from one of Wearing’s respondents is included in Box 4, below.
Chapter Three: Transcending ‘the Problem’: A Discursive and Conversation Analytic Approach.

Box 4: Wearing’s Data

‘Malcolm’ (a non-traditional male). Malcolm is a 22 year old first year social work student. He comes from a large family of 13 children who moved around Australia while he was growing up. He attended boarding school during his secondary years. He played football and cricket at school, swam competitively, played tennis and squash with his family. Now leisure for him is not having to study, do paid work or clean up around the flat. He flats with two girls whom he considers his best friends. He enjoys the pictures and socialising, reading, going away for a weekend and occasionally playing squash or riding a motor-bike. When he talks about masculinity, he is conscious of his own distancing from societal stereotypes of masculinity:

I still think I’m masculine because I like football. Even though I don’t play it I watch it every now and then. I watch it enough to be able to converse with somebody down at the pub, if they’re right into football or cricket. I am not much into macho type stuff, I try not to be chauvinistic. Like I do housework at home, there’s no big deal about it. To be stereotypically masculine you have to be pretty unemotional, you have to have a tough exterior. That’s why I keep an interest in football as a good exterior, a cover sort of thing. It helps if you don’t have any sensitivity or you don’t consider social issues either. That sort of thing about being independent, not needing anybody, not caring about anybody. If I get into situations where I feel out of place, where I might be thinking this is pretty disgusting sort of masculine behaviour, I won’t participate, but I won’t say anything about it. I try to be really conscious about what society expects of you but that isn’t natural so I don’t have to be like that if I don’t want to.

When asked to write seven statements about himself he writes:

1. I am shy/get embarrassed easily; I am relatively confident in dealing with people; I am outwardly conservative in my views; I am easy-going; I am interested in most things I see going on around me; I am concerned that people will be upset by the things I say and do; I am not as forceful as I should be.

His diary of his weeks leisure activities includes visits to the cinema, window shopping in music stores, drinking tea or coffee in coffee shops, watching rugby league football on TV, going to dinner with his flat mates and brother and sister-in-law who were visiting from Darwin, taking them to the Powerhouse Museum, taking an intellectually disabled person to a movie, cooking dinner (‘it’s something I enjoy doing, gives me a chance to relax and do something manual. It’s good when the meal turns out alright’), watching a video while chatting to flat mates and friends.

For Malcolm, ‘leisure allows me to be able to put across whatever type of ‘personality/gender’ I want e.g., football, masculine, social; reading, individual, intelligent.’ Nevertheless, he realises that the male role often gives him advantages and that females are much more restricted in their choice of leisure activities if they want to be considered feminine.....

(From Wearing, 1992: 334)

Wearing found that while ‘constraints concerning gender identities were evident for all respondents’ (1992: 329), there were ‘varying degrees of challenge or resistance’ (1992: 329). Therefore, she was able to identify a continuum of ‘types’ of gendered person: a ‘traditional female’, a ‘transitional female’, a ‘resistant female’ a ‘transsexual’ and a ‘non-traditional male’. Her analysis of ‘Malcolm’ is included in Box 5, below.
Chapter Three: Transcending 'the Problem': A Discursive and Conversation Analytic Approach.

Box 5: Wearing’s Findings

‘Malcolm, who does not want to fit into the traditional macho stereotype, is also resisting, but with some recognition that there are advantages in the male position. In comparison with the females he has more choice, and females will support his choice, even if males do not. His access to feminist ideas through the course assists his choice. In one respect though his diary shows a disadvantage as against females. His conscious choice of socialising as one of his main leisure activities is evident, but on a number of occasions he ended up having teas or coffee on his own in a cafe and reading university notes or the paper. None of the women recorded a similar experience, in some sense he is more alone than they.’

(From Wearing, 1992: 336)

Wearing concludes her study with the following remarks:

This research has shown that leisure in patriarchal society can be a site of resistance to male domination. It has shown that access to alternative discourses such as feminism can enable males and females to resist dominant discourses on masculinity and femininity and, in the moratorium period of late adolescence, through leisure, to expand their options.

(1992: 337-338)

Wearing makes several assumptions which are problematic from within a discursive and CA perspective, and which exist in tension with a constructionist approach to knowledge and ‘reality’. These assumptions are common, not only to Wearing’s work, and to leisure theory in general, but also to the vast bulk of qualitative research in the social sciences. These assumptions map onto the five problems introduced at the end of chapter two.

Five Problems With Wearing’s Approach

(i) Leisure ‘Meanings’ are Reified

First, the concept of leisure is not problematized. In fact, Wearing never states explicitly what she means by the term. There are, however, several places in the paper where she alludes to her own implicit definition. For example, she states: ‘leisure is one area of contemporary society where there is some room for Mead’s ‘I’ to operate’ (1992: 325), and that leisure offers ‘opportunities for spontaneity, solitary or concerted activity’ (1992: 327). It is ‘a potential site for the construction of feminine identities which resist male definitions and control’ (1992: 323), a ‘sphere where some resistance
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is possible’ (1992: 335). These claims are fleshed out in Wearing’s recent book, where leisure is conceived a site of ‘relative freedom’ for women (1998: 49), as a ‘personal space’ (1998: xi), or, following Foucault, ‘other spaces’, ‘heterotopias’, which constitute sites of ‘temporary respite’ (1998: xii) within the confines of power in contemporary society.

So, leisure is constructed as an ‘area’, a ‘site’, or a ‘space’, which ‘does’ or ‘offers’ things. It exists as ‘discourses’ and ‘contradictory discourses’ (Wearing, 1992: 323, 324, 326, 327, 337), which have the power to create ‘constrained’ or ‘resistant’ subjectivities. According to these definitions, then, leisure is a fairly abstract and elusive field of experience, with indefinable boundaries, rather than a concrete, objectively definable, ‘thing’, ‘activity’, ‘time period’, or ‘feeling’. However, in other areas of the paper, the concept does seem to take on distinct, objective, and/or common sense definitions. For example, Wearing mentions leisure ‘experience’ or ‘experiences’ (1992: 325, 328, 329, 330, 333), leisure ‘activity’ or ‘activities’ (1992: 328, 330, 333, 334, 335, 336), and leisure ‘interests’ (1992: 333) or ‘pastimes’ (1992: 331).

Wearing’s (implicit) definition of leisure, then, is subject to many of the problems specified by leisure theorists themselves in chapter two. For example, it cannot account for the way leisure ‘meanings’ vary according to context. Wearing selectively reifies ‘the meaning’ of leisure, as a ‘thing’ which can be captured and measured for long enough to divide individuals into ‘types’. Moreover, it is assumed one might be able (and that it is desirable) to gain access to these leisure ‘meanings’ simply by asking people. This assumption is problematized further below.

(ii) The Action Orientation and Indexicality of Talk is Ignored

Second, Wearing treats her participants’ talk as reflecting rather than constructing ‘reality’. There is no mention of the way in which this talk may be serving a function, performing an action, constructing a particular image of masculine and feminine identity, and all within the relatively ‘got up’ context of an interview. There is no mention of the fact that the participants are orienting to an interview context and constructing an account which they deem appropriate to that context, or constructing their diary entries for a future audience. There is no way of knowing whether the
participants are defending a position, orienting to a topic they find important (as opposed to one the interviewer or co-participant's find important), engaging in an argument, raising an issue for discussion, and so on. While other leisure researchers do reference the importance of context (Wang, 1996: 121), recognizing that 'leisure is embedded in a web of material and social relations' (Hemingway, 1996: 40), this context is often assumed to exist beyond or behind the immediate interaction, rather than being actively constitutive of it.

Moreover, talk is treated as a vehicle for off-loading beliefs, attitudes and opinions, rather than an activity which constructs the world and its objects. In this sense, Wearing's approach is a cognitivist account, which treats talk as a pathway to 'underlying' thoughts, feelings, or mental schemas. This cognitivism is apparent in a number of places in the text. For example, Wearing claims that her methods were chosen in line with the underlying assumptions of interpretive research and post-structuralist analysis. These assumptions are that lived experience includes, multiple realities, relationships, connectedness, wholeness and inclusiveness; theory which emerges within a context, and contextual processes that focus on meaning, subjectivity and perspectivity.

(1992: 328)

References to 'multiple realities', 'lived experience', 'meaning', 'subjectivity' and 'perspectivity', imply that there is a world under the skull, a pre-existing domain, separate from the rest of life, or other 'realities', and that's amenable to analysis. Similar assumptions appear elsewhere in the leisure literature. For example, Hultsman and Anderson talk about getting at 'multiple realities' (1991: 64), and Lengkeek suggests that 'the specific nature of leisure cannot be clarified simply by contextualizing leisure in terms of everyday reality'. Rather, leisure 'offers opportunities outside the dominant reality of everyday life' (1996: 23-24).

Wearing makes many references to this hidden cognitive world throughout the text. She talks about 'underlying' cognitive features such as 'the feelings and meanings attached to leisure activities' (1992: 329), 'subjectivity' (1992: 327, 328), 'subjective data' (1992: 328), 'individually constructed subjectivities' (1992: 327, 328), 'very individual subjectivity' (1992: 336), and 'subjectivity in transition' (1992: 330). For Wearing, 'subjectivity', when combined with the notion of 'resistance', 'holds out the
possibility, not only of multiple identities within the individual, but also of a variety of identities within and across gender' (1992: 327).

She also talks about the psychological knowledge of her participants, making reference to their 'awareness of the constraints' on their leisure, and says that 'some subjects' were able to 'consciously and deliberately resist dominant definitions of femininity and/or masculinity' (1992: 329). She claims to know when respondents are 'nervous and tentative' (1992: 331), and that Ruth is 'insightful' (1992: 333). Likewise, we are told what Malcolm 'wants' and 'recognizes', and that he makes a 'conscious choice' (1992: 336; Box 4 and Box 5, above)

This is a common feature of qualitative research, and many leisure researchers aim to uncover 'internal' cognitive states, 'experiences' (Scraton, 1994; Shaw, 1994); 'lived experiences' (Henderson, 1994b); 'meanings' (Henderson, 1996; Freysinger and Flannery, 1992), and 'personal meanings' (Glancy, 1993). Lee et al. (1994) argue that qualitative methods 'allow researchers to understand respondents' level of emotion, the way in which they have organized their world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions'. Qualitative methods emphasize the importance of 'participants' internal perspective' (1994: 197).

These assumptions about the world under the skull influence Wearing's approach to 'identity'. Wearing uses the term 'identity' 'to refer both to Mead's concept of 'self', which includes the 'I' and the 'me' and to the post-structuralist concept of 'subjectivity' in which there is also a sense of conformity... and resistance to the domination of discourses' (Wearing, 1992: 326). However, the Meadian separation of the 'I' and the 'me' leads to a gross characterization of individual selves which fractures the 'self' into parts. Consequently, Wearing's account of gendered experience is a rather abstract one. She says, for example, that

the interaction between men and women in the relative freedom of leisure spaces, may allow men to challenge and move beyond the 'I' and 'you' of their cultural construction of masculinity as superior and the 'she' of the 'other' as inferiorized femininities

(1998: 59)

It is not at all clear, however, how we might determine, simply by looking at some data, which bits of identity come from the 'I', and which the 'me'.

58
Similarly, Wearing says that

the period of late adolescence...is a moratorium time when there is a chance to explore or 'try on' different identities before integrating communal culture and individuality into a basic sense of the 'real me' which will underpin adult life.

(1992: 328)

However, it is not clear how 'trying on' different identities works in practice. Can we see it happening, for example? And what counts as evidence for it? If there is a 'real me', might we also be able to find an 'unreal me'? Wearing's reformulation of Mead's 'private but cumulative 'I' of the self' (Wearing, 1998: 158), is also problematic. From a poststructuralist perspective, the idea that we exist as private individuals (with an internalized 'I' or 'core' self), is itself a social construction (Kitzinger, 1992, 1995), and is profoundly antithetical to symbolic interactionism.

In all of these examples, then, cognition and descriptions of the 'self' are reified, taking attention away from the activities done with descriptions, and their indexical relationship to the settings or contexts in which they are expressed. Identity (and gendered identity) is conceived as something which can be measured and mapped onto 'types' of individuals, rather than a resource for various activities. Moreover, the mind and the world are treated as separate entities. There is no sense in which certain identities may be invoked to make an account of a particular event more persuasive, to deflect blame, manage potential accusations of prejudice, and so on.

Because talk is treated as a reflection of cognitions rather than actions, the indexical and context sensitive features of talk are ignored. This approach cannot account for the ways in which participants tailor their talk to the local interactional circumstances, and that any one utterance can mean different things on different occasions. Consequently, variability, or areas of apparent contradiction in participants' accounts, is treated as a problem, to be accounted for or overcome with better research instruments, rather than something interesting, and to be expected.

(iii) Dualistic Constructions of Macro and Micro 'Contexts' (and 'Structure' and 'Agency') Are Not Problematized
Third, Wearing adopts a model of society which is divided into macro and micro ‘realms’ (and structure and agency), and assumes that these two ‘realms’ can be brought closer together via her incorporation of Mead’s interactionism and feminist poststructuralism. In this way, Wearing hopes to demonstrate how participants are neither totally determined (by social structure) nor totally free (with agency). However, there are many places in the text where Wearing appears to retain rather than subvert the dualism, and ‘slip into’ the determinism that she is so keen to avoid.

For example, Wearing claims to adopt a Foucauldian notion of discourse, which she defines as

an assemblage of statements arising in an ongoing conversation, mediated by texts, among speakers and hearers separated from each other in time and space which take on the credibility of ‘truth’ and which are constructed as knowledge by the powerful.


These discourses are portrayed as controlling and determinate:

Societal control through leisure discourses... is both far-reaching and insidious. It is so far-reaching, in fact, that it reaches into the very self of the subject.... It is insidious in that females who through leisure internalise a sense of inferiority to males in adolescence are setting an agenda for powerlessness and submission to male domination in all spheres of their lives and for the duration of the life-cycle.

(Wearing, 1992: 337)

This quote implies that women who do not resist lack autonomy, and will be subject to ‘powerlessness and submission to male domination’ in every area of their lives, now and forever! However, Wearing offers no evidence of these nasty discourses, which have such ‘far-reaching’ effects. They ‘reach into the very self of the subject’ (1992: 337), but exactly how they do this, or how they are constituted in the data and oriented to by the participants in the study is a mystery. It is unclear how the researcher might determine what is a controlling leisure discourse and what is the ‘real self’ of the subject. These discourses are somehow strange forms of free-floating, ‘magic carpet’ type ideology, which take on a life of their own, operating behind the backs of individuals in unseen ways. They are assumed, taken for granted, just because Foucault says so.

Elsewhere, in Wearing’s recent book, we are told about ‘discourses which challenge
dominant discourses on gender' (1998: xi), 'the space created by contradictory discourses' (1998: 51), 'discourses ... open up the possibilities...' (1998: 151), 'this discourse gives permission for mothers to take time and space for themselves' (1998: 52), and 'dominant, constraining discourses on ageing' (1998: 53). We are advised that we should, following Foucault, 'refuse what we have been told by dominant discourses that we are and to imagine and build up what we could be' (Wearing, 1998: 126 emphasis in original). Thus 'discourses' are invested with the power to 'challenge' (unspecified other discourses), to 'create space', 'open up possibilities', 'give permission', be 'dominant' and 'constraining'. They can even communicate with us by 'telling' us things. However, we are not offered any evidence of just how these mysterious, decontextualized discourses actually work, and just how they are invested with such capabilities. In attempting to manage the apparent tension between structural determinism and agency, constraint and freedom in leisure, then, Wearing develops some rather abstract concepts, which have a tendency to obscure more than they explain.

Wearing is not alone amongst feminist leisure theorists, but is representative of a widespread theoretical and methodological trend. Many leisure researchers set about exploring the 'interconnections between the individual and the social' (Scraton, 1994: 257), divide up society into macro and micro 'realms', and talk about 'structures' (McCormick, 1996: 367). What all of these approaches neglect, however, is the local, interactional way in which such abstract, reified notions of 'society', 'structure', and the 'macro-social' are constituted in participants' discourse in the first place. This brings us to our fourth problem.

(iv) Analytic Conceptualizations Overlook or Distort Participants' Orientations

Fourth, Wearing infers the existence of her own analytic categories ('resistance', 'discourses', 'traditional femininity', etc), regardless of whether the participants themselves orient towards, or engage in practices which warrant the use of such categories. The data chunks are not analysed or discussed so much, as presented as representative of the author's point.

This lack of concern for participants' categories, orientations, and practices, and the
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corresponding conflation of analysts' and participants' concerns, is probably clearest in Wearing's statement about Ruth - the transsexual in the study: 'The 'I' and the 'me' were in conflict. The 'I' wanted to be female, the 'me' was interpreted as male. Eventually she chose to change the 'me' (1992: 333). There is, however, no evidence that Ruth herself constructs her identity in these terms. This account reflects the analyst's, and not the participant's concerns and assumptions, which are brought to the data (from above), so as to interpret it from within the author's framework. Wearing thus adopts an etic, rather than an emic approach to analysis.

Indeed, Wearing makes some magical leaps of faith in inferring resistance from the data, and from the concerns that her participants can actually be shown to be orienting towards. Wearing claims to adopt a Foucauldian understanding of resistance, which she defines as

\[
\text{the struggle against the form of power which pervades everyday life and constitutes individuals as subjects in the sense of being subject to somebody by control and dependence and subject to their own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge.}
\]


Those women (and men) who have access to 'feminist discourses' are, says Wearing, able to strive for more independence in their leisure, and challenge traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity. Following this argument to its logical conclusion, then, 'resistance' can be shown to be happening when one behaves in a non-traditional, non-normative way.

There are, however, some problems with these analytic conceptualizations and with how we might map them onto participants' practices. The relationship between 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' gendered behaviour, for example, is not problematized. Even if we were to have a continuum of behaviour from traditional to non-traditional and resistant, then at what point on that continuum would we draw the line and say 'from here-on behaviour is sufficiently different to be classified as resistant and oppositional?' Moreover, behaviours (and identities) do not necessarily come with their normativity (or traditional/non-traditional nature) built into them. To borrow the concept of 'indexicality' from ethnomethodology, behaviours which are normative and traditional in one context, may be non-normative and non-traditional in others. This flexibility is not allowed for in Wearing's approach. She simply assumes that the
meanings of these concepts are self-explanatory, and imposes them on her data.

For example, if resistance is defined as 'a struggle' against power, then does this struggle have to be a conscious political act, recognized and understood by participants as such? In Wearing's examples this certainly doesn't appear to be the case, as her participants never explicitly state that they are resisting anything. The implication of this is that if it does not have to be a conscious political act, then what right do we, as researchers, have to call it resistance in the first place? What, for example, would count as empirical evidence for the absence of resistance?

Linking certain types of behaviours (and identities) to the 'traditional' and 'non-traditional', then, is inherently problematic. It leaves the analyst in a situation whereby deviations can only be interpreted in oppositional terms. By ignoring this, Wearing seems to imply that norms and roles are templates for action, determined 'from above', rather than locally negotiated in situ. This act of reification has resonances of structural functionalism, and constitutes a kind of Parsonian 'judgemental dope' determinism that many theorists (especially discursive and CA ones), now reject (see Heritage, 1984).

This failure to look at the practices and orientations of participants has been touched on indirectly by other (non-discursive) leisure theorists. Chris Rojek, for example, argues that in the approach associated with the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 'the dogma of struggle and contestation is ritually repeated. So 'release' is piously turned into 'resistance'; and 'display' is primly interpreted as 'dissidence'. But these politically loaded propositions tend to be asserted rather than demonstrated' (Rojek, 1995: 24). Elsewhere, Rojek suggests, 'in all of these pages which proclaim the virtue of resistance and opposition there are hardly any convincing examples of successful oppositional activity' (1993: 281).

In fact, it may be that this problem of imposing the analyst's categories upon the data is more likely to occur in research which has political concerns at its heart. In this type of research, there is the danger of wanting to make the data 'fit' with pre-existing theories in order to prove the author's point, rather than letting the data, and the issues that the participants can be shown to be attending to, guiding the research question. Indeed, in some feminist research, there is no way of seeing acts of resistance, gender or differential power operating in the text or data provided. Such concepts take on

1 See Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1997a), on the elusive problem of implying false consciousness.
transcendental ‘thing-like’ qualities, and are decontextualized from talk-in-interaction, becoming the unquestioned beginning point of analysis, regardless of the actual concerns of the participants (cf. Widdicombe, 1995; Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995).

This imposition of the analyst’s categories is particularly evident in the leisure theorist’s treatment of ‘gender’. While many leisure researchers describe gender as socially constructed rather than a fixed attribute, or a categorical reality which exists prior to or outside a given situation or context (see Henderson, 1994b), many others, including Wearing (and many of the leisure researchers whose work I described in chapter two), nonetheless categorise participants’ talk as coming from either male or female persons, and code their responses in relation to these categories. They do so regardless of whether or not participants orient to such features as relevant. Wearing, for example, maps talk onto gender, and uses her data to divide male and female participants into ‘types’.

(v) The Problem of Realism

Finally, participants’ descriptions of mind and world are treated as more or less accurate reflections of their ‘underlying’ cognitions, thoughts, and feelings, and/or as an objective account of the ‘reality’ of their (leisured) lives. These descriptions are assumed to map onto a separate, but essentially ‘real’ and ‘concrete’ phenomenon - an unmediated ‘reality’ that is directly accessible to the researcher.

Descriptions of events are treated as accounts of ‘what really happened’. ‘Meanings’ leap off the page, and speak for themselves, as though self-evident and unrelated to interpretive work. As Edwards et al. (1995) argue, ‘method is offered as transparent, as unconstructive, as merely revealing’ (1995: 38). The procedures of both ‘science’ and ‘magic’ are displaced from their effects, designed to be transparent, unnoticed, while the findings are left to reveal the world’ (1995: 38). The constructive work that goes into producing ‘facts’ and what is (taken to be) ‘real’ is thereby obscured (cf. Potter, 1996a).

These assumptions about the relationship between the data and some readily accessible world beyond, or behind it, are manifest in Wearing’s analysis. As we can see from
Boxes 4 and 5, above, Wearing rarely provides more than a few sentences of analysis to every data extract (1992: 12). We are simply meant to ‘see’ that the data provides evidence of resistance (or whatever), and that these features can be unproblematically ‘read off’ from it. Fine grained analysis thus takes a back seat to categories which simply ‘appear’ and ‘emerge’ from the data. As Wearing says: ‘instead of distinct categories there appeared from the data to emerge a continuum from traditional to non-traditional male and female leisure experiences’ (1992: 329, my emphasis). Both the participants’ and Wearing’s own constructive, reality producing work is ignored.

Wearing does mention the interactional and contextual dynamics of the interview situation, but rather than treat method (the interview) as a constructive business, she uses what she takes to be the effects of the research encounter as data - as an example of something going on inside the head of her participants. So we are told ‘in the taped interview she [Ruth] is nervous and tentative in answering many of the questions. She is not at all sure yet of her own directions’ (1992: 331, my emphasis). Here then, actions (being ‘nervous’ and ‘tentative’) are treated as straightforward and unconstructive reflections of ‘feelings’ - of being ‘unsure’ (rather than as features which might demonstrate the participants’ orientation to, or their attempt to manage the demands of the interview situation). It is assumed that the analyst can somehow gain access to these phenomena, these ‘hidden’ mental entities, simply by recording such behaviours, and/or by asking.

In this section I have demonstrated how the five problems introduced in chapter two are manifested in the work of the feminist leisure theorist, Betsy Wearing. It is important to note, however, that these five problems are not peculiar to Wearing’s work, but are indicative of the vast bulk of research in the social sciences. Indeed, many of the assumptions that form the basis of these problems are so deeply ingrained in our thinking that they go unquestioned.

In the next section I will be outlining the ways in which a discursive and CA approach transcends the very premises of the key problems and assumptions outlined above.

Discursive Psychology

‘Discourse’ is a concept that is commonly used (and abused) in the social sciences.
Several leisure researchers mention the development of critical social psychology and the ‘debate around discourse and subjectivity’ (Smears, 1996: 79), while others, such as Wearing (1992), claim to treat discourse in its Foucauldian, poststructuralist sense. As I have already shown in my critique of Wearing, however, it is hard to map such reified, abstract notions onto concrete examples, or use them to develop a viable research programme.

Discursive psychology (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Wetherell and Potter, 1987) does offer us such a programme. To date, however, it has not been applied to the field of leisure research. Before going on to specify how it can help us overcome the five problems that I have identified within the leisure literature, it is necessary to define its parameters and trace its roots.

Discursive psychology, like CA (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984), ethnomethodology (Button, 1991), poststructuralism (Hollway, 1989), reflexive ethnography (Clifford and Marcus, 1986), the sociology of scientific knowledge (Latour and Woolgar, 1986), and symbolic interactionism (Hewitt, 1994), is a ‘constructionist’ approach to knowledge and reality (Potter 1996b: 127; Gergen, 1985, 1994), which applies ideas from discourse analysis to a range of psychological issues and concepts (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996a). Discursive psychology sits on the margins of mainstream social psychology, challenging many of its central premises. Unlike traditional positivist, hypothetico-deductivist research, for example, discursive psychologists tend not to begin with pre-defined hypotheses or questions (though neither do they assume that we come to our research value and theory free). Rather, they collect and analyze material from a range of data sources, and it is often in the process of (rather than prior to) analysis that new research questions arise.

Discursive psychology takes discourse itself as its topic (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). ‘Discourse’ refers to all forms of talk and text, including data from interviews, focus groups, television programmes, dinner discussions and telephone conversations, magazine and newspaper articles, e-mail discussion groups, biographies, ‘fictional’

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2 As Potter points out, however, attempting to pin down the meaning of constructionism is itself a ‘profoundly anti-constructionist approach to the question’ (1996b: 125). It would produce a realist account which assumes it is possible to arrive at objective, absolute, unambiguous definitions, and this is precisely the position constructionism rejects (1996b: 125). Furthermore, as Potter asserts, to the extent that constructionism is itself defined differently in different contexts, it too is constructed (1996b: 125).
novels, and visual images. Discursive psychology treats talk and texts as *social practices*. It is interested in their precise detail and in what that detail can be said to be doing interactionally (Potter, 1998b).

Language, then, is not a neutral means of reflecting or describing the world (Gill, 1996). Rather, talk and texts *constitute* 'reality'. Discourse is both constructed (from a variety of repertoires and resources, for example) and constructive. It is in this sense that the discursive approach requires us to make a radical shift in our epistemological and ontological assumptions.

One of the central tenets of discursive psychology is that it is concerned with the *action orientation* of discourse. Talk is used to *do* things, its serves a function. Potter and Wetherell refer to what people do with what they say and write as ‘discourse practices’ (1995a: 81). Analysis, then, is not so much concerned with what is said as with what saying such things achieves. Discourse can be used to manage issues of ‘responsibility’ and ‘stake’ (to present oneself in a favourable light), to ‘account’ for one’s actions (offering excuses, for example), to make requests, assessments, perform greetings or refusals, manage issues of ‘fault’, and to achieve ‘justifications’ and ‘blamings’.

Talk is also indexical (Garfinkel, 1967). The meaning of a word is dependent on its context of use, and what people say, from moment to moment, depends on the specific action, or business that talk is designed to achieve. Participants often say variable and contradictory things in the course of the same interview, or across one stretch of talk. For discursive psychologists in particular, however (cf. realists), this variation is not a problem, but is central to discourse (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). We contradict ourselves all the time, precisely because, what we say from moment to moment does things, it achieves things, it has a function. As Gill argues ‘as social actors, we are continuously orienting to the interpretative context in which we find ourselves and constructing our discourse in order to fit that context’ (1996: 142).

The discursive approach has proven particularly useful in research on sexism. Gill (1991, 1993), for example, has looked at the ways in which male DJs and programme controllers justified the lack of women in radio, thus perpetuating inequality. She argued that the broadcasters’ accounts diverted attention away from institutional sexism, placing the blame for the lack of women in radio on the women themselves, or
in the preferences of the audience. The broadcasters simultaneously presented themselves as non-sexist whilst justifying the low representation of women at the radio station (1993: 90).

Discursive psychology also studies the rhetorical forms and mechanisms through which arguments are made persuasive (Potter 1996b: 133). Rhetorical analysis (Billig, 1996) is concerned with the argumentative organization of discourse, and the ways in which 'people's versions of actions, features of the world, of their own mental life, are designed to counter real or potential alternatives' (Potter and Wetherell, 1995a: 82), and 'in turn, to resist being countered' (Potter, 1996a: 108).

Rhetoric is used to establish something as factual (Potter, 1996a) - such as accounts of paranormal experiences (Wooffitt, 1992) - and to legitimate courses of action that might otherwise be seen as problematic, such as racism, for example (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). We use rhetoric in order to establish a particular version of the world as unproblematic, uncontestable, as 'solid, real and independent of the speaker' (Potter and Wetherell, 1995a: 81). In much discourse work, then, 'realism' or what counts as real and factual, is taken as topic, not as resource (Potter, 1996a).

Although rhetorical analysis has some similarities with CA, unlike CA, rhetorical analysis is not so much interested in the sequential organization of turns, as with the relationship between different argumentative positions. These argumentative positions may or may not be organized sequentially (Potter 1996b: 134). The study of discourse, however, shades into the study of rhetoric and CA, because it is concerned both with the contextually sensitive nature of argumentative positions, and with the conversational organization of the procedures through which these are constructed (1996b: 132).

**Conversation Analysis**

Discursive psychology draws heavily on CA: the analysis of talk-in-interaction, which has its roots in Garfinkel's ethnomethodology (Heritage, 1984), and linguistic philosophy (Austin, 1962; Wittgenstein, 1958). CA is primarily associated with the work of Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974; see also, Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998; ten Have, 1999). Nonetheless, it could be argued that there are more similarities than differences between discursive psychology and CA (Potter, 1996b: 132). This is
because, as Sacks (1992/1995) has observed, much of what is going on in interaction occurs in its particulars: in the details of pauses, turn taking organization, hesitations, word choices, repairs and overlaps (Potter, 1996b: 132-133). CA has developed a comprehensive system for transcribing such features. A simplified version of these transcription conventions are included in Appendix A.

It is important to note that CA is not just concerned with the rules of turn-taking but with 'the fundamental sense that interactions have for their participants' (Potter, 1996b: 132). Like discursive psychology, it has been applied to a variety of topics, including courtroom trials (Atkinson and Drew, 1979), public speaking (Atkinson, 1984), the construction of subcultural identity (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995), and accounts of paranormal experiences (Wooffitt, 1992). One of the main differences between discursive psychology and CA, however, is that the latter rely almost exclusively on detailed transcriptions of ‘naturalistic’ records of interaction, whereas the former also tend to use interview data and other texts.  

Transcending the Five Problems

(i) Leisure ‘Meanings’ are Reified

As we saw in chapter two, one of the ‘problems’ identified by leisure theorists is that of definition. How can we produce a (non-reified) definition of 'leisure meanings' that can be used in our research, when it is defined differently in different contexts? As we have seen, Wearing’s solution is to map different leisure ‘meanings’ onto different participants, according to whether or not their definitions subvert traditional gender norms.

Typically, this type of contextual variation has been treated as a problem that can be ‘designed out’ of the method. Henderson, for example, refers to the ‘language problems’ in her and Rannells’ (1988) ‘interviews about leisure with rural farm women’:

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3 As Silverman points out, the distinction between discursive psychology and CA rests less on differences of approach, and more on 'whether the author pays his or her disciplinary dues to, respectively, psychology or sociology' (1998: 193).

4 As we shall see in chapter four, what counts as ‘natural’ data is itself problematic. Nonetheless, discursive psychologists (like conversation analysts) often advise against the use of materials that have been ‘got up’ by the researcher.
The farm women tended to laugh when we asked questions about their leisure and proclaimed they had none. Yet, when we asked what they did on holidays or with their families, they could describe activities that were meaningful and enjoyable to them which seemed to exemplify traditional ideas about leisure, although these experiences were not termed ‘leisure’ by the women. It became clear to us in the process of interviewing that we needed to use a different term like ‘free time’ or ‘fun activity’ in order to get the information that we needed.

(Henderson, 1991: 75-76).

Lee et al. (1994) describe leisure meanings as ‘transitory and complex’ (1994: 209). They explore the contours of this complexity by using a ‘self-initiated tape-recording method’, measuring their participants’ ‘immediately recalled leisure experience’, and ‘post-hoc interpretation of past leisure events through in-depth interviews’ (1994: 199). They intend to show how ‘people’s interpretations of leisure experiences change over time’ (1994: 209). However, rather than celebrate this variability as an interesting, to be expected feature of all interaction, like Henderson, they try to account for it in terms of problematic features of the method. They talk about ‘memory decay and mood bias’, which, they argue, is minimized using the immediate recall method. From a discursive perspective, however, remembering and forgetting are themselves socially constructed, locally constituted accomplishments (Shotter, 1990).

Other researchers treat variability as a problem that might be overcome with better measurement techniques. In an extraordinary and positivistic attempt to measure individuals’ ‘search for meaning’ in leisure pursuits, in a section entitled: ‘Guidelines to avoid methodological possible pitfalls’, Ragheb advises that ‘the search for meaning in leisure might fluctuate over time, such as mood and depression; therefore, long-term and short-term stability need to be considered, accounted for, and tested’ (1996: 254-255). Ragheb’s hope, it seems, is to pin leisure down - to capture it for long enough so that it can be precisely measured, free from all contaminating influences.

In discursive psychology, variation and context specificity is interpreted in a rather different way. Following Gill (1996: 142-143), simple statements about leisure can be used to perform different actions, depending on the interpretative context. Consider the words ‘I love dancing’:

(a) When used in a conversation with a friend, the words ‘I love dancing’ may be an attempt to elicit an invitation to a night club (an implicit request);
(b) When said to a friend who accuses you of not spending much time sitting
chatting at a night club, may be used as a justification or excuse; and
(c) When said to a partner who has just cancelled your ballroom dancing
lesson, they may be part of a blaming, or an attempt to make that person feel
guilty.

We will not gain access to some inherent ‘meaning’ of the leisure activity, ‘dance’, by
looking at these words in isolation. Rather, participants use such evaluative expressions
to achieve something in a sequence of utterances. The words ‘I love dancing’ are
interesting to the discursive psychologist, not because they reveal the speaker’s
‘underlying’ attitudes towards a particular leisure activity, or what leisure ‘means’ to
them, but because they achieve an action in the course of interaction. This stands in
direct contrast to the leisure theorist’s transparent treatment of such phrases.

Thus, the way we talk about, define and evaluate certain leisure ‘activities’ will depend
on a range of contextual issues. Chris Rojek comes close to this when he states

in order to understand leisure accurately we should begin not with our central object -
that which we take to be the thing-in-itself - but rather with the context in which the
thing-in-itself becomes an ‘object’, ‘an issue’, ‘a problem’ or what have you.

(1995: 2)

Whereas for Rojek this context is culture, for discursive psychologists it is talk-in-
interaction (where culture itself may be endogenously produced). All of these factors
combine to suggest that seeking a once-and-for-all definition of ‘the meaning of leisure’
is inherently problematic.

While the existence of such things as leisure centres, common sense assumptions, and
dictionary definitions provide inferences as to how leisure may be defined in an
abstract, conceptual sense, it does not determine the precise definition of leisure on any
particular interactional occasion, where it may be applied to do particular work.
Indeed, the notion of ‘indexicality’ highlights how ‘the meaning of a word cannot be
derived from some set of criterial features which inhere in the nature of the object or the
state of affairs in the world to which the word refers’ (Wooffitt, 1992: 59).
Descriptions of objects construct the nature of those objects, and any one person may
define leisure differently on different occasions, and for different audiences. From the
point of view of discursive psychology and CA, this is not a problem, but is
interesting, and to be expected.

Indeed, defining leisure is not just a problem for the analyst. Similar difficulties are played out in participants' own attempts at definition. The extract below is taken from a dinner discussion where Sue asks the participants to define what the word 'leisure' means to them:

Extract One: SAS 28/12/97: A: 3-12.
Participants: S: Sue, A: Alice, P: Pamela, D: Donald, K: Keith

1 S: Right so what does the word leisure (.) mean to you?
2 (.)
3 K: Oh my God!{{(laughs)}}
4 D: {{(laughs)}}
5 P: [something you do out]
6 S: [You had your turn] (wait)
7 P: some- something you do outside your (.) er
8 working hours.
9 A: Yes and but obviously (.) different to people
10 that are retired (.) as to those working. =
11 P: =Oh yeah.
12 A: Mm?
13 P: I mean life's one long round of leisure isn't
14 it if you're- if you're retired.
15 D: [Joke joke]
16 (S): [Ahha]
17 P: Joke joke so you're told ((laughs))
18 D: Not when I'm doing the hoovering.
19 P: No. {{(laughs)}}
20 All: {{(laughter)}}
21 D: I think that my leisure is playing golf.
22 S: I knew that [was gonna come out any minute]
23 [Without any doubt at [all]
24 D: [Mm:]
25 P: Boring.
26 D: You can re[lax (.) and get up tight over it.
27 A: [Can you]- can you play golf without thinking
28 about it?
29 P: {{(You do)}}
30 D: No=
31 K: =You can't=
32 A: =You do really do have to [concentrate?]?
33 D: [Ooh yes] you have to think.
34 A: Oh.
35 (.)
36 D: Most definitely.
37 A: That is stressful then? {{(said with
38 mouthful)}}
39 K: {{(laughs)}}
40 D: [Yes very stressful] actually.
41 K: {{(laughs)}}
42 A: [Well how can that be leisure] if it's
43 stressful?
44 K: {{(laughs)}} Can you ] finish that piece of=

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47  D  [(W) W- it’s leisure.]
48  K:  =cake!
((six lines omitted))

54  D:  No it’s enjoyable but it i- it is stressful
55  yes. It’s
56  (.)
57  P:  And (he) gets very touchy if he has to miss
58  it.
59  D:  No:
60  (.)
61  S:  So what, >hang on< [what’s stressful] about
62  it?
63  D:  [(You know You)]
64  It’s stressful when you- w- when you hit the
65  ball and it doesn’t go where you want it to
66  go (. ) and then you get a little bit up tight
67  inside and you’ve got to try and then
68  relax.
69  A:  Mm (coz) you’ll miss it again.
70  P:  But then you [say]
71  D:  [the] more
72  P:  you- you- you just purely play it and
73  [enjoy it. You don’t get stressed you say]
74  D:  [Yes I do I play it and enjoy it I- I- I- ]
75  don’t really get very [stressful] no it’s=
76  A:  [No]
77  D:  =the it’s the better players who get
78  [stressful.]

This extract displays the difficulty in treating leisure as an abstract, definable thing whose meaning is (or could be) shared. This difficulty is evident in the opening sequence. Sue asks ‘Right so what does the word leisure (.) mean to you? (lines 1-2) Keith responds ‘Oh my God!’ and laughs (line 4), and Donald laughs in overlap (line 5). While we never get to hear the precise reason why they react in this way, it is clear that Keith and Donald jointly attend to Sue’s question as a rather problematic one, that is not at all easy to respond to.

The participants themselves disagree with one another’s interpretations. Pamela suggests leisure means ‘something you do outside your (. ) er working hours’ (lines 8-9). Alice, however, does not affiliate, but responds ‘Yes and but obviously (. ) different to people that are retired (. ) as to those working’ (lines 10-11). Her ‘Yes and but obviously (. )’ indicates that she is about to offer an alternative response that qualifies something in Pamela’s remarks. Notice that she does this rather carefully so as not to appear to be directly undermining Pamela. She constructs what she is about to say as ‘obvious’, and therefore as something that Pamela may have already taken into account. Alice problematizes the work/leisure dichotomy by pointing out that Pamela’s
comments can not be straightforwardly mapped on to the experiences of retired people, for whom the ‘work’ part of the equation is not directly relevant. Pamela immediately concedes ‘oh yeah’ (line 12). In just these few lines then, the participants do not simply off-load some pre-formed ‘views’ about leisure. Instead, we see evidence of disagreement, and careful identity management - constructing one’s remarks so as not to offend others.

Part of the trouble with the concept of leisure is displayed in the participants’ ironic play with it. This demonstrates how statements about leisure can be invested, or perform moral work. For example, having just conceded to Alice, Pamela remarks ‘I mean life’s one long round of leisure isn’t it if you’re- if you’re retired’ (lines 14-15). Pamela thus problematizes one possible implication of Alice’s comments - that retired people do not work - thus ironizing or playing on the ‘typical’ ‘work/leisure’ dichotomy. One of the risks here, however, is that Pamela’s comments might be heard as a rather cutting counter to Alice, being ironic at her expense. Indeed, Alice does not respond, which may be indicative of a rather ‘po-faced’ receipt (Drew, 1987).

There is interactional evidence of the participants’ attempt to manage this risk, and deflect the trouble their comments may have engendered. Donald and Pamela immediately attend to the non-serious nature of Pamela’s remarks: Donald’s ‘Joke joke’ (line 16), and Pamela’s ‘Joke joke so you’re told’ (line 18). Pamela changes her footing here (‘so you’re told’), which neutralizes her accountability for her earlier ‘ironic’ remarks, voicing them as other people’s comments, not her own (Clayman, 1992; Goffman, 1981). Moreover, Donald works to demonstrate that the irony has a serious point: He makes reference to a concrete personal example: ‘Not when I’m doing the hoovering’ (line 19). In doing so, Donald positions himself as one of the retired people Pamela’s rather general remarks apply to. He shows how his experiences problematize Alice’s comments, thus reinforcing the appropriateness of Pamela’s remarks. Pamela affiliates with Donald, providing a further demonstration that her comments were meant ironically (line 20), and everyone (including Alice) now laughs (line 21). Here, then, the participants do not treat the issue of definition as a problem that they have to solve in an abstract decontextualized way, but they display problematic or contrastive things about it.

Accounts of leisure can be treated as things to be sent up, or used to tease the speaker.
Here, for example, Donald says ‘I think that my leisure is playing golf’ (line 22). Sue replies ‘I knew that was gonna come out any minute’ (line 23). This isn’t simply an example of Sue off-loading her prior ‘knowledge’ about Donald’s golf-playing, but it works as a display that indicates the predictability of Donald’s account, thus sending it (and Donald) up. Pamela’s ‘Bor†ing’ reinforces Sue’s interpretation. Pamela and Sue thus build their contrastive position against Donald, displaying what is patently not leisure for them! Consensus, then, does not seem to be the participants’ goal here. Rather, they use their agreements and disagreements to do interactional, interpretative work, forming alignments, making jokes, and positioning themselves and others in a certain way.

This lack of consensus is not just something which appears between participants’ accounts, but is also something displayed within accounts. Donald, for example, begins by describing why his golf is leisure: ‘You can re†ax (.) and get up tight over it’ (line 27). Alice, however, treats ‘relaxing’ and getting ‘up tight’ as potentially contradictory experiences. She says ‘That is stressful then?’ (line 39). Donald, however, does not attend to the apparent inconsistency, but simply agrees that it is ‘very stressful actually’ (line 42). Alice then explicates the upshot of her previous remarks, but this time in a more direct fashion: ‘Well how can that be leisure if it’s stressful? (lines 44-45). In spite of Alice’s comments, in the turns that follow Donald maintains his argument that golf is both enjoyable and stressful (line 54): ‘It’s stressful when you- w- when you hit the ball and it doesn’t go where you want it to go’ (lines 64-66). Therefore, Donald quite consistently constructs stress as ‘part and parcel’ of his leisure experience.

Only a few turns later, however, and in response to some rather different interactional circumstances, Donald works to eliminate the ‘stressful’ element from his account. Pamela highlights another (apparent) inconsistency between what Donald ‘normally’ says, and what he is saying on this occasion: ‘But then you say the more you- you- you just purely play it and enjoy it. You don’t get stressed you say’ (lines 70-73). ‘Scripting up’ what someone ‘usually’ says is a powerful way to undermine their comments, or force them to account for what they have said on this occasion (Edwards, 1994, 1995). Donald can either deny what Pamela quotes him as saying (which might entail portraying Pamela as a ‘liar’), or change his tack, and account for the apparent contradiction. Having been put ‘on the spot’, Donald chooses the latter option, and
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changes his argument: 'I- don’t really get very stressful no it’s=the it’s the better players who get stressful. (lines 74-78). Therefore, Donald reconstructs his account of the golfing experience by removing the 'stressful' element - deferring it onto the 'better players'. In this way, he retains the relationship between stress and leisure, but as something experienced by others, not by him.

A leisure researcher who treats participants' accounts of leisure as a reflection of some relatively stable 'core' view about what leisure means or feels like, may find it difficult to account for this variability. For discursive psychologists, however, as I have already argued, this variability is not a problem, but is to be expected. The variability in this extract, for example, can be accounted for in terms of the local interactional circumstances, the interpretative context in which Donald constructs his account, and the activities it is designed to perform. Donald backs down and changes his argument as a direct response to Pamela’s explicit challenge, and not because his ‘underlying’ views about his leisure have changed. From a discursive perspective, there is no essential ‘view’, only views constructed on, and for, particular occasions.

The ‘meaning’ of leisure, then, may not be as ready-made or consensual as it might at first appear (or as we might hope!). We may have a shared understanding of leisure in the abstract, but that masks the kinds of practical concerns that participants' situated practices of definition attend to. Leisure theorists’ definitions of leisure have depended on it not being applied in specific interactional situations. However, as I have demonstrated here, the precise meaning of leisure is in its application, and not in its dictionary, conceptual sense.

As I have shown in my analysis, participants do not construct leisure as absolute, or contingent. On some occasions, they describe leisure as though it is a concrete, 'thing' (Donald appears to have little trouble identifying what his leisure is, for example), while on other occasions, the participants draw attention to the contingency of leisure 'meanings' and problematize the work/leisure dichotomy. Therefore, the issue of whether leisure is absolute or contingent is not solved by participants, but is worked up as a participants' concern.

Leisure theorists spend much of their time attempting to overcome (what they see as)
the 'problem' of variability in participants' accounts. They try to reach some degree of consensus about the 'meaning' of leisure, when consensus may not even exist. From a discursive perspective, and as I have shown above, 'meanings' are not concrete things that can be plucked from within (or outside) the self. They are collaboratively produced, situated interactional accomplishments. Leisure does not exist outside of these 'reality' constructing practices, but is bound up in the interpretive work associated with them. Nonetheless, leisure theorists still treat leisure as existing independently of that descriptive work, and they assume that it is an appropriate exercise to shave off all the contextual particulars.

According to Gilbert and Mulkay (1984) scientists' 'consensus accounts', like participants' accounts of leisure, are not 'literal descriptions of an independently social reality', or the outcome of a set of 'standardised interpretative procedures'. Rather 'consensus accounts' are constructed and deconstructed by different participants, and by the same participants on different occasions, depending on the 'interpretative work' (1984: 140) their accounts are designed to perform.

As I argued in my discussion of paradigm shifts in chapter two, achieving consensus, or talking about consensus, is a rhetorical and constructive business. Similarly, what leisure is is not a ‘social fact’, but is 'a contingent product of participants' variable interpretative procedures' (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984: 120). Even in its broadest, conceptual sense, the meaning of leisure may be inseparable from its disciplinary and historical constitution, which so thoroughly structures its subject matter (cf. Rose, 1996). As I will be arguing in more detail in the next section, it is this constructive work that discursive psychologists and conversation analysts have shown to be so important.

In sum, as a constructionist approach to knowledge and reality, ethnomethodologically informed discursive psychology and CA prompt us to ask completely different questions of our topic and data. Quests to pin down 'the meaning of leisure', or come up with once-and-for-all watertight definitions, are rejected in favour of an examination of the ways in which leisure meanings are constructed in situ. This approach bypasses the problems of conceptualization and definition expressed by the leisure researchers discussed in chapter two, focussing instead on how our research participants themselves construct leisure 'meanings' in their talk. In fact, a discursive, CA
approach offers a particularly radical and challenging departure for leisure studies, since it asserts that attempts at definition, and attempts at location (situating leisure as part of the macro-structural/micro interactional realm, or some ambiguous amalgam of both), are practical matters that can not be solved in a definitive way. Consensus thus becomes the topic, not the goal.

It should now be clear how a discursive and CA approach attends to the first problem of definition. Participants may orient to leisure as meaningful and as existing 'out there'. However, from a discursive and CA perspective, the interesting questions for research are not 'what are these meanings?' and 'can we make generalizations about these meanings and come up with a more adequate definition of leisure?', but rather, 'how do participants construct an account of leisure's meaningfulness and out-thereness'? 'What purposes do such accounts serve?', and, more importantly for the purposes of this thesis, 'how, if at all, are accounts of leisure gendered?' 'How is the moral or normative nature of leisure constructed and oriented to?'

(ii) The Action Orientation and Indexicality of Talk is Ignored

As my introduction to discursive psychology and CA, and the analysis above has shown, what people say has an action orientation. It can be used to manage blamings, perform greetings, make complaints, joke and tease people, and so on. It is precisely because of the indexicality and context sensitive nature of utterances that we get so much variability within and between participants' accounts (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). In much qualitative leisure research (including that of Wearing), however, participants' accounts are taken at 'face-value', and are interpreted as unconstructive and decontextualized phenomena. This contrasts with the approach of discursive psychology and CA, where accounts are treated as interactional accomplishments.

As we have seen, Wearing argues that her participants' descriptions count as evidence for *resistance* to traditional gender norms. However, she is unable to *demonstrate* such (political) claims with reference to her data, or explain variations within her participants' accounts. As Widdicombe and Wooffitt state in relation to youth subcultures, we should not take what participants say about the oppositional or non-conforming nature of their activities, at face value. Instead we need to show how oppositional narratives
like all narratives... are mediated through communicative contingencies generated in the course of face-to-face interaction. For example, they are produced in response to an implicit challenge to formulaic expressions and hence threats to the integrity of respondents' claims that punk is about rebellion and being anti-establishment... opposition is not an intrinsic feature of particular activities or of appearance; the oppositional significance of punks' activities and lifestyle is achieved through their descriptions of those activities and so on. Therefore, resistance is a discursive not a symbolic act.

(1995: 204, 206)

Simply reading off 'resistance' from participants' accounts without reference to the local interactional circumstances, or the activities such accounts perform, will inevitably create findings that are strewn of their rich contextual particulars. It is these features of stake and local identity work which leisure theorists such as Wearing need to take more seriously if we are to have any confidence in assertions about leisure as resistance. According to Widdicome and Wooffitt, for example, resistance is an interactional activity, not something that can be linked up with 'individuals', 'identity', or concrete 'behaviours'.

Wearing also treats her participants' descriptions as unconstructive evidence of what they think, feel or believe, or as evidence of their potential or actual behaviours. This is a cognitivist approach in which 'method' is treated as a transparent window to the 'internal' reality of participants' subjective experiences and cognitive processes (such as attitudes). Method is treated as a resource for collecting views, perceptions and opinions, rather than a context in which activities get done.

One of the implications of this approach is that researchers worry that people may 'lie' at interview and ruin their attempts to uncover the world 'under the skull'. As I have argued in my discussion of variability, this is often treated as a problem to be overcome with more sophisticated research instruments, rather than a common and 'to be expected' feature of all research. According to Henderson, for example, 'two of the major issues raised in life history interviews are the genuineness and credibility of the data....the interviewee's ability to tell the truth, willingness to tell the truth, accurate reporting, and corroboration' (1991: 81). Because of this, she says 'it is important to listen carefully to what feelings and emotions underlie what is being said' (1991: 81). The researcher might want to encourage the respondent to 'tell the truth' by offering 'realistic expectations, use altruistic appeals, be sympathetic, offer a new experience or a chance for catharsis, and express the importance of the research' (1991: 77).
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From a discursive and CA perspective, talk and texts are treated very differently. Since all talk is both constructed and constructive, indexical and action oriented, discursive psychology advocates a non-cognitivist research agenda (Edwards, 1997; Edwards and Potter 1992; Potter and Edwards, in press). Descriptions of the mind, like descriptions of the world, are used to do business: 'Instead of considering 'cognition' as a collection of more or less technical inner entities and processes, the focus is on how mental phenomena are both constructed and oriented to in peoples' practices' (Potter and Edwards, in press a: 1; Potter, 1999). Discursive psychologists do not suggest that there is nothing going on under people's skulls, 'rather, discursive social psychology is moving both the analytic and explanatory focus from cognitive processes and entities to discursive practices and the resources they draw on' (Potter 1998b: 235-236, emphasis in original). From this perspective, 'lying' and 'forgetting' are not problems for research, since all talk, including descriptions of mental entities such as 'memory', are action oriented and constructive (Shotter, 1990). Establishing their status in relation to some 'truth' or 'reality' becomes irrelevant.

Therefore, the processes of 'the mind' and action are not objective and separable 'entities', the former influencing, underlying or determining the latter (Edwards, 1997). 'The mind' does not exist as an internal core that is independent of action, the latter social and the former non-social. Instead, descriptions of mind, like descriptions of the world, are fundamentally social, action oriented, and analytically tractable phenomena. As Potter argues, constructionists see minds

not as having fixed essences but as being built from the symbolic resources of a culture. Indeed, in some constructionisms, 'mind' is not a mental entity at all, but a discursive move: a set of stories that people tell or a set of different discursive practices for dealing with one another as moral and accountable. (1996b: 127)

It follows that discursive psychologists are critical of the idea that mental entities such as 'attitudes' can be said to underlie behaviour. Instead, they are interested in how 'mentalist notions' or practices of evaluation are used by participants in interaction, and how they are constructed. They are interested in what people do with talk about mental processes such as feelings and attitudes. Thus, rather than treating sexism as something that is linked up with particular individuals, or as a type of 'attitude', discursive psychologists are interested in how sexist or racist evaluations 'are managed in particular interactions and either linked up with or separated from particular
individuals (Wetherell et al., 1987; Gill, 1993...)’ (Potter 1996b: 129).

So far I have discussed the first two problems, and shown the way in which a discursive and CA approach might help transcend them. Earlier I referred to the different approaches which have labelled themselves ‘discourse analysis’, and in the sections that follow, I argue that a discursive approach which incorporates a strong element of CA is the most appropriate (both theoretically and politically) for analyzing people’s talk about gender and leisure. This approach, I suggest, best captures the interactional subtleties of talk, and the management of prejudice in action. Before explaining why this is so, it is necessary to highlight the limitations of one particular form of discourse work, that of ‘critical discourse analysis’ (from here-on ‘CDA’).

(iii) Dualistic Constructions of Macro and Micro ‘Contexts’ (and ‘Structure’ and ‘Agency’) are not Problematized

As we saw in the first part of this chapter, Wearing tries to overcome what she sees as the determinism of ‘macro-structural’ approaches, and the neglect of power and gender inequality in ‘micro-interactional’ approaches, by combining the two. In this way, she hopes to obtain a more inclusive and balanced picture of women, as both constrained and resistant at the same time. This approach is not new: Social theorists have been attempting to build bridges between these ‘realms’ for decades (see Ellis, 1999, and Mouzelis, 1995).

As I will be arguing in chapter six, many feminists - especially those with strong political engagements - have criticized discursive psychology (and especially CA) for favouring the ‘micro-interactional’ over the ‘macro structural’ realm (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1995: 6). Many discursive and CA researchers have been criticized for paying little attention to the ways in which the ‘big’ sociological issues of gender, class, power, and other structural inequalities, influence or determine what gets said. Some researchers argue that without a wider sense of what we mean by discourse and context, discursive psychology (and CA) loses its critical edge, and its ability to emancipate individuals.

There are now a variety of ways in which the macro-micro relationship has been theorized:
(a) Retaining the Macro/Micro Dualism

Many researchers adopt a non-CA version of discourse analysis (from here-on ‘DA’), in which talk is conceived as constrained, influenced, or otherwise determined by pre-existing forces of power ‘from above’ or ‘beyond’ the talk or text. They divide their version of society (if only implicitly) into macro/micro and structure/agency parts, and import macro-level notions of ‘context’. The ‘macro context’ is understood to exist independently of the ‘micro-interactional’ realm, working in a ‘top-down’ fashion to influence the way members talk and interact. Some of these researchers adopt a ‘bolt-on’ view, where they combine some of the analytic and theoretical principles from discursive psychology and CA with some form of social theory, assuming that it is ‘better than’ a purely technical CA approach. Schegloff (1997) refers to these theorists as ‘critical discourse analysts’. Some researchers who advocate this approach include, most notably, Burman and Parker (1993), Fairclough (1995), Hodge and Kress (1993), Parker (1992), Van Dijk (1993) and Wodak (1989, 1999). According to Fairclough and Wodak, the distinctive feature of CDA is that it is motivated by ‘emancipatory interests’ (1997: 259): ‘It intervenes on the side of dominated and oppressed groups and against dominating groups’ (1997: 259).

Like Wearing, critical discourse analysts adopt what they take to be a poststructuralist, Foucauldian notion of discourse, defined as ‘a coherent web of meanings; and persons are ascribed identities according to the ways they are positioned or embedded in relevant discourses’ (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995: 91). These discourses are ‘linguistic sets of a higher order than the sentence... and carried out or actualized in or by means of texts’ (Marin, 1983, quoted in Parker 1992: 7, emphasis in original, cited in Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995: 59). The critical discourse analyst does not just treat talk and writing as texts, but also objects, events, and cultural products such as advertisements. They treat them as ‘imbued with meaning’. In other words, discourses ‘inhabit’ these texts (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995: 59).

One problem of this approach is that it implies the discourse comes first - only to be ‘actualized’ in the text. Since discourses are regarded as ‘of a higher order than the sentence’ (Marin, 1983), this shifts attention away from the local, interactional features of talk, to extra-discursive and extra-contextual factors. These factors are, in turn,
treated as determining or constraining:

The social practices of discourse use often disappear from sight altogether... Discourses become seen as potent causal agents in their own right, with the processes of interest being the work of one (abstract) discourse on another (abstract) discourse, or the propositions or 'statements' of that discourse working smoothly and automatically to produce objects and subjects.

(Wetherell and Potter, 1992: 90)

Parker, for example, suggests that discourses 'facilitate and limit, enable and constrain what can be said (by whom, where, when)' (1992: xiii, cited in Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995: 59). There is, then, an implicit notion of social structure and causation in this version of DA, where discourses reflect, perpetuate or challenge unequal power relations that are constituted by the material and economic base of society. These discourses have 'ideological effects' (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995: 60). The problem with such a theorization, however, is that 'discourses' are reified. They appear as 'coherent and carefully systematized... wholes which take on the status of causal agents' (Potter, Wetherell, Gill and Edwards, 1990: 209). They are abstract entities, which lurk behind people's talk, moving us further from, and not closer to, instances of actual language use (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995: 91).

This type of CDA, then, is theoretically and politically loaded. It is motivated by the idea that, as theorists, we should make political interventions and expose inequalities and 'the ideological workings of specific discourses in texts' (1995: 60). DA which does not have this 'ideology critique' at its core, is thought to support the status quo. It is an illegitimate version of DA, or, to use Burman and Parker's phraseology, 'traditional positivist methods masquerading as discourse analysis' (1993: 11, cited in Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995: 61). As I demonstrate later, however, CDA actually places limits on the analysis, making it less and not more likely to challenge the status quo, diverting the analyst's attention from 'an investigation of the ways in which people themselves fashion their talk to address social and political issues' (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995: 64-65).

As I have argued in my analysis of Wearing (1992), CDA has a tendency towards 'ascriptivism' (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995: 62): That is, it maps 'discourses' onto talk 'without explicating the basis for that imputation' (1995: 62). Consequently, CDA researchers overlook the 'social functions' and action orientation of language use, and the interactional context in which utterances are produced (1995: 63). Analytic claims
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(like those made by Wearing about 'resistance', for example), remain 'unsubstantiated by the data from which they are purportedly produced' (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995: 63). This is significant, since critical discourse analysts often claim to use their research to speak 'on behalf of' or 'give voice to' their participants: As Widdicombe argues

Although analysts may wish to use discourse to speak on behalf of powerless and marginalised groups, their analytic concerns do not give those groups a voice. Indeed... discourse analysis actually seems to deny the significance of what people may be saying and doing with their talk. (1995: 65)

CDA researchers may actually deny the significance of what their participants say, by assuming they know, in advance of the analysis, what is important or politically significant. They make their analysis of participants’ talk subservient to their analytic claims.

(b) Transcending the Macro/Micro Dualism?: Interpretative Repertoires

The discursive psychological notion of 'interpretative repertoire' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984; Potter et al., 1990; Wetherell and Potter, 1988, 1992), was developed to overcome the problems inherent in CDA, and some Foucauldian and poststructuralist notions of discourse. These repertoires or 'pre-existing linguistic resources' (Gill, 1996: 142), such as metaphors and figures of speech, develop historically and can be deployed on any given occasion to construct a particular account. They are 'constituted through a limited range of terms used in particular stylistic and grammatical constructions' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 149), and are the 'available resources for making evaluations, constructing factual versions and performing particular actions' (Potter and Wetherell 1995a: 89). They help us to understand both the content of talk and its organization (1995a: 89). The particular choice of repertoire made from the large number of possibilities depends upon the specific requirements of the local context. Thus, repertoires are resources which can be flexibly applied and 're-worked' to suit the occasion (Potter 1996b: 131). Indeed, the key point is that 'it is the attempt to accommodate this flexible, local use that differentiates interpretative repertoires from the more Foucaultian notion of 'discourses' (Potter et al., 1990; Parker, 1992)' (Potter, 1996b: 131). We choose between different
repertoires depending on the task at hand, and it is this choice amongst alternatives, and talk’s action orientation, which gives language use its constructive nature.

This interpretative repertoire style of analysis has been central to research on sexism and racism (Wetherell, Stiven and Potter, 1987; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Edley and Wetherell, for example, are keen to work with the macro/micro distinction, rather than against, or on one side of it. They assert that whilst many researchers have divided discursive psychology into ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches,5 this distinction is too crude. Instead, they say, ‘our broad aim is to build forms of discursive psychology which draw more eclectically on both styles of work and which study the ways in which people are simultaneously the master, and the slave, of discourse’ (1997: 206), ‘the products and the producers of discourse’ (1997: 206). Like Hepburn (1997), they seek to express rather than transcend or resolve the paradox (Edley and Wetherell, 1997: 206). Paraphrasing Marx, they assert that ‘whilst men make their own identities, they do not make them just as they please. They make them under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past’ (1997: 214; cf. Marx, 1951).6 For example, according to Edley and Wetherell, the ‘circumstances’ surrounding masculinity are constituted by the ‘institutional practices of the school’, where, they argue, a specific form of masculinity is both produced and reinforced (1997: 214).

While this type of approach attempts to account for both constraint and creativity, structure and agency, in discourse, some ethnomethodologists argue that there is no paradox to express. By attempting to draw on - to use Edley and Wetherell’s phraseology - both ‘top down’ and ‘bottom up’ approaches, these researchers overlook how critical, poststructuralist, and other ‘top-down’ versions of DA, are simply incompatible with the more ‘bottom-up’ approach of most ethnomethodology and CA. In fact, it is doubtful whether ethnomethodologists would be interested in the ‘top’ or ‘bottom’ of ‘bottom-up’, since that very distinction is one they find problematic.

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5 ‘Top-down’ approaches are characterized by notions of power and ideology, and theoretical influences derived from poststructuralism, while ‘bottom-up’ approaches have more in common with grounded theory.

6 It is rather surprising that Wetherell and Edley resort to an old quote by Marx to support their claims. As Widdicombe and Wooffitt state in relation to a separate issue: ‘It is odd... to find a theoretical tradition which is subject to intense critical speculation in sociology being assimilated into social psychology as a kind of radical departure’ (1995: 74, n5; cf. Parker, 1999).
As I will be elaborating in the next section, many ethnomethodologists assert that the macro-micro distinction is a ‘non-starter’, a distracting product of sociology’s preoccupation with dichotomous models of society (Sharrock and Watson, 1988). Therefore, there is no need to build bridges between the macro and the micro, agency and structure, since the premises upon which such bridge-building exercises are based are misconceived. Moreover, conversation analysts such as Schegloff (1997) reject the notion that there are extra-contextual factors such as ‘abstract’ discourses which exist, or have a reality independent of the text or piece of discourse in question. Instead, as we shall see later, features of (what are typically conceived as) ‘macro-structural’ contexts are analytically tractable.

The notion of ‘interpretative repertoire’ described above, has created some problems for discursive researchers who want to transcend the macro/micro dualism. While the notion was originally intended to convey the local use and flexibility of particular resources, Potter has recently suggested that ‘the generality of the notion of a repertoire may obscure local interactional ‘business’ that is being achieved by particular forms of discourse’ (1996b: 131). This echoes a point by Wooffitt (1992), who argues that talk-in-interaction is organized at a level of detail ‘for which the notion of linguistic repertoire cannot provide an account’ (1992: 60). Participants’ decisions about what to say are ordered at the most basic level: ‘single word selection’. Their choice of a particular word from a range of alternatives ‘exhibits a sensitivity to the sequential environment in which it occurs’. Therefore, Gilbert and Mulkay’s (1984), and (also Potter and Wetherell’s (1987)) notion of the linguistic repertoire, may help them focus on the functions of language use, but is, according to Wooffitt, ‘far too gross to take account of precisely these... features of the moment-by-moment, practical accomplishment of talk’ (Wooffitt, 1992: 61). Despite Wooffitt and Potter’s reservations, however, the concept of ‘interpretative repertoire’ continues to be used widely in discursive psychology.

(c) Dissolving the Dualism

For researchers who aim to dissolve the dualism, the context - be it ‘macro-structural’ or ‘micro-interactional’ - does not determine what gets said. In fact, in any piece of interaction, there are an indefinitely large number of ways in which context can be formulated (for example, is the context of a tutorial the classroom, a building, a
university, or a town?). As Schegloff (1987, 1991, 1992) argues, just because these descriptions of context are potentially available, it does not mean they are actually consequential for any piece of interaction. Contexts do not 'contain' our actions, or bear down on us to constrain our behaviour. In other words, interactions are not tied to contexts. As I will be arguing in chapter four, characteristics associated with cross-examination, can occur outside of courtrooms in the relatively informal talk of couples, just as features associated with 'interview talk' can occur outside of interviews.

As I will be showing in more detail in chapter six, the process of analysis does not require us to look beyond the talk to establish the context, and understand what the talk is orienting to. Participants’ talk constructs and orients toward the relevant context, and does so on a turn by turn basis. Heritage draws attention to this point when he states ‘it is thus through the specific, detailed and local design of turns and sequences that ‘institutional’ contexts are observably and reportably - i.e. accountably - brought into being’ (1984: 290). As Schegloff contends, ‘the search for context’ must begin with an analysis of the talk and conduct on the page, not beyond it (1997: 197). The task is to show how these contexts are of demonstrable relevance to the participants’ (Schegloff, 1992: 215), and this applies to other features typically assumed to exert their influence outside of talk - such as gender and power, for example (Schegloff, 1997).

Discursive and CA researchers are not concerned with external causes of what gets said. Thus, they do not look for generalized, abstract ‘rules’ or normative structures in talk - which might imply a ‘pre-discursive’ or ‘extra-discursive’ layer. Researchers often treat normativity as something which resides outside of talk, governing the way individuals behave. Discursive and CA researchers have challenged this interpretation, demonstrating how the ‘locus’ or ‘site’ of normativity, the place where it is ‘found’, if you like, is in the participants’ turn-by-turn orientation to ‘it’. From this perspective, rules and norms are the ‘oriented to’ concerns of participants, not analysts.

The notion of preference organization, for example, highlights how there is an interactional (as opposed to a psychological) preference for self-correction, for acceptance of invitations, and so on (Pomerantz, 1984). If a participant ‘violates’ these commonly found structures of talk, it does not mean that they are in breach of some abstract rule or norm, and will inevitably be sanctioned for it. Normativity is established only when a participant orients to an activity as in violation of a norm.
Thus, a dispreferred statement will usually be preceded by some interactional difficulty, a pause or hesitation, for example, but this does not mean that this is always so:

Norms are oriented to; that is, they are not templates for action but provide a way of interpreting deviations. The absence of a return greeting does not disconfirm a regularity; rather it is the basis for inference: the recipient is rude, sad or deaf perhaps (Heritage, 1988).

(Potter 1997b: 148, emphasis in original)

Therefore, norms and rules, like ‘social structures’ and ‘macro contexts’, do not exist independently of our actions, exerting pressure on participants to behave in particular ways - in the Parsonian ‘judgemental dope’ sense (Heritage, 1984). Simply showing that a practice or activity appears regularly, or even routinely in talk, does not provide evidence of a determining structure or context that operates beyond it. As Sharrock and Watson state

Situations are encountered which are routine, familiar, standard, and so on, but our problem is not ‘what, from outside those situations, ensures their routine, familiar, standard character?’ but ‘how are recognizable routineness, typicality and standardization built into the situation?’

(1988: 74)

To understand more fully how discursive psychology and CA help us overcome, or transcend our third problem, and why contexts do not need to be conceived in dualistic terms, it is necessary to have a fuller understanding of the ethnomethodological ideas which are the roots of both discursive psychology and CA.

Ethnomethodology, like other ‘micro sociologies’ is often criticized for its reductionist tendencies, for focusing solely on ‘agency’ and ignoring the ‘macro-structural’ ‘realm’ (Sharrock and Button, 1991). However, according to some ethnomethodologists (including Sharrock and Button, 1991; Sharrock and Watson, 1988), ethnomethodology cannot be placed unproblematically on either side of the macro/micro and structure/agency dualism, since this dualism is itself misconceived, a symptom of a modernist logic which tends to dichotomize everything for the sake of clarity. For ethnomethodologists ‘the agency/structure polarity is the product of a set of assumptions about the aims and character of theorizing, rather than the necessary pre-condition of sociological inquiry’ (Sharrock and Watson, 1988: 57). It is an ‘artifact’ of ‘those things which need never have been dissociated’ (Sharrock and Button, 1991: 88)
Indeed, for Sharrock and Watson

To invite ethnomethodology to conceive itself through the opposition of ‘structure’ or ‘agency’ or to contribute to the mediation-and-resolution of this opposition is to ask it to situate itself in the terms of a dualism whose very constitution it finds problematic.

(1988: 61)

Instead, they say, ethnomethodology ‘obviates that polarity completely’ (1988: 64). It has ‘no work’ for the concepts of ‘social actor’ and ‘social structure’ to do (Sharrock and Button, 1991: 141).

As we have seen, researchers such as Wetherell and Edley attempt to express rather than transcend dualistic thinking. However, as I argue in chapter six, this can cause more theoretical and methodological problems that it solves. According to Sharrock and Watson, for example, one can take a stand on one side of the dualism, or attempt to overcome the duality, but in doing so, one will be ‘asking what to do about the problem of this or that duality, rather than how one comes to be in possession of such a dualism to begin with’ (1988: 58). From this perspective, the ‘macro’ and the ‘micro’, once useful as theoretical and analytic tools, have been reified, and now limit rather than aid our understanding of the workings of all contexts in talk.

Ethnomethodologists, in contrast, advocate a complete respecification of the relation between social action (the ‘micro’) and social order (the ‘macro’). Social actions are ‘irreducibly events-in-a-social order’ and so can not be identified adequately apart from that order. It follows, then, that the order in question can not be identified independently of the actions that are sited within it (Button, 1991: 7).

(iv) Analytic Conceptualizations Overlook or Distort Participants’ Orientations

Our fourth problem is that researchers such as Wearing use concepts which are not grounded in participants’ practices or orientations. ‘Resistance’ for example (which I mentioned under point ‘i’, above), was not something that Wearing’s participants were themselves oriented to as relevant. Resistance was inferred from the data, with no apparent grounding in it. In discursive psychology and CA, however, the interpretations made by the analyst are not ‘abstracted from [their] conversational
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Discourse analytic research generally avoids trading on analysts' prior assumptions about what might be called ethnographic particulars (e.g. participants' status, the nature of the context, the goals of the participants), preferring to see these things as things that are worked up, attended to and made relevant in interaction rather than being external determinants.

(Potter 1997b: 158)

Schegloff (1997) criticizes CDA researchers for imposing analysts’ categories on participants’ practices. As we have already seen, Schegloff (1997) argues that context (and the sense interactants make of it), is ‘endogenously’ grounded in talk, and one of the goals of CA is to explicate the orientation of participants to that context. These are contexts which are ‘demonstrably relevant to the participants’, and ‘not necessarily ones relevant to the inquirer doing the analysis’ (1997: 165). Therefore, for discursive psychologists and conversation analysts, it is the participants’ and not the analysts’ sense of what is going on that is important. This focus on participants’ orientations, is one of the main features which differentiates CA from the more critical and CDA alternatives, and from the key assumptions and analytic goals of leisure studies. The significance of such a participant focussed approach, says Schegloff, is that it serves ‘as a buffer against the potential for academic and theoretical imperialism which imposes intellectuals’ preoccupations on a world without respect to their indigenous resonance’ (1997: 165).

Widdicombe (1998b) applies these insights to the concept of ‘identity’. Traditionally, demographic features of identity such as gender, class, and race, have been treated as variables which are intrinsically relevant to our behaviour. Indeed, a whole social science machinery has been developed which is based on such assumptions, and which compares and contrasts individuals according to their membership of certain categories. Widdicombe (1998b), however, argues that one’s category membership will not always be relevant to an interaction. Certain features of identity will be made relevant on some occasions and not others. Which ones are and which ones are not is ultimately an interactional matter (for the participants), that cannot be decided in advance of the analysis. From this perspective, then, identity and ones membership of certain identity categories does not necessarily cause, or help explain what goes on in a particular piece of interaction.
As I have already argued with reference to Wearing's use of the concept of 'resistance', and the CDA approach to 'discourse', many critical and feminist leisure researchers come to their data with pre-existing terms of reference, categories, aims, theories and a whole range of other political preoccupations, and attempt to make their data fit those concerns. They do this, paradoxically, despite often explicitly aiming to 'see through the eyes of' their participants, to understand what leisure 'means' to them. The problem with this approach, according to Schegloff, is that, while it may be well intentioned, it involves a kind of 'theoretical imperialism', in which the researcher 'gets to stipulate the terms by reference to which the world is to be understood'. The participants' discourse is therefore made subservient 'to contexts not of its participants' making, but of its analysts' insistence' (1997: 167, 183).

According to Schegloff, we need to analyze participants' concerns before, and not after we set about extrapolating what they say to the socio-economic context, to issues of gender, power, class, and race, and so on (1997: 170). In fact, for Schegloff, the social and political may indeed be a constitutive element of the phenomena we start off with. The trick is to demonstrate this with our analysis, not in spite of it (1997: 170). In other words, we should be careful not to reify the existence of power and the other 'big' sociological variables. Schegloff concedes that this does not mean we cannot do CDA. Rather, he says 'you need to have technical analysis first, in order to constitute the very object to which critical or sociopolitical analysis might sensibly and fruitfully be applied' (1997: 174). It is then that we 'may find it no longer in point' (1997: 174). This issue will be addressed in more detail in chapter six.

(a) Gender Categories and Participants' Orientations

In much research across the social sciences, including that by Wearing, and the other researchers whose work I described in chapter two, gender is treated as an independent variable which determines or constrains talk and/or behaviour. What participants say is often coded according to their gender, and then gender is used to account for quantifiable differences between the language use or speech 'styles' of men and women. Some of the early work on sex differences in interruption by Zimmerman and West (1975), and the work of feminist linguists such as Coates (1986), Holmes (1995), Lakoff (1975), and Tannen (1990) used this, or a similar approach. Likewise,
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In some early discursive work, Wetherell et al. (1987) 'compare female and male participants' responses to to a series of questions' (1987: 64).

The problem with this style of research, is that it may inadvertently perpetuate difference by beginning with the analyst's assumption of difference, and looking for and coding responses in terms of those differences. This is a circular approach, in which gender is not only used to code responses, but is also the explanatory (causal) variable. The CA approach to context and participants' orientations, in contrast, highlights the problem of implying that gender determines the structure or content of talk. Indeed, the 'sex differences' approach reifies gender, treating it as relevant to the interaction when it may not be relevant to it at all. As I have already argued, there are an infinite number of contextual variables and participant identities that may be relevant to what is going on in any particular piece of interaction. The analytic challenge is to demonstrate their relevance through and not prior to analysis.

One consequence of the Schegloffian approach to participants' orientations, described above, is that in much recent discursive and CA work, the focus has shifted from viewing gender as a pre-existent causal variable, to exploring the constitution of gender in talk, when and if it is relevant and oriented to. At its most basic level, this involves exploring the work of gender categories in use.

Derek Edwards (1998), for example, has drawn on Sacks’ work on social identity categories (1979, 1992/1995; see also, Hester and Eglin, 1997), to show how words such as ‘girl’ and ‘woman’ carry their own subtle nuances of meaning (‘associations with age, marital status, and potential sexual availability’, for example (Edwards, 1998: 25)). These categories are also indexical, flexible resources, and, as I will demonstrate in chapter five, these categories may be deployed selectively, for a range of interactional tasks (see Frith and Kitzinger, under submission; Hopper and LeBaron, 1998; Stokoe, 1998). We categorize ourselves and others differently, across different situations and contexts, precisely because our selections are ‘not driven by objective category membership, nor a slavish adherence to semantics’ (1998: 26):

> Categorization is approachable discursively as something we actively do, and do things with (Edwards, 1991), rather than some piece of perceptual machinery that gets switched on by 'stimulus' events. Social categorizations are interaction's business, its matters in hand, not its causal effects or conditions.

(Edwards, 1998: 33)
A consequence of viewing identity categories in this way, is that, contrary to what some social theorists might have us believe, we do not necessarily need extra-discursive, or extra-textual cultural knowledge to decode the relevance, of, say, identity ascriptions for the interaction in which they are deployed (Antaki, 1998). This type of work demonstrates analytically how identities are co-constructed, conversational resources. As I will be exploring further in chapters five and six, gender categories can be rhetorically contrasted with one another to perform interactional, context sensitive work. Identities are deployed variably in talk to do business.

(v) The Problem of Realism

Finally, as I have shown in my analysis of Wearing, above, many researchers treat the accounts of their participants as resources for finding out about some coherent, and relatively stable, ‘reality’ beyond or beneath their talk. Thus, for the realist, there is a distinction between ‘the phenomenon’ and ‘the description’ (Potter, 1992: 172). Accounts do not construct ‘reality’, the world and its objects, but map onto it. It follows that ‘the role of the researcher is to discover and explain this reality’ (Henderson, 1991: 24). For the realist, then, research may be described as

a systematic process of discovering and interpreting data to understand reality. The goal of social research is to discover, understand, and communicate truth about people in society. We might think of research as puzzle-solving. It is highly cumulative and when the research is completed we should have a picture of a particular ‘slice’ of the world.

(1991: 9)

As an anti-foundationalist approach, discursive psychology rejects this ‘reality-capturing’ stance. The discursive approach marks a radical break with realist views of language which treat the accounts of participants as a transparent medium through which we can somehow gain access to beliefs and attitudes in the world ‘under the skull’, or what goes on in ‘the world out there’. Discourse does not reveal a reality that exists beyond or beneath it, but constitutes (a version of) that reality. From this perspective then, ‘phenomena’ and ‘descriptions’, are not separate entities.

7 According to Antaki (1998), the claim ‘you look like Fagin’, is ‘the ascription of an identity’ and ‘neither of the participants in the interaction, nor we observers, need special cultural decoding or mental speculation to make that clear’ (1998: 76). We do not need to know that Fagin is a man, a human, or a Dickens scholar to understand that an identity ascription has taken place: ‘What does matter about a category is its indexical use...what is made of it then and there’ (1998: 80).
Descriptions construct phenomena as real, and what counts as real is participants', not analysts' business. Discursive psychologists and conversation analysts treat 'reality as a members' phenomenon' (Widdicombe, 1998b: 195). They are interested in the ways in which participants themselves build a sense of a concrete reality on a turn-by-turn basis.

Discursive psychologists have been particularly vocal in rejecting the simplistic, realist, approach to knowledge and reality. They advocate a move from a positivist or phenomenological epistemology to a constructionist one, and a realist or subtle realist ontology to a relativist one. Edwards et al. (1995) define 'relativism' as

our catch-all term for a variety of labels, some self-ascribed, most not, including (social) constructionists and constructivists, deconstructionists, pragmatists, postmodernists, epistemological (cognitive, epistemic) relativists, subjectivists, sceptics, interpretivists, reflexivists and, especially, radical or thoroughgoing or extreme versions of any of the above. The family resemblance is a determined (or stubborn) anti-realism. (1995: 43)

Relativists argue that all knowledge is socially produced and constructed and so, 'there are no independent standards of truth' (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 1988: 206). There can be no phenomena that are 'independent' and 'knowable', because all phenomena are constituted in and through the process of definition, and through our arguments about their existence.8

Realism is maintained through a number of rhetorical discursive 'moves' (Potter, 1992). Therefore, realism is not rejected in a simple way, but it becomes a kind of discourse that can be explored analytically, or even used by the analyst to tell a 'good story' (Potter, 1992: 172; Van Maanen, 1988). The researcher, then, is intimately involved in the construction of a particular version of reality. An understanding of this leads us into reflexivity - where the researcher's textual 'reality producing' moves, become the topic for analysis, not the resource (Ashmore, 1989; MacMillan, 1996a).

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8 As I argued in my discussion of Woolgar and Pawluch's (1985) notion of 'ontological gerrymandering' in chapter two, even when everything is treated as a construction, it is hard not to adopt a 'bottom line' realist position (Edwards et al., 1995: 41), and doubtful that we might want to.
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Implications

The implications of adopting a discursive and CA approach to leisure should now, hopefully, be clear. We would be liberated at last from having to define the 'meaning' of leisure, and/or discover its 'multi-dimensional', 'experiential' qualities (either prior to, or as a result of our analyses). We would no longer need to look for 'constraints' to women's (and men's) leisure, as though these operate in a determining fashion to construct experience from within some abstract macro-structural, extra-discursive 'realm'. We would not need to look for 'types' of leisure which have more potential than others to 'empower' women or men, or which are intrinsically 'resistant and oppositional'. The question would not be 'what does a specific leisure activity feel like?' or 'what is leisure's meaning to (certain types of) individuals?', but rather 'how do people talk about leisure?' And, more importantly for the concerns of this thesis, 'how and in what ways do participants construct gender as relevant to leisure?' How is normativity expressed', and 'what is at stake in such talk?'

The ethnomethodological re-conceptualization of the relationship between macro and micro 'realms' or 'contexts' set out in this chapter, provides a rather provocative challenge for the discursive and CA researcher interested in gender and leisure: Can we really find the workings of 'social structure' or 'macro contexts' on the page? Recent discursive and CA work on identity construction and membership categorization may offer one route into answering this question, since it provides insights into the relationship between participants' accounts and their construction of gendered identities.

This type of approach might fruitfully be applied to the three structuring concerns described in chapter two. Rather than coding participants' talk in terms of their gender and using this as the explanatory variable, we might want to explore how men and women's non-participation in certain activities is justified by participants, and how normative category boundedness is constructed, oriented to, and sustained (Sacks 1992/1995). We may want to consider how men describe their participation in sport and leisure without stereotyping themselves as just another 'macho' or 'typical' bloke, or how sexist and heterosexist claims or practices are managed by speakers. What interactional resources do participants use to bring off 'derogatory' remarks? And do participants attend to the derogatory or prejudiced nature of saying such things? Indeed,
what counts as an orientation to prejudice?

Answers to these questions may give us a much better sense of precisely how ‘the social’ and ‘the individual’ come together and are expressed in talk. In the remainder of this thesis, I set about answering - if only tentatively and partially - just some of them.

Summary

In this chapter I have outlined the distinctive contribution that a discursive and CA approach can bring to leisure research, and the implications of adopting such an approach.

I began the chapter with a critical review of the work of the feminist leisure theorist - Betsy Wearing, demonstrating how each of the five problems introduced in chapter two are manifested in her work. In the rest of this chapter, I have outlined the distinctive features of a discursive and CA alternative. I have shown how a discursive and CA approach can help transcend these five problems, prompting researchers to ask completely different questions of their topic and data.

As we have seen, a discursive and CA approach offers a ‘world view’ rather than a distinct ‘method’ which can be applied to a whole range of different topics. The discursive, CA approach is not something that can be used as a ‘supplement’ to other theories or methods, but represents a perspective in its own right, which asks distinctive questions of its data. It is a radical approach to knowledge and reality which continues to push back the boundaries of social psychology and other disciplines. Indeed, researchers are only beginning to realize its potential for research on gender issues.

I will be returning to many of the issues that I have covered here in later chapters. In the next chapter, I introduce the methods and procedures used in this thesis. I consider the relationship between context and talk in more detail, with particular reference to the interactional construction of ‘method’. The discursive and CA approach to context introduced in this chapter, offers a new way of re-conceptualizing our understanding of ‘method’, and the status that we attach to our data collection practices. If our analytic procedures and practices are a constructed and constructive business, then what
implications does this have for the method as a scientific instrument? Can we only call an interview an 'interview' if participants orient to it as contextually relevant? What happens when the analyst is also a participant and these roles become blurred? It is to these issues that I will now turn.
Chapter Four: Research Methods

Introduction

In the previous chapter I demonstrated how a discursive and CA approach can help overcome the five 'problems' in leisure theory described in chapter two, and exemplified in the work of Betsy Wearing (1992). In this chapter I do two things. First, I describe the materials and procedures used in this, and the rationale for using an eclectic range of data sources.¹

Second, I address the issue of contextual 'bias' in research, and compare the traditional and discursive/CA approaches to it. As we saw in chapter three, leisure theorists such as Wearing treat research bias as a problem to be overcome with better measurement techniques, or by improving the research instrument. In contrast, the discursive and conversation analytic approach, with its emphasis on the action orientation of talk, treats 'bias' as both unavoidable and theoretically interesting. Indeed, this insight has prompted some researchers to treat the interview as a piece of interaction in its own right, and analyze it as such (see Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995).

Nonetheless, within CA, and increasingly in discursive psychology, researchers advocate the use of 'naturally occurring' data, and claim that it is somehow 'better than' 'artificial', 'got up' or 'contrived' data (Potter and Wetherell, 1995b). CA researchers make a further distinction between 'mundane' conversation, and the interaction found in 'institutional' settings. They argue that 'mundane' interaction is the 'primordial' form, against which other 'institutional' forms depart in significant and analytically tractable ways (Drew and Heritage, 1992).

Drawing on Holstein and Gubrium's (1997) notion of the 'active interview', and

¹ Discursive psychologists have problematized the distinction between theory and method. Discursive psychology is 'a whole perspective on social life and research into it' (Potter, 1996b: 130), rather than a theory or method in any traditional sense of defining those terms. As Potter and Wetherell argue 'there is no analytic method...as this term is understood elsewhere in social psychology. Rather, there is a broad theoretical framework, which focuses attention on the constructive and functional dimensions of discourse' (1987: 169). The issues covered in this chapter, then, are put here for pragmatic reasons, and relate to on-going 'methodological' debates. The separation of theory from method is also ideal for fulfilling thesis requirements!
insights from Heritage and Greatbatch's (1991) research on the news interview, I argue that my data problematizes both the natural/contrived and mundane/institutional distinctions. I consider the extent to which my data maps onto or departs from (i) the turn-taking system, and (ii) the neutral stance, which have been identified as normative features of the news interview.

I draw on CA's own claims about the local production of context, to argue that the natural/contrived and mundane/institutional distinctions have been exaggerated. They have a tendency to reify the method as another form of 'macro-context', which will determine or constrain interaction and the 'type' of data one will obtain. Instead, I argue that if we treat method as just one of many potentially relevant contexts to an interaction, then the status and relevance of any activity as method, interview, focus group, mundane conversation, or whatever, and participants' 'roles' or identities within 'it' (focus group moderator, participant, co-conversationalist), has to be worked up in the course of that interaction and attended to as such. This raises some important questions about the relationship between method, context and data.

This chapter will be divided into three parts:

Part One: Materials, Gaining Access and Recruiting
Part Two: Procedures
Part Three: Issues

Part One: Materials, Gaining Access and Recruiting

The data upon which this thesis is based comprise a corpus of over 600 pages of transcribed talk-in-interaction from a variety of sources, including dinner discussions (and wine and pizza discussions), focus groups, and informal interviews (collected between December 1996 and February 1998), newspaper and magazine articles, television talk shows and documentaries (collected from December 1996 to date).
Rationale: Sampling and Generalizability Across Contexts/
Participants

Issues of sampling and generalizability are rather different in discursive and non-discursive work. In discourse work 'the success of a study is not in the least dependent on sample size' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 161, emphasis in original). The focus is on interactional phenomena and language use, not on the individuals who produce that phenomena (Potter, 1998d: 135; ten Have, 1999: 50-52). Since ‘a large number of linguistic patterns are likely to emerge from a few people’ (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 161), several (rather than hundreds) of interviews, with a small sample may be adequate. Moreover, the process of transcription and analysis is ‘labour-intensive’ (1987: 161). Often, a larger sample will increase the workload, not the overall quality or validity of the analyses (1987: 161).

In most discursive and CA studies, the interest is in making generalizations about the *details of talk*, and not about the people being studied. Thus, the rationale for collecting data from a range of different sources is to explore the generality of certain *features of interaction*, conversational devices, and sequence types across varying contexts. These contexts may have different *local* constraints (although the extent to which contexts differ is itself a matter for analysis) (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 21; Perakyla, 1997: 214; ten Have, 12999: 136). As Hutchby and Wooffitt point out, ‘while there may be regularities across cases, each case is ultimately unique’ (1998: 116). In other words, the results of our analyses need to be ‘both *particularized* and *generalized*’ (1998: 95, emphasis in original, see also 112), and this maps onto the idea that resources for interaction are both context-sensitive and context free (1998: 141). Conversationalists may share conversational techniques which transcend a particular context, yet which, at the same time, ‘are specifically designed for use within it’ (1998: 124 and see 141).

While many studies do explore individual instances or contexts, looking for their specific or ‘unique’ features, in this research I used a range of different data sources because I wanted to be able to make some tentative *general* claims about interaction which were not ‘setting sensitive’ (ten Have, 1999: 52; Schegloff, 1999c: 144). By using different data sources, I was able to capture ‘the widest possible variation in
accounts’ (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 162). As Potter and Wetherell put it:

A person may offer a specific, limited version of their world in an interview compared to their writings or their unstructured conversation with their peers... By collecting documents from many sources... it is possible to build up a much fuller idea of the way participants’ linguistic practices are organized compared to one source alone.

(1987: 162)²

In addition, participants across contexts may undermine each others’ different versions, producing insights that might not be available through an analysis of a single case: ‘In effect, you can use people’s own ability to artfully (and very helpfully) poke holes in each others’ positions to reveal their constructed nature’ (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 162).

While this focus meant that it was not necessary to sample specific populations, or to obtain a large number of respondents, my corpus does include data from participants of different ages and from different backgrounds. This is a pragmatic choice designed to foreclose the potential criticism that ‘skewed’ demographic features of my sample (such as gender or age, for example) determined the interactions of my participants on any given occasion. Ultimately this maximizes the overall persuasiveness of the research findings - especially to the non-discursive and non-CA analyst.

In the following few pages, I will describe the range of data sources used, and the reasons for using them.

(i) The Informal Interviews

The advantage of using interviews is that they allow the researcher to directly intervene in the research process, to guide participants to talk about specific issues, and to ask a number of participants the same questions. While the analytic goal was not to produce a content analysis of the data, this process produces directly comparable responses that makes it easier to code common instances (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 163) and ‘identify regular patterns in language use’ (1987: 164).

² It is common practice for discursive psychologists to use a range of different data sources (see Potter 1996a; Edwards and Potter, 1992). Potter, for example, draws on an eclectic range of data sources in his work on fact construction. He says ‘my use of this wide selection of materials is driven by the conviction that there are general features of fact construction. That is, there are considerations that are likely to be attended to whatever the type of discourse’ (1996a: 8). Conversation analysts tend to use a less varied range of data sources, preferring ‘naturally occurring’ data from mundane or institutional settings.
Most of my interviews were 'active' in the sense that they were relatively informal and open-ended. An active interview can allow for diversity in participants' accounting practices, and promote a lively conversation rather than rigid question-answer exchanges (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 164; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Indeed, in my interviews I often played 'devil's advocate' which helped to provoke debate and produce some lively arguments.

The active interview can also be used to incite or provoke 'narrative production', forcing participants to provide justifications for responses that might otherwise remain implicit, and 'gain purchase on interpretive practice relating to matters that may not be casually topical, yet which are socially relevant' (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997: 126). Such matters may appear only rarely in 'mundane' conversation and so may be hard to capture 'naturally' (1997: 126). In addition, in the active interview the researcher's turns tend to be longer than those found in the more formal 'standardized' survey interview (Suchman and Jordan, 1990). Therefore, both parties' contributions are not only relevant to, but also significant for the analysis.

I conducted a total of five informal interviews. The first three of these were pilot interviews (see Box 6 for a copy of the pilot interview schedule). The table below details the date of each interview, the participants' (pseudonymized) names, their sex, age, and the approximate length of each session.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Length of Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10th December 1996</td>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19th March 1997</td>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23rd March 1997</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th December 1997</td>
<td>Eadie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Mid 90s</td>
<td>Half an hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28th December 1997</td>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>mid 20s</td>
<td>1 hour 30 mins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Box 6: Pilot Interview Schedule: Sample Questions

What does the word ‘leisure’ mean to you?
What types of leisure activities do you engage in?
Which aspects of your leisure do you enjoy most and why?
When would you say was your last leisure experience? (Describe)
Can you describe your feelings during that experience. What made it feel like leisure?
Can you describe for me a time when your leisure was fulfilling/satisfying.
Can you describe a time when your leisure was unfulfilling/dissatisfying.
Can you describe a time when you felt powerful during your leisure?
Can you describe a time when you felt powerless.
Can you describe a time when you felt constrained in terms of the types of leisure you can have or in terms of your actual leisure experience.
Is there any types of leisure you would like to have but can't for any reason?
Do you think the fact you’re a student/ the fact you’re male/female/your age effect your leisure in any way?
Are there any ways you feel your leisure differs from men’s/women’s leisure?
What do you think your leisure will be like in the future?
Do you feel that you have to behave in a certain way because you’re male/female?
Do you go out in single or mixed sex groups? (Why?)
Would you say that you ever behave in a way that’s not traditionally feminine/masculine?
In an ideal world what would your leisure experiences be like?
How do you think that your leisure relates to your work, if at all?

Participants were recruited from my network of friends and relatives, using a rather basic snowball sample. They agreed to participate on the basis that I wanted to ask them some questions about their leisure experiences. The purpose of the pilot interviews was to gain experience interviewing respondents, and to generate some initial ideas that might trigger new avenues for exploration. They were also used to get a feel for the types of things participants found important, and the best way to ‘get at’ gender issues in research. Therefore, the interview schedule was not intended as a rigid guide to ensure ‘standardized’ responses, but as a general prompting device that I expected to depart from, depending on the trajectory of individual interviews.

I decided to use the data from the pilot interviews as part of the final data corpus, since the material was so rich (and the time invested in transcription already significant!). While I continued to use interviews where groups were not available, later on in the data collection phase, I made more use of group discussions for the reasons described below.

(ii) The Focus Groups

While the interviews gave me quite a lot of control over the topics and issues discussed,
they were not ideal for producing ‘conversational’ data. Focus groups, in contrast, have been shown to provide such data. Focus groups have been defined as ‘a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment’ (Krueger, 1994: 6), and are now widely used to collect opinions and attitudes (Kitzinger, 1995). According to Morgan ‘the hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group’ (Morgan 1988: 12, emphasis in original).

The groups provided a more ‘naturalistic’ and interactive means of data collection than the one-on-one interviews (Wilkinson, 1998c). Unlike the survey interview, ‘focus groups are a contextual method; that is, they avoid focusing on the individual devoid of social context, or separate from interactions with others’ (Wilkinson 1999: 64, emphasis in original). They were full of the ‘conversational’ factors associated with group interaction, providing access to participants’ ‘own language, concepts and concerns’ (Wilkinson, 1998a: 188), and their ‘collective sense-making’ (Wilkinson, 1999c). Focus groups can help us understand how meanings are negotiated and re-negotiated (Wilkinson, 1999: 67), how identities are elaborated, and arguments developed (1999: 68). They tap into the processes of ‘social knowledge formation, rather than fixed attitudes’ (Green and Hart, 1999: 26), and offer the researcher ‘a slice of life’ (Puchta and Potter, 1999: 316).

In interviews, the researcher is the only person able to challenge the participants’ responses. In the focus groups, in contrast, participants tend to give ‘immediate feedback’ on each others’ views (Green and Hart, 1999: 24), forcing others to defend their position and offer justifications. They can argue with each other, tell jokes, or tease one another (Kitzinger, 1995: 299). Thus, the focus group is the ideal arena to find a range of different, possibly contradictory views and accounts, and generate fresh insights previously unavailable to the researcher. As Myers and Macnaghten point out, the ‘great strength’ of the focus group is ‘the liveliness, complexity and unpredictability of the talk, where participants can make sudden connections that confuse the researchers’ coding but open up their thinking’ (1999: 175), raising topics the moderator may never have thought of.
The focus group has been advocated as a distinctively feminist research tool, since the power and control of the researcher is reduced in a group as opposed to a one-on-one setting (Wilkinson, 1999: 70; Wilkinson, 1998b, 1998c). The balance of power shifts away from the researcher and there is a less hierarchical, more egalitarian relationship between the researcher and the researched (Wilkinson, 1999). Research participants are therefore in a better position to assert their own agendas (Wilkinson, 1999: 66), to challenge others, including the researcher (1999: 71). There is ‘a subtle process of interaction in which participants guide the moderator as well as the other way around’ (Myers and Macnaghten, 1999: 181). Indeed, some researchers argue that a successful focus group is ‘both a focused discussion and spontaneous participant interaction’ (Puchta and Potter, 1999: 317 emphasis in original; Myers, 1998). The researcher goes about the delicate task of producing opinions ‘while sustaining interaction that has a relaxed, spontaneous and unconstrained quality’ (Puchta and Potter, 1999: 333).

I conducted focus groups with two groups of 7-8 undergraduate students from a University in the Midlands. A focus group schedule was constructed in collaboration with my supervisor and other colleagues (see Box 7, below). Again, this was used only as a general guide. The primary emphasis was on achieving as relaxed and informal an atmosphere as possible. The participants were members of a colleague’s ‘Research Methods’ course, and were recruited to take part in the focus groups as an educational exercise. A number of different focus groups took place on the same day, with different moderators (marked ‘M’ in the table below). At the beginning of the afternoon’s lecture, the whole class were given information about the nature and purpose of each focus group, and were asked to choose which group they would like to take part in. Each focus group took place in a different room in the university. Once the sessions were over, the participants returned to the lecture theater to discuss the costs and benefits of focus group methodology, and reflect on their experiences. The demographic characteristics of each of the two groups are contained in the table below.

---

3 Compare Green and Hart (1999), who argue that ‘discussion groups... are potentially a particularly exploitative method, in which participants are not only persuaded by skilled facilitators to disclose intimate views, but also to do this in front of peers with whom they have to interact long after the research has finished’ (1999: 31).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Length of Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd December 1997</td>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lindsay</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderator (M)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd December 1997</td>
<td>Jackie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joanna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leigh</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sue (M)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Box 7: Focus Group Schedule**

- What do you think of the leisure opportunities available here?
- I'd like you to look at the pictures in the middle of the room.
- Are there any that really interest you or strike you?
- What is it that interests or strikes you about that picture?
- What do you think is going on in that picture?
- Do you think that's leisure/a leisure activity? (why/why not?)
- Is this the kind of thing you'd do/have done in the past? (why/why not?)
- Is this the kind of thing you enjoy/would enjoy doing? (why/why not?)
- Do you think any of these pictures support any stereotypes?
- Do you think any of these pictures challenge any stereotypes?
- Do you think the issues surrounding leisure are different for men and women?
- Is there anything else you'd like to say about leisure that I've left out?

The ground rules for the focus groups were simple: The participants were told that their participation was entirely voluntary. They could refuse to answer any question and could leave the room at any time. They were told that what goes on within the group should be treated confidentially, that they were the ‘experts’, and that there were no right or wrong answers. They were also given my contact information (as well as that of my supervisor) in the event that they might want to subsequently withdraw from the research, or have follow up questions. The telephone number of the university counselling service was also provided in case they felt they needed to discuss any personal issues arising from the research.
(iii) The Dinner Discussions

The dinner discussions shared a number of features with the focus groups. Each group contained a similar number of participants, and similar questions were asked. However, the majority of the participants belonged to pre-existing or 'naturally occurring' groups, and most of them were already known to me. The sessions were conducted in my own, or the participants' home, and took place over dinner or pizza and wine.

In the focus groups with undergraduates my 'institutional' role had meant I had been restricted in how 'involved' I could get with their answers, having to maintain a fairly neutral stance. Moreover, the students tended to be fairly good at 'policing' their responses, being careful not to become too relaxed in the relatively formal context of the university (see Green and Hart, 1999; 27). In the dinner discussions, in contrast, the interactions tended to be much more informal, the setting more relaxed, and free of institutional rules and roles. The relationship between myself and the participants was less hierarchical, and less stringently policed by either party (I will be expanding on this issue in part three, below) (1999: 26). As Green and Hart found 'in the less formal groups, the facilitator's role was ambiguous, and open to more negotiation' (1999: 29).

Since participants already knew each other, problems of 'shyness' and the relative 'formality' encountered with groups of strangers were avoided. In the dinner discussions, I was able to take advantage of this informality, and be more provocative and adversarial, again, playing 'devils advocate', or arguing with the participants. The group members were also more relaxed, and seemed to find it easier to 'let their hair down', shout, joke, criticize and tease the researcher, interrupt one another, change the subject, or conduct two separate conversations at the same time. Indeed, the dinner discussions proved to be a particularly provocative arena for debate and argument (cf. Horowitz, 1996). As Blum Kulka (1997) demonstrates, the dinner discussion can be a 'rich site for the enactment of sociable behavior'. It is also a common form of data in CA (see Schegloff's 'chicken dinner' discussions (1997: 181 and 182, for example)).

I conducted five such discussions, with a range of male and female participants of different ages and from different backgrounds (see the table below). Again, access was
gained relatively easily using an informal ‘snowballing’ method.

(iv) The Picture Prompts

In the interviews, focus groups and dinner discussions, I used picture prompts of men and women engaging in ‘non-traditional’, or ‘transgressive’ sports and activities (men doing ballet and women playing rugby, for example). Some sample pictures are included in Appendix B. Part of the reason for this choice, as I have already noted in chapter two, is that many leisure researchers argue that women’s participation in ‘male-identified’ activities threatens the gendered status quo. Kane, for example, says that the assumption that ‘men are better athletes than women’, is ‘protected most ferociously when talking about those sports, skills, and physical attributes that really count - those that belong to (have been appropriated by) men’ (1995: 203, my emphasis). These pictures, then, provided an interesting, often provocative stimulus around which to ask questions about leisure, and facilitated spontaneous, rather than researcher lead discussion of gender issues.

4 Although, of course, what counts as a ‘non-traditional’ or ‘transgressive’ activity is itself worked up by the participants, and is a matter for analysis. Moreover, Kane (1995), points out that by labelling activities ‘non-traditional’, one reinforces, rather than subverts dualistic gender logic.

5 And about whether these pictures I had picked out as examples of leisure were indeed ‘leisure’ to the participants!

6 However, if we treat both the researcher and the respondents as participants, then the matter of who mentions gender first should not be relevant. Moreover, the picture prompts were not neutral resources, but were themselves implicated in the production of ‘gendered’ talk.
(iii) Dinner Discussions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Length of Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8th December 1997</td>
<td>Gavin F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>early 30s</td>
<td>1 hour, 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Katie F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chloe F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>mid 20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jennifer F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>mid 30s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sue F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th December 1997</td>
<td>Melanie F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 30s</td>
<td>1 hour, 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elizabeth F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Angie F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Linda F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 30s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sue F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26th December 1997</td>
<td>Alice F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1 hour, 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keith M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jan F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matt M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chris M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>90s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rosemary F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>80s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edie F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>mid 90s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sue F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28th December 1997</td>
<td>Alice F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1 hour, 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keith M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pamela F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Donald M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sue F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17th February 1998</td>
<td>Joanna F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td>1 hour, 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diane F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rachel F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gillian F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faye F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>mid 20s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sue F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(v) Newspaper and Magazine Articles, Television Talk Shows and Documentaries

As ten Have argues, 'the mass media are a real data goldmine' (1999: 63). While media data is commonly used to analyze the distinguishing features of forms of media-talk, it is also useful for studying talk-in-interaction in its own right (1999: 63). A large portion of the data used in this thesis was taken from a range of media sources, including newspaper and magazine articles, television talk shows and documentaries. The details for each television programme and documentary are listed in the table below.

7 Where newspaper and magazine articles are used as extracts, their details are included in the extract header. Where newspaper and magazine articles are referred to in the main text, their details are included in the reference list at the end of this thesis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Series</th>
<th>Title/Topic</th>
<th>Length of Programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7th Jan 1997</td>
<td>BBC 1</td>
<td>Kilroy</td>
<td>Middle-aged women having fun</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Jan 1997</td>
<td>ITV</td>
<td>The Time, The Place</td>
<td>Extroverts</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th Jan 1998</td>
<td>ITV</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>'Lad Culture'</td>
<td>Approx 20 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19th Mar 1998</td>
<td>Channel 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>'The Real Monty' Documentary about male strippers</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th May 1998</td>
<td>BBC 2</td>
<td>Reputations</td>
<td>Billie Jean King</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th June 1998</td>
<td>Channel 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>'Women with Balls' Documentary about Women and rugby.</td>
<td>35 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th Aug 1998</td>
<td>BBC 1</td>
<td>BBC News</td>
<td>Item on MCC cricket club membership for women</td>
<td>Approx 5 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Sept 1998</td>
<td>BBC 2</td>
<td>Gaytime TV</td>
<td>A Report on the Fifth Gay Games in Amsterdam</td>
<td>Approx 30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th October 1998</td>
<td>BBC 2</td>
<td>Living With The Enemy</td>
<td>'Two homophobic rugby players from Yorkshire spend a week in Soho with two gay men'</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Nov 1998</td>
<td>UK Living</td>
<td>Michael Cole</td>
<td>Masculinity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23rd Nov 1998</td>
<td>BBC 1</td>
<td>Here and Now</td>
<td>Item on women’s boxing</td>
<td>5 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th Nov 1998</td>
<td>BBC 2</td>
<td>Behind Closed Doors</td>
<td>Documentary about a group of women motorcyclists</td>
<td>Approx 30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Jan 1999</td>
<td>ITV</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>'My Mum’s a Knockout' Documentary about a female boxer</td>
<td>Approx 30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th Jan 1999</td>
<td>Channel 4</td>
<td>Short Stories</td>
<td>Documentary about two young female boxers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26th Jan 1999</td>
<td></td>
<td>Previously shown as part of the Inside Story Series</td>
<td>Documentary about Centaur - A group of male strippers</td>
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<tr>
<td>18th Mar 1999</td>
<td>BBC 2</td>
<td>Esther</td>
<td>Boxing</td>
<td>35 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th Mar 1999</td>
<td>ITV</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Truth About Men</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Oct 1999</td>
<td>Channel 5</td>
<td>Family Confidential</td>
<td>Documentary about a female wrestler</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th Oct 1999</td>
<td>Channel 4</td>
<td>Ballet Boyz</td>
<td>Documentary about members of the Royal Ballet</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part Two: Procedures

(i) Recording

All of the interactions were recorded using two Sony Walkmans which were attached to flat microphones. The use of two tape recorders insured against losing the data should batteries fail. Since one was always turned on before the other, this also allowed me to tape all of the overlapping talk when one side of a tape ran out. Both tape recorders were placed at opposite ends of the dinner table or room, so that all voices could be picked up, if not on one tape recorder, then on the other.

(ii) Transcription

All of the data was transcribed orthographically in the first instance. Relevant extracts were selected (see below), and then transcribed in detail using a simplified version of the transcription conventions developed by Gail Jefferson (see ten Have, 1999, for a summary, and Appendix A for transcription conventions). Each extract was headed with information containing the transcriber’s initials, the date of the interview / focus group / dinner discussion / television documentary / newspaper article, the page where the extract appeared in the original transcript, and the participants’ (pseudonymized) names. A small amount of ‘contextual’ and demographic information was recorded for each extract. By including such characteristics, I am not implying that we need this information in order to understand the data in an explanatory sense. It is simply that much of it (in terms of gender, age, and the local history of relationships) is demonstrably relevant and attended to by the participants. Exactly which characteristics are relevant, however, remains a matter for analysis (see Edwards, 1998).

It is important to point out that transcription is a selective and not a neutral business. The layout of a particular transcript can betray the researcher’s hypotheses, analytic assumptions and theoretical goals (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 76). The identificatory characteristics included within the header of the transcript, along with the choice of names, roles or letters on the left hand side of the page, can all serve a rhetorical
function. For example, some participants may be referred to by name, while others may be referred to in terms of their institutional roles - as 'doctor' or 'teacher', for example. This might enhance the analyst's arguments about the degree of asymmetry in such interactions. Likewise, men's and women's names (rather than letters or 'participant 1, 2 and 3'), might be used to convey the impression that it is men rather than the women who are being 'sexist', for example. Alternatively, by making the gender of participants explicitly relevant, one may help persuade the reader that a regular feature of talk is down to interactional and not demographic factors.

(iii) The Initial Coding Stage

As in most qualitative, discursive and CA research, it is in the process of, and not prior to analysis that new research questions arise. Indeed, it was essential to the aims and objectives of this research that it was not driven by my own analytic concerns, but rather by what the participants themselves took to be important and consequential for the interaction. In an attempt to balance this concern with the constraints of thesis writing, however, the data collection and analysis proceeded with one very general research question in mind: How does gender enter into participants' talk about leisure, and what is such talk used to do?

The initial coding stage involved reading and re-reading the data, searching for common issues and themes, and looking across all the materials for similarities as well as variations (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). All relevant portions of the transcripts were highlighted, which formed the basis for more comprehensive coding. The actual process was a lot messier than it is described in methods texts, and, as Potter and Wetherell argue in relation to beginning the 'analysis proper' the notion that the analytic enterprise involves a clearly defined sequence of activities 'is a clarifying fiction rather than a fully accurate chronology' (1994: 52). This is a time-consuming process with many false starts.

I began with a pile of transcripts divided up into thematic areas. These included various 'types of accounts' used to justify men and women's non-participation, such as: 'It's been that way historically', 'men are stronger than women', 'women will get injured', 'they must be poofs/dykes/queer', 'it's not feminine'. Some of these rather crude thematic categories formed the starting point for more detailed analyses, searches for
variations and deviant cases, and later, the analytic chapters. Therefore, the initial process of coding was just as much for 'pragmatic' reasons, as it was for explicitly 'analytic' purposes (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 167).

(iv) Identifying Instances

Once three chapter themes had been identified, relevant extracts were selected by searching the transcripts for references to femininity, masculinity and sexuality, putting each in separate files. I then went back to the tapes and transcribed the data in more detail.

There are, of course, problems with selecting cases for analysis: In picking extracts as examples of (potentially) 'sexist' or 'heterosexual talk', for example, one assumes the existence of sexism and heterosexism in the first place, prior to, and not after analysis (Woolgar and Pawluch, 1985). By selecting extracts where gender and sexuality were made relevant, by participants, however, I was able to bracket the issue of whether the instances were or were not 'sexist' or 'heterosexual', saving that for the analysis.

By choosing extracts where category ascriptions occur, I do not mean to imply that 'sexism' or 'heterosexism' only takes place when explicit labeling occurs, or that prejudice is always verbally expressed (indeed, an interesting question for future research - as I will be arguing in chapter eight, is precisely the issue of what counts as an orientation to gender and/or prejudice). Since such data is available, however, and since such little research has been done on it, it makes sense to start with what we've got, and see how far we can get with it.

(v) Interpretation and Analysis

The data was analyzed using the procedures and techniques of discursive psychology (Edwards and Potter, 1992) and CA (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998; ten Have, 1999). The analysis involved many careful readings of the data and entailed the development of a distinctive 'analytic mentality' (Potter, 1997b: 148; Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 93), rather than following some set of standardized procedures or rules (Potter and Wetherell, 1994). Indeed, Potter and Wetherell have described discourse analysis as 'a craft skill, something like bike riding or chicken sexing, which is not easy to render or
describe in an explicit or codified manner" (1994: 55; Potter, 1997b).

In traditional forms of analysis, analytic claims are warranted with reference to the techniques and procedures used. In discursive and CA studies, in contrast, the analytic claims are justified in relation to the data, not the process of analysis. The participants themselves display their own internal analysis of the sense that the interaction has for them, on a turn-by-turn basis. This provides a ready-made way to validate the researcher's claims (Potter 1997b: 147; and see under 'validation' below), and helps avoid the problems associated with the etic forms of analysis described in chapter three.

(vi) Deviant Case Analysis

Once I began to identify common features or patterns in the data, the next task was to identify and account for instances which seemed to depart or 'deviate' from that previously formulated pattern (ten Have, 1999: 136). This 'deviance', however, is from the analyst's and not necessarily the member's expectations (ten Have, 1999: 136). Deviant cases can be identified with reference to the notion of 'conditional relevance' (ten Have, 1999: 16). Usually, a first pair part of a sequence (such as a question) will be followed with its relevant second (an answer). Many adjacency pairs (such as greeting-greeting), have this conditionally relevant quality. It follows, then, that the absence of a second may be a noticeable and accountable issue for the participants. The key to deviant case analysis is in 'showing the ways in which the participants, through their actions, orient to these departures' (Heritage, 1988: 131). Such orientations, thus confirm the existence of a normative pattern.

An analysis of deviant cases is often extremely revealing, since exceptions to the rule often give a more sophisticated understanding of the workings of that rule. Deviant cases may reinforce or illuminate the original analysis, or that analysis may need to be replaced 'with a more general formulation' that can account for the workings of both the 'regular' cases and the 'departure' (Clayman and Maynard, 1995: 7-9, in ten Have, 1999: 137). This will provide a 'new, more adequate formal description' which can be applied to all relevant cases in the data set (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 97). Deviant case analysis is thus an essential part of 'analytic induction', ensuring generality across contexts (ten Have, 1999:136; Perakyla, 1997: 210).
In chapters five to seven I identify several deviant cases. Many of these cases are ironic commentaries, where the participants problematize traditional assumptions about what is normative. In doing so, they display their orientation to (the existence of) such normativity. Such cases thus give a much richer understanding of the data corpus as a whole, and point towards some productive issues for future research.

(vii) Ethics and Confidentiality

This project complies fully with the British Psychological Society’s ‘Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines’ (1998). All respondents were informed of the methods, purposes, ‘intended and possible’ uses of the research, and were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. All participants completed consent forms (see Box 8) and were given the opportunity to specify their precise level of consent: They were asked to list any contexts in which they did not want the tape to be played, or data extracts to be used, such as at conferences or in journal articles, for example. Some participants asked to look at the (anonymized) transcript before the data was used, and for certain sections of the transcript to be deleted. All of the participants were given the opportunity to withdraw all or part of their data, but only one person requested significant changes.

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8 Although it is hard (if not impossible) to know at the outset of a discursive and CA study, what all of the ‘intended’ and ‘possible’ uses of the research will be.

9 This participant felt that certain parts of the transcript could not be anonymized enough to ensure that he/she was not identifiable. Indeed, the process of anonymizing the transcript was much harder than I had initially anticipated. It was difficult to know precisely which features of the data (other than person and place names) would make a person identifiable to their friends and colleagues, for example.
Box 8: Informed Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research.

My name is Susan Speer and I am a research student in the Department of Social Sciences. My research is on leisure, and it is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. I can be contacted on ( )if you have any queries about the research or your participation in it.

Before we begin I would like to emphasize that:
- your participation is entirely voluntary
- you are free to refuse to answer any question
- you are free to withdraw at any time.

You are also the ‘experts’. There are no right or wrong answers and I am interested in all of your opinions.

The focus group will be taped and the data will be treated in the strictest of confidence. It will only be used for research purposes and will only be available to members of the research team. Excerpts from the focus group data may be made part of the final research report, but under no circumstances will your name or any identifying characteristics be included in the report. Please keep the discussion confidential to the group.

Please sign this form to show that I have read the contents to you

____________________ (Signed)

____________________ (Printed)

____________________ (Date)

Please return the signed copy to me, and you retain the unsigned copy.

Should you have any personal problems as a result of your participation in this research, the University Counselling Service can be contacted on ( ).

(viii) Validation

The notion of ‘validity’ - the production of a ‘truthful’ representation - has been problematized in recent years by researchers who demonstrate that the process of research and writing at least partially constructs the phenomenon under investigation (see Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Van Maanen, 1988). The notion of ‘validity’ has itself been subject to a thoroughgoing critique (Kvale, 1995).
The standard way in which a researcher assesses the adequacy of their interpretations, is through the use of a variety of ‘external’ validation criteria (Hammersley, 1992; Perakyla, 1997). These criteria are understood in different ways for quantitative and qualitative approaches. In quantitative research, the criteria include internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity, and their parallel terms in qualitative research are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This distinction, however, may be a rather crude one. Some of the terms traditionally used to describe validity in quantitative research have also been used in qualitative studies. Henderson, for example, describes some of the techniques leisure theorists might use to improve the validity of their findings:

The use of extended contact, repeated observations, continuous observations, corroboration, and triangulation of data sources and techniques will... increase the internal validity... Using 'member checks' or cross examination by going back to individuals and checking out conclusions will increase the credibility of the research.

(1991: 135)

One problem with standard methodological approaches (both quantitative and qualitative) is that the reader is rarely able to judge the researcher’s interpretations against the original data for themselves. Howe, for example, argues that positivist 'standards of parsimony and economy' mean that 'phenomenological investigators tend to report methods and findings with brevity, reducing evidence to the bare minimum, and resultantly, challenging the confidence of the reader' (1991: 49). As I demonstrated in my analysis of Betsy Wearing’s work in chapter three, the data chunks that are selected are often brief, and meant to stand on their own as evidence of some ‘theme’ that has ‘emerged’ from the data, whose meaning is self-evident. Thus, leisure researchers (and social scientists in general) have typically not been very good at explicating precisely how their data have been analyzed. It is often unclear how the researcher got from the data to their own particular interpretation, and not some equally plausible alternative explanation.

Discourse and conversation analysts have a rather distinctive approach to validation which transcends many of these problems (see Perakyla, 1997; Potter, 1998d: 137). First, long sections of data are provided for the reader to check the analyst’s claims, and reach their own independent conclusions. Second, as we touched on in our discussion of ‘interpretation and analysis’, above, rather than talking about themes
which 'appear' or 'emerge' from the data, or warranting claims with reference to the process of analysis, discursive and conversation analysts demonstrate how the participants themselves display their understanding and interpretation (and thus their own internal validation), of what has gone before - on a turn-by-turn basis. Validity then, is something we can demonstrate with reference to the endogenous sense making practices of participants. As I argued in relation to the notion of 'conditional relevance', above, each utterance can be understood in relation to the utterances surrounding it. We can check the adequacy of our claims by looking at how participants respond. So, as Potter, argues, 'a turn may be responded to as a question, a criticism, an invitation and so on' (1996b: 133). By responding in a certain way, participants display their own interpretation (and thus analysis) of the previous turn. If the understanding that they display is 'faulty' 'various repair mechanisms can be brought into play during the next turn in order to sort things out' (1996b: 133). In this way, the 'situated analyses' of the participants provide the ideal resource against which the analyst's claims can be checked (1996b: 133).

Returning to the example I used in chapter three, when a friend replies to the statement 'I love dancing' with 'oh well, perhaps you can tag along too if you want', it was heard as an attempt to elicit an invitation, despite not being directly stated as a request - 'can I come too?' If it was not intended as an indirect request (and thus, if we, as analysts, are wrong about its significance as such), we may see this oriented to in the next turn with a repair sequence. Thus, 'CA highlights a certain symmetry between the position of the participant and that of the analyst in a conversation' (Potter 1996b: 133). The analysis is, first and foremost, an internally produced and grounded phenomenon (Schegloff, 1997: 184), and the interaction itself 'embodies and displays moment-to-moment the products of its own, endogenous mechanisms of interpretation and analysis' (Schegloff, 1997: 183-184). It is precisely this feature of the data which gives discursive psychology and CA a distinct advantage over traditional qualitative and grounded theory approaches in the social sciences. Discursive psychologists and conversation analysts do not simply assert the relevance of certain contexts (such as gender) to any particular piece of interaction: They can use participant's own interpretations and orientations to demonstrate their relevance.

Finally, since discursive psychology and CA are cumulative enterprises, the results of each additional study can be used to validate previous research, and vice versa.
Part Three: Issues

Contextual ‘Bias’ in Research

Traditionally researchers have worried that the interview is not a wholly neutral or objective instrument, and that there are numerous potential sources of ‘bias’ which may lead to ‘invalid’ results. Henderson, for example, argues that

Reactive effects, selective perception, and limits on what the observer can see all affect validity (McCall and Simmons, 1969) ... We would like to think that the development of trust would make the participants’ responses more credible but if the interviewer or observer becomes too ‘native’ the credibility may also be affected because of the researcher’s bias.

(Henderson, 1991: 135)

Rather than turning such issues into interesting research questions, however, many researchers treat ‘bias’ as a ‘problem’ that can be solved by improving the research instrument, making it more ‘objective’ and less ‘polluted’ by extraneous influences. Positivist researchers, for example, have traditionally sought to overcome these ‘problems’ by adopting a stimulus-response model of the survey interview, where the interviewer offers the respondent ‘a carefully standardised physical stimulus (ie. question)’ and the respondent gives ‘a response (ie. answer) expressed in terms of a standardised format provided by the researcher’ (Foddy, 1993: 14).

The realist assumptions underpinning such claims have been highlighted in research on context effects in questionnaires and interviews. Small changes in question wording have been shown to have drastic effects on the distribution of responses, and participants have even been shown to have ‘views’ about fictional government policies when ‘don’t know’ response options are not available (see for example, Schuman and Presser, 1979, 1980, 1996). Attempts to control for ‘bias’ then, may not only be futile, but may also stifle the very features of interaction that are theoretically interesting. As Potter and Wetherell argue, apparently ‘incoherent’ claims are not treated as revealing ‘indications of the way people deploy their language, but are generally treated as obstacles to the production of reliable research findings’ (1987: 40).
Some qualitative researchers have taken a rather different approach to question-answer behaviour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'A model of the symbolic interactionist view of question-answer behaviour' (From Foddy, 1993: 22)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I</strong> Interviewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encodes question, taking into account own purposes, and presumptions/knowledge about the respondent, and perceptions of the respondent's presumptions/knowledge about self (ie: the interviewer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IV</strong> Interviewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decodes answer, taking into account own presumptions/knowledge about the respondent and perceptions of the respondent's presumptions/knowledge about self (ie. the interviewer)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While this model highlights the potentially infinite number of ways in which contextual knowledge influences the relationship between interviewer and respondent, it is also a realist approach to the research process. It treats 'context effects' as things that prevent access to some objectively 'real' or 'pure' state of affairs, and as something which needs to be overcome. It is based on the assumption that knowledge of such processes will help us design better questions and get closer to some 'untainted' features of the respondent's 'reality'. This is a non-constructionist approach to methodology which ignores the inevitably interactional and constructive, context-shaping features of the interview.

This model does not ignore contextual features, but concentrates on cognition rather than interaction (where talk about 'cognition' is itself an interactional business). It is rather similar to Schaeffer and Maynard's (1996) 'social information processing model' of the question and answer process (1996: 65), which focuses on 'cognitive processing as an internal psychological process' (1996: 65-66), rather than as an interactional accomplishment. The model above, for example, contains many cognitivist assumptions about what is going on 'under-the-skull' of the interviewer and the respondent, who somehow 'encode' and 'decode' information about their own, and (what they take to be) each other's subjective knowledge.
Foddy (1993) suggests that we might minimize such ‘problems’ of communication, by, for example, asking questions in such a way that they will work as they are ‘intended’ to work, or guide respondents about appropriate answers (1993). Other frequently recommended ‘improvements’ include taking time to build up rapport with respondents, allowing for acclimatization periods, dressing in a way that is not intimidating, learning about techniques to broach sensitive topics, and so on. Books on interview methodology overwhelmingly advise researchers to minimize the ‘intrusive’ effects of interactional and contextual features, thus denying the existence and theoretically telling nature of ‘the complex social processes that produce sociological information’ (Cicourel, 1974: 195; cf. Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995).

Discursive and CA research problematizes these standard approaches to research bias. For discursive psychologists in particular, efforts to minimize bias are not only bound to fail, but are based on a realist ontology that they reject. Both discursive and CA researchers take as their starting point the idea that accounts are always constructed in and for a particular context. It is precisely because of this context sensitivity that, as Holstein and Gubrium point out, ‘“contamination” is everywhere’. The concern about bias can only be sustained ‘if one takes a narrow view of interpretative practice and meaning construction’ (1997: 126).

The status of the interview as an interactional accomplishment has been highlighted in a study by Suchman and Jordan (1990). They argue that the survey interview has features that rely on ‘but also suppresses, crucial elements of ordinary conversation’ (1990: 232). The constraints on interaction characteristic of the survey interview are in the interests of standardization (1990: 233). The survey interview exerts control ‘over who speaks and on what topic’ (cf. the ‘minimal constraints’ of ‘ordinary conversation’). Features of ‘ordinary conversation’ such as recipient design, elaboration and clarification of meaning, the re-design of questions, and the detection and repair of misunderstanding, all tend to be suppressed in the survey interview. It has been argued that this ‘suppression of discourse’ (Mishler, 1986: viii) and ‘injunction against interaction means that certain basic resources for establishing shared understanding, essential to successful communication, are effectively prohibited’ (Suchman and Jordan, 1990: 233). The restrictions on response options and suppression of ambiguity overlook the contextually sensitive and variable features of language use. Consequently, the validity of the survey instrument is undermined
Chapter Four: Research Methods

(Suchman and Jordan, 1990). 10

Potter and Wetherell (1995b) express similar (though non-cognitivist) concerns about the 'got-up' nature of the materials commonly collected by social psychologists. They argue that the studies based on such materials

often ride roughshod over the... subtly contexted nature of conversational interaction and damage the possibility of using the turn-by-turn displays of understanding and repair that have been exploited so effectively by conversation analysts (Drew, 1995).

(Potter and Wetherell, 1995b: 218-219)

For discursive psychologists and CA researchers, the interview is a piece of interaction, not a neutral resource for a social science investigation (Mishler, 1986). In the interview, meaning is constructed jointly, by both interviewer and interviewee, and the interaction's status as an interview is a turn-by-turn accomplishment. Therefore, however hard one might try, the interview is not a standardized or standardizable instrument.

By turning what is commonly regarded as a 'resource' (albeit an inherently flawed one) into a 'topic', researchers using discursive psychology and CA have been able to show how 'interview talk' (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991) or 'focus group talk' (Puchta and Potter, 1999; in press) gets done, and identify features (such as activities and roles) which distinguish it from 'mundane conversation'. As ten Have points out, 'for a CA researcher, with an interest in the social organization of interview talk, these are 'natural' specimens of the phenomenon of interest' (1999: 50).

Data from interviews can also be 'naturalized', as it is in this thesis, and treated just as one would treat 'ordinary' talk (Edwards, 1997: 89; ten Have, 1999: 49). In discursive and CA research, therefore, the focus shifts from seeing the interview as a fairly neutral instrument.

10 Suchman and Jordan (1990) do not advocate that researchers abandon the survey interview, but, like the researchers who align with the kind of model discussed by Foddy (1993), above, they aim to improve on it. They propose that we need research which will help us to understand how interviewer bias can be avoided 'while admitting the negotiation of question meanings' (Suchman and Jordan, 1990: 241). They suggest that:

validity requires a mechanism to ensure that all parties involved... have a common understanding of what the question means and how the answer is to be taken. The only hope for such stable interpretations, and therefore for validity, is active collaboration between all of these parties... Insofar as the interviewer is briefed on the intent of a question, he or she can then act as a kind of stand-in or representative of the question writer, thereby contributing to effective standardization (1990: 240).

Therefore, this is still a rather limited view of the interview, which is both realist and cognitivist in the sense described for Foddy's model, above.
mechanism that can be used to collect people’s views and opinions—‘a machinery for harvesting data from respondents’ (Potter, 1997b: 149)—to a piece of interaction in its own right (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995), where the contributions of both the researcher and the researched are analyzed. In this sense the ‘method’ (interview) is not a reified, standardized resource to get at something separate from it (data), but constitutes its very object, and the interaction embodied within it (see Baker, 1997).

Potter and Wetherell argue that once interviews are treated in this way

The standard injunction to be as neutral and uninvolved as possible becomes highly problematic. It only makes sense as part of the fiction that the researcher can somehow disappear from the interaction by being passive enough

(1995b: 218; Potter, 1997b: 149)

So, ‘bias’ at interview need not be regarded as a problem, but can be ‘turned on its head’ and celebrated. Quests for objectivity (and claims like ‘during the interview, the researcher needs to be nonjudgemental and just let people talk’ (Henderson, 1991: 80)), become redundant. Instead, as I highlighted in my discussion of the active interview in part one of this chapter, interviewers can be active participants, arguing with members, and questioning their assumptions. In this way, one is able to get at a wider range of accounting practices (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 164; Holstein and Gubrium, 1997), and the traditional distinction between researcher (as active questioner), and participant (as comparatively passive respondent), becomes blurred.

Despite the argument that ‘bias’ in research is only an issue for realist and cognitivist researchers, many discursive and conversation analysts advocate a distinction between ‘naturally occurring’ and ‘got up’ research, arguing that the former is somehow qualitatively different from and/or ‘better’ (for the purposes of analysis) than the latter. The active interview described above, however, and much of the other data used in this thesis, problematizes this distinction. In the remainder of this chapter I will outline some key points in Potter and Wetherell’s discussion of the natural/contrived distinction, and CA’s additional mundane/institutional distinction. I will then analyze some of my own data, showing how it has features which are both similar to, and depart from the interaction one might expect to find in the relatively ‘contrived’ and ‘institutional’ context of the interview.
Natural and Contrived Data

Potter and Wetherell problematize what we mean by 'natural language' (1995b: 216), and what status we should give to 'naturally occurring' talk (see Potter, 1997b). According to Potter, 'naturalistic interaction' is interaction which 'has not been got up by the researcher' (Potter 1996b: 135). It has not been collected by means of an interview, an experiment, or a survey questionnaire (1997b: 149). As Potter says, 'the test is whether the interaction would have taken place, and would have taken place in the form that it did, had the researcher not been born' (1996b: 135; Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 162). From this perspective, doctor-patient interaction, business meetings, and conversations between friends are all 'natural' (Potter, 1997b: 148-149).

At one end of the natural/contrived data ‘continuum’, then, we have research with a high level of researcher involvement, which is not very natural at all, and at the other end we have ‘very natural’ studies, where the interaction is accomplished with no researcher involvement (Potter and Wetherell, 1995b: 217). It is unclear, however, how this distinction can be sustained in light of the arguments about bias, above. The discursive and conversation analytic approach to bias has undermined the idea that interactional or contextual ‘contaminants’ (from the researcher or anyone/anything else) are problematic. There would seem to be a potentially contradictory tension here: On the one hand, discursive psychologists argue that ‘bias’ is not a problem, but a feature of all interaction, which can be celebrated and explored, and on the other hand, that naturally occurring talk is ‘better’, or more amenable to analysis, because it would have happened ‘had the researcher not been born’. In this sense, then, the researcher is deemed to be a potentially ‘biassing’ influence.

Potter and Wetherell themselves suggest that the natural/contrived continuum is rather crude. It implies that interaction in research settings is ‘rather ephemeral or is not genuine’ (1995b: 217). They stress instead that ‘what is going on is indeed genuine; it is genuine interaction in a laboratory’ (1995b: 217). Holstein and Gubrium make similar points, arguing that while naturally occurring talk may appear to be more spontaneous and less staged than an interview, this is true only in the sense that it has been 'got up' or 'staged' by someone other than the researcher (1997: 126). ‘Mundane’ conversations will not necessarily be more ‘realistic’ or ‘authentic’ than interviews.
Indeed, it may be insulting to participants to imply that their talk in such contexts is not genuine, or is 'contrived'. Holstein and Gubrium suggest that this is particularly true given 'the development of the interview society', and the associated 'deprivatization of personal experience'. We are increasingly subject to surveillance and the 'gaze' of others. The interview may, therefore, have become 'a 'naturally occurring' occasion for articulating experience' (1997: 126).

The 'interview society' is quite pertinent to this debate, since guidelines and procedures for the conduct of *ethical* research, increasingly require the 'informed consent' of participants. In this context, it is hard to see how *any* data could be collected had the researcher 'not been born'. Potter and Wetherell nonetheless worry about the 'the potential disadvantages of participants' knowledge that recording is occurring' (1987: 163), and argue that 'social psychologists should indeed move toward an analysis of natural language materials' (1995b: 216).

Potter and Wetherell (1995b) suggest that one way to avoid the potential pitfalls of the natural/contrived debate, is to treat natural language, not as something concrete, an object that can be found, but as a construction: 'A perspective on any set of materials'. As Potter warns, 'we should be wary of accepting too readily assumptions about what kinds of talk are natural and what are not' (1997b: 149). This might reify the method by mapping specific data collection techniques onto 'types' of interaction. According to Potter and Wetherell, 'natural language' is not a type of data (1995b: 218), but is 'a theoretical and analytic stance on conversational interaction' (Potter, 1997b: 149). However, they do not advocate that we 'abandon the argument for considering natural language'. They simply want to 'change its basis' (1995b: 218).

Potter and Wetherell identify three obstacles which have traditionally prevented researchers from treating language in this way: 'Hypothetico deductivism, cognitivism, and the primacy of etic over emic analysis' (1995b: 219). All of these approaches cause researchers to overlook the interactional and indexical features of language use. They conclude the 'most suitable materials' for getting at participants 'everyday' understandings are 'records of natural interaction' (1995b: 221), and that 'a movement to "natural language data"... is a timely and necessary one for progressive work in

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11 Likewise, ten Have (1999) argues that, when using data from the mass media, one should be aware of the way in which 'the fact that people know they are being recorded may influence their interactions' (1999: 63).
Conversation analysts have been rather more stringent in their preference for ‘natural language’ data. Indeed, this preference is built into many definitions of CA. Hutchby and Wooffitt, for example, define CA as ‘the study of recorded, naturally occurring talk-in-interaction’ (1998: 14, emphasis in original). Here, ‘naturally occurring’ refers to ‘non-experimental’ data, ‘not co-produced with or provoked by the researcher’ (ten Have, 1999: 48).\textsuperscript{12} Psathas notes that this data ‘may be obtained from any available source, the only requirements being that these should be naturally occurring’ (1995: 45; see also, Heritage, 1984: 236-238).\textsuperscript{13}

Heritage argues that CA’s ‘insistence’ on the use of naturally occurring data is matched by an avoidance of data collection techniques which they deem ‘unsatisfactory’ (1984: 236). These include, interviews where participants’ accounts of events are treated as an ‘appropriate substitute’ for a recording of the actual events, experiments, field notes, and invented examples or other ‘idealizations about how interactions work’ (1984: 236; see also, ten Have, 1999: 53-54). Nonetheless, ten Have, like Potter and Wetherell, warns that the line between naturally occurring and experimental data is not a hard and fast one (ten Have, 1999: 49). Indeed he says ‘whether some piece of talk can be treated as ‘natural’ or not depends not only on its setting, but also on the way it is being analysed’ (1999: 49).

It is important to note, however, that the natural/contrived distinction does not map on to the CA distinction between ‘mundane’ and ‘institutional’ interaction (Drew and Heritage, 1992). Both of these may be ‘natural’ in the sense that they have not been ‘got up’ by the researcher, as described above. Conversation analysts treat ‘mundane’ or ‘everyday’ conversation as the ‘primordial’, or primary form of talk-in-interaction, against which other forms deviate. It is the ‘basic form of speech-exchange system’ (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974: 730). It is ‘the richest available research domain’ (Heritage, 1984: 240), and, as such, is ‘perhaps always the analytic first base’ (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 162).

\textsuperscript{12} Compare Harold Garfinkel’s ‘breaching experiments’ (1967), where researcher provocation was used to illuminate participants’ sense making practices.

\textsuperscript{13} While many researchers advocate the use of data that has not been ‘got up’ by the researcher, few mention the ethical implications of collecting such data (excepting Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 163).
Conversation analysts argue that talk in institutions differs in significant ways from that found in 'mundane' conversation. These differences constitute the 'institutional' character of 'institutional' talk, and make it identifiable as such to participants and analysts (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991: 94). In 'mundane' conversation, for example, turns at talk are free to vary. Participants are free to choose the topic that they will talk about and explore it in whatever way, and to whatever 'depth' they choose (Suchman and Jordan, 1990: 233). In institutions, however, there will be some restrictions on the activities found in 'ordinary' conversation (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 190). One or more of the participants may represent a formal organization (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 3), and official, or task-based activities are undertaken (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991: 94). Turns may be pre-allocated, or asymmetrical (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 47), and there may be formal, role bound, or legal constraints on who may speak. For conversation analysts then, doctor-patient interaction, courtroom trials, talk in the classroom, news interviews, and emergency calls to the police (which are all 'natural' in the sense described by Potter and Wetherell, above), are all examples of 'institutional' interaction (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991: 94).

There are a number of problems with the mundane/institutional distinction. First, Potter and Wetherell regard it as an example of CA's 'mundane foundationalism'. Such a distinction treats 'mundane' talk as some pure entity, as 'itself an undifferentiated, uninstitutionalized category' (1995b: 218). It lumps together the talk of lovers, friends, acquaintances, and family mealtimes (1995b: 218), which may all vary in their level of 'institutionality' in recognizable and analytically tractable ways. Moreover, 'institutional' talk need not be 'setting related'. Activities typically associated with 'specialized' settings like the courtroom, such as 'interrogation' or 'cross-examination', for example, may also occur over the breakfast table (Heritage, 1984: 240), just as talk associated with the workplace can occur at home (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 3). Therefore, the distinction between 'mundane' and 'institutional' talk is not a hard and fast one.

Potter draws attention to some of these issues in his explication of the contrasts between Derrida's deconstruction approach and CA. He argues that the distinction between 'mundane' and 'institutional' talk represents just the kind of 'hierarchy' which

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14 Such asymmetry is often related to the question-answer format of interactions within institutional settings. As Drew and Heritage state: 'In such contexts, there may be little perceived opportunity for the lay person to take the initiative... and professionals may gain a measure of control over the introduction of topics and hence of the 'agenda' for the occasion' (1992: 49).
Derrida has deconstructed so effectively. Citing the work of David Bogen (1992), Potter argues

The primacy of mundane talk is not a discovery of conversation analysis but an analytic and theoretical presupposition. Furthermore, the very notion of mundane talk is open to critical examination, with its implication of a somewhat homogeneous realm, free from institutional concerns or structures

(1996a: 85)

Second, this distinction does not help us to account for the status of data which does not lend itself to any particular methodological category. This data may contain features which are both similar to, and at the same time depart from, those one might expect to find in ‘mundane’ or ‘institutional’ talk. Indeed, as we shall see below, my data is not easily classifiable in these terms. As conversation analysts themselves have shown, the ‘institutional’ (or ‘conversational’) nature of an interaction, and participants’ roles within it, has to be made relevant and attended to as such (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 3-4; Drew and Sorjonen, 1997: 92). Participants’ own orientations help to define what the interaction can be said to be at any particular moment. This maps onto the CA approach to context. For the conversation analyst, context is not determined in advance of the interaction, but is both the ‘project’ and the ‘product’ of participants’ practices (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991: 94; Drew and Heritage, 1992: 19). ‘Context’ is ‘inherently locally produced and transformable at any moment’ (1991: 95; Drew and Heritage, 1992: 19). This contrasts with the ‘bucket’ or ‘container’ theory of context, in which pre-existing features are treated as both ‘containing’ and ‘causing’ the participants’ actions (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 19; Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 170).

Third, while some conversation analysts talk about the ‘ensemble of variations’ and ‘unique fingerprints’ (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991: 95; see also Drew and Heritage, 1992: 26) available for each piece of interaction, and recognize the possibility that more than one ‘type’ of interaction may be identifiable within the same sequence of talk (which implies that interaction is infinitely variable), at the same time, they talk in terms of ‘institutional forms’, ‘baselines’ (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991: 95-96), and ‘family resemblances’ (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 21). This implies that interaction can be divided into recognizable ‘types’, be contrasted with and/or measured against some foundational or ‘primordial’ form.
A fourth problem is put rather succinctly by Drew and Heritage:

Although it is easy enough, on an intuitive basis, to identify a variety of ways in which activities seem to be "done differently" in institutional settings, it is much more difficult to specify these differences precisely and to demonstrate their underlying institutional moorings (1992: 20-21)

It may be rather hard to specify just what counts as an example of 'institutional interaction'. As Drew and Sorjonen argue, 'there is probably no clear definition which could precisely delimit the scope of the field of institutional dialogue' (Drew and Sorjonen, 1997: 92).

On the one hand, then, CA researchers talk about the 'mundane' and 'institutional' features of an interaction (implying that these are yardsticks against which deviations, or alternatives can be measured), and on the other hand, they have adopted an approach to context which works explicitly against the use of such pre-defined yardsticks. The challenge, therefore, has been to specify precisely which features of an interaction can be said to be 'institutional', while also demonstrating how that institutional status is oriented to, and thus maintained, on a turn-by-turn basis.

In the next section, I describe one piece of research which has addressed this question. I discuss some of the implications of this research for how I might categorize my own data. One of the problems I have had, for example, is in knowing quite what to call my dinner discussions (in terms of their methodological status), and where to place them on the natural/contrived and mundane/institutional continuums. According to the preceding discussion, for example, my own data is both 'non-natural' - in the sense that it has been 'got up' by the researcher, and would not have taken place had I not been born, and is also rather 'institutional' - in the sense that there is a (pre-defined) asymmetry of roles (between the researcher and the other participants). However, this labelling does not capture the extent to which my data contains interactions which, at certain times, display features that are both 'naturally occurring' and 'mundane', and which transcend pre-defined contextual hierarchies. By comparing some of the distinguishing features of (what has been constructed as) a 'typical' institutional type of interaction, with the interaction in my own data, I may be in a better position from which to grasp precisely what 'it' is. This, in turn, might shed some light on the utility of the natural/contrived and mundane/institutional distinctions.15
The News Interview

Some conversation analysts argue that the interview is an ‘institutional’ form of interaction which ‘contrasts with ordinary conversation’ (Schegloff, 1990: 248, my emphasis). Heritage and Greatbatch (1991), for example, argue that there are certain regular features of interaction within the news interview, which are sustained collaboratively, and which constitute, or make it recognizable as a ‘news interview’.

(i) A Distinctive Turn-Taking System

According to Heritage and Greatbatch (1991), the turn-taking system of news interviews departs substantially from that found in ‘ordinary’ conversation. In conversation, turns at talk are free to vary. In the news interview, however, the interviewer (IR) usually asks the questions, and the interviewee (IE) provides the answers. Consequently:

Speakers who act as IRs may not properly engage in actions other than questions, while those who take part as IEs should refrain from initiating actions (such as unsolicited comments on prior talk) or sequences (for example, asking questions to which the IR or other IEs would be obliged to respond.

(1991: 97-98)

In the news interview, the pattern of questions and answers proceeds as follows:

IR: Question
IE: Answer
IR: Question
IE: Answer

The roles of interviewer and interviewee are jointly accomplished and demonstrated, turn-by-turn, in participants’ own orientation to such a system (1991: 106). This displays their shared orientation to the ‘non-conversational’ qualities of the interaction.

This particular turn-taking system means that participants are limited in the range of

15 The aim, therefore, is not to ‘prove’ the ‘non-institutional’ status of my data by comparing two intuitively different ‘types’ of interaction, but rather, to use the well established example of the news interview as a kind of ‘baseline’, or guide, against which I can chart the similarities and differences with my own data.
activities available to them (1991: 95). IEs perform activities that are primarily responsive to those of the IR (1991: 98), and they should not initiate an action or question (1991: 103). IEs typically withhold their responses 'until a recognizable question has been produced' (1991: 99). IEs cannot allocate next turns, or select themselves as next speaker when there are two or more IEs. Departures from such expectations are normatively accountable. Therefore, an IE who wants to evade or challenge these procedures may have to 'engage in complex courses of action' if they are to succeed (1991: 98-99).

In contrast to ordinary conversation, where the turn size of a participant's response tends to be minimal, in the news interview, the IEs' responses are commonly extended, multi-turn units that 'pass through several possible completion points' (1991: 109). When the IE offers only a brief response, such departures tend to 'engender gaps' (1991: 102). The IR rarely intervenes during such extended turns with 'continuers' (1991: 101), or 'acknowledgement tokens' such as 'yes' or 'mm hm', or news receipts such as 'oh' and 'really' (1991: 109). Instead, the IR refrains from providing any sort of commentary which may influence the IE's extended talk (1991: 102). Transition relevance is only effected when the IR and the IE have produced recognizably complete questions and answers respectively (Lawrence, 1996: 186).

According to Heritage and Greatbatch, these features of turn allocation and management constitute 'massive evidence for the existence of a Q-A preallocated turn-taking system for news interviews that is distinctive from conversation' (1991: 103).

(ii) A Stance of Formal Neutrality

In the news interview, IRs are required to maintain a stance of 'formal neutrality' in relation to IE statements and opinions (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991: 106). IRs are required to '(1) avoid the assertion of opinions on their own behalf, and (2) refrain from direct or overt affiliation with (or disaffiliation from) the expressed statements of IEs' (1991: 116). As Clayman says, 'IRs simply do not comment on the views that they animate' (1992: 173; see also Clayman, 1988).

The turn-taking system itself limits the expression of opinions, by placing the IR in the
role of questioner. The requirement for neutrality works with these restrictions, to limit features of ordinary conversation, such as continuers, news receipts, positive or negative assessments, and newsmarks, 'which accept, or project acceptance, of the factual status of the statements to which they respond' (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991: 117; see also, Heritage, 1985).

One way in which IRs depart from the neutral stance, but avoid stating their own opinion and directly agreeing or disagreeing with IEs, is by changing their footing. Footing shifts are used to deflect 'authorship' for reported views onto a third party (Goffman, 1981). This may involve framing an issue as a formulation of the audience's standpoint (1991: 121), or that of an institution, such as 'some people will say that X, Y or Z'. Ordinarily, as Heritage and Greatbatch point out, even where IR questions are 'hostile' or 'presuppositionally weighted against the position, of the IE' (1991: 116-117), the neutral stance is maintained, and questions are treated as intended to elicit the IEs viewpoint. IEs also occasionally induce the IR to take a position by asking them a question. However, Heritage and Greatbatch argue that this is 'normally strenuously resisted' (1991: 121). If the participants do depart from the neutral stance, it may be oriented to by both parties, as a 'momentary departure from neutralism' (Lawrence, 1996: 184; Clayman, 1988). In this way, the participants display their joint orientation to such features, and in doing so, construct and sustain the status of the interaction as a news interview, and their respective roles within it.

The Dinner Discussion

As I argued earlier, my 'dinner discussion' data does not fit neatly into a particular category of talk, or map onto a specific point on the natural/contrived, and mundane/institutional continuums. Indeed, there are several features of my data which problematize these distinctions, which suggests that their differences may have been exaggerated, at the expense of an analysis of what is going on in different contexts.

Consider the extract below, taken from a Christmas dinner discussion, where the participants were all known to me, and had agreed to help with my research on leisure. We join the interaction half-way through a discussion about the appropriateness of men and women's participation in 'non-traditional' gender sports.

Participants: S: Sue, K: Keith, C: Chris, R: Rosemary, M: Matt, E: Eadie.

1  S: Okay so what’s wrong with (.) women playing rugby then? (1.2) Not that I play it but (0.6)

4  K: [hhhhh.]

5  S: [Supposing I- >I] †could †easily [come home one day and say]=

7  C: [well I think]

8  [they enjoy it]

9  R: [it’s unladylike]

10  S: =I want to [play]

11  R: [it’s] an unladylike game

12  C: [They enjoy it don’ they?]

13  M: [Well you were thinking]

14  R: [of playing it were you?] [you don’t say they look] ladylike

15  (0.6)

17  S: I- I- I- wouldn’t have [any qualms about]

18  M: [just put on a bit of]

19  weight first and then (0.2) get out on the old field and

21  (.)

23  K: ((noise of disgust))

24  S: If >I- I don’t< (.) I don’t actually want to play it but (0.8) if I decided I wanted to take up a team sport I would consider it

26  (0.6)

27  K: are you [sure (you’re )]

28  S: [but I know] all the stereotypes

29  that- (. ) that the

30  women who do do it have to put up with although (0.8) that is changing at like [University]

32  M: [Yeah but] apart from all that, apart from us being against it

35  E: ((noise of hearing aid whistling))

36  (0.8)

37  M: Why would you choose rugby (.) being a very rough sport, (.) you’re liable to get in- (.)

39  horrible injuries...

In the next section, I consider the ways in which this interaction contains features which are both similar to, and depart from, those identified in ‘news interview’ talk, described above.

(i) The Turn-Taking System

(a) Similarities

First, Sue sets up the discussion, having made it clear that she is collecting data for a
social science investigation. Indeed, the opening sequence positions Sue as the interviewer or questioner: She formulates the upshot of what’s gone before: ‘Okay, so’, and brings the discussion back to relevance with a rather challenging and potentially antagonistic question: ‘Okay so what’s wrong with (. . .) women playing rugby then?’ (lines 1-2). The ‘then’ does some provocative work here, encouraging a precise and explicit answer. It also seems to draw attention to a perhaps less than complete response to a prior question. When an answer is not immediately forthcoming, Sue removes her stake from the question: ‘Not that I play it but’ (line 2), making it easier for her respondents to answer. This in itself provides evidence of Sue attending to her ‘interviewer’ role, facilitating the discussion, and tailoring her questions to harvest the participants’ ‘views’.

There is also evidence that the participants treat Sue as the appropriate person to ask questions. Despite their delayed response, once Sue clarifies her position (lines 5-10), the participants answer the question Sue poses, and do so collectively. Their overlapping responses indicate that the participants treat this as the appropriate moment to answer, and that their answers should indeed be forthcoming. Sue’s role as questioner, and the participants’ role as answerers, is here, at least, mutually accomplished and oriented to.

(b) Differences

There are several occasions in this piece of interaction, where the turn-taking system departs from the ‘IR: Question, IE: Answer, IR: Question, IR: Answer’ format identified by Heritage and Greatbatch (1991). It is very argumentative, with a continuous thread of evaluations, accounts, mitigations, justifications and counter-arguments, rather than a simple question/answer format. Rather than there being an obvious asymmetry of questions and answers, where the roles and identities of the participants (interviewer/respondent) are clearly differentiated, in this extract the roles are rather more fluid. On occasion Sue seems more like a family member than an interviewer or focus group moderator (indeed, she only asks one question throughout this whole sequence), and her participants often seem more like interviewers than respondents. Indeed, in places, the interviewer / interviewee roles are reversed or blurred.
Chris (line 7) does not wait for Sue to finish asking her question, but speaks in overlap with her. However, like Rosemary on line nine, he offers only the briefest of responses, not an extended turn (cf. Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991). Moreover, the participants do not respond to Sue’s rather provocative questioning with a series of their own views and opinions. Instead, they deal with Sue by ‘turning the tables’, so to speak, holding Sue accountable for, and personally implicated in her questions and hypotheticals. In doing so, they orient towards her as having (potential or hypothetical) views, and go on to solicit them from her.

Again, this interaction tends to disrupt the researcher/participant distinction (as those roles are commonly understood in the natural/contrived debate, and in traditional interviews). Matt, for example, asks a direct question (lines 13 and 14), which attends to Sue’s likely degree of investment: ‘Well you were thinking of playing it were you?’. Later in the extract he probes further with a question about Sue’s potential decision: ‘Why would you choose rugby...’ (lines 37-39), and even offers advice: ‘Just put on a bit of weight first’ (lines 18-19). Sue is drawn into the interaction, and responds to Matt’s questions: ‘I- I- I- wouldn’t have any qualms about’ (line 17), ‘If I- I don’t< (. ) I don’t actually want to play it but (0.8)’ (lines 23-24), and ‘but I know all the stereotypes’ (line 28). This apparent role reversal (Matt as questioner, Sue as answerer) does not appear to be actively resisted by any of the group members.

(ii) The Stance of Formal Neutrality

(a) Similarities

There is some evidence that Sue and her participants both attend to the requirement for neutrality. To begin with, as I have already noted, above, Sue’s opening question is constructed as a rather hostile one: ‘Okay so what’s wrong with (.) women playing rugby then?’ (lines 1-2). Its formulated quality, the provocative use of the word ‘then’, and ‘what’s wrong with’ (rather than ‘what do you think about...?’) make this question ‘presuppositionally weighted against the position, of the IE’ (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991: 116-117). This talk is hearably challenging; antagonistic rather than ‘friendly’, and is not designed to save the face of the participants (cf. Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1997; Houtkoop-Steenstra and Antaki, 1997).
Indeed, the participants treat the question as problematic. It is followed by a rather long 1.2 second pause, and Sue’s ‘Not that I play it but’ (line 2). This qualification demonstrates that Sue is attending to some trouble that her participants may be having answering her question, and that this trouble relates to her own stake (and thus her non-neutral position) in relation to it. Sue’s qualifier works to deflect the interpretation that she herself might play rugby, and be so invested in her subject matter that she may be offended by a negative response. Sue’s explicit reference to not playing, then, can be heard as an attempt to literally ‘neutralize’ her stake or investment in the topic of the original question. In doing so, Sue paves the way for her respondents to answer, and construct their ‘views’.

The participants themselves may be attending to the requirement for neutrality by withholding their response until Sue has (re)formulated her question in such a way that her investment in relation to it is made explicit. Indeed, they may withhold their response precisely because it might be difficult to offer a view when the implications of doing so are rather inexplicit, or potentially troublesome.

Sue’s ‘but’ (line 2) also suggests that she has something more to say, to clarify, or perhaps reaffirm some part of her original question, or her stance in relation to it. Indeed, the participants do not come in at the pause on line three, but wait until Sue’s: ‘Supposing I- >I could easily come home one day and say... I want to play’ (lines 5-10) before offering a response. Having just worked to neutralize her stake, then, Sue uses the hypothetical format to suggest only possible stake. The use of the hypothetical allows Sue to navigate a path between formal neutrality, on the one hand, and provocative (ie: putting her participants ‘on the spot’) questioning, on the other. Indeed, hypotheticals are particularly useful, because they allow the speaker to discuss scenarios without ever having to offer their own ‘on the record’ view, or be held directly accountable for their stance in relation to the particulars of those hypotheticals (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995).16 The hypothetical could be regarded as a kind of footing device which works to deflect the speaker’s stake from what they are saying. As Clayman (1992) argues, footing shifts often occur when ‘IRs make provocative statements to open the discussion, or to initiate a new topical line of talk’ (1992: 174), and they are usually ‘restricted to relatively controversial opinion statements’ (thus, interestingly, also constructing them as such) (1992: 169). Footing shifts have a

16 The use of hypothetical questions will be discussed further in chapter five.
number of uses:

By virtue of the footing device, the IR's own position is (a) not stated, (b) not officially "on record" in the discussion, and, as a consequence, (c) the animated viewpoint is not something for which the IR... can be held responsible (1992: 174)

As Clayman argues, the footing shift can be used by the IR 'to generate an informal debate between IEs without collaborating with either side' (1992: 177), to 'present the other side' of an argument (1992: 175), and to generate disagreement between participants (1992: 176). The IR can manipulate footing to 'actively shape the course of the debate without entering it as a participant' (1992: 177).

Therefore, Sue uses the hypothetical to position herself as a 'potential' rugby player, with 'potential' investment in her question. She could say 'some women might want to play' (an arguably more neutral stance that leaves her out of the equation), but instead uses the hypothetical to maintain a hearably positioned, but not necessarily personally committed stance. Sue positions herself in a realm of possibilities, which allows her to be provocative without ever having to express an opinion, and gives her the flexibility to change her position at any moment.

Where the participants respond as though Sue may have a view, and ask her questions about her own thoughts and motives, such as 'Well you were thinking of playing it were you?' (Matt, lines 13-14), Sue reaffirms her (more neutral), hypothetical position: 'I don't actually want to play it but (0.8) if I decided I wanted to take up a team sport I would consider it' (lines 23-25). By talking about her possible decisions and considerations in this way, Sue, again, positions herself as a potential, not an actual rugby player, committed to 'harvesting' the views and opinions of others.

In this extract, then, the hypotheticals facilitate data collection, and demonstrate Sue's orientation to the practices associated with such a task. Citing Clayman, Lawrence argues

The IRs complicity in co-constructing normalization may exemplify a complement to the journalistic practice of "being interactionally 'adversarial' while remaining officially 'neutral'" (Clayman, 1988, p.490), namely, being interactionally facilitative while remaining officially neutral.

(Lawrence, 1996: 208)
Chapter Four: Research Methods

(b) Differences

Heritage and Greatbatch argue that the neutral stance tends to be preserved, and questions are treated as intended to elicit the IE's viewpoint, even when IRs produce hostile or contentious questions which are 'weighted' against the position of the IE (1991: 116-117; see also, Clayman, 1992). Therefore, IEs tend not to treat the IR's questions as an expression of their own opinion. They preserve the IR's neutralistic posture by officially validating and advancing the IR's neutralistic stance, or simply by avoiding undermining their footing (Clayman, 1992: 180). In Clayman's data, where the IE does treat the IR's question as an expression of a personal view, this usually only happens where the IR has not shifted footing, or where the interviewer's footing is ambiguous. Ordinarily, Clayman suggests, this does not happen, and the IRs statements are not treated as an expression of their own opinions.

There are a number of features of my data which problematize these findings. Sue begins by formulating a question which presupposes that the respondents see something wrong with women's rugby playing: 'so what's wrong with' (line 1). By weighting her question in this way, Sue may solicit 'views' that are consistent with her own expectations (see Rapley and Antaki, 1998). As Clayman argues, the positions animated by the IR may be 'endowed with varying degrees of credibility' (Clayman, 1992: 187). The effect of this is to place IEs in a defensive position, where they have to respond 'to compelling alternative points of view' (1992: 187) - in this case, to Sue's potential rugby playing. Even while shifting footing, then, Sue's questions may be designed in such a way that they implicitly express affiliation with, or disaffiliation from (what she takes to be) the IE's viewpoint.

While this is consistent with Heritage and Greatbatch's (1991) claim that IR questions may be 'weighted' against the position of the IE, the respondents do not always treat Sue as someone who is neutral. Indeed, Sue's neutral stance is, in some places, maintained only precariously, if at all. While she does not explicitly offer 'on the record' views or opinions about liking or disliking rugby, there are, nonetheless, a number of occasions where the participants treat her as having (or having just expressed) a view. Matt treats Sue's hypothetical as ambiguous and requests
clarification, thus making Sue's stake directly relevant: 'Well you were thinking of playing it were you?' (lines 13-14). The 0.6 second pause (line 16), and the repetition of 'I' in Sue's response (line 17), indicate that she might be having some trouble responding to such a direct question about her own position. Sue, then, seems to struggle to maintain a neutral footing. Her eventual response is framed as a hypothetical: 'I wouldn't have any qualms about' (line 17), but even before she has completed her turn, Matt intervenes, treating Sue as someone who has just expressed a personal view. This gives him a license to offer advice: 'just put on a bit of weight first and then (0.2) get out on the old field and' (lines 18-20).

There are a number of places where Sue appears to move away from her neutral footing, offering comments which are not framed as hypotheticals, or the view of a third party. For example, she says 'I don't actually want to play it' (lines 23-24), and 'I know all the stereotypes that-(.) that the women who do do it have to put up with' (lines 28-30). In the context of the news interview, such departures from neutralism (where they are not constructed or oriented to as momentary lapses), are sanctionable and ordinarily generate repair. In this extract, however, there do not appear to be any such orientations or sanctions for such departures.

In summary, then, the interaction in this extract is clearly 'got up' in the sense described by Potter and Wetherell (1995b), above. It obviously would not have taken place had the researcher 'not been born', and in some places, the participants attend to their different ('researcher/researched) 'roles'. Nonetheless, it is also rather 'natural' and 'conversational', with Sue answering questions, offering views and being treated as having a distinct position, even where she has not directly expressed one. The distinction between natural and contrived data, therefore, risks missing the subtleties of 'methods in practice'.

Likewise, the style of interaction in this extract is quite different from that we might expect to find in more 'institutional' settings, such as the news interview. Heritage and Greatbatch assert that it is 'compliance with these procedures' which 'is, in part, what distinguishes a radio or TV "interview" from a "discussion"' (1991: 98). However, in the extract above, the speaker's alignment with and departure from such procedures is by no means consistent, making it difficult to identify this sequence as either that of an interview or a discussion/quasi-conversation. My materials both follow and deviate
from traditional 'interview talk'. The *roles* within the interaction are also variable rather than fixed. Sue is treated as accountable for views, unlike standard TV interviewers, but is still treated as the appropriate person to ask questions, to probe further, and so on (cf. Horowitz, 1996).

**Discussion**

This extract, and my analysis of it, problematizes both the natural/contrived, and the mundane/institutional distinctions.

While Potter and Wetherell (1995b) are keen to point out that 'natural data' is a *construction* as opposed to a 'thing', in some places, Potter seems to suggest something rather different. He argues that many discursive researchers are moving away from the 'got up' interview as a data collection technique, because it is hard to avoid 'the interaction being swamped by the interviewer's own categories and constructions' (1996b: 135). He says, the interview 'is contrived; it is subject to powerful expectations about social science research fielded by participants; and there are particular difficulties in extrapolating from interview talk to activities in other settings' (Potter, 1997b: 150). Moreover, even when interviews are 'naturalized', or treated as natural, the 'dominant question-answer format' 'is not ideal for getting at the sorts of turn-by-turn display[s] of action and understandings that conversation analysts have utilized so effectively' (Potter 1996b: 135). Thus, discursive psychologists, following the approach advocated by conversation analysts, have been turning towards more 'naturalistic' data sources (1996b: 135), in order 'to focus on materials less affected by the formulations and assumptions of the researcher' (Potter, 1997b: 150).

Thus, according to this account, there appears to be something 'intrinsic' to the interview as a type of data, which Potter finds problematic. By mapping 'contrived talk', onto 'interview talk', Potter implies that the natural/artificial distinction is indeed about 'types' of talk.

Clearly, as Potter shows, there are *practical* issues involved here, which will determine what 'type' of method or technique any particular researcher uses. However, in this chapter, I have shown how, on a theoretical and analytic level, the distinction between 'natural' and 'contrived' materials (and arguments which are based on a preference for
the former over the latter, thus linking them with specific data collection techniques, are rather less easy to sustain when we analyze data of research in practice. If I were to label my data as ‘interview talk’ (with the corresponding assumption that it is also ‘contrived’ and ‘got up’), for example, I would risk reifying the method - as Foucauldian notions of ‘discourse’ often do (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995). I would risk implying that the method determines what is said in that context, and the type of data I would obtain. It would ignore the subtleties demonstrated in the analysis above, and the many ‘natural’ qualities of my data. Methods are not rigid, standardized instruments that can be applied uniformly across contexts, nor do they have determinant (interactional) outcomes.

The relationship between the method (be it ‘interview’, ‘focus group’, or whatever) and the ‘type’ of data collected (be it ‘natural’; or ‘contrived’), may have been exaggerated in discursive and CA studies. Method (like ‘discourse’) is an essentially abstract, analyst’s concept, not a thing with rules that will determine the type of data the researcher will obtain.

I have also problematized the distinction between ‘mundane’ and ‘institutional’ talk (which are both ‘natural’ in the sense described by Potter and Wetherell (1995b), above). My data problematizes the idea that specific contexts have their own internal organization, and that institutional/ non-institutional roles (such as interviewer/ respondent, participant/ participant, for example) will be clearly oriented to and identifiable within them. The status of an interaction as a particular ‘type’ - even one with a ‘unique fingerprint’ - seems rather more ambiguous when we analyze methods in practice.

Several researchers warn against drawing hard and fast boundaries in social interaction research, and assuming that certain ‘types’ of talk are more legitimately studiable than others (see Tracy, 1994). Drew and Sorjonen, for example, argue that ‘the boundaries between institutional talk and conversation are not fixed’ (1997: 94): ‘Thus within a single encounter participants may engage in, and move between, ‘sociable’ and ‘institutional’ talk’ (1997: 93). Schegloff provides a particularly telling example of this point. He describes the processes through which one piece of interaction - a television interview - turned into a rather more conversational ‘confrontation’, and the
mechanisms that made it identifiable as such. He claims

> The Bush/Rather affair is itself the most eloquent prima facie testimony to the observation that labelling and announcing an occasion of talk-in-interaction as an interview does not ipso facto make it one, nor does it guarantee that what began as one will remain one.

(Schegloff, 1988/89: 215, emphasis in original)

According to Schegloff, the features of an interaction that make it recognizable as an interview or a confrontation ‘require explication as *achievements*, as the *outcomes* of practices of conduct in interaction (Schegloff, 1987, pp. 218-228)’ (1988/89: 215). We should not identify an interaction on the basis of its ‘institutional’ *setting*, or in terms of the researcher’s ‘declared *intentions*’. The status of an interaction is not decided in advance. Instead, says Schegloff, ‘an occasion is progressively and methodically constituted and “realized” as an interaction’ of a certain type (1988/89: 218; Schegloff, 1992: 118).

Similarly, in an analysis of the way that stigmatized practices are normalized in news interviews, Lawrence argues

> Characterizing an interaction as a news interview is not a once-and-for-all-time analytic description but is a provisional description of participant orientations that may be renewed on a moment-by-moment basis. Each interactional moment presents a situation of choice in which co-participants may depart from institutional constraints.

(1996: 210)

Therefore, as I argued in chapter three, the context or setting does not work as a ‘container’ for participants’ talk, ‘but is progressively constituted by them (Schegloff, 1987; see also Greatbatch, 1988, 409-413; Clayman, 1988, 479-480)’ (Schegloff, 1988/89: 224). The approach I advocate here, then, is entirely consistent with many conversation analysts’ own arguments about the endogenous nature of context, and the care we must take not to legislate about the relevance of context in advance.

This approach to context allows for variability in the appearance of any one piece of data as ‘natural’ or ‘contrived’, ‘mundane’ or ‘institutional’, and for the indexical usefulness of certain roles and methodological contexts as *resources*, that can be exploited for interactional purposes. The argument for natural data, then, may be useful for pragmatic reasons, but may not be easily sustained on a *theoretical* level.
Indeed, it may be sensible to follow the practice of Miller and Glassner (1997: 111), who are sceptical of a ‘neat distinction’ between the natural and the cultural in social science data (‘as elsewhere’). They advocate putting ‘naturally occurring data’ in scare quotes. This may remind us to be more cautious in our claims about the relationship between method, context and data.

Nonetheless, many researchers continue to impose their pre-conceived ideas about what constitutes a piece of interaction as an ‘interview’, ‘focus group’, or ‘conversation’ on their data, and draw neat boundaries around these essentially abstract analysts’ categories. And this is often done before the pervasiveness (and thus relevance) of such a classification has been proved empirically. Method is often treated as a resource to get at something else. That ‘something else’ is then treated as an effect of the way in which it was collected, rather than as constitutive of that method/data collection technique. This cause-effect model seems peculiar in the context of a research field that spends much of its time criticizing such frameworks as both deterministic and simplistic. In contrast, the approach advocated here treats method as one of an infinite number of potentially relevant contexts which may be oriented to by participants in an interaction. It might, then, be fruitful for future research to consider just what counts as an orientation to method.

While there is no space for this task here, as a brief example of what I mean, on many occasions participants will and do attend to the issue of their taking part in a social science investigation. My participants have picked up microphones and ‘messed about’ with them, or sung into them. They have recruited the tape recorder as a participant, by talking as though it is an overhearing audience, for example. At other times, the tape-recorder is treated as an available source of evidence to confirm what a participant has said (‘as I said earlier on the tape’). Alternatively, participants attend to the later transcription of their comments, by saying ‘scratch that comment’, or ‘I don’t envy you doing the overlap’. Some will anonymize the data for you as you go along, offering handy hints for the transcriber. Others attend to the future audience of the data, whose potential interpretations of that data are recruited for discussion (such as ‘she’ll love that bit’). Therefore, there are occasions when issues relating to method are made explicitly relevant by participants (including myself), but on the whole, it is hard to delineate hard and fast boundaries.
In sum, these considerations indicate that we need to be careful not to reach premature conclusions about the effects of any particular research technology on our data. We need to be cautious about drawing neat (though convenient) boundaries around ‘types’ of talk (natural/contrived, mundane/institutional) and methods of data-collection (interview, focus group, dinner discussion, and so on) before we have analyzed the practices involved in the infinitely variable contexts of our particular data collection techniques. The distinction between ‘types’ of talk is an analyst’s one, which has a tendency to reify and ‘clean up’ what happens in practice. The precise ways in which different contexts are constructed and oriented to in the course of an interaction, may be an interesting question for future research. As Nofsinger (1999) has recently argued, ‘participants’ orientation to two or more different turn-taking systems during the course of an interaction provides numerous data patches for excavation’. The (interactional) circumstances under which participants switch from one system to another may help us to understand further the precise ways in which ‘macro’ contexts are oriented to in talk, and the reasons why certain contexts, and not others are made relevant.

Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced the materials and procedures used in this thesis. I have discussed the issue of ‘bias’ in research, and the discursive and CA reformulation of it. Using insights from Heritage and Greatbatch’s (1991) research on the news interview, and Holstein and Gubrium’s (1997) research on the ‘active interview’, I have shown how my data problematizes the natural/contrived and mundane/institutional distinctions.

I have argued that the natural/contrived and mundane/institutional distinctions have been exaggerated, and have a tendency to reify the method as a context which will determine or constrain what participants say, and the ‘type’ of data one will obtain. I have shown how the method is just one of many potentially relevant contexts to an interaction, and that an interaction’s status (as an interview, a dinner discussion, or a ‘mundane’ conversation, etc.), and participants’ roles within it (interviewer, respondent, or co-conversationalist, etc.), has to be oriented to as such. I have argued that we need to exercise caution in treating the natural/contrived and mundane/institutional distinctions as explanations of our data, or as absolute, and invariable ‘types’.
The issues covered in this chapter are not just methodological ones. The importance that I have attached to the local production of context, and participants’ orientations to that context, is a theme that runs throughout this thesis. It is an issue that is particularly relevant to the concerns of chapters five to seven, where I treat gender as an endogenously produced, and variable resource, rather than as something which determines what participants say.

In the next chapter I begin the analysis proper. Using data from the same dinner discussion as the one discussed here, I demonstrate the analytic utility of the discursive and CA approach to gender advocated in chapter three. I attempt to extend our understanding of the construction and maintenance of normativity, by exploring how participants undermine women’s participation in male-identified activities.
Chapter Five: Constructing (the Limits of) Femininity

Introduction

In chapter four, I introduced the methods and procedures used in this research, and discussed some data that problematizes the natural/contrived and mundane/institutional distinctions. In this chapter, I use some data from the same dinner discussion (and other sources), to explore the way participants construct and articulate what they take to be the limits of 'femininity'.

As I have shown in chapter two, many feminist leisure theorists argue that women’s participation in the traditionally ‘masculine’ pursuits; the violent, team-oriented, physical contact sports, presents the most powerful challenge to ideas reinforcing biological reductionism. In this chapter, I explore how women’s non-participation in these pursuits is justified and legitimated. I begin by describing the mechanisms of ‘continuum containment’ identified by Kane (1995), whose work I introduced in chapter two. Kane argues that these mechanisms reinforce the assumption that men and women are fundamentally different, and maintain dualistic thinking. While the binary is meant to reflect difference, the continuum emphasizes sameness, and the possibility of a diversity of performance within and between genders.

I argue that a discursive and CA approach problematizes several features of Kane’s approach. My particular analytic focus will be on just one of Kane’s mechanisms of continuum containment - that of ‘injury arguments’. I consider how such arguments are constructed in practice, in participants’ actual evaluations. I identify three different ways in which injury arguments are used, each performing a different action:

(i) Differential Susceptibility to Injury;
(ii) Men Don’t Like Women With Injuries; and
(iii) It’s ‘Surprising’ That Women Want to get Injured and ‘I Wouldn’t Want to do it’.
I explore the variable ways in which injury arguments work as a *resource* in participants’ accounts, and their local, rhetorical organization. I identify several features which help the speaker manage or sustain their arguments, and deflect accusations of prejudice. These include a number of rhetorically effective contrasts and mechanisms which reify or ironize the factual status of their descriptions. In the last analytic section, I discuss some deviant cases, where injury arguments are inverted or used ironically. I suggest that, when injury arguments are used ironically, *they construct, and at the same time problematize their normative nature.*

Unlike Wearing and the other leisure theorists, whose work I discussed in chapters two and three, I will not be treating gender as an independent variable that determines or explains what participants say. This chapter builds on the early discursive studies by Gill (1991, 1993), and Wetherell et al. (1987), by adopting the more CA-informed, technical approach to the use of gender categories in talk that I introduced in chapter three. From this perspective, gender categories do not work in uniform ways, but are indexical *resources.* It follows that arguments which invoke the binary (assertions of *difference*), will not always be ‘sexist’, just as arguments which invoke the continuum (assertions of *sameness*), will not always be egalitarian. I conclude by discussing some of the implications of this approach for feminist leisure theory, discursive psychology and CA.

**Mechanisms of ‘Continuum Containment’**

As I showed in chapter two, a number of leisure theorists have attempted to account for women’s non-participation in male-identified activities. According to Kane, a continuum of abilities exists, where a diversity of performances within and between genders are possible (1995: 194). However, Kane identifies a range of cultural ‘mechanisms of counter-resistance’, which reinforce the idea that men and women have different abilities, thus suppressing evidence of a sports continuum. Consequently, says Kane, the ‘artificial’ binary of gender is maintained, and women’s non-participation in male-identified pursuits is legitimated. As a consequence, women’s sporting experiences are ‘trivialized’ and ‘marginalized’ (1995: 194).

Here I pick out just four of the ‘mechanisms of counter-resistance’ put forward by Kane, supplementing them with some other examples from the leisure literature:
(i) Muscle Gap: ‘Men are Stronger Than Women’;
(ii) Regendering: ‘She Hits Just Like a Man’;
(iii) Deviant Mutants: ‘They Look Like Dykes’; and
(iv) Gender Segregation: ‘You’ll get Injured’.

I’ll take each in turn.

(i) Muscle Gap: ‘Men are Stronger Than Women’

Kane suggests that one way in which the binary is maintained is through references to ‘the muscle gap’, where it is argued that women are physically and biologically inferior athletes to men. Direct comparisons of the performances of men and women in the same sports (such as the 100 metres, in athletics, for example), reveal what are claimed to be incontestable gender differences. Even critical feminists such as Messner, have argued that

Male and female bodies do tend to differ in potential physical strength, endurance, agility, and grace. Despite considerable overlap, the average adult male is about five inches taller than the average female. Can women really hope to compete with men at the highest levels of basketball or volleyball?

(1992: 167)

Some researchers suggest that physical differences can be explained by ‘sociocultural factors’, which show that women typically do ‘less upper body exercise than men’ (Freedson, 1994: 178). Nonetheless, Kane points out that much of this research starts from the assumption that there are differences between the performances of men and women, which actually serves to perpetuate dualistic thinking (1995: 198). Masculinity and femininity are treated as mutually exclusive categories, with no room for overlap. According to Kane, for example, even those men deemed ‘marginal’ in relation to the strength of other men, are considered by many of us, to be capable of outperforming the fittest of females (1995: 202).

These assumptions remain, despite some challenging ‘evidence’. Miller, for example, reports that, since 1964, when records were first kept, women’s times for marathon running have improved by an annual average of more than two minutes 47 seconds, compared with 66 seconds for men (1999: 8). Moreover, women are reported as
winning more medals than men at the top levels of British sport, but their achievements are under-reported, if they are reported at all. For example, Jordan argues that very few people may have heard that in August 1988, a female swimmer, Alison Streeter ‘swam from Ireland to Scotland in 9 hours and 53 minutes, and took the world record, from a man’ (1988: 12).

A particularly telling example of the interest engendered when men and women do compete ‘head on’, has been documented in a recent television programme charting the life of Billie Jean King (Reputations, 1998). In 1973 Billie Jean won a ‘Battle of the Sexes’ tennis match against Bobby Riggs, in Houston, Texas. It became an event of national interest, which threatened to undermine, not only the notion that women are naturally inferior athletes, but also the gender differential underpinning the rules and rewards of tennis. This ‘threat’ may well account for the different glosses on the outcome of the match. On the one hand, the event is described as having ‘transformed many “male chauvinist pigs” from coast to coast’ (Hahn, 1998: 22), and on the other hand, rumours spread that Bobby Riggs had placed a bet on Billy Jean winning, thus throwing the match (King, 1998: 30). This, of course, only served to reinforce the idea that, if a woman beats a man, it must be down to something other than superior performance.

(ii) Regendering: ‘She Hits Just Like a Man’

A second way that Kane argues the idea of a continuum of performance is undermined, is by recasting female athletes as men. Phrases such as ‘she hits just like a man’ (1995: 208), for example, do two things. First, they place a limit on women’s top capabilities (Daddario, 1998: 26): They serve ‘to reinforce the equation of superior athleticism with maleness while subverting any notion that females can possess such skills in such capacities’ (Kane, 1995: 208). Second, to receive such praise, regendering implies that the female athlete ‘must be (temporarily at least) considered anything but female’ (1995: 208; see also Choi, forthcoming).

In the press only recently, the lesbian tennis player, Amelie Mauresmo, has been reported as having a ‘masculine style’ which has provoked ‘bitchy comments’ from fellow players, and accusations that ‘she plays like a man’ (Silberfeld, 1999: 11-12).

1 Alternatively, ‘throwing like a girl’ is often used to insult men who do not play well, again, accentuating the ‘inferior’ athletic abilities of young women (Young, 1990).
One reporter, Charlotte Bradshaw claims 'the row about her masculine attributes has continued to overshadow her success' (1999: 19).

Daddario (1998: 25) argues that one strategy the media use to marginalize female athletes and question their femininity, is by accusing them of taking steroids (see also Lenskyj, 1986: 89ff). The two times world-record holding sprinter, Florence Griffith-Joyner's times for the 100 metres had been faster than the men's national records of many countries, including New Zealand and Norway. But since her premature death in 1998, there has been much media speculation that her successes were down to drugs and not talent. (Bryant, 1998: 50; Mackay, 1998: 30; Rodda, 1998: 22). Despite never having tested positive for performance-enhancing drugs, just two days after her death, the national press contained headlines such as 'What made Flo-Jo go? Was it God-given talent that turned her into a world-beating sprinter, or was it something more sinister' (Chaudhary, 1998: 2; see also Weaver, 1998: 30). This, again, reinforces the assumption that if a woman succeeds in sport, it must be due to other factors, such as performance enhancing drugs, or her 'masculine' traits.

The controversy surrounding the transsexual tennis player Renee Richards is a perfect example of the confusion that ensues when the seemingly 'natural' distinction between the sexes is challenged. Richards chose to compete as a woman in a sport which is typically divided into two sex categories (Birrell and Cole, 1994b: 374). The media could not cope with the ambiguity that Richards' participation engendered, and attempted to resolve it by playing the 'equality' card: If persons not genetically female were to compete against women, they would have an unfair advantage (Birrell and Cole, 1994b: 389). There were fears that a male player who was not very good at men's tennis might change so that he could 'overpower the women players' (Richards, 1983: 345). Therefore, it was suggested that it was in women's interest that Richards' participation be contested. The implication of such fears was clear: Men must be superior athletes to women.

(iii) Deviant Mutants: 'They Look Like Dykes'

As I demonstrated in my discussion of 'heterosexism' in leisure in chapter two, a further way in which women's participation in sport is undermined, is by arguing that
muscular and athletic women who subvert gender norms through sport, are not 'proper' women, and must be 'butch' or 'dykes'. Kane's concept of the 'deviant mutant' refers to a female athlete who so deviates from traditional expectations of femininity that her biological standing as a 'real' female is called into question' (1995: 210). These women may be incredibly skilled and competent athletically, but are looked on with suspicion: 'Their 'true' biological sex is often called into question, with some required to undergo sex-testing and/or to be 'branded as lesbians' (1995: 210).

Lesbians, Kane argues, are suspicious because they do not fit neatly into bipolar conceptions of gender and sexuality... they can offer contradictory evidence that gender does not consist of two mutually exclusive oppositional categories... female athletes branded as lesbians are cast as deviant outliers who belong to some netherland outside the so-called normal biological categories of male and female.

(1995: 211)

There is an assumption that the terms 'masculine' and 'lesbian' (Lenskyj, 1991: 63) are interchangeable, like the words 'feminine' and 'heterosexual'. These women, then, are portrayed by the media as both 'sexual deviants' and 'biological anomalies' (Daddario, 1998: 25, 26). Halbert's analysis of women professional boxers reinforces this finding. She argues that, in their violation of traditional gender norms, these women are considered so gender deviant that they are labelled and stereotyped as problematic (1997: 11, 16-18). Such 'unfeminine' or sexually ambiguous athletes, also threaten 'compulsory heterosexuality', and notions that men are naturally dominant (Lenskyj, 1986: 87; Rich, 1980). The negative labelling of such women thus polices the limits of appropriate femininity (and sexuality), and maintains the sex/gender binary.

(iv) Gender Segregation: 'You’ll get Injured'

Since many men are apparently 'deeply afraid that many women can outperform them' (Kane, 1995: 206), Kane suggests that a further way to maintain the binary is by never letting men and women compete against each other in the first place. Women are led to believe that segregation is in their best interests, as it will prevent them from getting injuried:

2 Consider, for example, the many negative reactions to sports women such as Martina Navratilova and Billie Jean King, who have both identified as lesbian. Related issues of sexuality and labeling in women's sports have been documented by Cahn, 1994; Griffin, 1998; Lenskyj, 1994, Sykes, 1996, and others, and are discussed in more detail in chapter two.
Such examples range from Little League baseball, where attempts at integration during the early 1970s were met by medical claims that girls' bones were more susceptible to fractures (Goodman, 1989)... to assertions that women's presence on men's teams (even if they had equal ability) would weaken the character of sport because males would have to play softer against females (Kidd, 1990).

(Kane, 1995: 204)

Keeping men and women separate in this way, says Kane, hides evidence of a continuum of performance, and diversity amongst the abilities of men and women (1995: 207).

There is a large amount of feminist research which documents the historical use and prevalence of such arguments (see Box 9, below). Many of the fears around women's participation in sport in the nineteenth century related to the medical profession's belief that menstruation made women particularly vulnerable to injury (Cahn, 1994: 21; see also, Lenskyj, 1986: 25ff). Similar arguments circulate today. For example, despite American Boxing Association doctors' arguments that 'women are less likely to suffer injuries from boxing than from football, rugby or riding horses' (Shields, 1998: 16), only recently, the 'British Board of Boxing Control' has been quoted as saying that women should not be allowed to box professionally because 'many women suffer from PMT', which makes them 'more prone to accidents... more emotional and more labile [unstable], which makes them more prone to injury'. They 'bruise more easily', and can 'suffer from lumps on the breasts after being punched' ('Women are Unfit Boxers Due to PMT', 1998).³

The 'All England Netball Association' has a 'foetal rights' rule, which bans women who are more than twelve weeks pregnant from competing 'on the grounds that the risk of injury to the unborn child is unacceptable' (Bond, 1989: 5). Many feminists interpret this as an oppressive piece of legislation, which not only over-estimates the risk of injury, but also overrides women's right to choose (Goodbody, 1999: 38). Likewise, Pink's (1996) analysis of women's bullfighting, has identified a number of 'practical'

³ Both Shields (1998) and Hargreaves (1997) cite arguments which undermine these claims. According to Shields 'it is now more than 20 years since the American Committee on the Medical Aspects of Sport showed that women suffer fewer injuries in contact sports than men: their smaller muscle mass in relation to body size generates less momentum and potentially damaging force' (Shields, 1998: 18). Hargreaves considers the argument that boxing can harm the ovaries, womb and breasts. She says: 'In fact, the female reproductive organs are firmly positioned and thoroughly protected inside the body cavity and are probably less susceptible to injury than those of men' (1997: 38). Both Shields and Hargreaves invoke scientific rhetoric to undermine problematic claims, yet in doing so, reinforce the male/female dichotomy and the 'binary' of difference (see Clarke, 2000).
arguments that are used to undermine women's participation. For example, it is claimed that women's breasts are particularly vulnerable to injury, and hinder movement (1996: 51). Moreover, in the event that surgery is required, it is thought that this would prove more complicated than for a 'normal' (male) wound (1996: 52). According to Pink, these arguments are based on the assumption that the 'primary purpose of the breast is for motherhood'. Yet, she says, the same individuals who make this argument, do not consider how harm to a man's genitals might be equally (if not more) dangerous - effectively preventing them from fathering a child (1996: 53).

Other researchers comment on the relationship between injury and gender. Young and White (1995), for example, argue that injury is perceived as 'masculinizing' (Halbert, 1997: 13). When men risk injury through performance, it is an indication of their 'hardness' and bravery. For men, then, pain and injury are normalized: It is part of an initiation into the world of masculinity, which displays and enhances their physical toughness and mental courage, further differentiating them from women (Jefferson, 1998: 81; Nixon, 1993). Boys are socialized into treating accidents and injuries as 'inevitable and acceptable', and that the appropriate response to such injures is 'a studied stoicism' (Fine, 1987: 48). By normalizing injury in this way; men and boys defuse it 'as a deterrent to continued participation' (Albert, 1999: 157). However, the same principles do not apply to women. According to Young and White, women's increased participation in dangerous activities does not liberate them, or transform the meaning of sport, but incorporates them into a male-defined, 'hegemonic' process, where violent machismo is encouraged, with all its antecedent 'health-compromising aspects' (1995: 45).

Sargent et al. (1998), whose work on attitudes I introduced in chapter two, found that men and women differ in the extent to which they are attracted to violent (and thus injurious) sports: 'Whereas men seem attracted to violent displays, women, if anything, are deterred by them....men deemed the presence of danger exciting....whereas women did not' (1998: 59). In combination, these studies paint a rather gloomy picture: Women are deterred from participating in male-identified sports by the violence and injury associated with them, while those women who overcome such fears and do participate in such sports, end up reinforcing, rather than subverting patriarchal values.
Chapter Five: Constructing (the limits of) Femininity

Box 9: A Biography of Injury Arguments

Historically, the medical profession have justified women's non-participation with a whole host of weird and wonderful 'injury' arguments. A common concern was that 'over enthusiastic' participation may damage a woman's reproductive organs, causing 'uterine displacement' (which could be brought about via jumping) (Lenskyj, 1986: 27 and 28), or lead to 'the loss of sexual control' (Cahn, 1994: 21). Sports participation during menstruation was thought to be particularly dangerous, since it had 'enfeebling' effects (Miller, 1999: 8). The uterus would be at its heaviest and the strain on the uterine ligaments at its greatest (Lenskyj, 1986: 27-28). Doctors contended that 'menstruation, childbirth and suckling are so debilitating that at those times...alternative activities should be terminated altogether' (Hargreaves, 1994: 45). Between 1910 and 1950, scientific 'experts' told women that 'playing certain sports would turn them into physiological monsters and cause their genital organs to decay and their bodies to change into men's bodies' (Coakley, 1998: 228). Doctors argued that 'the passion and excitement of sport would lead women to the brink of moral, physical, and emotional breakdown' (Cahn, 1994: 167-168).

Stuart Miller reports Ellis Cashmore's research in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, which documents an 'extraordinary range of bogus medical arguments against women taking up sport' (Miller, 1999: 8). One theory - 'virilism', suggested that over-exertion would turn women into men, prevent them from having children, and lead them to sprout beards (1999: 8). A book on 'Exercises for Women' condemned riding for producing an 'unnatural consolidation of the bones of the lower part of the body, ensuring a frightful Impediment to future functions' (Walker, 1837: 8, cited in Hargreaves, 1994: 105). Others were fearful that riding horses with the legs astride would break the hymen, 'signalling the loss of virginity and rendering her less marriageable' (Hargreaves, 1994: 89). Even hockey 'could disable a woman from breastfeedlng (Murray 1910-11, cited in Dyhouse 1976: 45-6)' (Hargreaves, 1994: 105). It was cycling, however, which seems to have produced the most fears: Lenskyj cites a piece by Doctor J. Roosevelt (1895) entitled 'A Doctor’s View of Bicycling':

There is no reason to think a healthy woman can be injured [cycling]...provided she does not over-exert herself by riding too long a time, or too fast, or up too steep hills, and provided she does not ride when common sense and physiology alike forbid any needless exertion.

(Lenskyj, 1986: 24)

One of the most astonishing arguments for non-participation was the risk of 'bicycle-face' - ‘a condition that included wild, staring eyes, a strained expression, and a protruding jaw' (Whorton, 1982, cited in Vertinsky, 1994: 70). Doctors worried that the bicycle saddle was a 'threat to sexual purity', since it could be 'sexually stimulating' (Garvey, 1996: 41): The 'masturbating saddle' was taken so seriously that the manufacturers responded by modifying their design: 'Advertising copy for these 'hygienic' seats typically warned of the 'injurious' or 'harmful' pressure exerted by other saddles, or carried medical endorsements, declaring their saddles free of 'pressure against sensitive parts' (1996: 41).

Women were not prevented from taking part in exercise completely. They were encouraged to take part in some 'mild exercise such as bean-bag throwing', or some 'homely gymnastics', which was 'better known as housework' (Miller, 1999: 8). They would pay a high price for ignoring such advice: They might turn into 'unfeminine freaks and moral degenerates' (Miller, 1999: 8).
Kane's findings have been reinforced by Nancy Theberge, who analyses the accounts of women who play ice-hockey with men. She says 'women hockey players emphasize the significance of natural differences. At the same time, they clearly understand that these differences operate within a continuum' (1998: 193). The implications of both Kane and Theberge's arguments are clear. The parts of participants' accounts which invoke the continuum (and which recognize the 'socially constructed' nature of differentials in sports performance), are good, and need to be emphasized, whilst assertions of 'natural difference' are bad, and need to be eliminated. In addition, despite evidence that 'physical injury is an unfortunate by-product of participation in sport and exercise' (Brewer, 1998: 1), for both men and women, injury arguments tend to be used asymmetrically to justify women's and not men's non-participation. Both authors hope to find ways to dissolve, or transcend this asymmetrical binary.

From Mechanisms of 'Continuum Containment' to Action Oriented Resources

There are a number of problems with the approach to 'continuum containment' considered so far. I will mention these problems briefly before going on to demonstrate, with some of my own data, what a discursive and CA approach to women’s non-participation might look like.

First, while Kane moves the theoretical focus much further than previous research, towards an analysis of the specific uses of descriptions and justifications, there are, nonetheless, several problems with the way she conceptualizes some of the issues. For example, Kane does not show how the mechanisms of 'continuum containment' she identifies enter into participants' practices, and whether they are, or are not participants' concerns. None of this research looks at how injury arguments are constructed, and what they are used to do interactionally, where the business may be far more subtle than Kane has implied.

Second, Kane reifies the binary and the continuum, assuming that the former maps onto assertions of gender difference (which is bad), and that the latter maps on to assertions of sameness (which is good). She presents her theory as though certain
accounts work in uniform and rigid ways to hide the continuum, preventing debate and argument about gender issues in sport from taking place.

Third, Kane reifies culture and the site or causal locus of prejudice. She says 'cultural effort goes into maintaining the binary while simultaneously suppressing evidence of the continuum' (1995: 203 my emphasis). However, it is not at all clear how culture has 'effort' to do this 'suppressing', or that this happens so straightforwardly or so uniformly in practice.

In this chapter I do not want to reify or privilege either the binary or the continuum as the most 'appropriate' way to treat gender in sport. Nor do I want to treat culture as an extra-discursive context which determines the precise contours of prejudice at any one time. Instead, as I did in chapter two, I take a symmetrical, or 'meta' position. I explore how, if at all, arguments which invoke binaries or continuums appear in participants' accounts, and consider what they are used to do interactionally. How are binary and continuum arguments constructed in participants' accounts? Indeed, is the identification of such arguments a straightforward matter? Do certain constructions automatically reinforce the binary identified by Kane, or do they work in more subtle and variable ways than her list of 'mechanisms' implies? In this chapter, I consider precisely how such 'mechanisms' are instantiated, negotiated and argued about in situ, in the ebb and flow of argument and counter-argument. I consider both their indexical, context sensitive organization, and their rhetorical effects.

This chapter builds on some of the early discursive work on gender inequality exemplified in the work of Gill (1991, 1993) and Wetherell et al. (1987). In contrast to the feminist leisure research I described in chapters two and three, these studies effectively upset the idea that individuals possess stable attitudes, and that accounts of gender inequality are presented in a straightforward manner. As I noted in chapter three, these studies explore participants' practices of evaluation, showing how arguments supporting egalitarianism may co-exist with practical, contingency-type arguments, which undermine the egalitarian element, thus preventing equal outcomes. The upshot of this 'type' of accounting was to support the status quo.

There have been a number of critical discursive studies of the way gender is occasioned and organized in interaction. However, many of these studies have reified ideology and
discourse, and ignored the local, situational business of talk’s turn-by-turn construction (see Gavey, 1989, for example). What participants say is assumed to be determined ‘from above’, either by the forces of patriarchy, or through mysterious ‘magic carpet’ type discourses. Such approaches are preoccupied with bringing in politics ‘by the back door’, looking for what they hope to find in their data, regardless of what their participants are demonstrably oriented to (Widdicombe, 1995). Although some researchers, such as Wetherell (1998), have argued that a purely technical, CA analysis doesn’t go far enough (and I will be expanding on this issue in chapter six), it is precisely this form of analysis which most closely attends to what is made relevant in talk, and to the concerns of the participants themselves.

As I noted in chapter three, the early discursive research on gender by Wetherell et al. (1987), and Gill (1991, 1993), has a tendency to treat gender identity as at least partially determined by the ‘discourses’, or ‘interpretive resources’ available within society. Gendered identities, then, are not ‘endogenously grounded’, in the sense described by Schegloff (1997) (and thus analytically tractable), but are also subject to ‘extra-discursive’ forces. This research ignores the finer grained detail of talk, and the interactional work that gender categories themselves can do. Therefore, it needs updating with a more detailed, and technical approach. Indeed, since these early studies, there have been considerable advances in our understanding of the operation of gendered membership categories, which have offered some productive insights. Edwards (1998) and Stokoe (1998), for example, have developed the Billig et al. (1988) research on gender categories in use, with a more CA-informed approach to analysis. I hope to expand on this style of research, and the discursive psychology of views and attitudes (Billig, 1989; Potter, 1998b), extending what we know about the constitution of (views about) gender in talk, with particular reference to sport and leisure issues. I demonstrate how gender categories are just one rhetorically effective, and flexible resource that can be used in arguments about women’s non-participation.

Justifying Women’s Non-Participation: The Participants’ Accounts

My data contains many examples of arguments which are used to justify women’s non-participation in ‘male-identified’ activities, and which (superficially, at least) map onto
some of Kane's 'mechanisms' of continuum containment' described above. Injury arguments, however, were by far the most prevalent justifications used, with a total of approximately 30 instances throughout the data corpus. The frequent use of such arguments by so many of the participants, suggests that they have some interactional currency, or 'action payoff'.

In the analysis that follows, I identify three different ways in which injury arguments are used, each performing a different action:

(i) Differential Susceptibility to Injury;
(ii) Men Don't Like Women With Injuries; and
(iii) It's 'Surprising' That Women Want to get Injured, and 'I Wouldn't Want to do it'.

I explore the variable ways that such arguments are used as resources in participants' accounts, and their internal rhetorical organization. I identify several features which help the speaker manage or sustain their arguments, and deflect accusations of prejudice. These include a number of rhetorically effective contrasts and mechanisms which reify or ironize the factual status of their (potentially problematic) descriptions. A fourth section of deviant cases considers how injury arguments are inverted or used ironically.

Consider the following extract, which is taken from approximately half way through a Boxing Day dinner discussion. Sue has just shown the participants a picture of women boxing (see Appendix B).

Extract One: SAS 26/12/97: B: 28-29

1  J: [No.] Don't like that.
2   (1.2)
3  S: What? (...) Which one don't you like?=
4  J: =The women. (0.6) I don't like to see that.
5  C: [{ innit?]}
6  J: [I think that it's] (it is) you could get
7  some very nasty physical injuries.=
8  A: =Um:
9   (...)  
10 S: WHY is it okay for men to get them and women
can’t?

Well coz (they say) a w- a woman’s breast
innit?

[((laughs))]

[Yeah [they] get ( )]

[You’re gonna do] damage there

ain’t yer?=

Yeah but their [faces] as well=

[Yeah]

=>Yeah but think<> think of where men can get
damaged though.

[Yeah but if you go out ( )]

[(Yeah but he hasn’t got anything there to)]

Oh you can’t go below the belt can(h) you(h).

[No you can’t [no]

C: [No you can’t [no]

R: [No] but I mean if you went out

with a fella er and

[er he- he had (. ) er] anything wrong >with=

[You didn’t wanna box (though Chris didyou?)]

=his face< it- it wouldn’t be so much but a

fella [wouldn’t speak to a girl that had a]=

[(No) at the clubs you see (. ) er]=

=[black eye or a hair lip or]=

=[boxing at the clubs but er you never]=

=[you]

=[see women] boxing like that

[You wouldn’t stick it.]

[Well no it would] put you off more.

Yeah.

[It looks very very hard to ( )]

[I’m surprised [girls] doing it really]=

[Yeah]

=Mm

some (. ) all these other rough sports coz

they spend so much money on their faces

don’t they]

THAT’S IT! Makeup. Yes. Hairdos

Yet they (0.4) do that and smash ‘emselves

up.

[Mm].

(. )

“Mmm”

(. )

I would bar all forms of boxing, (. ) if I had

my way.

The picture provokes a lengthy discussion, in which the participants discuss the appropriateness of women’s involvement in boxing. In other words, legitimate ‘category boundedness’ (Sacks, 1992/1995), or what counts as ‘normative’ (ie: appropriate) femininity, is precisely what is at stake in this extract.

The trajectory of this discussion is rather interesting. The participants offer a variety of
justifications for women’s non-participation, and statements of their disapproval. These range from rather vague notions of likes and dislikes: ‘I don’t like that’/‘I don’t like to see that’, to more explicit arguments that men wouldn’t ‘like’ or ‘fancy’ women with injuries. Although this is a rather gross characterization of what occurs in practice, if we take these arguments in the order in which they appear, we have:

(a) **Assertions of likes/dislikes**: ‘No. Don’t like that’ (line 1). ‘I don’t like to see that’ (line 4).

(b) **References to injury**: ‘You could get some very nasty **physical** injuries’ (lines 6-7).

(c) **Differential susceptibility to injury**: ‘Well coz (they say) a w- a woman’s **breast** innit?’ (lines 12-13) ‘You’re gonna do damage there ain’t yer?’ (lines 16-17). ‘Yeah but their **faces** as well’ (line 18).

(d) **Men wouldn’t like injured women**: ‘A fella wouldn’t speak to a girl that had a black eye or a hair lip or anything’ (lines 31-36). ‘You wouldn’t stick it’ (line 40). ‘It would put you off more’ (line 41).

(e) It’s ‘**surprising**’: ‘I’m surprised girls doing it really like... some (...) all these other rough sports coz they spend **so** much money on their **faces** don’t they’ (lines 44-50). ‘Yet they (0.4) do that and smash ‘emselves up’ (lines 52-53).

(f) **It’s the game itself that’s the problem**: ‘I would bar all forms of boxing, (...) if I had **my way**’ (lines 58-59).

Some of these justifications explicitly reference gender, biology, or sex as the problem (eg: c, d, and e), while others are more generic, tied to person universals such as ‘you’, rather than ‘men’ or ‘women’ (b) (Sacks, 1992/1995), and likes and dislikes, or practicalities which may de-gender the surrounding arguments (a and f). By looking at situated discourse, then, we might be able to get a better understanding of the ways in which talk that sustains gendered arguments (binaries) and talk which de-genders arguments (continuums), actually works.

As a first step in my analysis, I will explicate some of the key features of these arguments, and consider how they are constituted and locally managed. What is the **function** - the **action pay-off** - of these resources as ways of talking about women’s non-participation? Since discussions about gender are intimately bound up with the speaker’s own identity, potentially implicating them as prejudicially motivated or
egalitarian, I will also consider the ways in which participants construct their talk to manage issues of stake and accountability.\(^4\)

(i) Differential Susceptibility to Injury

One way in which injury arguments are used to justify women's non-participation (and reinforce Kane's binary), is to suggest that women are more prone to injury because they have a different *physique* from men. Recall this argument's use in extract one:

**Extract Two: SAS 26/12/97: B: 28-29**

Participants: S: Sue, C: Chris, J: Jan, M: Matt, A: Alice.

1  J: I think that it's (it is) you could get some
2  very nasty *physical* injuries.=
3  A: =\(\wedge\)m:
4  (\^)
5  S: WHY is it okay for men to get them and women can't?
6  C: Well coz (they say) a w- a woman's breast
7  innit
8  S: [((laughs))]
9  (J): [Yeah [they] get ( )]
10 C: [You’re gonna do] damage there ain’t
11  yer?=
12  M: =Yeah but their [faces] as well=
13  J: [Yeah]
14  S: =>Yeah but think<-- think of where men can get
15  damaged though.

In this discussion there are a range of arguments which both support and undermine binary gender logic. Sue's two challenges, *WHY is it okay for men to get them and women can’t?* (lines 5-6), and *">Yeah but think<-- think of where men can get damaged though* (lines 15-16), make gender explicitly relevant, and draw attention to some problematic features in Jan and Chris's accounts (lines 1-2 and 7-8 respectively). Despite Sue's challenges, there are a number of features of the participants' talk which may actually work rhetorically to bolster their arguments, in anticipation of, and in order to deflect, potentially negative uptakes.

The first reference to injury comes on lines one and two, where Jan suggests 'I think

\(^4\) I'm bracketing issues about what is or is not sexist for the time being, except insofar as participants themselves can be shown to be orienting to sexism or some form of trouble in their talk. I return to the issue of what counts as sexism in the discussion section, and again (in relation to 'heterosexism') in chapter seven.
that it's (it is) you could get some very nasty physical injuries'. If we refer back to the lines preceding this in extract one, it is clear that Jan is attempting to account for why she doesn't like to see women boxing. However, her reference to 'you' is rather vague. Jan does not say 'they could get some nasty injuries', which would index back to the 'women' she referred to only a couple of lines earlier. Instead, Jan appears to have some difficulty in choosing the precise referent of her complaint - evidenced in her two repairs from 'it', to 'it is', and finally, to 'you'. Her eventual choice of 'you', allows her to do double duty: 'You' is an impersonal pronoun (Sacks, 1992/1995) which helps her to account for why people shouldn't do boxing, leaving their gender (productively) vague. This is a rhetorically effective construction precisely because it is not explicitly gendered. It may not be easy to accuse Jan of being prejudiced against women, here, since everybody is implicated in her account. Indeed, Sue attends to this inexplicitness by asking a further account-seeking question that brings gender back to relevance: 'WHY is it okay for men to get them and women can't?' (lines 5-6). This problematizes Jan's account, challenging her to explain the asymmetry of injury risk implied by her earlier reference to women.

Chris responds 'well coz they say a w- a woman's breast innit' (lines 7-8). Again, this utterance is vague, and productively so. The 'they say', defers accountability onto a de-gendered and non-present third party. This footing (Goffman, 1981) neutralizes any stake Chris has in answering, and inoculates him from accusations of prejudice. It may be particularly hard to come back to Chris and say 'they don't say...', for example. Indeed, Chris never explicitly mentions what 'they say' about a 'woman's breast' at all. The 'well', and mis-start indicate that this statement is interactionally dispreferred (Pomerantz, 1984), is delicate, and requires care. Chris elaborates his reply in response to Sue's laughter. He says 'You're gonna do damage there ain't yer?' (lines 11-12), again using impersonal pronouns to invoke the generic, non-gendered person. Matt's 'Yeah but their faces as well' (line 13) expresses some disagreement with Chris's rather explicit formulation, and offers an alternative, less explicitly gendered bodily part. Sue's 'but think of where men can get damaged though' (lines 15-16) indexes back to 'breast' on line seven, and again, like lines five and six, draws attention to the possible sexism of Chris's account, referring (implicitly) to an equally (if not more) vulnerable, bodily part.
Here, then, the participants alternate between gendered category references and less explicit person universals. The internal rhetorical design of these gendering and de-gendering moves, the productive vagueness engendered by the use of impersonal pronouns, and the careful footing, all work together to bolster the speakers’ descriptions against attack. While not always successful, the work involved in such constructions, nonetheless demonstrates an interactional concern to deflect negative uptakes. This work helps the participants to sustain the asymmetrical argument that women are more likely than men to get injured, thus reinforcing Kane’s binary, and undermining the idea of a sports continuum.

A similar argument is that women look worse than men with injury:

Extract Three:SAS 26/12/97: B: 1-2

1  S: What is it- yeah but supposing I came home
2  one day and said ‘ooh I want to play rugby’,
3  what would you say to me?
(0.4)
4  C: [Mm: (((laughs)))]
5  A: [I- I- would] immediately think
6  K: [I don’t think it’s very fem-]
7  feminine=
8  A: =of (.) the (.) not- the dangers the injury
9  side [of it]
10  R: [yes]
11  M: Yeah
12  A: that would be my [first reaction]
13  R: [I’d be a- er-]
14  [a woman doesn’t look]=
15  C: [you wanna be tough]=
16  R: =([very pretty with a black eye it’s bad]=
17  C: =([you ought to see all these men with all]=
18  R: =([enough to see a man with ( )])
19  C: =([these]()[you gotta be at least]=
20  J: [with half his teeth knocked out]
21  C: =[e- er twelve stone before you start]
22  playing rugby
23  S: (((laughs)))
24  A: I would think ‘ooh dear (.) susan (.) be
25  careful (.) injury.’
26
In this extract, Sue poses a hypothetical question, which moves the discussion from the relatively safe realm of the generic and the impersonal, to the rather less safe realm of the personal and the particular. She says ‘What is it- yeah but supposing I came
home one day and said 'ooh I want to play rugby', what would you say to me?' (lines 1-3). As we saw in chapter four, the advantage of hypotheticals is that they have 'a defensive property' (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995: 120). Rather than offering a precise account of the features of some event, which may need clarification or expansion, with the hypothetical, ‘no specific incidents are proffered, and thus there is no recourse to a direct interrogation of the details of the events’ (1995: 120). The use of active voicing in ‘Ooh I want to play rugby’ (line 2) (Wooffitt, 1992), gives the hypothetical a ‘real life’, ‘being there’, quality, and constructs rugby playing as something that Sue may both want to do, and get excited about. It indicates that Sue may be a potential or actual rugby player, who is invested in such a question, and that any answer may have implications for her. Indeed, as I demonstrated in chapter four, Sue maintains her role as fence-sitting discussion leader, able to harvest her participants’ opinions in a provocative manner, while avoiding being held directly accountable for, and implicated in, holding her own ‘on the record’ views.

The hypothetical format, then, may be a rather difficult one for the participants to respond to. Indeed, the pause and Chris’s laughter (lines 4-5) indicate that they may be having some trouble with this question. In fact, Sue’s question occasions two different, but overlapping responses: One gendered (Keith’s ‘I don’t think it’s very feminine’ (lines 7-8)), and the other practical and de-gendered (Alice’s ‘I- I- would immediately think of (.) the (.) not- the dangers the injury side of it that would be my first reaction’ (lines 6-13)). Indeed, Alice’s ‘I would immediately think’, implies there would be no other motive or reason for her to disapprove of Sue’s (potential or actual) rugby playing. In ‘immediately’ thinking about Sue getting hurt, Alice manages her identity as someone who is not motivated by prejudice, but is, instead, rather caring and sensitive to Sue’s well-being. Moreover, since ‘thinking’ is generally assumed to come before saying, she creates the impression that nothing else, except the possibility of injury and Sue’s welfare would concern her.

The element of immediacy is again reiterated: ‘That would be my first reaction’ (line 13), and with the use of active voicing: ‘Ooh dear (.). Susan (.). be careful (.). injury’ (lines 25-26). The pauses, here, do not fall at transition relevance places, and work to ‘hold the floor’. In doing so, they add a hearable weightiness and authority to Alice’s claims. She sets herself apart from the other participants, portraying herself as someone

5 It also attends to the possibility that there is an alternative, subsequent ‘second’, less immediate, and possibly more dubious reaction.
who has difficulty with Sue’s potential rugby playing for all the right reasons, as opposed to sexist or prejudicially motivated ones. Indeed, the internal rhetorical design of Alice’s response, the words she chooses, and the way she delivers her argument, display delicacy, careful identity management, and a corresponding sensitivity to alternative, ‘prejudiced’ uptakes to Sue’s question.

While Alice’s de-gendered account treats Sue’s question as though Sue is personally implicated in, and offendable by her response, Rosemary, in overlap, seems rather less attentive to such concerns. Rosemary offers a gendered account which suggests that women look worse than men with injuries: ‘A woman doesn’t look very pretty with a black eye it’s bad enough to see a man with ( )’ (line 15-19), which is completed by Jan: ‘With half his teeth knocked out’ (line 21). While this account is hearably stronger than Alice’s - directly comparing what men and women would look like with injuries, and using this as an account for non-participation - this is also constructed in anticipation of a subsequent uptake. Rosemary tailors her response to the generic woman (rather than Sue), thus demonstrating that it is not Sue’s rugby playing she has a problem with, but women’s participation in general. Indeed, the rhetorical force of this argument is bolstered via the use of non-equivalent types of injury (a ‘black eye’, compared with ‘half his teeth knocked out’), and there is interactional evidence for this non-equivalence. Rosemary says ‘it’s bad enough to see a man with’ (lines 17 and 19, my emphasis), with ‘bad enough’ working as a contrast marker, positioning what has gone before as worse than what will come next.

We can get a much better understanding of how this non-equivalence works, if we consider what the rhetorical or interactional effect of citing equivalent injuries might be. If, for example, Jan says ‘it’s bad enough to see a man with a black eye’, the focus of contrast is the gender of the person with the injury, which may seem overtly prejudiced. By contrasting the ‘black eye’ injury with a comparatively more serious ‘half his teeth knocked out’, the participants make their argument (that it’s worse to see women with injuries) more persuasive: It may be hard to disagree with the assertion that seeing a man with ‘half his teeth knocked out’ is indeed a problematic phenomena that is ‘bad enough’!

Whereas Alice relates her de-gendered argument specifically to Sue, the other
participants tailor their responses to women in general. By generalizing and not particularizing (as one might suggest Sue’s hypothetical originally asked her participants to do), they are able to maintain their potentially sexist justifications, without personally offending Sue. Moreover, by alternating between gendered and de-gendered accounts, and referring to non-equivalent types of injury, the participants work to maintain the asymmetry of their argument (and Kane’s binary): That it is worse for women to get injured than men.

In the next extract, references to ‘likes’ and ‘dislikes’ work alongside gendering and de-gendering moves, to account for the lack of female jockeys in the Grand National.

Extract Four: SAS 28/12/97: 33-35.
Participants: A: Alice, P: Pamela, D: Donald.

1 D: What about women jockeys in the Grand National?
2 (0.8)
4 P: Yeah. I s’pose=
5 A: =yes; is I can cope with that because obviously
6 that’s (. ) coming more of a norm but er
7 D: don’t[get many] though do you?
8 ()
9 A: [No:]
10 P: [No]. No because [again]=
11 A: [Few]=
12 P: =c- coz they fall hard and -and women don’t
13 really like the knocks as the men do do they?
14 I mean they don’t seem to be .hhh
15 (0.4)
16 A: Or pra- whether they don’t often get offered
17 the rides.
18 D: I s’pose [there not] many women jockeys are=
19 (): [Mm]
20 D: =there [really]
21 (): [No]

As in previous extracts, here women’s non-participation is accounted for in terms of their differential susceptibility to injury: ‘C- coz they fall hard and -and women don’t really like the knocks as the men do’ (lines 12-13).6 Placing the blame for non-participation on women’s likes and dislikes in this way, is something which, again, may be (interactionally) difficult to undermine with the counter ‘but women do like the knocks’. It may imply, for example, that such women have a rather masochistic attitude.

6 This is a similar style of argument to that found by Rosalind Gill in her analysis of radio DJ’s talk. One argument that the DJs used to justify the lack of women in radio is that ‘women don’t apply’ (1991, 1993).
Pamela seeks affiliation (line 13), and, in its absence, goes on to qualify her statement: ‘I mean they don’t seem to be .hhh (0.4)’ (line 14). ‘I mean’, here, signals that what comes next qualifies what has gone before. However, we never get to hear what ‘they don’t seem to be’. The lack of affiliation, and Pamela’s difficulty in formulating this utterance (marked by her in-breath and pause on lines 14-15), indicate that this is a potentially problematic action to bring off. Indeed, Alice, who has withheld affiliation, offers an alternative, practical and de-gendered account for why there are fewer women jockeys, asserting speculatively ‘Or pra-whether they don’t often get offered the rides’ (lines 16-17). The ‘Or pra-whether they’, does not explicitly undermine Pamela’s account, but nonetheless constructs this as an alternative to Pamela’s remarks, which, again, indicates some problem with it. As an argument accounting for non-participation, this is less risky than Pamela’s, since it is less likely to appear prejudicially motivated. It attributes the reason for women’s non-participation in an external source (people who don’t offer women rides), rather than something intrinsic to women’s makeup (which implies they are less able to manage the dangers and injuries). Again, there is trouble in asserting differential effects of injury, and an alternative, perhaps more acceptable, external and practical explanation is put forward.

In all of the extracts considered so far, Kane’s binary gender logic is maintained by arguing that it is worse for women to get injured, by virtue of their being or looking different from men. The internal rhetorical construction of these asymmetrical accounts (the use of gendered specifics and person universals, references to non-equivalent types of injury, and ‘likes’ and ‘dislikes’) indicates that the participants are orienting to potentially negative uptakes (and the possibility that their remarks will be interpreted as prejudiced), at the same time warding them off.

(ii) Men Don’t Like Women With Injuries

A second way in which injury arguments are used to justify women’s non-participation is to refer to the ‘damage’ that it would do to a woman’s relationship with her (male) partner. Here, injury is constructed as something men ‘don’t like the look of’. We return again to a section from extract one:
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Extract Five: SAS 26/12/97: B: 28-29

Participants: R: Rosemary, C: Chris, J: Jan, M: Matt.

1 R: No but I mean if you went out with a fella er
2 and
3 J: [er he- he had (. ) er] anything wrong >with=
4 R: =his face< it- it wouldn't be so much but a
5 fella [wouldn't speak to a girl that had a]=
6 C: [(No) at the clubs you see (. ) er]=
7 R: =[black eye or a hare lip or]=
8 C: =[there's boxing, I used to do]=
9 R: ={anything, you wouldn't wanna ( )would=}
10 C: ={boxing at the clubs but er you never=
11 R: ={you]
12 ={see women} boxing like that
13 R: [You wouldn't stick it.]
14 M: [Well no it would] put you off more.

In this extract, there is a rhetorically useful contrast between generic (and productively vague) claims about relationships, on the one hand, and specificity about injuries, on the other. Rosemary begins by accounting for why it is worse for women to get injured than men, by suggesting that if a female boxer is in a relationship with a ‘fella’ who has ‘anything wrong >with his face< it- it wouldn’t be so much but a fella wouldn’t speak to a girl that had a black eye or a hair lip or anything’ (lines 1-10). Again, as in previous extracts, there is a productive vagueness running throughout this formulation, with references to ‘anything wrong’, ‘wouldn’t be so much’, ‘or anything’, and later, ‘stick it’ (line 14). The vagueness of ‘anything wrong’ (line 3) contrasts markedly with the specificity and detail of injuries: ‘Black eye or a hair lip or anything’ (lines 8 and 10), a three part list, which portrays such injuries as normative, and thus likely (Jefferson, 1990). This is a rhetorically effective construction, since one may need to do quite a lot of interactional work to deny that such injuries are indeed problematic. It may, for example, be rather difficult to offer an explicit, or personalized denial, such as ‘no I wouldn’t mind’, or ‘it wouldn’t be so bad going out with an injured man’.

Note, again, that throughout this extract, the participants mix references to gendered particulars, such as ‘fellas’ and ‘girl’, with generic, impersonal pronouns, even when they are prompted (by Sue) for their personal opinions. Rosemary’s ‘you wouldn’t stick it’ (line 14, my emphasis), and Matt’s ‘it would put you off more’ (line 15, my emphasis), for example, are both examples of some careful footing (Goffman, 1981), which works to neutralize their stance in relation to their hypothetical opinions.
(Clayman, 1992). This enables the participants to manage delicate moments in the interaction, and simultaneously bring off their 'strong views' (Billig, 1989). The debate remains in the realm of the abstract, and no one (except the generic and impersonal 'you' (lines 1, 10, 14 and 15; and see Sacks, 1992/1995)) can be pinned down and accused of explicitly owning or aligning with such views. In sum, Rosemary and Matt's careful footing, combined with the contrast between vague and explicit references to injuries, works rhetorically to bolster Rosemary's asymmetrical, binary reinforcing claims.

Matt offers a rather similar argument in the following extract.

**Extract Six: SAS 26/12/97: B: 10**

Participants: S: Sue, C: Chris, M: Matt, K: Keith.

1. M: If you were interested in a girl (1.0) you know and she was nice looking and everything you wouldn't want her to go out and get all smashed up (0.2)
2. K: Right. (1.0) There is a [propri-]
3. M: [with] broken nose, (0.8) missing teeth, (0.6) cuts and (0.4) grazes, and cauliflower [ears and]
4. C: =((Laughs))
5. (): [((Coughs))]
6. S: [Okay]

We join this extract at a point where Sue has been trying to establish precisely why the participants object to women playing rugby. Matt offers a hypothetical explanation (lines 1-9). This rather neat construction is in two lists, the first of three parts: 'If you were interested in a girl (1.0) you know and she was nice looking and everything you wouldn't want her to go out and get all smashed up' (lines 1-4), and the second of four: 'Broken nose, (0.8) missing teeth, (0.6) cuts and (0.4) grazes, and cauliflower ears and' (lines 7-9).

Again, Matt talks about the abstract, generic 'you' (lines 1 and 3), which neutralizes his own stake in such a view (and the possibility that he is interested in 'a girl'). It may be difficult to suggest that Matt is prejudicially motivated here, since he turns the issue into
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one about anybody contingencies (with ‘you’ potentially indexing the interest of all men). He asserts that ‘you wouldn’t want her to go out and get all smashed up’ (lines 3-4). Again, the men, and not the women, are invested with agency. Matt’s ‘all smashed up’ creates a charged image of total carnage, and his discourse of ‘wants’, like Pamela’s discourse of ‘likes’ in extract four, is rhetorically quite strong: To undermine such a claim, one would have to construct a potentially dubious counter claim, such as ‘yes you would’, or ‘actually I would want to see them all smashed up’. This would present the speaker as someone with unpleasant, if not sadistic, tendencies.

Matt’s list of potential injuries on lines seven to nine does not appear to be randomly chosen: It does not include references to broken arms, cracked ribs, or concussion. All of the injuries affect the face in some way, and so the list constructs a certain type of injury as normative. This generates an image which contrasts rather strongly with the ‘nice looking’ ‘girl’ that Matt’s hypothetical person might be interested in (lines 1-2). Indeed, the contrast is so explicit that Sue treats it as a laughable one (lines 10-11). The internal rhetorical construction of Matt’s argument, then, demonstrates an orientation to potential counters, and, at the same time wards them off.

As I argued towards the end of chapter three, membership categorization analysis (Edwards, 1998; Hester and Eglin, 1997; Sacks, 1992/1995) has demonstrated how gender categories can be mobilized to achieve a variety of rhetorical effects. Gender categories (like all categories), contain powerful rhetorical affordances. The categories ‘male’, ‘female’, ‘boy’, ‘girl’, ‘lad’, and ‘bloke’, for example, all come ‘inference rich’ (Sacks 1992/1995: 40), and we tend to associate particular activities with them. As Hutchby and Wooffitt argue, ‘they are loci for the imputation of conventional expectations, rights and obligations concerning activities... which it is expectable or proper for an incumbent of a given category to perform’ (1998: 214). The selection of a particular category from a range of alternatives can allow the speaker to perform some subtle interactional business. Notice that the gender category ‘girl’ is used here (line 1). ‘Girls’ are typically young, with youthful, fresh looks, not as hardy or experienced as ‘women’, and perhaps slightly delicate and in need of protection. The use of this particular category, then, helps create an image that contrasts vividly with that of someone who is ‘all smashed up’.

If we look at the overall trajectory of this piece of interaction, then, it is noticeable how
the participants move from presenting an argument based on gender, to one based on seemingly logical (and, by implication, non-prejudiced) practicalities - such as horrific injuries and the like. The arguments about injuries, however, ultimately work with the gender category references, to bolster arguments which undermine women’s participation and reinforce dualistic assumptions. This pattern of argumentation also occurs elsewhere, in different media. Consider the following extract, taken from the beginning of a television documentary about women rugby players, entitled ‘Women with Balls’.

Extract Seven


1 My name is David Brookes and I’m the president of
2 the Harlequins.
3 (.)
4 The Harlequin football club is a hundred-and-thirty
5 years old.
6 ((cuts to music))
7 It’s the first year that we’ve had a Harlequin
8 ladies team.
9 (.)
10 They wanted to call it Harlequin women but we
11 insisted that we are (. ) gentlemen and ladies so we
12 called it Harlequin ladies.
13 ((cuts to music))
14 Whilst in the men’s game (they) suffer a lot of
15 injuries (. ) er they don’t really want their ladies
16 to turn up at home with black eyes and broken
17 noses and cauliflower tears. Er, they really like
18 them to look a little bit more ladylike than that.
19 ((cuts to women rugby players))

This extract is rather different from those considered so far, taking the form of a monologue rather than a conversation. Nevertheless, since we take account of the possible ‘voices’ and responses of others as we speak (Shotter, 1993: 120), the speaker still works to present his talk in anticipation of a possibly negative uptake (see Bakhtin, 1986). These potential uptakes can be encouraged or exploited by the programme makers, by editing talk alongside visual imagery. This can create rhetorical contrasts which engender the audience’s skepticism in the preceding claims (Pomerantz, 1988/1989). In this case, for example, the programme makers edit images of women playing rugby (and not women with horrific injuries), alongside Brookes’ statements about ‘ladies’ and fears of injury. This contrast works (despite Brookes’ efforts to the contrary, as we shall see below), to portray Brookes as a rather
conservative and old-fashioned man, who is out of touch with the less than 'lady-like' 'reality' of these women's lives.

One of the most interesting features of this extract, is the way in which the speaker constructs an account which seems to invoke both the binary and the continuum (as they have been defined by Kane). Brookes' formulation is very similar to Matt's in the previous extract. The first part of his utterance, 'Whilst in the men's game (they) suffer a lot of injuries' (lines 14-15), works as a concession to alternatives (Antaki and Wetherell, 1999), and as a display of the speaker's 'awareness' that there are similarities between the effects of the game on men and on women (a limited type of continuum argument). However, the second part, 'they don't really want their ladies to turn up at home with black eyes and broken noses and cauliflower ears' (lines 15-17) provides the 'sting': A 'binary' type justification that undermines women's and not men's participation, indicating that there are differences between them. The plural construction, 'ladies', implies that women might go out getting these types of injuries in droves, while the three part list, 'black eyes and broken noses and cauliflower ears' (lines 16-17), constructs these types of injury as normative, and just the tip of the iceberg of a range of other types of injury.

In this very simple structure, Brookes works to display his awareness of alternatives (and thus, his reasonableness), by conceding the possibility that men also get injured. Moreover, his repeated hesitation 'er' (lines 15 and 17), and 'they don't really want' and 'really like them to look' (lines 15 and 17-18, my emphasis), again demonstrates an 'awareness' that there may be alternative 'wants' and 'likes', leaving some space for possible counters. All of this may signal the need to approach the topic of the inappropriateness of women getting injured with delicacy, and in anticipation of negative uptakes. This interpretation is supported if we look at the way the utterance is constructed, not as a factual statement such as 'men don't like women with injuries, therefore they shouldn't play rugby', but as a speculative noticing-type of statement, where the speaker does lots of work to avoid being held accountable for it. In fact, Brookes' assertion that there are a lot of injuries in the men's game, is one of the only utterances that is stated in a distanced, factual type way. This may be because it is thought to be indisputable, and a perfectly legitimate thing to say. Indeed - as a concession - it is the least likely thing to be unpacked.
Brookes' "they really like them to look a little bit more ladylike than that" (lines 17-19, my emphasis), is the perfect rhetorical contrast to the image of awful injuries worked up in the preceding lines. These men are not unreasonable in their requirements, but 'like' their women to look 'a little bit more ladylike' than they would if they had broken noses etc. It is such a minimal requirement on their part, that it would be difficult to suggest it is unreasonable!

A second interesting feature of this extract, is the enormous amount of work that Brookes puts in to displaying his 'sensitivity to the inferential implications of category ascription' (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 214), to the interactional work that gender categories can do. In describing the process of naming the team (lines 7-12), for example, Brookes details his preference for certain gender categories ('ladies') over others ('women'). Here Brookes turns an issue that is usually left implicit, into something explicitly relevant to his account: That different gender categories can give very different inferential meanings to a team name. This does some useful interactional work for Brookes. For example, it is easier to imagine 'women' playing rugby than 'ladies', since 'ladies' are not typically associated with rugby, muddy fields and shorts, but rather with gloves, posh frocks and high heels. Therefore, insisting 'that we are gentlemen and ladies', provides a dramatic contrast, against which Brookes' can make his claim about the inappropriateness of such 'ladies' getting injured. Moreover, the referent 'we' (line 11), is characteristic of the way individuals talk when speaking on behalf of institutions: The suggestion that more than one person felt the same way (and are, therefore, accountable for the decision about the team name), provides corroboration for Brookes' views.

In addition, the choice of the word 'men' (line 14), is a direct contrast to the claim made only three lines earlier, where Brookes insists that they are 'gentlemen and ladies' (line 11, my emphasis). 'Men' is not the logical parallel of 'ladies' (line 15), and one can more easily imagine 'men' (as opposed to the 'posher' top hat and tails variety 'gentlemen') getting injured. By drawing the largest possible contrast, Brookes' arguments are made more persuasive.

The work done by these gender categories, then, is often achieved, as above, not via some neutral, absolute notion of what the category means, but through its indexical usage in relation to another category which is not logically parallel with it. As Edwards
suggests, 'rather than starting with the abstracted content of categories and then theorizing about how they are used, discursive psychology recommends starting with situated usage' (1991: 517). When a speaker contrasts a category with activities one wouldn't normally associate with that category, they 'perform moral work on the world described, and indexically, on the current interaction and participants' (1991: 518; Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 213). Situated characterizations do not only describe, but can also work as a comment on appropriate (and thus normative) category boundedness. It is through the use of such conversational resources that the speaker manages potentially prejudiced accounts in ways which maximize their rhetorical effect, and at the same time, minimize their accountability for them. Injuries are thereby worked up as intrinsically relevant to definitions of appropriate femininity.

Sports media research has already noted the non-parallel use of gender categories in the descriptions of athletes by commentators. As the research described in chapter two shows, such constructions tend to 'infantilize' women: Women are often referred to as 'girls', while men are hardly ever referred to as 'boys' (Duncan et al., 1994). Likewise, women are often referred to as 'ladies' while men are never called 'gentlemen' (Blinde et al., 1991). These researchers talk about 'linguistic patterns' (Duncan et al., 1994), and argue that 'discourse is rigged against women' (Duncan, 1993: 46). However, as Edwards remarks:

Models of word meanings, whether semantic, etymological, monolingual, universalistic, cognitively modelled or derived from conceptual analysis, tend to aim for coherence, as if the word's meaning was always that whole package, scenario and all, and it all gets wheeled out for use on each occasion.

(1999: 281)

The problem with this style of research, however, as I have indicated in chapter three, is that it records the frequency of references to 'girl', 'man', 'woman' or 'lady', implying that gender categories work in uniform ways across different stretches of talk. It searches for the 'underlying basis for such differences' (Blinde et al., 1991: 109) (in terms of cultural or individual attitudes), and category usage is interpreted as a reflection of some fairly stable 'ideological assumptions'.

Such an approach can not account for variability in the use of gender categories, and misses their indexical usage. As Edward's states, for talk's business to be achieved,
'people require conceptual resources that are inconsistent, contradictory, fuzzy and to-be-indexically-specified' (1999: 288). Gender categories, like the 'emotion categories' that Edwards refers to, 'provide a flexible resource for situated discourse, including the potential for rhetorical opposites and contrasts, rather than a set of semantic templates, or fixed scenarios' that mean the same thing in different contexts (1999: 278). Here, we have explored the rhetorical function and action 'payoff' of such contrasts and non-parallel terms. The discursive, CA-aligned approach to categorization outlined above, can capture these subtle, variable features.

In the next extract, gender category references work as part of a narrative to undermine women's participation in rugby.

Extract Eight: SAS 28/12/97: 25-26

Participants: A: Alice, K: Keith, P: Pamela, D: Donald.

1. D: I don't think [it'll ever] catch on
2. A: [ohh]
3. K: No as we were saying [( )] I think
4. D: [(and)] I think
5. K: w- a young girl of y- your fiancée, she's
6. twenty years of age, she's going out playing rugby. That night she comes in, she's got
7. half her teeth missing. You know, which-
8. [ would you] like that?
9. P: [(Exactly)]
10. P: Bruised [and]
11. K: [Bruised] yeah.[( )]
12. A: [no I- I can't see it]
13. P: [and making up all]
14. 15. this muscle power [hh ha]
16. A: [Mm]
17. D: [I'm not] sure whether that
18. would happen in women's rugby would it?
19. K: Well why not?
20. 21. P: Why not?
22. 23. (1.0)
26. D: Do you get ( ) cuffs flying? Yeah
27. P: [you could do I suppose]
28. 29. P: [Yes- it's qui- yeah]
30. it's the same with anything else- because=
31. A: [If they can do boxing]
32. 29. P: =[because they because] they- th- they play
30. as men play.
32. P: That- that's the whole point of them doing
33. it.

7 This research may be guilty of what Potter has termed 'homogenizing' which is 'a consequence of using coding practices that take instances that may be superficially similar, but may display a range of differences that discursive social psychologists would treat as interestingly variable, and placing them in the same category' (1998b: 245).
In this extract, as in previous ones, the injury argument is part of a hypothetical question. Keith constructs a narrative about a woman who might get injured: ‘Young girl’ (line 5), ‘twenty years of age’ (line 6). He situates her in a caring relationship: ‘Your fiancée’ (line 5). The rhetorical contrast with ‘that night she comes in, she’s got half her teeth missing’ (lines 7-8), is an especially pronounced one, making it hard for anyone to suggest they do indeed ‘like that’ (line 9). As in previous extracts, the reference to a person’s ‘likes’, combined with the contrast between ‘young girl’ and (facial) injuries, works to bolster Keith’s (arguably gendered) argument, against possible counters.

When Donald expresses doubt about the likelihood of women getting such injuries (lines 17-18), Pamela provides an account which seems to reflect ideas about a continuum of sports performance. She uses this account to argue that women are just as likely as men to get injuries: ‘Because they- th- they play as men play... That- that’s the whole point of them doing it’ (lines 29-30 and 32-33). This account presents similarities, rather than differences between the way men and women play, in order to establish the possibility of similar outcomes (in terms of their likelihood of getting injured). Rather than using this argument to undermine the binary, however (as Kane’s (1995) approach would imply), Pamela uses it to justify women’s and not men’s non-participation, thus reinforcing the dualism.

In this case, then, arguments about similarity ultimately support dualistic assumptions. This indicates that notions of human similarity and difference may not work in uniform, decontextualized ways, and may not be easily separable in practice (Clarke, 1999; Kimball, 1995). Non-discursive and non-CA approaches miss this degree of subtlety. In particular, they cannot account for the fluid and variable uses of binary/differences and continuum/similarities arguments, and the way each can be used for egalitarian or sexist purposes.

(iii) It’s ‘Surprising’ That Women Want to get Injured, and ‘I Wouldn’t Want to do it’

A third way in which injury arguments are used, is to assert that, given knowledge of the injuries associated with rugby, it is actually rather irrational for women to want to
participate in it at all. This works to construct them as accountable or blameworthy for their behaviour, thus warranting their non-participation.

Extract Nine: SAS 26/12/97: B: 28–29

Participants: C: Chris, J: Jan, M: Matt, K: Keith, A: Alice.

1 M: I'm surprised [girls] doing it really=
2 C: [Yeah]
3 M: =like=
4 A: =Mm
5 M: some (. ) all these other rough sports coz they spend so much money on their faces
6 [don't they]
7 A: [THAT'S IT!] Makeup. Yes. Hairdos
8 M: Yet they (0.4) do that and smash 'emselves
9 UP.
10 (C): "Mm".
11 (. )
12 J: "Mmm"
13 (. )
14 K: I would bar all forms of boxing, (. ) if I had
15 my way.

Injury arguments are particularly robust when deployed in this manner, since the speaker avoids stating their views in an on-the-record fashion (which may risk making them look prejudiced). Instead, they present the 'other' (female rugby players) as accountable for (what is constructed as) a rather irrational desire. Thus, the attention shifts from the speaker's prejudice, to the female rugby players' (obviously) defective capacity for mental reasoning.

Matt, for example, begins by noting his 'surprise' that girls 'like' rough sports, 'coz they spend so much money on their faces don't they' (lines 1-7). Alice affiliates even before Matt has finished his turn, and helps produce a three part list: 'Makeup. Yes. Hairdos' (line 8). This collaboratively produced listing ('faces', 'makeup' and 'hairdos'), gives such behaviour a scripted, 'typical' nature (Edwards, 1994, 1995), constructing women's investment in their appearance as a normative phenomenon (Jefferson, 1990). This works contrastively with Matt's comments on lines nine and ten: 'Yet they (0.4) do that and smash 'emselves up'. 'Yet they do that' positions these activities as contradictory, each with a different logic. In this case, since women invest so much money in their appearance, and care so much about their looks, it is rather surprising that they would want to risk them.
In previous extracts, it is the men who have been invested with agency, with the power to like or dislike ‘their lady’s’ or their partner’s participation. Indeed, it has been the (potential or actual) male opinion which has been used to justify accounts about the problematic nature of women’s participation. In this extract, in contrast, this is reversed. Here it is the female rugby players who have agency, and who choose to play. This time, however, the agency is used for rather different argumentative ends. It is used to make the women accountable for their rather odd or illogical desire to participate in the first place.

Women are presented in a similar way in the following extract.

Extract Ten: SAS 26/12/97: B: 18
Participants: S: Sue, J: Jan.

1 J: =Quite honestly if the lady wants to go and
2 play rugby and smack her nose in=
3 ( ) =((coughs))=
5 S: Yeah.
6 ( . )
7 J: But it doesn’t. It’s not. I wouldn’t want to
8 do it.

Jan uses the discourse of ‘wants’ to create a distinction between the (constructed as) irrational ‘wants’ of female rugby players (line 1), and her own, possibly more reasoned and careful ‘wants’ (line 7). Jan’s comments on lines one to four work as a limited form of concession (Antaki and Wetherell, 1999), with a ‘do what you like, but on your own head be it’ quality. Again, this makes the female rugby players appear irrational, and as the kind of individuals who would deliberately go out and get injured. At the same time, Jan’s ‘great. Fine. Go ahead’ (line 4), positions her as a supporter of individual freedom, with no objections to their participation. However, the listed way in which Jan’s support is expressed here, has a forceful and almost exaggerated quality, which, at the same time, seems to ironize that support, implying that such deliberate self-harm is patently not ‘fine’.

Jan’s ‘but... I wouldn’t want to do it’ (line 7-8), works contrastively with the concession, to undermine the rationality of women’s participation. By referring to her own position in this way (with the emphasis on ‘I’), Jan is able to provide a
rhetorically robust and non-prejudiced sounding justification for non-participation. In other words it's not that certain types of people shouldn't play rugby, it is simply that 'I' - as a reasonable person, with knowledge of the dangers - wouldn't do it. This may be rhetorically quite hard to undermine, since the speaker, and no one else, is in a position to talk about their 'likes' and 'wants'. In this way, Jan owns her views, making it particularly hard for somebody to counter with 'you would want to do it'.

The overall rhetorical impact of this sequence is enhanced by Jan's 'quite honestly' (line 1). This works to present her forthcoming views as a sincere expression of her feelings on some matter. It also positions what comes next as being rather delicate, and perhaps requiring honesty to be said. As Edwards argues, honesty contrasts with 'cognitive calculation' or 'a fake, insincere acting-out' (1999: 283). Thus, such a construction displays Jan's vulnerability to (at the same time, inoculating her from) possible counters.

In the next extract Matt contrasts (what he constructs as) Sue's 'unreasonable' 'wants', with his own, more reasoned desires.

Extract Eleven: SAS 26/12/97: B: 9

Participants: S: Sue, C: Chris, M: Matt, K: Keith, E: Eadie.

1 M: Yeah but apart from all that, apart from
2   us being against it
3 E: ((noise of hearing aid whistling))
4 (0.8)
5 M: Why would you choose rugby (.) being a very
6   rough sport, (.) you're liable to get in-(.)
7   horrible injuries, (.) it's twenty-four
8   blokes this year in this country alone (.)
9   rugby players who've broken their necks
10 (0.4)
11 K: Yeah
12 C: Yeah-[well]=
13 S: [Really?]
14 C: =a girl[I know that lives underneath me she]
15 M: [I mean would you (0.4) would you]
16   rather do that than per'aps play tennis or
17   something which is less likely to be?
18 (0.9)
19 S: But if I was- if I was male now would you be
20   saying the same things to me?
21 (0.3)
22 M: Well no because I think a bloke o'n: (0.8)
23   look after himself more
24 (0.4)
25 C: [{ }]
26 M: [and if he] wants t' anybody if they wanna
We join this extract at a point where Sue has just said that she would ‘consider’ playing rugby, if it weren’t for ‘the stereotypes that the women who do do it have to put up with’. Matt’s comments on lines 1-2 clearly assert that he (and the referent ‘us’ indicates everybody else present) is ‘against’ women playing rugby. Again, like Jan in the previous extract, Matt owns his views. He discards these views as irrelevant, characterizing everybody’s prejudices (and Sue’s reference to ‘stereotypes’ in the line preceding it) as ‘all that’ (line 1). These stereotypes and prejudices, then, detract from the really important issue: The logic of women choosing rugby in the first place. Matt’s remarks on lines one and two manage potential accusations of prejudice by owning, and then dismissing such prejudice as irrelevant. The central issue is not about whether the participants approve or not. It is about the much more important issue of why Sue might ‘choose’ (line 5) to participate in such a dangerous sport.

As in the previous two extracts, the (reasonable) speaker is positioned against the unreasonable ‘other’ by appeals to Sue’s rationality: ‘Why would you choose rugby (. . .) being a very rough sport’ (lines 5-6). This formulation positions Matt as someone who is having a particular difficulty understanding Sue’s (potential) participation, rather than as someone who has a particular problem with, or prejudiced feelings towards, women’s rugby. Nonetheless Matt’s ownership of this ‘difficulty’, this lack of understanding, is used to make Sue’s reasoning (her dangerous choices) appear defective.

The strength of Matt’s assertion, and the contrast between Matt (as reasonable) and Sue (as irrational), is enhanced by the detailed list of evidence about injuries that follows (lines 6-9). This makes it particularly hard to respond in favour of rugby playing, since Sue is being held accountable for a decision that ignores or overlooks evidence of such risks. Matt’s reference to such a precise number of neck injuries gives him the status of expert, with facts and figures about the state of the game at his finger tips. It is hardly coincidental that the injuries he quotes are amongst the most extreme available, and typically associated with life-long paralysis. Matt portrays himself as an authority on the sport, and in doing so, constructs a rhetorically powerful ‘factual’, informed case, that bolsters his argument against possible counters (Potter, 1996a).
Note too, the use of the gender category ‘blokes’ (line 8). Again, this works rhetorically to bolster the dangerous image of the sport that Matt is trying to create. The category ‘blokes’ is ‘inference rich’ (Sacks, 1992/1995), and commonly associated with activities such as beer drinking, and fighting, or with a person who can ‘hold their own’. Blokes (as opposed to ‘boys’ or ‘men’) are the least likely category of person to be thought to be going out breaking their necks in such large numbers. If ‘blokes’ get so badly injured, then what hope is there for girls or women?

Matt also works to portray himself as a caring advice giver, by framing his views in the structure ‘why do X when X is bad? Why not do Y instead?’. He does not simply undermine women’s participation, but is thoughtful enough to offer (what he constructs as) a more reasonable, practical alternative. It is interesting that Matt does not finish his utterance ‘would you rather do that than per’aps play tennis or something which is less likely to be?’ (line 15-17). By leaving the completion open to interpretation, Matt avoids having to state a categorical, and possibly dubious assertion, that tennis is ‘less dangerous’, for example. The fairly long pause (line 18) indicates Sue’s trouble in responding to such an incomplete (yet inferentially rich) question.

Indeed, rather than provide a direct response, Sue’s hypothetical, ‘But if I was- if I was male now would you be saying the same things to me?’ (lines 20-21), draws attention to a possible source of bias in Matt’s question, and holds him accountable for that bias (lines 19-20). Matt’s reply ‘I think a bloke c’n look after himself more’ (lines 22-23), seems to contradict his assertion only a few lines earlier that ‘twenty-four blokes’ had ‘broken their necks’ (lines 7-9). So, on the one hand, Matt emphasizes the horrific injuries in the men’s game to account for why Sue - and perhaps anybody - shouldn’t play rugby (a continuum-type argument), and on the other hand, he uses ‘blokes’ ability to ‘look after themselves more’, to highlight why women shouldn’t play rugby (a binary-type argument). Interestingly, on both occasions, he exploits the ‘inference rich’ nature of the category ‘blokes’, but for different rhetorical ends. This highlights the context-sensitive, action oriented nature of categories and descriptions, and the variable uses to which injury arguments can be put.

These remarks are de-gendered in the final few lines, with Matt’s ‘if he wants t'- anybody if they wanna (.) face dane- I mean I wouldn’t wanna play rug by’ (lines 26-
28). Matt seems to be saying that, in the last analysis, his objections are not related to
gender at all, but are about danger, which applies to everybody who plays rugby. This
de-gendering is rather explicit, evidenced in the repair from 'he' to 'anybody', with the
emphasis on 'anybody'. The sequence ends with Matt's emphatic 'I wouldn't wanna
play rug by' (lines 27-28), which closes it down. As I have already argued, referring
to things one would and wouldn't 'want' to do is rhetorically strong. Matt exploits this
feature of talk to enhance his argument against Sue's potential rugby playing. The
emphasis on 'I' bolsters the contrast between Sue's (constructed as irrational) wants,
and Matt's more reasoned wants, holding Sue accountable for her alternative views.
Indeed, one of the interesting things about this utterance, is that it is not simply a
description of Matt's wants, but an account which is meant to stand alone to justify
his views.

So far I have identified three ways in which injury arguments are used to justify
women's non-participation, and a variety of interactional and rhetorical mechanisms
which sustain them. In the next section, I consider three deviant cases which have
features which depart from the patterns identified so far. As I argued in chapter four,
deviant cases can give us a much better understanding of the workings of the target
phenomenon.

(iv) Deviant Cases

(a) Inversions

Extract Twelve:


Gooch quotes:

1 "She was skilled in the initial stages of a fight
2 with the cape, but never learnt to kill well, and
3 that's the real test," said one. "She wasn't tall
4 enough and breasts get in the way. No one doubts
5 that she's shown balls - or ovaries - in the ring.
6 But last year she fought more than sixty times and
7 wasn't injured once. A bullfighter who's doing the
8 stuff properly gets gored".
In a striking inversion of the ‘women shouldn’t do violent sports because they’ll get injured’ type of argument, in this extract, women’s non-participation in bull-fighting is justified by referring to their lack of injury. In this case, it is a woman’s physical make-up which prevents her from being able to ‘kill well’ (line 2). Women are not ‘tall enough’, and their ‘breasts get in the way’ (line 4).

There are two occasions where the person quoted cites positive features of the female bullfighter’s participation: ‘She was skilled in the initial stages of a fight with the cape’ (lines 1-2), and ‘No one doubts that she’s shown balls - or ovaries - in the ring’ (lines 4-5). These work rather like concessions (Antaki and Wetherell, 1999), where the speaker works to bolster their claims and deflect accusations of prejudice, by initially conceding positive features of women’s participation. As I will be demonstrating in more detail in chapter seven, the act of conceding displays the speaker’s orientation to potential counters (in this case, that women are skilled and brave), at the same time, inoculating themselves from such counters. These concessions are followed by ‘but’ markers, which signal an impending qualification: ‘but never learnt to kill well’ (line 2), and ‘But last year she fought more than sixty times and wasn’t injured once’ (lines 6-7). They continue, ‘A bullfighter who’s doing the stuff properly gets gored’ (lines 7-8, my emphasis). In the last analysis, then, this speaker constructs gender as irrelevant to a bullfighter’s success. Good fighters - whoever they are - get injured.

This deviant case problematizes the assumption that injury arguments might work in uniform ways across contexts to undermine women’s participation. Some arguments justify women’s non-participation by referring to their risk of injury, while others achieve exactly the same effect, by referring to their lack of injury, again demonstrating the indexical variability of injury arguments.

In the last two extracts, and in contrast to all of the extracts considered so far, the injury argument is not used to undermine women’s participation in activities non-traditional to their sex. Instead, it is used in an exaggerated and ironic fashion to highlight the normative (and yet futile) nature of just such arguments.
Chapter Five: Constructing (the Limits of) Femininity

(b) Ironic Uses

Extract Thirteen: SAS 9/12/97: B: 38-39


1 M: Oooh I'd have no desire to play rugby.
2 E: (No)
3 S: Why not?
4 M: I've got too [pretty features] hhh.
5 A: ( )
6 E: Coz [I'd break my nails]
7 S: [((laughs ))]
8 (): [I don't know the rules]
9 E: [I couldn't wear my]
10 high heels!
11 M: Coz I don't know the ru(h)le(h)s!
12 [((laughs))] 13 E: [((laughs))] 14 M: I don't know if I can move in that gold dress
15 All: [((laughter))] [knees] stuck together trying to run
16 down the field.
17 (): [((Laughter))] 18 M: [Umm] (.) no but I
19 certainly think it's leisure to watch it.
20 A: Mn.=
21 S: *Right.

We join this extract at a point where Sue has just asked the participants what they think about rugby. The participants proceed to justify their own non-participation in rugby, by providing an ironic commentary on the injury argument. Ironic commentaries and descriptions work by problematizing as defective or invested, that which they purportedly describe. They differ from factual claims, which are reified as solid, literal, and independent of the speaker (Potter, 1996a: 112-113).

Here the participants resist and ironize the interpretation that their non-participation might be due to fear of injury, by voicing just such fears in an exaggerated and parodied manner. They provide various accounts for non-participation, some of which centre (if only implicitly) around the possibility of injury: 'I've got too pretty features hhh' (line 4), 'I'd break my nails' (line 6), 'I don't know the rules' (line 8), 'I couldn't wear my high heels!' (lines 9-10), and 'I don't know if I can move in that gold dress', 'knees stuck together trying to run down the field' (lines 14-17). Indeed, the participants work together to produce a ridiculous combination of accounts. This 'ridiculousness' is itself evident in a number of ways:

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First, the accounts are expressed, not as carefully articulated views, but as a list. This listing gives the impression that the participants are simply off-loading, or voicing (and at the same time ironizing), what they take to be a common, or normative response (Jefferson, 1990).

Second, there is an increasing amount of laughter throughout the extract, which displays (what the participants' take to be) the humorous, ironic nature of their accounts. For example, speaker M's: 'Coz I don't know the ru(h)le(h)s!' (line 11), is not framed as a direct challenge to the utterance on line eight. It does not have a questioning intonation, as one might expect if it was a 'next turn repair initiator' (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977). Instead, speaker M simply repeats the turn with interpolated laughter, thus displaying what she takes to be the 'not-to-be taken seriously' nature of it.

Third, we know that the laughter (and repetition of this turn) treats the account as funny (rather than peculiar or problematic for other reasons) since none of the participants attempt to repair their 'laughed at' utterances (as one might expect in more serious discourse (Mulkay, 1988)). The participants simply continue laughing and 'adding on' more laughable references. They appear to be almost inviting a negative uptake, and in doing so, problematize just such a (potential) response to Sue's question.

Finally, the participants themselves mark the distinction between ironic and serious discourse. The shift back to the 'serious mode' (Mulkay, 1988), is evidenced in speaker M's considered 'umm', and 'no but I certainly think' (lines 19-20, my emphasis), which marks what comes next as a departure from the humorous nature of what has gone before (Mulkay, 1988).

By ironizing their talk in this way, the participants in this extract actually display what they interpret as the normative (and at the same time, problematic) nature of injury arguments. Thus, injury arguments do not always work in negative, prejudiced ways, but can be exploited and caricatured, and used for humorous effect. More importantly, by ironizing (and thus problematizing) injury arguments, such accounts may actually
attend to and work to undermine precisely the type of ‘undermining’ strategies found in the previous extracts.

Therefore, in contrast to what Kane (1995) implied, the injury argument does not work in uniform or fixed ways. While not directly promoting or encouraging women’s participation, the ironic commentary nonetheless undermines justifications for non-participation. Since irony can show how futile prejudice is, it can be a powerful social comment. Ironically, injury arguments, far from containing a continuum in sport and leisure, may actually be one of the most effective ways to increase awareness of, and eventually obtain just such a continuum!

Thus, the injury argument can be used to achieve a range of variable and sometimes contradictory actions. This assertion is not just an analyst’s gloss but is something attended to, and occasionally highlighted by participants themselves. Sometimes, for example, variability in the use of such arguments becomes participant’s topic, and the indexicality (and hypocrisy) of the injury argument is explicitly highlighted and ridiculed. In the following extract, for example, Glenda Cooper responds to the British Board of Boxing Control’s argument that pre-menstrual women should not be allowed to box professionally, because they are more prone to injury:

Extract Fourteen:


1 One really has to conclude that this men’s
2 enclave, the BBBC, doesn’t know too much about
3 women. As far as I can see, premenstrual women
4 would make far better boxers than women on an even
5 keel who might realise how stupid this sport is...
6 Naked aggression, the desire to hit anything that
7 gets in your way, the singleminded conviction that
8 life is unfair and everyone is going to pay sounds
9 like a recipe for success in the boxing world to
10 me........
11 To be honest anyone who decides to box needs
12 their head examined. But if the BBBC is going to
13 suggest that women become emotionally unstable and
14 vulnerable during periods then I’ll buy it. Just
15 don’t expect me to go near a cooker. I might hurt
16 myself on the nasty hot hob. Or indeed damage
17 myself with a sharp fruit knife due to my increased
18 chance of being prone to injury. Maybe I’ll just
19 stay away from the weekly shop at the supermarket
20 in case I become emotionally unstable with the till

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As I showed on my discussion of the previous extract, the opposite of fact construction - ironization - occurs, when descriptions are constructed ‘as partial, interested, or defective in some other way’ (Potter, 1996a: 113). Here Cooper ironizes the boxing officials’ ‘PMT makes you more prone to injury’ argument, by illustrating the variable, and potentially contradictory uses of just such arguments, thus highlighting the degree of stake involved in certain accounting practices.

Cooper not only identifies, but also appropriates the rhetoric of the boxing officials to highlight the fallacy of their own argument. She turns the boxing officials’ argument ‘on its head’, so to speak, showing how PMT, even in its most extreme (indeed-ironized and most ridiculous) forms, may actually help make women more effective boxers (lines 6-10). While this works by emphasizing the differences between men and women (apparently reinforcing, rather than undermining Kane’s (1995) gender binary), this construction is nonetheless used to undermine and ironize the (sexist) arguments based on such constructed differences. In turn, Cooper problematizes their status as appropriate, or adequate justifications for women’s non-participation.

In a long sequence, Cooper appropriates the boxing officials’ rhetoric to undermine women’s participation in (what Cooper constructs as) normatively female activities, such as cooking, shopping, and child-minding (lines 15-23). Freeing women from these activities, may actually work in their favour. This normativity is made explicit on lines 21-23, where Cooper refers, contrastively, to ‘sitting on the sofa’ and ‘watching TV’, and to what she would ‘let’ men do. In doing so, Cooper cleverly constructs the Boxing Officials’ arguments as inexplicably and unjustifiably gendered.

Again, in this deviant case, injury arguments do not work uniformly to reinforce ideas justifying women’s non-participation. Instead, they are exploited and ironized in order to undermine their factual status, at the same time demonstrating their rhetorical, constructed, and constructive nature (see Potter, 1996a: 112-113). Cooper highlights the variable uses of injury arguments, showing how they can be used inconsistently, as resources in the boxing officials’, and ‘men’s’ (line 22) favour. Injury arguments, then, have the potential to mask a range of sins.

21 girl. I’ll stay on the sofa, watch television and
22 let men do dangerous things like looking after
23 children. PMT? I’ll have it all month thank you
24 very much.
Discussion

In this chapter, I have built on Kane's (1995) research on the binary and the continuum of gender, by demonstrating the precise ways in which injury arguments work in participants' accounts. I have described three ways in which injury arguments are used to justify women's non-participation in 'male identified' activities:

(i) Differential Susceptibility to Injury;
(ii) Men Don’t Like Women With Injuries; and
(iii) It’s ‘Surprising’ That Women Want to get Injured, and 'I Wouldn’t Want to do it'.

A fourth section of ‘deviant cases’ (inversions and ironic uses), problematizes and at the same time, sheds light on, the constitution of the first three.

I have shown that the local constitution and management of injury arguments is a lot more subtle than Kane's (1995) 'mechanisms of continuum containment' framework implies. I have identified a variety of features which are used to sustain such accounts, and which work as orientations to, and deflect, accusations of prejudice. These include a number of rhetorically effective contrasts: The use of non-equivalent gender categories (such as women and ladies, blokes and girls), which exploit the inference rich and flexible nature of membership categories; references to gendered specifics (such as 'he' or 'she', 'women', or 'men'), alongside person universals (such as 'they', 'we', 'you' or 'us'); non-equivalent types of injury, or specific versus (productively) vague references to injuries; and comparing the (rational) self, with the (irrational) other, where the speaker invokes practical reasons for non-participation.

These rhetorical contrasts are supported by a range of other mechanisms which reify or ironize the factual status of descriptions: The discourse of likes and wants, owning views with reference to one's 'honesty', the self as 'expert' on the detrimental effects of participation, and constructing the normativity of injuries through listing. Finally, the use of concessionary formats presents the speaker as somebody who is able to recognize positive features of women's participation, while at the same time,
inoculating themselves from accusations of prejudice (and I will be expanding on this particular feature of accounts in chapter seven). Indeed, all of the features described above work in anticipation of possible counters, thus displaying the speaker’s orientation to, and interactional ‘awareness’ of the possibility that their remarks might be heard as troublesome or prejudiced.

One of the most important findings of this chapter, is that injury arguments do not work uniformly to reinforce the binary and undermine the continuum of gender identified by Kane, but are used to perform a range of actions. Indeed, part of the usefulness of injury arguments, as I have shown, is that they can be used to portray the speaker as someone who is caring about a person’s welfare, and is not sexist. They can justify women’s non-participation without ever making gender relevant at all! Moreover, when we analyze actual sequences of talk, arguments about gender difference (the binary), and arguments about similarities (the continuum), seem to blur together in complex ways. It thus becomes hard to treat them as undifferentiated, mutually exclusive phenomena. Arguments that men and women are the same in certain respects (continuums), for example, do not always work in positive, egalitarian ways, just as arguments that they are different (binaries) are not always ‘sexist’.

Sometimes injury arguments are used to argue that men and women are inherently different, or that injury is more acceptable in men than in women (thus reinforcing the binary identified by Kane), and at other times (when the likelihood that women will get injured is in doubt, as it is in extract eight), such arguments are used to imply that women are just as likely to get injured as men, and ‘play as men play’ (thus reinforcing Kane’s idea of a continuum of performance, or generic features of sports participation). Sometimes, as in extract seven, the binary and the continuum are used alongside one another, in the form of a concession. Arguments about continuums, then, can exist alongside argumentative attempts to silence that continuum.

In the process of argumentation, participants manoeuvre between arguments which gender and de-gender their accounts, depending on the interactional task at hand. As many of the extracts above illustrate so effectively ‘notions of common human nature and gender difference may be so closely related in talk that it’s difficult to regard them even as separate ‘positions’ or discourses, let alone as aspects of discrete ideologies or attitudes’ (Billig et al., 1988: 126).
As Marshall and Wetherell have shown in their analysis of talk about career and gender identity, individuals are not always consistent in their use of resources. They were able to identify a number of 'contradictory notions' relating to gender: ‘That women and men are essentially different in traits, outlook and abilities; and that gender makes no difference, and women and men are basically similar’ (1989: 120). However, these arguments did not map onto two different types of people with different beliefs. Instead, ‘those interviewed drew freely on both notions’ (1989: 121). Therefore, notions of sameness, and notions of difference, were both useful in different contexts (1989: 121).

Billig et al. (1988) have described this as a constant tension, a ‘dilemma between asserting human similarity and difference’ (1988: 128):

The distinction between assertions of human similarity, absolute variety and (gender) difference may be regarded as inherently unstable. Billig (1985/1987) notes that categorization presupposes particularization and, conversely, particularization presupposes categorization... people only use one type of account through a recognition of the possibility of alternatives.

(1988: 131-132)

When feminist leisure theorists talk about arguments which ‘reinforce’ or ‘undermine’ binaries and continuums (claiming that binaries are intrinsically sexist, and continuums are not), they simplify what is in fact a very subtle and complicated business. ‘Binaries’, ‘dualisms’ and ‘continuums’ are analysts’ categories, which do not reflect the activities performed in situated discourse. Constructions of difference and sameness (Clarke, 1999; Frith, 1998; Kimball, 1995), gendered statements and de-gendered statements, may, as we have seen, coexist alongside one another in a way which can be difficult to unpick in the abstract. According to Condor (1986), for example, statements about essential ‘differences’ between men and women, may be politically and rhetorically useful (1986: 112). Likewise, Kimball (1995) wants to practice theoretical and political ‘double visions’, where one resists choosing between either

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8 Shakespeare (1998) (and see also, Kitzinger, 1995), considers the rhetorical uses of essentialist and social constructionist accounts of identity in relation to the women’s, lesbian and gay, and disability movements (1998: 168). He shows how causal arguments have political consequences, and, like all arguments and accounts, can be used indexically to do different things on different occasions. Thus, essentialist arguments are not always used to 'underpin social subordination', just as constructionist arguments do not necessarily lead to 'progressive political interventions' and social change (1998: 171). Gay men and lesbians, for example, often wish to assert their essential differences from heterosexuals 'in order to develop a sense of distinction and specialness' (1998: 175), and essentialist arguments have been used for emancipatory ends: to justify lowering the age of consent for example (1998: 176).
similarities or differences 'as the more true or politically valid' approach (1995: 11). She argues that this does not 'preclude making choices for one side or the other in particular contexts' (1995: 11). Rather, 'the partiality of any particular view is recognized' (1995: 12). These approaches highlight the naivety of attempts to escape from dualistic constructions. As Wetherell and Potter argue, 'attempting to simply transcend binary logic will almost certainly rebound' (1998: 382). It ignores the way all talk is indexical and action oriented.

In the sport and leisure literature, however, there are many arguments about whether men and women are or aren't different (and much effort is put into 'proving' the latter), which shifts attention away from what assertions of difference (the binary) or sameness (the continuum) do in practice, and the nature and construction of the binary/continuum argument itself. Ultimately, within a discursive and CA approach, such concepts are thrown into crisis.

The final three 'deviant case' extracts, demonstrate how injury arguments are not 'types' of accounts which work in decontextualized ways to undermine women's participation. They are interactional, action oriented resources, which do not intrinsically support or undermine women's participation. As Edwards states, 'resources' have a degree of 'flexibility' and 'we need to explore the relationship between 'resources' and situated talk' (1991: 517).

Injury arguments have a variety of rhetorical uses and are always deployed within a specific context. This context sensitivity accounts for why we find variability within one stretch of talk, and why the same arguments can mean different things on different occasions. Indeed, as we saw in extract 12, a lack of injury can be used to undermine women's participation. While injury arguments may frequently be used to support gendered assumptions, they can also be used ironically to challenge those assumptions, and be exploited for their indexical usefulness.

As extract 13, and particularly extract 14 show, dualistic gender logic can be invoked in a rhetorically gross and ironic way, in order to highlight the normativity and the futility of just such arguments. Just as Glenda Cooper (extract 14) draws attention to the indexical usefulness of the injury argument, I hope to have demonstrated that same indexicality in my analysis of the other extracts.
As I will show in more detail in chapter seven (where I look for participants’ orientations to ‘heterosexism’), we don’t ever find a concrete ‘thing’ called ‘sexism’ in participants’ accounts. Rather, what counts as sexism and/or prejudice may be precisely what is at issue for participants. Sexism is only ‘found’, if you like, in participants’ ironic commentaries (which display what they take to be problematic), in their orientations to trouble, and the potential for a negative uptake. It follows that language and certain words are not inherently ‘sexist’ (cf. Spender, 1980; Cameron, 1992). What counts as sexism is not pre-determined, invariable, and legislated in advance of interaction (although, it can be, for political or legal purposes), but is always something that is oriented to.

Sport and leisure theorists need a more sophisticated understanding of interaction and language that is more attentive to its action orientation, and how it constructs what is legitimate/illegitimate in the first place. In other words, we do not need to start from the assumption that certain activities, behaviours or statements are non-traditional, or map attitudes onto genders and use gender as the explanatory variable (cf. the attitudes research described in chapter two). Nor do we need to assume that gender categories work in uniform ways to undermine women’s participation (cf. the sports media research described in chapter two).

This analysis, then, has implications that go well beyond the field of sport and leisure research. The relationship between gender and the other ‘big’ sociological variables is a live topic in CA, ethnomethodology and discursive psychology, and the issue of just what counts as a gendered interaction is likely to provoke much debate and argument in the future.

Summary

This chapter has worked on two levels. On one level, it has provided a distinctive 9 Kane herself uses arguments which reinforce the binary on certain occasions. In discussing the gender differential in the rules of tennis, for example, Kane suggests ‘not only is there no biological justification for a differential set of requirements, if there is any physical attribute that women possess that enables them to compete successfully against men, it is endurance’ (1995: 207). Elsewhere, she argues ‘it may be the case that males, as a class, tend to have an advantage in strength and size over women, as a class’ (1995: 201), and ‘many women are bigger, faster, and stronger than many men’ (1995: 201). Kane invokes biologically reductionist arguments about essential difference, in order to highlight the sexism in the rules of tennis (Woolgar and Pawluch, 1985).
contribution to leisure theory, by examining the various ways in which injury arguments are used to justify women's non-participation in 'male-identified' activities. This approach builds on and problematizes much of the research described under our first structuring concern in chapter two. It offers a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of practices of evaluation in specific settings, and of the variable and subtle ways in which binaries and continuums are constructed and used. I have, for example, identified several features of such arguments, their internal rhetorical constitution and their action 'pay-offs'.

On a second level, this chapter offers a contribution to discursive psychology and CA, by providing a detailed analysis of the internal rhetorical design of these 'gendered' utterances, their contrastive uses, and orientations to potential prejudice. Indeed, I have argued that we cannot find 'sexism' in an objective sense, but that it is something that is oriented to.

This research also builds on the early discursive studies of gender, by using insights from membership categorization analysis in CA (Edwards, 1998; Sacks, 1992/1995). I have not treated gender as an independent variable which determines or constrains what participants say, but as a context sensitive resource. I have shown how the inference rich and flexible nature of gender categories can be exploited by participants in variable and interactionally significant ways. For example, the deviant cases and ironic uses offer productive insights into just what the participants take to be normative and/or problematic. Irony can undermine the factual status of claims and descriptions, and thus work as a comment on normativity. This is an important theme running throughout this thesis, and something that I will pick up again in subsequent chapters.

I will return to the issue of prejudice and what counts as an orientation to it in more detail in chapter seven. Before doing so, however, in the next chapter I address the second of the structuring concerns introduced in chapter two: Hegemonic masculinity. I will not focus on how others describe and/or problematize masculinity in relation to certain leisure activities (as I have done with the notion of 'femininity' here). Instead, I consider how participants talk about their own leisured masculinities, and how they construct and position themselves (and others) in relation to them.
Chapter Six: Constructing Masculinity

Introduction

In chapter five, I explored the way injury arguments are used to justify women's non-participation in 'male identified' activities, and the way such arguments can be used to sustain or ironize assumptions about normative femininity. In this chapter, I explore the second of the structuring concerns introduced in chapter two: 'hegemonic masculinity'. I analyse accounts where the relationship between masculinity and leisure becomes salient for participants, and consider the way 'leisured' masculinities are constructed and deployed by the speaker to manage their own stake and accountability.

This chapter begins by exploring the way the relationship between masculinity and leisure has been described and/or problematized in some recent popular texts. These texts demonstrate participants' own concern with the link between the category of 'masculinity', and certain category bound activities. While popular and academic texts have highlighted some interesting features of that relationship, I argue that leisure research has, to date, failed to consider the interactional reasons why men position themselves in relation to certain conceptions of the masculine, and the variable ways in which men describe themselves.

I evaluate Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity', and build on and develop Wetherell and Edley's (1999) critical discursive reformulation of the concept. Following the approach advocated by Schegloff (1997, 1998, 1999a; 1999b) in a recent exchange with Wetherell (1998) (and subsequently with Billig, 1999a, 1999b), I argue that previous research is based on the assumption that we need to venture further than the limits of the text to explain why participants say what they do, and go beyond participants' orientations to be able to say anything politically effective.

Using data from two semi-structured interviews with men in their early twenties, where the relationship between masculinity and leisure is discussed, I explore the way participants construct 'leisured' masculinities and situate themselves (and others) in relation to those constructions. Following Schegloff, I adopt a more technical, CA sensitivity to my data (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998), and an analysis which is more
attentive to participants' orientations (Schegloff, 1997) and gendered category membership (Edwards, 1998), than that used in the analysis of masculinity so far. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of this approach for feminist leisure theory, discursive psychology, and CA.

Defining Masculinity: The Relationship Between Masculinity and Leisure

Academic work on masculinity has continued to flourish since the late 1980s, and there has been a corresponding interest in the criterial dimensions of 'manliness'. Recently, for example, many men's and women's magazines have set about defining various 'types' of man, according to the activities that they engage in. What, for example, are the relevant behavioural criteria one must fulfil in order to claim the label 'new man', 'lad', or 'new lad'? 

Masculinity, like all membership categories, comes 'inference rich' with meaning, with activities providing clues to the nature of one's identity and group membership (Sacks 1992/1995). As we saw in chapter two, leisure theorists have problematized the relationship between masculinity and leisure. They suggest that leisure, and particularly, sport, is one of the few remaining arenas where the myth of men's 'natural' superiority (and female inferiority) is sustained. Such myths are perpetuated at the expense of women, and other men, who do not conform to the 'macho' sporting stereotype.

The relationship between masculinity and leisure has been commented on in a number of popular cultural texts. This would suggest that such a relationship is not just a concern for analysts and theorists, but is also important, and relevant, for participants. Indeed, these texts demonstrate the Sacksian (1992/1995) argument about the 'inference' rich nature of membership categories. In the extract below, for example, the writer, Nick Hornby, describes masculinity in terms of a rather limited range of activities:

According to a large number of both men and women, masculinity is a shared set of assumptions and values that men can either accept or reject. You like football? Then you also like soul music, beer, thumping people, grabbing ladies' breasts, and

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1 Some of the most well known studies of masculinity include those by Brod, 1987; Brod and Kaufman, 1994; Chapman and Rutherford, 1988; Kaufman, 1987; Kimmel, 1987; Kimmel and Messner, 1995; Mac an Ghaill, 1996 and Morgan, 1992.
money. You’re a rugby or cricket man? You like Dire Straits or Mozart, wine, pinching ladies’ bottoms and money. You don’t fit into either camp? Macho, nein danke? In which case it must follow that you’re a pacifist vegetarian, studiously oblivious to the charms of Michelle Pfeiffer, who thinks that only leering wideboys listen to Luther Vandross....Tell a thinking woman that you like football and you’re in for a pretty sobering glimpse of the female conception of the male.

(Hornby, Fever Pitch, 1992: 79-80)

For Hornby, then, your leisure preferences predict what ‘type’ of man you are.

Indeed, popular literature seems to be littered with what Van Maanen (1988) calls ‘confessionary tales’, where men problematize the relationship between sport and leisure, and consider the implications of their category membership (or non-membership). Consider the following two extracts:

Part of my obsession with Arsenal was that it gave me a quick way to fill a previously empty trolley in the Masculinity Supermarket.

(Hornby, Fever Pitch, 1992: 80)

Sporting activities partly acted as masculinizing practices and played a part in developing my ‘masculine’ identity against a background of great personal insecurity....although I partly wanted to be accepted by an actively virile schoolboy culture that stressed the values of physical toughness, aggression, honour and daring at the expense of ‘girlish’ softness and physical incompetence, another part of me felt extremely uncomfortable within conventional masculine behaviour...


Nowhere is it put more clearly, however, than in the following, which I quote at length:

Sport, sport, masculine sport
Equips a young man for society!
Yes, sport turns out a jolly good sort
It’s an odd boy who doesn’t like sport!

I laughed at that song, but I inwardly wept at it too. I hated sport, ekkar, games, whatever they wanted to call it.....things that were manly frightened me. And nothing was more manly than Games....Work was ultimately poopy and to be bad at work was no cause for shame....But you could fuck me with a pineapple and call me your suckpig, bent me with chains and march me up and down in uniform every day and I would thank you with tears in my eyes if it got me off games. Nothing approached the vileness of games, nothing....PE lessons cropped up in the syllabus, in academic time: absurd Loughborough-educated imbeciles calling everyone ‘lads’ and using Christian names as if they found the snobbery of public school inimical to their healthy, matey world of beer, bonhomie, split-times and quadriceps.

‘Good lad, Jamie!’ Oh, there was always a Jamie, a good-lad-Jamie, a neat, nippy, darty, agile scrum-halfy little Jamie. Jamie could swarm up ropes like an Arthur Ransom hero, he could fly up window frames, leap vaulting horses, flip elegant underwater turns at the end of each lap of the pool, somersault backwards and forwards off the trapeze and spring back up with his neat little buttocks twinkling and

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winking with fitness and firmness and cute little Jamieness. Cunt.

(Fry, MOAB is my WASHPOT, 1997: 232-234)

Fry’s, Hornby’s, and Jackson’s comments reflect some of the central concerns of existing academic work on masculinity, sport and leisure (see, for example, Messner 1992; Messner and Sabo, 1990). One element common to both popular and academic work, is an interest in the reasons why men behave as men, be it due to culture, biology or the psyche. While popular and academic texts have highlighted some interesting features of this relationship (the problems it entails for individual men who do not conform to the macho sporting stereotype, and its use in the oppression of women, for example), I argue that research to date has failed to consider men’s own descriptions of masculinity, and the interactional reasons why men position themselves in relation to certain conceptions of the masculine, on some occasions and not others.

Fry’s comments, for example, point to the difficulty in reconciling one’s identity or evident category membership as a man (with a confessed hatred for sport), with the knowledge that sport is culturally regarded as the site par excellence for the demonstration and confirmation of one’s ‘true’ manliness. Indeed, implicit in all of these quotes is the idea that to be good, or at least interested in sport, not only affirms, but defines one’s identity as a man.

How, then, does a man who does not conform to the stereotype of ‘idealized machismo’, manage this dilemma? Does he, for example, construct himself - as it says in Fry’s song - as an ‘odd boy’, as weird, other, or different (thus risking his identity as a ‘proper man’)? Or does he, as Fry does here (and with the aid of a little accountability reducing humour), construct the ‘sporty types’ themselves as ‘other’, as ‘absurd’ ‘imbecilic’ objects of derision? Indeed, one might construct them - like Jamie - as almost superhuman, and thus beyond the realm of what’s ‘normal’.

There is, then, an interactional feature of such positioning, which has been neglected in most leisure research. Many researchers concentrate on the ‘inference rich’ (Sacks, 1974). In a recent Cosmopolitan article, ‘Why men are crazy about sport’ (Thomas, 1998: 92), the reasons for men’s preferences are located in biology, sociobiology, socialization and a number of other unclassifiable reasons, including, ‘to get away from women’, ‘an excuse to get drunk’, and the opportunity to engage in ‘legalized violence’.

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nature of gender categories (the image we think of when we say ‘bloke’ rather than ‘man’, ‘girl’, rather than ‘woman’, or ‘masculine’ rather than ‘feminine’). In doing so, however, they reify what is considered ‘masculine’, and overlook the indexical, action oriented nature of gender categories in use. In the rest of this chapter, I attempt to address issues like ‘Fry’s dilemma’, above, through an exploration of the interactional (and thus variable) uses of (what is constructed as) ‘the masculine’. Before doing so, however, I will situate the notion of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ within the discursive and CA literature.

Hegemonic Masculinity

In recent years there has been a growing interest in theorizing masculinity from a discursive perspective (Coyle and Morgan-Sykes, 1998; Edley and Wetherell, 1997, 1999; Gough, 1998a, in press; Gough and Edwards, 1998; Wetherell and Edley, 1998, 1999). The main aim of these theorists has been to outline the ways in which oppressive forms of masculinity are discursively instantiated, maintained and reproduced.

As we saw in chapter two, one of the central concepts used in this endeavour - in the leisure and sports literature and elsewhere - has been that of ‘hegemonic masculinity’. The notion of ‘hegemony’ originates with Gramsci (1971), and is used to define the maintenance of social power by certain groups, through persuasion and other means. Unlike ideology, however, hegemony invokes power by consent rather than coercion. The ruling classes, for example, maintain their domination by defining and legitimating a certain definition of the situation, framing the way events are understood and morality is defined. Consequently, the organization of society appears natural, inevitable and ordinary (Donaldson, 1993: 645).

The concept of ‘hegemony’ has been developed and applied to masculinity by Connell (1987, 1995) and colleagues (Carrigan et al., 1985), and subject to various refinements and applications. However, while the term is commonly used, it is rarely explicated in a way that can be easily applied to data. Thus, it has been described as a notion ‘as slippery and difficult as the idea of masculinity itself’ (Donaldson, 1993: 644). This difficulty and ‘slipperiness’ is demonstrated perfectly in Connell’s own, somewhat convoluted definition. For him ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is ‘the configuration of gender
practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women' (1995: 77). However, such definitions give little sense of how we might be able to find such a thing, or identify it in our data.

Nevertheless, some consensus does appear to exist around the defining characteristics of the hegemonic ideal, which are ‘naturalized’ in the form of the hero in films (such as ‘Rambo’), books, and sporting events (Donaldson, 1993: 646). Therefore, in this society, and at this moment in history, dominant or ‘hegemonic’ masculinity equals white, heterosexual, successful masculinity. Indeed, Donaldson argues that ‘heterosexuality and homophobia’ are its ‘bedrock’ (1993: 645). Furthermore, while many men do not live up to the culturally hegemonic type, they do, nonetheless, benefit from its existence, and are ‘complicit’ in sustaining it (Edley and Wetherell, 1995: 129). In this respect it is not determinate of identity, but there is space for resistance, with subordinate forms constantly striving for ascendancy (1995: 165).

There are, however, several problems with this concept. As Edley and Wetherell argue, ‘there are some areas of ambiguity... and it is not quite clear... just what counts as hegemonic masculinity’ (1995: 129). Indeed, it has been described as a ‘hybrid term’, which, under the guise of explaining everything, actually explains nothing (Miller, 1998a: 194-195).

‘The hegemonic’ is often used as a kind of baseline around which other ‘types’ of masculinity can be measured, rather than, say, showing how participants themselves construct such a version of masculinity in their talk. They may, for example, use a version of dominant machismo rhetorically, as an argumentative position from which to speak or situate themselves interactionally, to undermine some marginalized or alternative ‘other’ (or, likewise, to position themselves as ‘other’). From this ‘hegemony as baseline’ approach, that which is defined as ‘hegemonic’ is reified. It takes on uniform, stable qualities, whereby one can measure the extent to which one does or does not live up to it, as well as chart its changing nature over time. It turns an essentially abstract entity into something with a thing-like, ‘out there in the world’ status. Such constructions cannot account for what descriptions of masculinity are used to do.
Martin (1998) takes issue with Connell’s (1995: 76-77) argument that hegemonic masculinity is not a ‘type’ of masculinity, but must always be defined in relation to the socio-historical context (Martin, 1998: 473). According to Martin, ‘many scholars use the concept to indicate a type... usually implying that hegemonic masculinity is substantively negative’ (1998: 473). If hegemonic masculinity is such an intrinsically bad thing, the implication is that it needs changing or supplanting by a ‘better’ type.

In discussing some newspaper texts examining the ‘crisis’ in men’s mental health, for example, Coyle and Morgan-Sykes conclude: ‘contradictions are created by the coexistence of old and new discourses of masculinity, even if these contradictions are being rhetorically managed in ways that preserve hegemonic masculinity’ (1998: 280).

By talking of ‘old’ and ‘new’ discourses of masculinity and the signs of change that their coexistence brings about, Coyle and Morgan-Sykes seem to imply a new, perhaps better type of masculinity will develop. There is no room in this account for the possibility that multiple ‘versions’ of masculinity may exist at any one time, as a fundamental feature of discourse. In all of this research, the emphasis is on change, removing ways of talking about masculinity (and their corresponding ‘types’), supplanting them with more palatable, equality-oriented alternatives.

The confusion, says Martin, stems primarily from Connell’s inconsistent usage of the concept, such as when he contrasts hegemonic masculinity with homosexual masculinity (Connell, 1995: 154-155). When authors conflate hegemonic masculinity with type, Martin suggests, this undermines Connell’s claims that hegemonic forms of masculinity are constantly contested (1995: 76), or that they can be positive (1995: 225ff; see Martin 1998: 473). Furthermore, despite Connell’s acknowledgement that women can do masculinities (and thus masculinity is constructed as a way of behaving; an orientation, rather than something that is linked up with an object or person), there is little in his approach which helps us to understand exactly how this happens, or how men ‘do femininities’ (Martin, 1998: 474).  

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3 In his reply to Martin, Connell concedes that ‘the term has come to stand for a fixed character type... and almost always with negative connotations’. He goes on

Although I have tried to be consistent in defining it historically, in some usages I refer in a shorthand way to hegemonic masculinity when the topic is men behaving badly (with respect to gender equality). And this gives an opening to the notion of a fixed negative character type. But I do think it possible for hegemony to be a positive force...and it is quite conceivable that a certain hegemony could be constructed for masculinities that are less toxic, more cooperative and peaceful, than the current editions (1998: 475-476).
Despite Connell's (1998: 476) argument that hegemony can be 'a positive force', it is also unclear what the world would look like if harmony and equality existed in gender relations. In a critique of Davis's (1997) book on hegemonic masculinity in *Sports Illustrated*, discussed in chapter two, Miller lists his problems with the 'hybrid term'. He asks:

Can it allow for a time when men are not *being* men, when their activities might be understood as discontinuous, conflicted, and ordinary, rather than interconnected, functional, and dominant - when nothing they do relates to the overall domination of women or their own self-formation as a gendered group? The thing about hegemony as a concept is that it explains everything and nothing in a circular motion, lacking a dynamic of history made at specific sites.


Wood also criticizes Stuart Hall's approach to hegemony, which, he argues, 'wavers uncertainly between the poles of statist foreclosure and discursive contingency' (Wood, 1998: 406). According to Wood, there is a tension between the conceptualization of hegemony as, on the one hand, a solid entity independent of individuals (which cannot be 'reduced to discourse' (1998: 405)), and, on the other hand, as something which is more contingent, variable and fluid.

It is for all these reasons, that, like Martin, I too 'worry about how scholars are using Connell's hegemonic masculinity concept' (Martin, 1998: 473). Its remarkable popularity means it has dominated the field of masculinity studies at the expense of other - potentially fruitful - lines of inquiry.4 Given such conceptual confusion, and despite - or perhaps - because the concept has become so influential over the past decade, it is hardly surprising that 'hegemonic masculinity', along with the concept of 'hegemony' itself, is currently the subject of a theoretical and methodological critique.

In a recent article (Wetherell and Edley, 1999; see also, 1998), Wetherell and Edley offer one of the most comprehensive critiques of 'hegemonic masculinity' to date. In this chapter, I review this article, and develop an approach located more firmly within the technical, CA tradition (ten Have, 1999; Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998), as outlined in the recent exchange between Schegloff (1997, 1998) and Wetherell (1998) (and subsequently with Billig, 1999a, 1999b). Using data from two semi-structured

4Indeed, so popular is the concept that Rogoff and Van Leer argue: 'No one doubts the existence of what R. W. Connell calls 'hegemonic masculinity'- the use of a normative concept of male character to subordinate women and males with nontraditional behaviors' (1993: 743, my emphasis).
interviews with men in their early twenties, I explore whether participants themselves orient toward something like hegemonic masculinity in their talk about leisure, and if so, I consider what they are doing with it interactionally.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of this approach for feminist leisure theory, discursive psychology and CA. Indeed, such a topic is especially relevant given the current debate about the relative status that we should give to analysts’ and participants’ accounts (Frith, 1998; Frith and Kitzinger, 1998), and the question of how (if at all) we can reconcile the concerns of both feminism and a relativistic form of discourse analysis (see, for example, the debate between Edwards et al., 1995; Gill, 1995; Hepburn, 2000; and Potter, 1998a).

A Discursive Approach to Hegemonic Masculinity

Wetherell, Edley, and colleagues’ research on masculinity (Edley and Wetherell 1995, 1997, 1999; Griffin and Wetherell, 1992; Wetherell, 1998; Wetherell and Edley, 1998, 1999; Wetherell and Griffin, 1991), provides a significant contribution to debates at the heart of feminism, discursive psychology and CA. Indeed, as we saw in chapter three, Wetherell’s work has been central in developing the field of discursive psychology (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), and in applying discursive psychological ideas to gender and other forms of inequality (Marshall and Wetherell, 1989; Wetherell and Potter, 1992, Wetherell et al., 1987).

As I argued in chapter three, discursive psychology is a rapidly advancing field, and there are now a variety of approaches which claim the label ‘discursive’. These vary in the extent to which they combine a poststructuralist and Foucauldian understanding of discourse, with an ethnomethodological and/or CA one. Therefore, they each have a slightly different approach to the way discourse, gender, and participants’ orientations (particularly their relation to ideology and ‘macro contexts’), may be understood (see, for example, the range of different approaches in Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1995).

Wetherell and Edley’s critical discursive approach is based on a combination of ideas from feminism, poststructuralism, and ethnomethodological, CA-influenced discursive psychology (1999: 338). They highlight a number of problems with Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity. For example, it cannot account for how male identities are
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'reproduced', whether more than one hegemonic strategy can exist at any one time, and whether men can experience conflict or tensions as they move from one version of masculinity to another. They highlight its nebulous, 'impossible' nature, arguing, 'as social psychologists...we wonder about the appropriateness of a definition of dominant masculinity which no man may ever actually embody' (Wetherell and Edley, 1999: 337).

In particular, they argue that Connell's formulation of hegemonic masculinity, while having a number of advantages, does not help us understand 'the nitty gritty of negotiating masculine identities' and how such forms actually 'regulate men's lives' (Wetherell and Edley, 1999: 336). Wetherell and Edley's critique, then, points toward some methodological recommendations. They argue

What remains mysterious however, is what practice looks like 'on the ground'. What kind of activities are these? And, how do masculinities emerge 'in practice'? How is this sense of something external, constraining and superordinate which is also productive, active, changing and flowing to be managed analytically?

(1998: 160)

They suggest 'most emphasis needs to be placed on the exact mobilisation of accounts within a discursive field rather than on semantic content defined a priori' (1999: 352). This is translated into a discursive psychology which analyses the ways in which men themselves 'negotiate regulatory conceptions of masculinity in their everyday interactions as they account for their actions and produce or manage their own (and others') identities' (1999: 337).

Wetherell and Edley set about demonstrating the utility of this more 'fine-grained' approach with data from interviews and responses to picture prompts. This data is analyzed by examining the way 'men position themselves in relation to conventional notions of the masculine' (1999: 335), and the implications of these positionings. As they explicitly state (and in contrast to the approach I develop here), 'we will not be concerned with the fine detail of the discursive and rhetorical work evident in the specimen extracts' (1999: 339). Drawing on the notion of 'imaginary positions' (1999: 335), they outline three 'relatively global strategies of self-positioning' (1999: 338) - otherwise referred to as 'typical discursive paths', 'discursive strategies', or 'psychodiscursive practices' - through which members construct themselves as masculine and
negotiate membership of this category.

The first pattern identified - that of ‘heroic positions’ - is the one which, they argue, ‘could be read as an attempt to actually instandiate hegemonic masculinity’ (1999: 340, emphasis in original), and represents the alignment of self with a ‘conventional masculine ideal’ (1999: 341), or ‘man as courageous, physically tough and yet able to keep his cool’ (1999: 342). Thus, the three men whom they suggest exemplify this position, align with such characteristics as the pleasure of being in control, meeting challenges in risky situations (Michael) (1999: 340), going into pubs and showing southerners how to drink (Simon) (1999: 341), and accounting for enjoying a violent sport such as rugby in terms of an ‘unreflexive and conventionally masculine self’ (Graham) (1999: 341).

However, Wetherell and Edley argue that this is not the most common form of positioning. With ‘ordinary positions’, men separate ‘self from certain conventional or ideal notions of the masculine which... get reconstructed as social stereotypes’ (1999: 343). Rather than align with macho ideals, these men emphasize their normality and ordinariness. In ‘rebellious positions’, men also reject ‘macho’ ideals but, in contrast, ‘define themselves in terms of their unconventionality’ (1999: 347). They flout ‘social expectations’ (1999: 347), and take pride in non-conformity (1999: 349).

Wetherell and Edley conclude that both positive and negative implications may derive from their analyses (1999: 350). On the one hand, ‘some men do appear to be abandoning macho masculinity’ (1999: 350). On the other hand, however, this does not mean that men are ‘beyond gender power’ (1999: 351), or that the ‘alternative identities’ of ‘ordinary’ and ‘rebellious’ positions do not work in ‘gender oppressive ways’ (1999: 350). ‘Sometimes’, they argue, ‘one of the most effective ways of being hegemonic, or being a ‘man’, may be to demonstrate one’s distance from hegemonic masculinity’ (1999: 351).

Wetherell and Edley challenge the assumption that hegemonic masculinity is an invariant style or label for a type of man. Instead, they say, men can position themselves in multiple ways, dependent on the context (1999: 352). Indeed, they can appear ‘both hegemonic and non-hegemonic... at the same time’ (1999: 353). In short, Wetherell and Edley suggest that we need to give greater emphasis to ‘the multiple and
inconsistent discursive resources’ through which ‘hegemonic gender identities’ are constructed (1999: 352). This type of approach will eventually help us to understand ‘the reproduction of the social in the psychological’ (1999: 354).

Wetherell and Edley’s research goes some way towards reformulating the way masculinities may be understood discursively (and they go much further than others in this respect). Indeed, as will be apparent from my discussion of discourse work (particularly that with a gender focus) in chapter three, there are several points of overlap between the approach developed by Wetherell and Edley, and the more CA-aligned approach that I develop here. These centre around the commitment to exploring ‘the constitutive role of discourse’ (Wetherell, 1995: 136; Wetherell and Potter, 1992: 62), and the variability (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), and ‘action orientation’ of talk (Wetherell and Edley, 1999: 338). Both approaches treat identities as ‘actively accomplished’ (Edley and Wetherell, 1999: 182; Wetherell and Potter, 1992: 78). Gender is conceived as ‘a discursive practice’ (Wetherell and Edley, 1998: 165), ‘a method of description, not a psychological attribute’ (Wetherell, 1995: 141). Finally, both approaches are committed to the ‘fine-grained’ analysis of data.

As we have also seen, however, there are some subtle points of difference in both theory and analysis, which, I argue, relate to Wetherell and Edley’s combination of elements from ‘two competing theoretical ‘camps’’ (1999: 338): The conversation analytic, ethnomethodological camp (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995), and the more Foucauldian inspired, poststructuralist camp (Parker and Shotter, 1990; see Wetherell and Edley, 1999: 338). As I argued in chapter three, Wetherell and Edley’s ‘synthetic approach’ (1999: 338) joins the ‘macro (‘top down’) with the ‘micro (‘bottom up’) emphasis on context (Willott and Griffin, 1997: 111), and, in terms reminiscent of Marx’s famous dictum, ‘to embrace the fact that people are, at the same time, both the products and the producers of language (Billig, 1991)’ (Wetherell and Edley, 1999: 338), or ‘the master, and the slave, of discourse’ (Edley and Wetherell, 1997: 206; 1999: 182).

Thus, despite refusing an ‘ontological distinction between the discursive and the extradiscursive’ (Wetherell, 1995: 140), the more CA-aligned approach to participants’ own orientations, is rarely taken to stand adequately alone. It is assumed that CA needs to be subsidized with Foucauldian poststructuralism, which can account for the ‘much

From this perspective, then, identities are ‘not formed from scratch every time a person speaks’ (Wetherell and Potter, 1992: 78), but are ‘a sedimentation of past discursive practices’ (1992: 78), which can subject and regulate individuals (1992: 79) or be ‘close(d) off’ (Wetherell, 1995: 136). Men are both ‘positioned by a ready-made or historically given set of discourses’ (Edley and Wetherell, 1997: 206), and ‘active creator[s]’ (Wetherell and Edley, 1998: 168), both ‘practitioner[s]’ and ‘practised upon’ (1998: 168). I suggest that it is not very easy, within this approach, to account for the ways in which participants may align with or differentiate themselves from a whole range of different identities in the course of one stretch of talk, or how identities may be invoked for political and rhetorical purposes.

A (More) Conversation Analytic Alternative?

As I argued in chapter three, recent discourse work (Edwards, 1997; Potter, 1996), is heavily influenced by CA in the Sacks (1992/1995) and Schegloff (1997) tradition. This research differs from much of the early discursive work, in its explicitly non-Foucauldian approach to discourse, which rejects the separation of ‘macro’ and ‘micro’ contexts, and the combination of ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches. Rather than asserting that gendered identities are ‘positioned’, or partially ‘constituted’ by an ‘external public dialogue’ (Wetherell and Edley, 1999: 337), established ‘global patterns’ (1999: 338), or that there is some abstract, discursive ‘constraint’ on people’s lives (Wetherell and Potter, 1992: 78), conversation analysts argue instead that what counts as power and normativity is negotiated and constructed by participants in the course of interaction. A technical analysis can reveal the in situ workings of these ‘ideological’ or ‘structural’ phenomena (see, for example, Drew and Heritage, 1992; Hutchby, 1996).

While work in both CA and feminism is developing rapidly, there has been a notable lack of cross-fertilization, and many feminists have been reluctant to adopt a CA
approach to feminist issues (some recent exceptions include Frith and Kitzinger, 1998; Kitzinger and Frith, 1999; Speer, 1999a, in press a; Speer and Potter, in press; Stokoe, 1998). This is primarily due to misgivings about CA’s political efficaciousness, practical utility, and compatibility with feminist principles (Speer, 1999a). In some recent papers, for example, Wetherell and Edley clearly differentiate their approach from the purely Schegloffian, CA variety (1998: 163; Edley and Wetherell, 1999: 182).  

The analytic utility of combining these approaches has been the topic of a recent debate between Wetherell (1998) and Schegloff (1997, 1998). This debate addresses the issue of whether CA can offer an adequate answer to its own classic question about any piece of discourse - ‘why this utterance now?’. Using data from her and Nigel Edley’s masculinity project, Wetherell proposes that, while a focus on participants’ orientations (as outlined in Schegloff, 1997) may be ‘extremely revealing’ (1998: 404), ‘a complete or scholarly analysis... must range further than the limits Schegloff proposes’ (1998: 388). In contrast, Wetherell’s own, more ‘eclectic’ approach, would, she says, be able to answer questions about her data, such as ‘why in this community does it seem to trouble identity to ‘be on the pull’ but multiple sexual encounters can be also successfully framed as ‘good’?’ (1998: 404). Wetherell’s approach can, in other words, explain the ‘whys’ of talk-in-interaction, when CA seems only relevant to the ‘hows’.  

Schegloff, on the other hand, believes such questions are not beyond the scope of CA, and one does not need to turn to ‘concerns extrinsic to the interaction’ to find answers to them (1998: 416). Indeed, the ‘why that now?’ question, is, for Schegloff, a pervasive one for the participants to a piece of interaction, and they do indeed ‘seem oriented to [these questions] as relevant’ (1998: 415). Therefore, Schegloff warns, ‘it would be useful not to underestimate what the reach of CA’s questions is’ (1998: 416), and suggests ‘rather than beginning with gender ideologies... the analysis might begin by addressing what the parties to the interaction understand themselves to be doing in it’ (1998: 415).  

The issue at stake for Wetherell and Schegloff here, then, is the amount of ‘mileage’ that one can ‘get out of’ this technical approach to the details of talk. How much of a

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5 One exception is Wetherell’s recent work with Charles Antaki (Antaki and Wetherell, 1999), which sits more firmly toward the CA end of the theoretical spectrum.
piece of interaction can it explain? Is it sufficient (for feminists) on its own, or do we need to supplement it with other analyses? Indeed, in the quote above, Schegloff appears to be 'throwing down the gauntlet' of this challenge to researchers interested in gender issues.

In the analysis that follows, I take up this challenge, and enter this debate, by adopting the type of approach Schegloff proposes. I look to see just how far it can take us in our understanding of 'hegemonic masculinity'. I explore whether participants do indeed attend to something one might call 'hegemonic masculinity' in their talk about leisure, and, if so, I examine what such 'attending to' is doing interactionally.

I retain some familiar elements from Wetherell and Edley's discursive approach. For example, I explore the way masculinities are rhetorically constructed and deployed by participants in the management of certain interactional dilemmas (Billig et al., 1988), paying close attention to the variability (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) and indexicality (Garfinkel, 1967) of resources. However, I do not assume in advance of the analysis that we need to venture further than the limits of the text to explain why participants say what they do, or that we need to go beyond participants' orientations to be able to say anything politically effective. I adopt a more technical sensitivity to my data (ten Have, 1999; Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998), and an analysis which is more attentive to participants' orientations (Schegloff, 1997), and gendered category membership (Edwards, 1998; Hopper and LeBaron, 1998; Sacks, 1992/1995; Stokoe, 1998), than that used in the analysis of masculinity so far. This is consistent with a Schegloffian approach, and the type of analysis I have already begun to develop in chapter five.

The extracts in this chapter are taken from two interviews with men in their early twenties. I asked both men if they thought that factors associated with their identity (such as their age and gender, for example), influenced their leisure in any way.\(^6\) I chose these extracts as examples of accounts where the relationship between masculinity and certain behaviours - or 'category bound activities' (Sacks, 1992/1995) - became salient for participants. I chose extracts from the same interviews precisely because I wanted to highlight the degree of variability in the construction of, and degree of alignment with masculinity in the participants' accounts (Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

\(^6\) See chapter four for a more detailed description of the questions asked and topics covered.
(i) Differentiation

(a) Masculinity as ‘Extreme’

Consider the following extract. We join the interaction at a point where Sue has just queried how she can ask her participant, David, a question designed for female participants (‘do you think you ever behave in a way that’s not traditionally feminine?’). He responds with a suggested version of just such a question:

Extract One: SAS 23/3/97: 28
Participants: S: Sue, D: David  
1 D: [Well you could] say (. ) do you ever (. )
2 think you behave in a way that’s not
3 traditionally [masculine?]  
4 S: [Masculine.] Okay then. (. )
5 D: [Do you?]
6 S: [You know] the whole masculine (0.8) image of (. ) what you should be. ❖erm (. ) ‘yeah.
7 Well I don’t think (0.8) I ( . ) comply to the
8 real 0 (2.4) well there’s differen- you know
9 the extreme (1.0) form of (0.4) the laddish
10 image I don’t ( . ) [live up to.]
11 D: Yeah. [But]
12 S: [But] (. ) even at the best of times now
13 I don’t think I do.(0.8) Because I don’t (.)
14 I don’t try and pull all the time, I don’t.
15 (0.6) feel obliged to drink lots. (1.0) I d-
16 I’m not very (0.8) I’m not overly
17 competitive in sport.

In this extract David identifies something that one might gloss - from a superficial reading - as ‘hegemonic’ (or ‘heroic’) masculinity. He refers to the ‘laddish image’, and outlines its apparently limited category boundedness (‘pulling’, ‘drinking’, and being ‘competitive in sport’ (lines 16-19)). This three part list (Jefferson, 1990), which refers to different features of the same ‘masculine’ phenomenon, and David’s reference to ‘what you should be’ (line 7), constructs masculinity as having a normative nature, and as something prescriptive rather than reflective of the ‘type’ of man David is.

7 While we should be cautious not to make too much of rather rigid, dictionary definitions, ‘pull’ is commonly understood as a slang term, used to describe the act of ‘obtaining’ a partner (for the night, or longer), of having successfully ‘chatted someone up’.
However, it does not automatically follow that we should interpret this as meaning hegemonic masculinity actually exists as an identity (and conclude that, since David constructs, and then seems keen to differentiate himself from such a form of masculinity, he is not a hegemonic person). Instead, the interaction provides clues as to why, on this occasion, David constructs masculinity in such a way (or, as it is framed in the Wetherell and Schegloff debate, 'why this utterance now?'). In fact, this construction helps David manage an interactional dilemma, that alternative, less technical analyses may miss.

For example, David to some extent, 'lands himself in it' in the opening sequence, by helpfully re-formulating Sue’s question. Being asked if you ever behave in a way that is not ‘traditional’, is something which can be risky to respond to, and David’s speech is hearably quieter at the moment of asking the question (which may signal his orientation to some problem with its contents (lines 2-3)). If he responds ‘yes, I do cooking, sewing and flower arranging’, then he may risk appearing effeminate, and thus not in a position to talk about (his own) masculinity at all. However, if he replies, ‘no, I always act in such a traditional fashion’, thus identifying fully with the category, he may risk appearing conformist, or stereotypical, a dope who lacks authenticity.

Therefore, David is faced with a dilemma, or conflicting demands for accountability. On the one hand he is a man, with the category entitlement that brings (who better to comment on what it’s like to be a man than a man? (Potter, 1996a), and he is someone who - for the purposes of a social science investigation - is asked to hold masculinity accountable. How does he do this without undermining his position as a ‘proper’, normal man (maintaining his entitlement to speak as such), and retain some sense of being authentically individual or unique (see Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995 and Widdicombe, 1998a). In managing these issues, David makes a distinction between the type of man he himself is, and the type of man (or ‘image’) he wishes to hold accountable. It is in the service of this distinction (and the dilemma it is designed to manage), that David’s particular version of ‘extreme’ machismo is deployed.

For example, when David is talking about the type of man he is not, he repairs ‘real’ to ‘extreme’ (line 9-10). While ‘real’ would implicate David as somehow ‘unreal’, and less authentically a man (the long 2.4 second pause may signal some interactional trouble with this construction, and David’s orientation to the dilemmatic nature of these
issues (line 9)), the ‘extreme’ (1.0) form of the laddish image’ (lines 10-11) allows David to construct traditional masculinity as somehow unreasonable and ‘other’ by virtue of its extremity. It is then perfectly reasonable for David to differentiate himself from it and assert that he is not such a man.

David subtly constructs the meaning of masculinity in such a way that makes the business of differentiation less problematic and more rhetorically persuasive. Since all words and categories contain ‘rhetorical affordances’, they can be used contrastively to bolster an argument (Edwards, 1999; see also, chapter five). In this extract, for example, David not only constructs the version of masculinity that he chooses to hold accountable as extreme, but also uses a number of extreme case formulations (‘at the best of times’ (line 14), and ‘pull all the time’ (line 16), for example), which present the most extreme case in a statement, working contrastively with other alternative interpretations, rhetorically warding them off (Pomerantz, 1986).

There is, then, a dual sense in which masculinity is worked up as extreme, and this dual sense of extremity works as an interactional resource, helping David manage the conflicting demands of the interview situation. He draws attention to masculinity as a category, an extreme image or ideal type, which he is then able to distance himself from and contrast with his authentically real, less extreme, more reasonable version (Day, 1998).

A participant’s construction of masculinity and his or her positioning in relation to it is never final. Identities are constantly in motion, created a-new with each turn of talk. Dilemmas are not so much resolved as constantly in flux. Indeed, there are a different set of concerns attended to in the following extract, which comes several turns later.

(b) Masculinity as ‘Self-Confidence’

Extract Two: SAS 23/3/97: 28
Participants: S: Sue, D: David

1 D: Well I d-hhh. I wouldn’t do it but I’d like
2 to be able to. I’d like to (1.0) have the

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8 ‘Cop off’, like ‘pull’, above, is commonly understood as a slang term that refers to the act of ‘obtaining’ a partner. However, like ‘shag’, it has more connotations of actual sexual activity than the word ‘pull’. A ‘snog’, according to The Concise Oxford English Dictionary (1995), is also a slang term for ‘kiss and caress’. Again, however, we need to be careful about applying dictionary definitions in this once-and-for-all way. The vagueness and ambiguity of slang words may be doing some business in the talk itself.
self-confidence and the (0.8) the (0.8)
approach that would get (me there.) -I
wouldn’t= 
=Yeah.
I don’t think I would do it if I could but.
What do you think women think of these blokes
that do that?

I don’t (1.0) know. C’z (1.8) you would have
thought that they’d (0.4) be wary of them.
[Yeah.]
[And.] of their reputation, and er (0.4)
avoid them, but then (0.6) they’re always
still the ones that seem to pull, and
they’re always the ones that attract the
women. (0.6) The re- the really self-
confident ones that are out-going an -and -
and do pull all the time and ar -are known
to’ve snogged everybody in sight.

We join this extract at a point where Sue has just asked David if he ‘admires’ the men who - in his words - ‘cop off two or three times a night’ and ‘always end up going back for a shag’. Again, he orients toward some version of masculinity that an analyst might gloss as ‘hegemonic’. These ‘blokes’ are ‘confident’ and ‘out-going’, have ‘snogged everybody in sight’, and ‘pull’ women easily (lines 18-21). Although this construction is very similar to the one we saw in extract one (again, extreme case formulations are used on lines 15 onwards for their contrastive effect), notice that masculinity is given its precise meaning on this occasion, with the repetition of the notion of ‘self-confidence’ (lines 3 and 19). This is significant for the identity it helps David portray, and the interactional contingencies it is deployed to manage.

For example, David is asked a question about whether he ‘admires’ the men who engage in behaviours that he has previously differentiated himself from (in extract one). In answering this question, David has to negotiate a path through two, possibly negative (for his identity) alternatives. He could, for example, say that he does not admire these men, but might risk distancing himself from an identity which is culturally exalted (to be sexually successful is to be a ‘proper’ man). Alternatively, he might say that he does admire them, but might then appear hypocritical, buying back into the extreme machismo that he’s just been working to hold accountable. We can see evidence of David attending to the troublesome nature of this question in the hearably exasperated ‘Well I d-hhh.’ (line 1) and the three, noticeably considered pauses in ‘I’d like to (1.0) have the self-confidence and the (0.8) the (0.8) approach’ (lines 2-4). This construction enables David to manage these implications in a way that does not
undermine his own identity.

For example, 'self-confidence' is a fairly safe, non-gendered notion, a domain of one's personality that it is legitimate to want more of, and yet it is also something that one might not be held accountable for lacking. Therefore, David's lack of success with women is not because he's not handsome or sexually attractive enough: It is simply that he lacks confidence. The ultimate reason why David is unsuccessful with women, however, is constructed as a result of *choice* rather than *incapacity*. For example, the 'I wouldn't do it but I'd like to be able to', and 'I don't think I would do it if I could' constructions (lines 1-2, and 7), suggest that David would like to have the *ability* to attract women, but would not choose to exemplify the *behaviour*, even if he were able.

Moreover, when David is asked 'What do you think *men* think of these blokes that do that?' (lines 8-9), he works to avoid the implication that his own desires or behaviours are somehow questionable, by distinguishing between what one would ordinarily *think* to be the case, and what is *actually* the case: 'you would have thought that they'd (0.4) be wary of them... but then (0.6) they're always still the ones that seem to pull' (lines 11-12ff). David constructs this as a weird, perhaps illogical *phenomenon* (which women irrationally collude in - despite all the negative evidence about these men's reputations (lines 14 and 20-21)), rather than something peculiar or intrinsic to himself. Indeed, it is the simultaneously negative slant given to women, and the masculine activity of 'pulling', which helps David manage his own identity, and present himself as a reasonable person.

The extracts considered so far have come from the same interview. It could, then, be argued that David is somehow unique in his construction of, and degree of alignment with masculinity. However, in the next extract, a second interviewee - also a man in his early twenties - orients toward a strikingly similar construction of masculinity, and again, differentiates himself from it, though this time via a more direct denial of possessing criterial features (Widdicombe, 1998a: 58).
(c) Masculinity as Inauthentic

Extract Three: SAS 27/12/97: 36
Participants: S: Sue, B: Ben

1. S: >what would you say to people< who think say
2. (0.4) that what you do is geeky? If anyone
3. said "you're an anorak". You like Star Trek.
4. 4 You haven't talked about Star Trek.
5. B: Yeah. (0.6) \textit{Erm.} (1.8) what would I say?=
6. S: =Or you're a typical B\textit{loke}.
7. B: I'm not a typical bloke, I think I'm very
different.
8. S: "In what ways?"
9. B: Well I'm (.) I'm not one of these (0.4) lads,
10. I a'pose if you can label it as a \textit{lad}=
11. S: =What's a lad then? (.) leisure-wise?
12. (1.0)
13. B: Goes out on the \textit{pull}. (0.6) Goes out just-
14. (.) on a weekend just to get
15. totally stoned or to pull a woman. (0.8) I'm
16. not that kind of \textit{person}. (0.4) I'm more a
17. (0.4) sort of (0.8) e-\textit{erm} (1.8) well, like
18. 1-looking in on the world from outside (.)
19. sort of person (.) er, a window on the
20. world person.

The first thing to note about this extract is the way Sue's opening question links Ben's leisure pastimes with potentially negative identity characteristics: 'geek', 'anorak', and later, 'typical bloke'. Ben delays his response until line seven, where he asserts categorically that he is not such a man: 'I'm not a typical bloke, I think I'm very different'. Again, like David in previous extracts, Ben uses extreme case formulations to construct the typicality of 'bloke' or 'lad' behaviour: 'Goes out just- (.) on a weekend just to get totally stoned or to pull a woman' (lines 14-16). This extremity helps him build a rhetorical contrast case, an alternative identity, that vividly differentiates him from the traits that Sue accuses him of possessing, earlier on line one (albeit in a thinly disguised hypothetical form: 'what would you say to people< who think...'). Unlike these 'typical blokes', Ben is contemplative, thoughtful, and distant: a 'looking in on the world from outside (.) sort of person (.) er, a window on the world person' (lines 19-21). In the space created by rejecting the 'typical bloke' or 'lad' identity, Ben forges a special and unique alternative.

\footnote{An 'anorak' is a slang term which, like the word 'geek' and 'nerd' is used (usually, though not always, in a derogatory way), to describe someone who is a fan of science fiction and/or spends a lot of their time on computers, etc (though see my cautions about dictionary definitions in footnotes seven and eight, above).}
In the three extracts considered so far, the participants do seem to be attending to the existence of some form of hegemonic masculinity. It is in the particularities of those descriptions, however, where most of the interactional work gets done. For example, the participants construct masculinity (as ‘extreme’, ‘traditional’, about ‘self-confidence’, or whatever), choosing from amongst the words and inferences available to them in culture. They use them contrastively (Edwards, 1999), building a rhetorically effective position from which to differentiate themselves, and develop an alternative, more authentic identity.

This type of positioning is common to accounts where one’s genuineness or authenticity may be questionable (Sacks, 1984; Wooffitt, 1992). Indeed, Wetherell and Edley discuss this in their analysis of ‘ordinary positions’ (1999: 343), identifying a contrast (for their participants) between ‘ordinary’ masculinity and ‘some version of the macho man as an archetype, simplification, or extreme caricature’ (1999: 345).

An alternative way to construct masculinity and avoid resisting membership of a category outright, is to identify with, or embrace elements commonly associated with the category, whilst portraying that embracing as a lack of choice. In other words, the speaker uses choice as a resource to manage both alignment (with the category of masculinity), and differentiation (in terms of their own accountability), at the same time. Consider the use of this strategy in the next extract, which is taken from the same interview as extracts one and two.

(ii) (Partial) Alignment

(a) Masculinity as a Determined ‘Mind-set’

Extract Four: SAS 23/3/97: 18

Participants: S: Sue, D: David.

1 S: Right. Do you think the fact you’re male
2 affects your leisure in an[y way?] [Yes] Yeah.
3 D: [1.0)
4 S: How?
5 (1.0) hh. Well it’s just a mind-set isn’t it -it’s
6 -it’s what you’re indoctrinated with when you
7 grow up. (1.0) Sport for blokes is a must

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In direct contrast to David's portrayal of extreme machismo in extracts one and two, here we have one of the most graphically deterministic constructions of masculinity one would think possible. Indeed, we now get some idea of the level of variation in both the construction of, and degree of alignment with masculinity within the same interview. Here maleness is a 'mind-set', it is 'indoctrinated', and is representative of things one 'must' do. It is normative and prescribed, ingrained (from 'when you grow up' (lines 6 to 10)), and very much something David is subjected to (as opposed to responsible for).

We begin to understand why David should so patently contradict himself (or 'why this utterance now?'), if we look in closer detail at the opening sequence. First of all, David does not answer the question about leisure and his maleness ('Do you think the fact you're male affects your leisure in any way?' (1-2)), in quite the way one would expect, given that he is asked a probing 'how?' question (rather than an account seeking 'why?' question), on line four.

Rather than provide a description of how his maleness affects his leisure (such as 'I do all those traditionally masculine pursuits like rock-climbing, cricket etc', which he has mentioned elsewhere in the interview are pursuits he enjoys), David instead provides an account of why maleness affects his leisure: 'Well it's just a mind-set isn't it—it's—it's what you're indoctrinated with...’ (lines 6-7), thus treating the question about gender as a possibly problematic, instantly accountable issue. A clue to this response may lie in the fact that culturally 'we all know' that men and women do different sports and activities, and were David not to (being quite obviously a man), he might be seen as accountably strange, 'other' or different. David can not (easily) deny his maleness, but, by responding 'yes' to the question, and then explaining how it affects his leisure, he opens himself up to being just like any 'typical' man, and again, not an authentic individual. His spontaneous accounting here, therefore, along with the portrayal of leisure as socially determined rather than freely chosen, may stem from his attending to the possibility that he might somehow be to blame for being 'typical', or worse, stereotypical, by virtue of his maleness, and all in front of a female - perhaps feminist - social science interviewer.
David denies responsibility for the link between his maleness and his behaviour, and cannot be held accountable for it. This is a negative construction of his own masculinity, very unlike the identity of choice David portrays in the other extracts.

(b) Masculinity as a ‘Mask’

Extract Five: SAS 23/3/97: 18
Participants: S: Sue, D: David.

But what are the characteristics of laddishness then? I mean do you try and emulate these characteristics?

[No] no but it’s [laughs] it’s a very - it’s a peer pressure thing, it’s - laddishness is all a peer pressure thing. Everybody - it’s the mask thing you know? A group of lads, (.) just first arrived at university, (.) some rugby players amongst them, some big drinkers amongst them,

Masculinity is given a slightly different meaning in this extract. The image of social determinism continues with the use of lay social scientific examples. ‘Laddishness’ is a result of ‘peer pressure’ (lines 6-8), and is subject to social sanction: ‘Anybody that doesn’t try and live up to that is - is scorned by the group’ (lines 20-21). Moreover, this is not an authentic or ‘real’ self, but is a ‘mask’ that you ‘wear’ (lines 8 and 16) (David’s lay version of ‘gender as performance’ (see Marshall and Wetherell, 1989)). Indeed, the reason for this particular construction may be prompted by Sue’s question about whether David tries to ‘emulate’ masculinity (lines 2-3), which makes the issue of authenticity and choice directly relevant.

For example, to suggest that someone emulates a characteristic is to imply that they are not authentically that person at all (a point attended to by Sue’s tease on line five,
suggesting it is 'natural'). One way to avoid the negative implications of responding 'yes, I try to emulate masculinity', then, is to suggest that one is laddish simply because one has no choice in the matter, thus further distancing one's own accountability or responsibility for being just such a person.

Having provided numerous examples to demonstrate this lack of choice, however, a few turns later (and in response to the local interactional circumstances), David's tack changes slightly. Having deferred accountability to such a great extent, he now reclaims some agency and responsibility.

(c) Masculinity as a 'Hive Mind'

Extract Six: SAS 23/3/97: 19

Participants: S: Sue, D: David.

1 S: So were you put in that situation then?
2 D: No coz I -I -I picked who I hung a -hung
3 about with very carefully, but -well not
4 carefully but I just happened- you know
5 like attracts like and you hang about with
6 people who are like yourself
7 [( )]
8 S: [Who are] not 'laddish' then?
9 D: Yeah I was lucky to- >but there was still the
10 laddish< (1.0) er only -only as far as -as
11 drinking went definitely coz I -I was in
12 (. )-I was on like 2 or 3 of my group were_big
13 drinkers and it was "you've got to match pint
14 for pint at the same rate of drinking as I do
15 or else you're_queer, or else you're weak, or
16 else you're a Southerner" you know and that's
17 [(all this)]
18 S: [Did they] actually say that?
19 D: Oh yeah! all the time mm [( )]
20 S: [Yet you] hung
21 around with these people?
22 D: No well I was doing it to others as well you
23 know [it's all]=
24 S: [really?]
25 D: =it's a -it's a -it's a: -a hive mind (.) you
26 know=
27 (lines omitted))
28 D: and it's -it's like a group mind and
29 everybody (.) thinks the same and talks the
30 same and you have the same phrases and you
31 have the same likes and dislikes.

In this extract, which follows almost immediately from the preceding one, the issue is no longer about whether David tries to emulate masculinity (cf. line 3, extract five),
but is instead about his own relationship to this peer pressure: ‘So were you put in that situation then?’ (line one). In other words, the questioning instigates a move from David as accountable for the behaviour, to David as accountable for having agency or not, and there is selective variation between the two. The interactional benefits of asserting lack of choice are all but gone, and what’s at stake has changed. To respond ‘yes’ to this question might paint a tragic picture of David’s inability to resist category membership if he so chooses. Thus he responds ‘No coz I -I -I picked who I hung a - hung about with very carefully’ (lines 2-3). However, when his responsibility for ‘hanging around’ with people who call others derogatory names is at issue (lines 20-21), David reverts again to constructing masculinity as lack of choice, deferring his accountability, and thus blame-worthiness, for Sue’s implied criticism. Indeed, he finishes several lines later, with wonderful images of social contagion, of ‘hive minds’ (line 25), where ‘everybody thinks the same and talks the same’ (lines 35-36).

The extracts in this section, like the first three, have tended to portray masculinity as a negative phenomenon. However, while its meaning may often be constructed (and oriented towards) as negative (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995), it may also, on certain interactional occasions, be given a more positive gloss. In the account that follows, for example, the speaker relies on the characteristics typically associated with ‘stereotyped’ masculinity, to divert attention from another - possibly even more accountable or (constructed as) problematic aspect of their identity - their sexuality.

(iii) Deviant Cases

(a) The Display of Masculinity in the Management of a (Potentially) Problematic Identity

We join this extract at a point where the discussion turns to drug taking, and Ben, in relaying his repertoire of drug experiences, has just announced that he has done a ‘blow

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10 Condor (1986), makes a similar point about femininity. She suggests that many women ‘may value the characteristics associated stereotypically with their sex’, and that there is no reason to assume ‘that the feminine stereotype may be regarded as evaluatively negative’ (1986: 105-106, emphasis in original). While these women may value such stereotypes, it does not mean that they are ‘falsely conscious’, unaware of the damage that their adherence to such ‘traditional’ roles might do to womankind. Rather, the ‘value’ that they attach to ‘femininity’, may be in terms of those stereotypes’ interactional uses. This is similar to the argument I developed in chapter five, where I suggested that binaries and other dualistic constructions (that men and women are inherently different), need not be regarded as essentially negative, but can also, on certain interactional occasions, be exploited for political, emancipatory purposes. They too have ‘value’ - of an interactional rather than a cognitive kind.
back' 'where you take a drag, (.) and breathe into the other person' with a 'lad at erm uni- at college', and that he 'used to do it all the time'.

Extract Seven: SAS 27/12/97: 30

Participants: S: Sue, B: Ben.

1
S: =>"That's a bit (. ) risque< isn't it?"
2
B: No:
3
S: (.)
4
B: [Actually] yeah it is like
kissing- it's like- almost like french
kissing but without tongues.
5
S: And that's okay?
6
B: >Yeah it didn't bother me. He was a good
mate<
7
S: hhh. ((laughs))
8
B: Yeah he- he- when he first said he said "have
you ever done a blow-back?" We were totally
and utterly (.) ss - pissed out of our heads.
And we were laffing our 'eads off coz we'd
already had a couple of (0.6) joints, (0.6)
and we were actually in a- in a hall that
wasn't ours, and there was a telly in there
and he said "that window's open do you fancy
ha(h)ving the te(h)lly(h)." ((lines omitted))
9
B: Be said "have you ever done a blow-back?" I
said "what the hell's a blow-back?", he says
"it's where I take a drag and then pass it
onto you (0.8) by like kissing you", he says
"it's a bit queer but you know it doesn't
bother me if you want."
10
[I said "go on then"]=
11
B: [((laughs))]=
12
S: "let's have a go. >Because it doesn't bother
me<. " (0.8) Be said "sure?" I said "yeah no
worries". (1.0) Steve "we's a bloody great
laugh he was. (0.6) You'd have liked him coz
he was a right (. ) lad from Brighton and he
was a right down to earth guy.

In stark contrast to Ben's account in extract three, where he distances himself from the 'typical blokes' who go out 'jus-(.) on a weekend just to get totally stoned' (lines 14-16, my emphasis), in this extract, in contrast, he tells a story about just such drug-taking behaviour. Unlike previous extracts, however, Ben invokes characteristics traditionally associated with masculinity, so as to manage what Sue constructs as a potentially problematic sexual identity: "That's a bit (. ) risque< isn't it?"...It's like ↑kissing someone' (lines 1 and 4).
Chapter Six: Constructing Masculinity

For example, in recalling the 'blow-back' incident, Ben does some accountability reducing scene setting: They were 'totally and utterly (.) ss - pissed out of our heads', 'laffing our 'eads off', and had 'already had a couple of (0.6) joints' (lines 14-17). These activities are what one might regard as 'laddish' behaviour, all of which point to the alcohol, and drug enhanced - 'not to be taken seriously' nature of the occasion. The dare-devil antics of the suggestion “that window’s open do you fancy ha(h)ving the te(h)lly(h)” (lines 32), contribute to the impression of wild school-boy pranks (rather than rampant homo-eroticism). The whole incident is given innocent immediacy and an unplanned 'spur of the moment' feel, by the use of active voicing (Wooffitt, 1992), which again, forecloses any suggestion that this activity might represent the expression of some innate desire. This is reinforced further by Ben's display of ignorance: “What the hell’s a blow-back?” (line 28). Moreover, the level of detail in this short narrative may provide ‘the kind of warrant, the kind of document of experiential recall, of ‘being there’ (Geertz, 1988)” (Edwards, 1999: 281), that bolsters the validity of arguments that may be in danger of being contested (see also, Edwards and Potter, 1992). In this case, the danger may be that Ben's behaviour is somehow pre-planned, calculated, or inherently meaningful.

Interestingly, while Ben initially counters Sue's construction of the 'blow-back' as 'a bit(.) risque<', and thus problematic in terms of the sexual identity it invokes (line 1), here, Ben constructs Steve as already having mentioned, at the time of the incident, the sexual connotations implicit in the 'blow-back' manoeuvre: 'He says “it's a bit queer but you know it doesn’t bother me if you want.” (lines 34-36). This is, then, a clever display of recognition, that retrospectively constructs and counters just such inferences, inoculating the speaker from their effects.

Ben's story works to convince us of Steve's (the proposer of the 'blow back') credentials as a proper 'laddish' 'bloke' in the closing sequence, where Ben says he's a 'great laugh', and argues that Sue would have liked him 'coz he was a right (.) lad from Brighton and he was a right down to earth guy' (lines 42-44). Being 'right' of any characteristic leaves one in little doubt that it is a quality in plentiful supply, and Ben can bask in the glory of his friend's macho credentials. In sum, Ben retains the identity of a 'proper' man by replacing one commonly othered, yet stereotyped category (of 'queerness'), with another, perhaps more acceptable one (masculine activities and
‘laddishness’). In doing so, he relies on the traits commonly associated with (and culturally recognizable as) stereotypical masculinity. In managing his relation to (what Sue on line one constructs as) a potentially problematic, ‘stigmatizable’ activity, Ben foregrounds as newsworthy relatively ordinary (though stereotyped), features of his activities (cf. news reports, where it is taken for granted that reported matters are not likely to offend the moral order (Lawrence, 1996: 182)).

A further example of alignment with masculinity, but from a rather different media, is provided in extract eight, below, which is taken from a popular sports magazine. Here, Ian Roberts, a homosexual rugby player, aligns himself with features of ‘conventional’ masculinity, despite being (or, perhaps, because he is) a member of a commonly ‘othered’ category, whose masculinity may be in doubt.

Extract Eight:


So what was it like to be a gay man in a sport like Rugby League? Ian says there were isolated incidents where people in the sport were threatened by his sexuality and plenty of on-field slurs from spectators and opposition players, but on the whole, people were accepting of him because, “I was a good player and a good bloke.”

What about the stereotypes? “Homosexuality doesn’t deny masculinity,” he says, “It embraces it. You get conditioned to be hard and tough when you go out onto the field and the longer you play, the tougher you get. It’s just part of the game and it’s got nothing to do with being gay. Some people believe everything relates to that, but they’re wrong”.

Roberts’ sexuality is made relevant in the opening sequence: ‘So what was it like to be a gay man in a sport like Rugby League?’ (lines 1-2). It is constructed as the relevant thing about him (cf. Edwards, 1998) and as a newsworthy (and thus non-normative) phenomenon. There are several problems that such a question may engender. For example, to answer the question adequately, Roberts must also make his sexuality relevant, and comment on the effect of his sexuality on his rugby playing. One of the problems with this, however, is that it may risk making sexuality - which is just one feature of Roberts’ identity - integrally related to how he plays. This would detract from
Roberts' other qualities and abilities, which may be more directly relevant to his success. Alternatively, if Roberts talks about the problems of stereotypes and heterosexism, he may construct a rather negative image of the sport, which may imply that homosexuality is incompatible with it. It might also portray Roberts' as a bitter individual who is using the media for political 'complaint-making' purposes. The ultimate form of liberation for Roberts (in this context), then, might be to present himself as a ‘normal’, ‘ordinary’ person, whose sexuality is an irrelevant, unremarkable, perfectly acceptable and non-comment-worthy feature of his identity, which has nothing to do with his participation in rugby league. This, however, would not only not be news, but it might also risk trivializing or ignoring the (constructed here as normative) negative stereotypes which impinge on so many players' experiences. Indeed, the reporter constructs these stereotypes as a given feature of Roberts' participation: ‘What about the stereotypes?’ (line 9).

Roberts manages these conflicting demands for accountability in two ways. First, he positions himself as someone who is not accepted for being gay. People are ‘threatened by his sexuality’ (line 4), and subject him to ‘plenty of on-field slurs’ (line 5). At the same time, however, he is accepted for playing well, and being a good person: ‘A good player and a good bloke’ (lines 7-8). This works rhetorically to bolster Roberts' image as an ordinary, but nonetheless ‘masculine’ man. This allows him to present his sexuality as both relevant (to the negative stereotypes he suffers) and irrelevant (to his actual playing - which undermines those stereotypes), at the same time. The use of the category 'bloke', here (line 8), is exploited for its ‘inference rich’ character (the category 'bloke' is typically associated with macho toughness, not homosexuality), which helps portray Roberts as just like any other heterosexual rugby player.

Second, like David in extract one, Roberts reconstitutes the category (of homosexuality) so that that it includes the masculine characteristics associated with rugby, and his own identity within it: “Homosexuality doesn't deny masculinity,” he says, “It embraces it” (lines 9-11). Roberts aligns with masculinity, with people who are 'hard and tough' (lines 11-12), to distance himself from the assumptions and potentially negative rhetorical contrasts his category membership might invoke (that ‘homosexuals’ are not masculine, and cannot play rough sports like rugby, for example). Indeed, here, rugby is constructed as a game which makes you develop
masculine characteristics, regardless of your sexuality. He says 'the longer you play, the tougher you get' (line 13), and 'it's got nothing to do with being gay' (lines 14-15). Roberts works to maintain the irrelevance of sexuality by referring to the generalized other (the repetition of 'you' on lines 11-13). In his (reported) response, then, Roberts manages to combine one commonly othered, yet stereotyped category (homosexuality), with another, perhaps more acceptable one ('traditional' masculinity).

These two deviant cases have shown how participants do not always differentiate themselves from potentially negative stereotyped identities, but invoke them to manage other (perhaps more problematic) identities. This reinforces the conclusion that one might draw from the analysis as a whole: That masculinity is a fluid and variable resource, whose meaning is not fixed.

Discussion

This analysis builds on and develops several features of Wetherell and Edley's (1999) critical discursive approach. I have demonstrated a number of context sensitive ways in which participants construct masculinity and position themselves in relation to it. Indeed, these participants seem to be attending to the existence of something that non-discursive and CA researchers have glossed as 'hegemonic' masculinity. For example, Ben and David alternate between alignment with, and differentiation from a version of masculinity which they define in remarkably similar ways across extracts ('drinking', 'pulling' and 'sport', for example).

In its particularities, however, masculinity is defined and described in different ways (as 'extreme', 'typical', about 'self-confidence', an 'image', 'hive mind', or a 'mask'), appropriate for the local interactional context, and the work that needs to be done to invoke or manage a particular identity. Therefore, it is not simply the degree of alignment with 'hegemonic' or 'heroic' masculinity which changes, but it is also participants' definitions of masculinity which change. These different descriptions and uses of masculinity give it a different meaning across contexts. Participants make use, in action, of both the indexical (Garfinkel, 1967) and ready-made (or 'inference rich' (Sacks, 1992/1995)) elements of the category of masculinity. The precise meaning of masculinity is both context sensitive and context free, and it is this feature of all words and categories, which helps explain both the similarities (in terms of similar
descriptions), and differences (in terms of the precise definition and interactional usages of masculinity), across extracts.

Moreover, while the characteristics of masculinity each participant identifies may well exist ‘out there in the world’ for them, it does not mean we (as analysts) should interpret this as meaning hegemonic masculinity actually exists, or that we might be able to identify a hegemonic person. All it does mean, is that a cultural category, or way of describing masculinity (that we can all use) exists, and, as I have shown here, it exists to do business, and variable sorts of business for the participants. Indeed, the CA sensitivity to participants’ own orientations, clearly demonstrates how and why identities are ‘utterly fluid, variable and context-specific’ and are ‘made contextually relevant to address contingent interpersonal concerns’ (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995: 108).

Building on the argument about the variable uses of binaries and continuums developed in chapter five, I have also demonstrated that there is nothing intrinsic to a statement or behaviour which makes it hegemonically masculine or dominant. Things become ‘masculine’ only in relation to what is ‘othered’ and constructed as inferior, and only in situ, in the local context of interaction. The variable construction and positioning of masculinities, as I have shown in my analysis of the two deviant cases, suggests that hegemonic masculinity does not exist as some cognitive core inside the heads of individuals, or as a prototype or shared mental ‘representation’ against which members measure their own and others’ success at ‘doing being masculine’ (see Marshall and Wetherell, 1989: 125).\(^{11}\) When we look at actual discourse, we find that the patterns within it do not correspond to those one might expect from individuals with consistent attitudes, ‘nor to the organization that would follow from sets of underlying representations shared across social groups’ (Potter and Wetherell, 1998: 155). Instead, there are a range of rhetorically effective constructions and reconstructions of masculinity, which are tailored to the interactional business at hand. These, ‘representations are designed to accomplish particular actions’ (1998: 150).

Masculinity need not be defined or determined by one’s participation in certain leisure activities. While all categories do come ‘inference rich’ (Sacks, 1992/1995), they can (as I demonstrated in chapter five), be used flexibly and reworked so as to include or

\(^{11}\) See also Potter and Edwards (in press b) for a critique of social representation theory.
exclude the self. Some participants distance themselves from masculinity by reconstituting the category as extreme and negative, thus excluding themselves from it. Likewise, the activities typically associated with certain categories can be flexibly reworked, to alter or redefine the constitution of a particular category. Activities, like the categories to which they are often applied, are indexical resources that can be linked up with, or contrasted with certain categories for interactional purposes. The relationship between categories and activities is not a rigid one determined in advance of their use. Categories, and the ‘inferences’ associated with them, are infinitely malleable. Sport and leisure theorists, however, do not allow for this degree of flexibility. For them, masculinity is a mapping notion, or a shared representation: One either lives up to the ideal, by participating in ‘manly’ pursuits (at the expense of women and others), or one does not.

Gender identity, then, need not be conceived as a relatively fixed, cognitive, biological, learned, or performative feature of one’s identity, or as something which is constrained or determined ‘from above’, by ‘wider’ power structures. It follows that sporting masculinities need not be inherently hegemonic, dominant, or negative. Hegemonic masculinity is not an abstract, reified ‘thing’ that participants can aspire to or reject. Instead, gender identities are resources for interaction, in everyday, mundane contexts. What it means to be masculine or feminine, is constructed jointly in interaction, and tailored to local, interactional demands.

Despite the potential of the approach demonstrated in this, and the previous chapter, CA is often viewed as excessively ‘nit-picking...as unable to see beyond the ‘micro’ level of the 0.2-second pause’ (Kitzinger and Frith, 1999: 311). Indeed, many feminist psychologists suggest that we need to go beyond participants’ orientations to be able to say anything politically effective (Frith, 1998; Kitzinger, 1992; Gill, 1995; Wetherell, 1998; Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1995: 6). As I have shown in my analysis, however, a CA influenced, discursive psychology of masculinity does not necessarily need to be subsidized with Foucauldian poststructuralism, or make references to features extrinsic to the interaction, in order to tell us something fruitful about the political uses to which identity categories can be put, or allow us to reach politically efficacious conclusions. Indeed, this analysis has been able to provide answers to CA’s own classic question about ‘why this utterance now?’, and it is hard to see what going beyond participants’ orientations would add to our understanding of the reasons for, or workings of this
talk. Indeed, the reason why a deconstructive approach which does not go beyond participants' orientations is so important and radical for feminism, is because claims about power and asymmetry, 'macro contexts', 'broader, global patterns', the 'inter-textual', and all things typically conceived as beyond CA's scope, are analytically tractable (Drew and Heritage, 1992; Hutchby, 1996; Speer, 1999a, in press a). What better way to convince sceptics of the blatant (or, indeed, subtle) inequalities in society, than with a line-by-line demonstration (and validation) of their workings and constitution on the page?

As Wetherell herself has pointed out (1995: 141-142; 1999: 404), it is important not to underestimate discursive psychology's radical political potential (Edwards et al., 1995; Potter, 1998a), a potential which, I believe, has yet to be realized in research on gender issues. For example, if we take a broad view of politics as rhetoric, as taking up a position for strategic ends, then discursive psychologists, like feminists, are also engaged in a political project, albeit with (often, though not always), different goals. From this perspective, the 'why that now?' is a political question (for the analysts and the participants), that I have shown we can answer by focussing on participants' practices. David and Ben do (identity) politics with their talk and actions, and political implications can be built from our analyses of them.

If one of the aims of a radical feminist psychology is to challenge patriarchy, and set about 'ending the social and political oppression of women' (Wilkinson, 1997: 189), then it makes sense to try and capture the object of our critique (or the oppressor), in as much detail as possible, and to understand what talk about, or displays of masculinity do for participants. This will hopefully (eventually at least), help us to understand how masculinity itself gets done, the way it is mobilized for political and strategic ends, how it works as a rhetorical strategy, and why men (or indeed women), find it so attractive (indeed - effective) as a resource on certain interactional occasions, and not others. We may then find ourselves in a stronger position from which to undermine or 'disarm' it, and to challenge the weapons of patriarchal rhetoric.

This need not lead to weakness, an absence of critique (see Wilkinson, 1997), or some form of self-referential nihilism, but will prevent us from 'reproducing precisely the assumptions we have set out to criticize' (Potter, 1997a: 64), of replacing one
Summary

This chapter has worked on two levels. First, it has provided a distinctive contribution to leisure theory, by showing how a discursive and CA approach completely reworks the way we might go about applying and studying concepts such as hegemonic masculinity. As I showed in my description of leisure in chapter two, and again in chapter three, much leisure research treats gender as a relatively stable feature of identity, that can be mapped on to what participants say, and treated as the explanatory variable. Hegemonic masculinity is treated as a reified, mapping notion, a cognitive schema that exists inside the heads of individuals, or a shared mental ‘representation’. Individuals either represent it, or aspire to it, and those who do not are almost inevitably ‘othered’ and marginalized. The discursive and CA reworking, in contrast, demonstrates how gendered and ‘leisured’ identities are not fixed but fluid resources. They are interactionally useful ‘versions’, that can be used to position the self and other in infinitely variable ways, and in response to local, context sensitive demands.

On a second level, this chapter has addressed a key debate at the intersection of feminism, discursive psychology and CA: The issue of participants’ orientations. I have shown how we do not necessarily need to venture beyond the text to explain why participants say what they do, or talk about features extrinsic to the interaction to be able to say anything politically effective. This is relevant to some of the issues around ‘context’ discussed in chapters three and four, and has some epistemological and political implications which I have touched on, above, and will pick up again in more detail in chapter eight.

In chapter seven, I develop these findings, by considering the construction of ‘heterosexism in action’. I develop the approach to participants’ orientations, introduced in chapter five, and explored in more detail here, by examining whether participants themselves orient to their talk as problematic in some way, even in their most ‘extreme’ utterances. Indeed, what counts as an orientation to prejudice?
Chapter Seven: Heterosexism in Action

Introduction

In the last chapter I provided a discursive and CA approach to 'hegemonic masculinity' - the second structuring concern introduced in chapter two. I explored how participants invoke particular descriptions of leisured masculinity and position themselves (and others) in relation to it. One of my main aims in that chapter, in addition to reformulating the concept of hegemonic masculinity, was to demonstrate how, contrary to the claims of many feminist researchers, a discursive, and CA approach to participants' orientations can indeed help us to understand why participants say what they do, and provide a route into understanding the politics of identity work.

In this chapter, I take this approach to participants' orientations one step further. I briefly review the literature on 'heterosexism' in leisure, the third structuring concern described in chapter two, and offer a discursive and CA reformulation of it. I explore how 'heterosexism' has been operationalized in mainstream (and some discursive) psychology, arguing that its characteristics have been reified and presented as self-evident prior to analysis. For example, it is often assumed that 'heterosexual' individuals empty out pre-existent attitudes from within themselves, and, in doing so, are unlikely to show any interactional 'awareness' of their talk as problematic in some way.

Using data from a variety of sources (see chapter four), I examine accounts where sexuality is made relevant in talk about leisure (in labelling someone who participates in activities non-traditional to their sex, as a 'poof' or 'dyke', for example), to explore:

(a) Whether participants do indeed attend to something one might call 'heterosexism' or some form of trouble in their talk, and if so;
(b) Examine what such 'attending to' is doing interactionally.

I argue that an analysis of actual instances of heterosexism 'in action' demonstrates how 'heterosexual talk' is not a straightforward emptying out of pre-formed
homophobic ‘attitudes’, by the ‘heterosexist person’. Instead, statements are often produced in ways which show a concern for the accountability and identity of the speaker.

I highlight four of the resources that participants use to manage such talk:

(i) Constructing the ‘Problem’ as a Feature of the World, not the Mind;
(ii) Owning Psychological Trouble;
(iii) Softening the Blow; and
(iv) Conceding Positive Features.

As I demonstrated in chapter five, talk which under certain circumstances might be considered ‘prejudiced’, is also indexical, and can be used ironically as a comment on normativity. A fifth section, ‘ironizing heterosexist scripts’ shows how statements do not necessarily come with their negativity built into them, but are flexible and variable, and only become troublesome, prejudicial, or otherwise, for participants in situ, as their meanings are produced and negotiated. I conclude with a discussion of the implications of this approach for feminist leisure theory, discursive psychology and CA research on ‘prejudice’ and (what are typically conceived as) ‘ideological’ or ‘cognitive’ phenomena.

Operationalizing Heterosexism

As I showed in chapter two, feminist leisure theorists argue that men and women’s participation in activities non-traditional to their sex, has been undermined by heterosexism, which is ‘pervasive’ in the sports community. Many female athletes, for example, are considered so gender deviant that they must be lesbian or gay, and are often labelled ‘butch’ or ‘dykes’ (Kane, 1995). This labeling reinforces (what is constructed as) appropriate, or normative, masculine and feminine behaviour. For feminist leisure theorists, then, it is language which is central to understanding lesbian and gay oppression: We must turn our attention to the heterosexist ‘discourses’ through which lesbian identities are constructed, restricted, and marginalized (Sykes, 1996).

Despite its pervasiveness ‘heterosexism’ is a relatively recent concept in psychology. It was developed in preference to the term ‘homophobia’, which has been criticized for
'imputing sickness to specific individuals who supposedly deviate from the rest of society' (Kitzinger, 1996b: 37; 1996a: 10; Kitzinger and Perkins, 1993).¹ 'Heterosexism' is defined more broadly as 'an ideological system that denies, derogates, or penalises any nonheterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship, or community' (Kitzinger, in press: 1; Herek, 1995: 321). It is 'a diverse set of social practices - from the linguistic to the physical... covert and overt... in which the homo/hetero binary distinction is at work whereby heterosexuality is privileged' (Plummer, 1992: 19, emphasis in original). Thus 'heterosexism' is not simply about discrete acts, but describes, in a way that other concepts do not, 'the bias of a whole culture' (Kitzinger, 1994b: 126), an 'offensive milieu' (Kitzinger, 1994b: 126), where human experience is conceptualized 'in strictly heterosexual terms' (Herek, Kimmel, Amaro and Melton, 1991: 957). 'Heterosexism' incorporates the assumption that everyone is (or should be) heterosexual, and that heterosexuality, as the norm, does not need to be accounted for.

Despite this (definitional) shift of focus from the 'individual' to the 'social' (Kitzinger, 1987: 153), however, it is common to divide up heterosexism according to its institutional, religious and legal manifestations ('cultural heterosexism'), and its attitudinal and behavioural manifestations ('psychological heterosexism') (Herek, 1995; Hunter et al., 1998: 36). There have been numerous attempts to measure and operationalize 'psychological heterosexism' and identify 'heterosexist' individuals. One of the most well respected methods used in this endeavour has been the 'Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale' (ATLG), developed by Herek (1994). This scale is included in Box 10, below. Positive scored items on the scale consist of statements such as 'female homosexuality is a sin', 'homosexual behavior between two men is just plain wrong' and 'female homosexuality is a threat to many of our basic social institutions'. Individuals who agree with these statements may be given a psychological diagnosis as 'heterosexist', and be regarded as in need of treatment and correction.

¹ The word 'phobia' comes from the Greek for 'fear' and translates as 'an irrational fear or dread' (Kitzinger, 1996b: 8, 1996b: 34). Thus, 'homophobia' (literally meaning 'fear of sameness' (Hunter, Shannon, Knox and Martin, 1998: 22)), has been defined as 'the dread of being in close quarters with homosexuals' (Weinberg, 1973: 4), 'an irrational persistent fear or dread of homosexuals' (MacDonald, 1976: 23), and, more recently, 'a hatred or fear of homosexuals' (The Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 1995). There are, of course numerous terms to describe the phenomena of anti-gay prejudice ('homohatred', 'queer-bashing', 'anti-gay violence', etc. (Kitzinger, 1994b: 126)), and each one endorses an analysis (Adam, 1998: 388). 'Heterosexism' is currently the preferred term (Kitzinger, in press). I use the concept of 'homophobia' here, only insofar as it reflects the continued usage of that word by those authors quoted (and its continued popularity in psychology and beyond).
Chapter Seven: Heterosexism in Action

Box 10: The ATLG Scale

'The ATLG consists of two 10-item subscales, one of attitudes toward gay men (ATG) and the other for attitudes toward lesbians (ATL)....The 20 statements were presented to respondents in Likert format, usually with a 9-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"....total scale scores can range from 20 (extremely positive attitudes) to 180 (extremely negative attitudes)' (Herek, 1994: 209).

The Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLG) Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes Toward Lesbians (ATL) Subscale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lesbians just can't fit into our society.</td>
<td>(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A woman's homosexuality should not be a cause of job discrimination in any situation.</td>
<td>(R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Female homosexuality is detrimental to society because it breaks down the natural division between the sexes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. State laws regulating private, consenting lesbian behavior should be loosened.</td>
<td>(R; S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Female homosexuality is a sin.</td>
<td>(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The growing number of lesbians indicates a decline in American morals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Female homosexuality in itself is no problem, but what society makes of it can be a problem.</td>
<td>(R; S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Female homosexuality is a threat to many of our basic social institutions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Female homosexuality is an inferior form of sexuality.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Lesbians are sick.</td>
<td>(S)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes Toward Gay Men (ATG) Subscale</th>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>11. Male homosexual couples should be allowed to adopt children the same as heterosexual couples.</td>
<td>(R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I think male homosexuals are disgusting.</td>
<td>(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Male homosexuals should not be allowed to teach school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Male homosexuality is a perversion.</td>
<td>(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Just as in other species, male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in human men.</td>
<td>(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. If a man has homosexual feelings, he should do everything he can to overcome them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I would not be too upset if I learned that my son were a homosexual.</td>
<td>(R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Homosexual behavior between two men is just plain wrong.</td>
<td>(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The idea of male homosexual marriages seems ridiculous to me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Male homosexuality is merely a different kind of lifestyle that should not be condemned.</td>
<td>(R; S)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 'R means the item was reverse scored and S means that the item appears on the short form'.

(From Herek, 1994: 210)

Although this type of research is widespread and well respected in psychology, the notion of 'psychological heterosexism' can be criticized on two distinct, but related levels: One political; the other epistemological.

First, for radical feminists such as Celia Kitzinger, 'the words we choose matter' (1994b: 126, 1996a), and the way we define oppression is, and should be, political (1994b: 129). However, psychology, as a 'heterosexist discipline' (1996a: 5), is itself
bound up in silencing politics. According to Kitzinger, ‘psychology has systematically replaced political explanations (in terms of structural, economic and institutional oppression) with personal explanations (in terms of the dark workings of the psyche, the mysterious functioning of the subconscious)’ (1996b: 36-37). It could be argued, for example, that the term ‘psychological heterosexism’, as a description of psychopathology, has a tendency to reinforce rather than subvert the kinds of assumptions that the concept of ‘heterosexism’ was originally designed to replace. For example, Kitzinger argues that the attitude scales based on such concepts ‘depoliticize’ lesbian and gay identities by individualizing the problem, portraying the ‘homophobic’ person as someone with a selective, prejudiced and stereotyped belief system, that masks or distorts some objective ‘reality’ (Kitzinger, 1996a, 1996b; Kitzinger and Perkins, 1993).

Second, the broader, epistemological problems associated with attempts to measure psychological phenomena, have been addressed within discursive psychology, with its critique of the notions of ‘attitude’ and ‘prejudice’ (Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

This chapter presents a discursive and CA critique of the theory and method of researching ‘heterosexism’, and a discursive psychological challenge to the assumptions underlying the ‘cultural heterosexism’ / ‘psychological heterosexism’ distinction. In the next section, I explicate further some of the key features of discursive psychology’s critique of cognitivism, and the CA approach to evaluations, before going on to demonstrate the value and potential of this approach. I explicate, with analytic examples, how discursive psychology and CA may respecify how the concept of ‘heterosexism’ and, specifically, ‘heterosexist talk’ itself might be conceived and studied.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the wider implications of this type of research for feminist leisure theory, and for psychological approaches to (what are typically conceived as) ‘ideological’ or ‘cognitive’ phenomena.

Discursive Psychology, Conversation and Heterosexism

As part of its non-cognitivist agenda, outlined in chapter three, discursive psychology has provided a fundamental respecification of the concepts of ‘attitude’ and ‘opinion’
(Billig, 1989; Potter, 1998b; Puchta and Potter, in press). Rather than conceiving of attitudes as mental constructs that can be used to distinguish between individuals, or as predictors of future behaviour, discursive psychology treats attitudes and evaluations (like all talk) as performing actions. It is interested in what ‘practices of evaluation’ do ‘in particular settings’ (Potter, 1998b: 242). One problem with attitude scales, however, is that they are often based on invented examples which caricature ‘real’ talk. They also form part of a machinery of techniques which shave off the activities to be found in people’s practices of evaluation in specific settings, thus eliding the interactional and rhetorical subtleties of talk.

As conversation analysts have shown, the giving of views, assessments, opinions and so on, happens in much more subtle, interesting and dynamic ways that attitude theorists would have us believe (see Pomerantz, 1984). One could argue, for example, that the ATLG scale (like all attitude scales), has a tendency to reify the object it attempts to measure (heterosexism), by presenting its contours as relatively self-evident and objectively measurable prior to, and not as a result of, an analysis of actual instances (of heterosexism in action). Moreover, it assumes that the object of people’s attitudes remains stable, while individuals’ attitudes to that object differ (Potter and Wetherell, 1988: 55). When one analyzes actual evaluative practices, however, this distinction between attitude and object becomes hard to sustain. From a discursive perspective, one cannot separate out the attitude or evaluation (eg: ‘homosexuality is a sin’) from the attitudinal object (homosexuality), as the former is bound up in the construction of the latter. In other words, ‘the nature of ‘the object’ is formulated in the course of evaluating it’ (1988: 56).

The difficulty of separating the attitude from the attitudinal object is seen simply in the disclaimer (Hewitt and Stokes, 1975; Van Dijk, 1992). Statements such as ‘I’m not bothered - as long as they don’t come on to me’ (from Gough, 1998b: 34), or ‘I’m not a gay basher, but I think this is an issue that since he [Clinton] brought it up, we have to deal with it’ (from Meyers, 1994: 328), are particularly problematic for the attitude theorist, as they raise the issue of just which part of the disclaimer should be interpreted as evidence of an individual’s views. Is it, for example, the first (positive) part of the evaluation, which is a claim that one is not prejudiced toward the object (‘not bothered’, ‘not a gay basher’), or the second (contrastively more negative) part (‘as long as they don’t come on to me’, ‘since he [Clinton] brought it up, we have to deal with it’),
which seems to demonstrate the very prejudice toward the object that has just been denied? Disclaimers are particularly problematic for the attitude theorist working with decontextualized scales, as it is unclear how a theory based on the idea that individuals hold consistent underlying positions is meant to interpret and account for such variability. As Potter points out, ‘traditional attitude measurement and theory pays almost no attention to what is done by attitude talk, let alone what is done by different descriptions of behaviour’ (1998b: 252).

Discursive psychology and CA treats people’s practices of evaluation and descriptions of psychological states (or the mind), culture and ‘reality’ (or the world), as its topic (Edwards, in press b; Edwards and Potter, 1992). Mind-world descriptions are not peculiar to ‘attitude talk’, but as the building blocks of interaction, are pervasive in talk of all kinds. Talk that invokes cognitions and mental states, thoughts, feelings, opinions, and so on, and talk about the world and its objects, descriptions of actions, situations, or persons, are resources for interaction (Potter and Edwards, in press a: 2). When we analyze actual materials, it becomes hard to separate mind and world, cognition and context, since they blur together in ‘complex patterns of mutual implications’ (Potter, 1998c: 40). In other words, as Potter argues, ‘versions of “inner states” can be part of establishing consequential “facts” about the world... Conversely, particular descriptions of “external reality” can be part of established consequential “facts” about inner states’ (Potter, 1999: 123). In this sense, then, neither cognition nor context can, individually, adequately explain what goes on in talk (Potter, 1998c: 40 and see p. 30). Indeed, Potter advocates a move away from cognitivism to the kind of work that considers how cognition and context, mind and reality, are invoked and ‘managed in particular settings’ (1999: 125). The analytic task becomes one of (re)specifying how descriptions of mind and world are deployed in the maintenance and management of prejudicial claims (Edwards, in press b).

In fact (as is highlighted in the disclaimers referred to above), it is a common feature of talk that participants attempt to manage their stake and interest by constructing evaluations and descriptions in a way which does not portray them in a negative light (Potter, 1996a; Edwards, in press b). A participant may work to inoculate themselves from the potential for their remarks to be interpreted as prejudicial or biassed, by constructing their views as ‘rationally arrived at’ (Edwards, in press b: 8). As I touched on in chapters three, and five, in (potentially) ‘sexist’ or ‘racist’ talk, denials of
prejudice often co-exist with practical, 'factual' reasons, which limit egalitarianism, and which ultimately justify the status quo (Edwards, in press b; Gill, 1991, 1993; Potter and Wetherell, 1988; 1989; Wetherell et al., 1987; Wetherell and Potter, 1992).

This dual concern - both to express a view, and yet manage it in a way that portrays the speaker as caring and egalitarian, is problematic for the attitude theorist working with decontextualized scales. Indeed, it makes little sense to use attitude scales to distinguish between individuals who are, and who are not prejudiced, since evaluative descriptions are resources for the construction of one's identity. As I demonstrated in chapter six, from a discursive perspective, identities, and identity categories are fluid and variable. They are co-constructed and always subject to negotiation (see Antaki, Condor and Levine, 1996; Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998; Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995).

A number of studies have adopted a broadly discursive approach to explore the construction of heterosexism in talk and texts (Armstrong, 1997; Clarke and Kitzinger, in press; Clarke, Kitzinger and Potter, in preparation; Gough 1998b; McCreanor, 1996; Meyers, 1994; Morrish, 1997; Praat and Tuffin, 1996). These studies represent an advance on attitude scale research, since they highlight the situated production of prejudice. Each conceptualizes heterosexist talk in a slightly different way. Meyers (1994), for example, provides a critical discourse analysis of newspaper coverage of Clinton's attempt to repeal the ban on lesbians and gay men in the military. She argues that 'coverage presented a male, heterosexist discourse which reinforced homophobic myths and stereotypes' (1994: 322). A variety of statements are interpreted as 'heterosexist', including references to gay men and lesbians as 'special interest groups' (1994: 329), and use of the word 'gay' to describe both lesbians and gay men (1994: 333). Similarly, Armstrong (1997) describes 'homophobic slang' as 'any adaptation and extension of terms referring to homosexuals that can be interpreted as derogatory in the sense that the quality, action, attribute, or individual to which the term refers is being devalued' (1997: 328). Usage of the term 'homo' is described as 'almost inevitably derogatory' (1997: 328), and, likewise, there is 'hostility and... devaluation implicit in the usage of homophobic terms' (Armstrong, 1997: 328, my emphasis). Finally, in a recent study, Gough (1998b) provides a 'constructionist grounded theory'

\[2\] On other occasions, however, Armstrong suggests that it is 'intent to insult' which marks the difference between 'derogatory' and 'non derogatory' statements (1997: 330-331) - a rather cognitivist assumption.
and psychoanalytic reading of the discursive mechanisms heterosexual men use to
describe the gay ‘other’, and the ‘interpretative repertoires’ used to maintain
statements such as ‘I am totally homophobic - take them out and shoot them all’

This chapter offers a rather different approach to ‘heterosexist talk’ from the studies
cited above. Rather than assuming that we can know in advance of the analysis what a
heterosexist statement looks like, I interrogate what counts as an instance of
heterosexism from a participant’s perspective. What participants take to be
a heterosexist statement or act, is, for discursive psychologists and conversation
analysts, a matter for analysis, and is not to be decided by what the analyst has already
concluded counts as an example of it. Indeed, it is a commonly held assumption,
which stretches across the social sciences, that one cannot rely on talk and text alone to
explicate the reasons for, or workings of ‘prejudice’. It is argued that analysts need to
specify in advance what these things are, as if evidence for the existence of such things
will not be in the interaction itself.3 However, just as researchers have shown that
structures, institutions or ‘macro-contexts’ can be endogenously grounded (and
analyzable) from within talk (see Drew and Heritage, 1992), so too can ‘cognitions’
and the ‘inner life’ of the individual (see Potter, 1998c: 34). Claims about, or
descriptions of both are analysable ‘on the ground’ so to speak, and one does not
necessarily need to venture beyond or behind the talk to understand what (talk about)
both are doing. Capturing the phenomenon on the page is not a problem for discursive
psychology, but the analytic challenge (see Edwards, 1998; Speer, 1999a, in press a;
Speer and Potter, in press). The analytic task here is to explore how descriptions of
cognition and context, mind and world, are used in the justification and management of
(potentially) ‘heterosexist’ claims.

In the next section, I explore what the contours of ‘heterosexist’ statements look like in
practice, in actual interactional situations where sexuality is made relevant (in labeling
someone a ‘butch’, ‘dyke’ ‘poof’, or ‘queen’ for example), and when an act of
‘heterosexism’ occurs. I explicate the discursive mechanisms through which such talk
is brought off, managed, and made rhetorically persuasive. This is an approach, which

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3 See, for example, the debate between Schegloff (1997, 1998, 1999a, 1999b), Wetherell (1998), and
now, Billig (1999a, 1999b), and my contribution to it in Speer (in press a), and chapter six.
(unlike the ATLG scales and its derivatives), is not based on decontextualized statements defined as objectively ‘heterosexist’ prior to analysis, or disinfected of their social context.

In adopting such an approach, I hope to add to what we already know about the construction and precise nature of the ‘myths’, ‘stereotypes’, ‘discourses’, and ‘practices’ referred to in the studies of heterosexism, above, and how they are constituted in talk and action. Specifically, then, the analysis has a dual focus. Using data from a variety of different sources (described in chapter four), I consider:

(a) whether participants do indeed attend to something one might call ‘heterosexism’ or some form of trouble in their talk. Can we find participants orienting to their own talk, or the talk of others, as potentially ‘heterosexist’, prejudiced or problematic in some way? Is there something in the way their utterances are rhetorically designed which attends to possible counters or alternative claims? If so, then

(b) I examine what such ‘attending to’ is doing interactionally. What are the significance of such orientations? How can potentially, or hearably derogatory remarks get said? I also consider how participants manage their own identity in relation to their evaluations, and how they deal with, preempt, and foreclose counter arguments and challenges.

I identify four resources participants use to manage and sustain (potentially) ‘heterosexist’ claims, each one meshing together different descriptions of mind and world:

(i) Constructing the ‘Problem’ as a Feature of the World, not the Mind;

(ii) Owning Psychological Trouble;

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4 The analysis of heterosexism (like leisure), is a particularly ‘hard case’ (see Potter, 1996a: 17) to analyze in this respect since (unlike sexism and racism), it is one of the few forms of discrimination still upheld in law. Section 28 of the UK Local Government Act (1988), for example, states that ‘a local authority shall not promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship’ (in Plummer, 1992: 20). As Kitzinger says, this is ‘widely understood actively to endorse the removal of pro-gay literature from the shelves of public libraries, and the sacking of openly lesbian or gay teachers in schools’ (1994b: 128). Moreover, if it is true that, ‘social desirability’ (or a concern to appear ‘non-prejudiced’) ‘is rarely evident in expressed attitudes toward homosexuals’ (Kite, 1994: 36), then one would expect to find hardly any instances of participants orienting to their talk as problematic in some way.
(iii) Softening the Blow; and
(iv) Conceding Positive Features.

A fifth section 'ironizing heterosexist scripts' considers a deviant case, which problematizes just what counts as a 'derogatory' remark, and provides further evidence for the analytic claims. I conclude with a discussion of the wider implications of this type of research for feminist leisure theory and psychological, discursive, and CA approaches to 'context' and 'cognition'.

Throughout the data corpus, there were 64 instances where sexuality was made relevant, in the form of a category ascription (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998), either directly by the interviewer or documentary host, or spontaneously by the other participants. I analyse nine of those instances here, picked for their representation of the range of different practices displayed across all instances. Parts of the extracts that I wish to draw to the attention of the reader are marked in bold.

As I argued in chapter four, there are problems with selecting cases for analysis. In picking extracts as examples of (potentially) 'heterosexist talk', one assumes the existence and nature of just such a phenomenon in the first place, prior to, and not after analysis (Woolgar and Pawluch, 1985). By selecting extracts where sexuality was made relevant, however, I was able to bracket the issue of whether the instances were or were not 'heterosexist', saving that issue for the analysis. However, by choosing extracts where category ascriptions occur, I do not mean to imply that 'heterosexism' only takes place when explicit labeling occurs, or that 'heterosexist talk' is the only way in which prejudice may be noticed, felt or experienced. As has been well-documented, verbal abuse is only the tip of the ice-berg (Armstrong, 1997; Kitzinger, 1994b), and heterosexism may be at its most damaging and pervasive, when it is silent. Nevertheless, it makes sense to start with what we've got: instances of actual talk, to see just how far we can get with it, and what insights it can provide.

(i) Constructing the 'Problem' as a Feature of the World, not the Mind

Turning to extract one, we join the interaction at a point where Sue has just asked Ben - a man in his mid-twenties - if he enjoyed going to 'the gay club'. He responds 'Yeah I
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† did. I had a bloody good † time'.

Extract One: SAS 27/12/97: B: 27
Participants: S: Sue, B: Ben.

1  S: Was it a different kind of experience from a:
2  (.)(.) the pubs you’re used to?
3  B: (2.0) yeah it was a different experience
4  but (1.0) it didn’t bother me (0.4) you know.
5  The difference was (.) ex: (1.0) knowing the
6  fact that the: (.) No, it wasn’t knowing the
7  fact. (0.4) >You know it wouldn’t have
8  bothered me if I didn’t know. (0.4) The
9  difference was they’re very (0.4) very (2.0)
10  well, the fact that you get men (.) going
11  past you and saying “excuse me darling” (.)
12  instead of (.) “excuse me mate” or (0.6)
13  “coming through” or what– you know, they’re
14  (0.8) ob(h)viously more feminine a lot of
15  them (1.0) or ex (.) you know, you get men
16  coming onto you sometimes. (0.8) But it
17  doesn’t bother me. (.) You know, I’ll be
18  straight and honest with anyone (.) and say (.) “I’m
19  sorry I’m not interested”.

The question posed by Sue (lines 1-2) is a somewhat ‘tricky’ one for Ben to respond to, since it brings to the fore a range of dilemmas that have implications for Ben’s identity (Billig et al., 1988). Asserting that an experience in a gay club is different from those one is ‘used to’, raises all sorts of questions about the nature, extent and cause of that difference. There is always the possibility that one will be held accountable for explaining just how the experience is different. Is it something about there being gay men in the club which is responsible for the difference (in which case, precisely how do they make it different?), or is it simply a different atmosphere, music, or dress code, for example? Whatever reasons one gives, how does one assert difference when to do so may make one appear prejudiced or ‘heterosexist’ in some way? On the other hand, if Ben suggests that the experience of being in a gay club is not different from the pubs he is ‘used to’, then it leaves open the possibility that Ben is regularly going to such clubs, with the implications for his (sexual) identity this might raise.5

Ben’s orientation to such (hypothetical) dilemmatics is evidenced in the interaction

5 The dilemmatics of asserting sameness or difference, of categorizing and particularizing in the context of a ‘recognition’ of both common human nature and infinite human variety, are discussed in Billig (1996) and Billig et al. (1988), and in detail in chapter five.
itself. The mis-starts, frequent pauses at non-transition-relevant places, hesitation, and explicit self-repair throughout his answer, all indicate that Ben seems to be having quite a lot of trouble here. The necessity for such a long and detailed response - indeed - an account, when Ben could logically have answered simply ‘yes’ or ‘no’, displays Ben’s orientation to the accountable nature of these (hypothetical) dilemmatics, his attempt to manage the sensitivity of the issues concerned, and to the requirement for delicacy in his answer.

Ben works to account for his different experience in terms of features that are (stereotypically) associated with gay men’s behaviour, and not in terms of Ben’s own psychological knowledge about the status of the gay club as one frequented by gay men. In other words, the differences are ‘out there in the world’ (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) for everybody to see, rather than the product of Ben’s possibly prejudiced or anti-gay psyche, or worse, a figment of his ‘troubled’ imagination (see Potter, 1996a). In fact, Ben explicitly and repeatedly distances himself from the potential for his remarks to be interpreted as based on him having a personal problem with sexuality.

This concern is made explicit early on. One of the first things Ben says, for example, is ‘it didn’t bother me’ (line 4), which he later repeats on lines seven to eight: ‘it wouldn’t have bothered me’, and sixteen to seventeen: ‘it doesn’t bother me’. Then, in accounting for the stated difference, Ben explicitly aligns: ‘The difference was (.) er, (1.0) knowing the fact’, and then, in repair, distances himself: ‘No, it wasn’t knowing the fact’, from ownership of a particular (unspecified) knowledge state (lines 5-7). While we never get to hear what it is that he ‘knows’, though, one might predict he was going to say ‘knowing the fact that there were gay men in the club’. That he does not say this - indeed he changes the subject mid-turn - suggests that Ben may be attending to the problematic nature of saying such a thing.

He goes on, ‘The difference was they’re very (0.4) erm (2.0) well, the fact that you get men (.) going past you and saying “excuse me darling” (.) instead of (.) “excuse me mate”’. Again, the gay men themselves are constructed in such a way that makes them responsible for the (visible) differences, which can then account for Ben’s perfectly valid ‘perception’ of difference. Ben works to generalize his experience to others by repeated appeals to common knowledge: ‘you know’ (lines 13, 15 and 17), and by ‘scripting up’ his experience as typical or normative: ‘you get men (.) going past you’
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(lines 10-11), and 'you get men coming onto you' (lines 15-16) (Edwards, 1995, 1997). This inoculates him from being implicated in homosexual contact. This contact has nothing to do with Ben per se. It is simply what usually happens in the club. Thus, Ben works to portray himself as unprejudiced whilst attributing the club's differences to external factors.6

Traditional approaches to heterosexism and attitude measurement cannot capture these subtle and context sensitive features of talk. Indeed, it is hard to see how the attitude theorist would interpret the repair on line six of Ben's statements. Instead, a discursive approach shows how, by selectively drawing on the discourse of mind ('it doesn't bother me'), and scripted up, normalized accounts of the world ('the fact that you get'), Ben works to inoculate himself from accusations of prejudice, and from having a 'problematic' identity (see Edwards, in press b). It is this strategic use of mind-world claims, and the on-the-record trouble their juxtaposition engenders, which displays Ben's orientation to the potential for his remarks to be heard as problematic, and the necessity for their careful management.

From this analysis, we can see that what counts as heterosexism or prejudice, might not only be an analyst's concern, but is also a concern for the participants. This extract also exemplifies some problems with the analyst's distinction between 'cultural' and 'psychological heterosexism' that I referred to in the introduction. For the participants, at least, there is no easy separation of the two 'realms', and theorists who prioritize one or the other miss this subtlety.

(ii) Owning Psychological Trouble

Participants do not always work to distance themselves from the possibility that they might have a personal problem with a particular category of person. Sometimes (and variably), for example, a speaker might display ownership of, or investment in a view, such as 'I have a problem with or don't understand a, b, or c', precisely so as to make the 'a, b, or c' seem problematic. In this sense, then, the ownership of one's psychological trouble can be used as a resource (just as factual out-there-in-the-world claims can), to construct something or someone else as problematic. Again, this is not

peculiar to 'prejudice talk', but is pervasive in interaction and the management of stake and interest (Edwards, in press b; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter 1996a). Consider the way knowledge claims work in the extract below.

Extract Two: SAS 28/12/97: Tape 1: B: 41
Participants: K: Keith, P: Pamela, D: Donald, A: Alice.

Donald begins by telling a story about his visit to the pantomime where there was 'one man' dancing who 'looked complete poof' (lines 5-6) - something one might argue sounds heterosexist. However, while no one else attends to it as such, and despite getting alignment from A and K in the turns that follow, Donald nevertheless provides an account for this in terms of his own lack of knowledge 'and how he could do it there, I just don't know, the one man on his own' (lines 10-12).

As Potter (1996a; 1997b; see also Edwards, 1997: 158) has shown, the words 'I don't know' are not necessarily a reference to the reality of one's lack of psychological knowledge. Rather, they can also work interactionally to display lack of knowledge. Donald's claim regarding his lack of knowledge works here to bolster his argument about what a 'complete poof' this 'one' person dancing is. His claim is reinforced with the word 'just', which displays the degree of his lack of understanding, and perhaps his despair and frustration at having tried and failed to comprehend how this dancer could do such a thing. Donald's lack of understanding is caused by this dancer's unfathomable behaviour, and Donald cannot be held accountable for that. Here, then, mind-world claims implicate and reinforce one another. Donald's lack of
understanding, his ownership of a psychological difficulty (mind), does not make Donald appear ignorant or 'out of touch'. Rather, it makes his claim about male dancers looking like ‘complete poofs’ (world) rhetorically strong.

While not explicitly attending to his remarks as ‘heterosexist’, then, Donald nevertheless constructs his account using mind-world descriptions in a way that makes the object of Donald’s distaste appear odd, in contrast to Donald himself, who has simply tried and failed to grasp the reasons behind this dancer’s peculiar behaviour. As Drew remarks in his analysis of complaints about transgressions, reporting a ‘sense of grievance’, ‘enables complainants to characterize how far the other’s behaviour has caused offense’ (1998: 311). This type of description works to exhibit the other’s (and logically, not one’s own) behaviour as ‘reprehensible’ (1998: 312).

While he does not work at ‘being liberal’ in the way that Ben does, in extract one, Donald, like many of the participants in chapter five, still conveys his ‘strong views’ (Billig, 1989) in a way that attends to possible rhetorical counters, signalling perhaps the necessity for him to do so in the first place. Indeed, Donald does not simply provide a fairly straightforward - strewn of its contextual particulars - attitude scale type ‘male ballet dancers are poofs’ statement. Rather, he is sensitive to the ways in which potentially negative comments can reflect poorly on the identity of the speaker, and works to preempt and deflect such inferences. Therefore, Donald ‘talks with an expectation of the listener preparing a response’ (Bakhtin, 1986: 69; Shotter, 1993: 120), and with ‘the possibility that the account might receive an unsympathetic or sceptical hearing’ (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 196). It is this anticipation of a possibly negative uptake, which accounts for the internal rhetorical design of Donald’s account.

(iii) Softening the Blow

Speakers sometimes work to portray other people as prejudiced, contrastively implying that they themselves are not. Here factual claims about the world are used to undermine other people’s ‘presumptions’ (mind) about the nature of the world. Consider the following extract.
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Extract Three: SAS 17/2/98: A

Participants: J: Joanna, R: Rachel.

1  R: I think that's becoming erm, (.) more common
2  now ( ) female rugby players.
3  (.) And there's sort of the erm (0.6)
4  presumption that they're all gonna be butch
5  and (0.4) stuff, but they're not, a lot of
6  them ( ) (0.8)
7  J: ()
8  ( )
9  R: especially in Birmingham.

In this extract, sexuality is made relevant by speaker R, who refers to the 'presumption' by (unspecified) others, that female rugby players are 'all gonna be butch' - though in this case (and in contrast to the extract we have just considered) - the speaker is concerned to undermine such 'presumptions'. An ideal way to portray oneself as unprejudiced, and knowledgeable about the contours of other people's prejudice, is to refer to the prejudicial assumptions of others, and then (contrastively) to undermine the factual basis of those assumptions. Speaker R does this by constructing the 'presumption' in such a way that makes it rhetorically easy to falsify with counter-evidence. She says there's 'the erm (0.6) presumption that they're all gonna be butch and (0.4) stuff' (lines 3-5). The extreme case formulation (from hereon, 'ECF') 'all gonna be butch' (line 4), does not simply work up the prejudice as normative in the context of possible doubt (see Pomerantz, 1986), but is also hearably extreme, in the sense that it is more than would be factually necessary to say to convey the prejudiced views of others (it would be enough to suggest that 'others presume rugby players are butch', for example, and without making a reference to the numbers involved). As Derek Edwards claims,

the extremity of ECFs makes them available as potentially non-literal, in the sense of being produced and heard not merely as descriptive of their objects, but as indexical of the speaker's commitment to, investment in, or stance towards, those descriptions'.

(in press a: abstract)

Speaker R's claim is not a literal description of the presuming person's or people's views, but is constructed and deployed to show the strength (and ultimately, the...
unreasonableness) of the others’ prejudice (the ‘and stuff’ works to ‘script up’ the typicality of this type of prejudice (see Edwards, 1995; 1997)).

Edwards suggests that this very extremity and non-literalness means that ‘ECFs can be rhetorically brittle, easily refuted, require softening, display subjective investment, and lend themselves to ironic uses’ (in press a). Speaker R cleverly uses this very requirement for softening hearably non-literal descriptions as a resource. She is able to undermine the (extreme) claim with a (constructed as factual) contrastive counter-claim: ‘They’re not, a lot of them’ (lines 5-6). The interesting thing about this extreme case softener, is how - even when the view expressed is (constructed as) a rather liberal ‘to be heard as non-prejudiced’ one - the talk is still managed in such a way that leaves many of the ‘prejudiced’ assumptions of the original (constructed as disputable) ‘presumption’ intact. For example, in countering this ‘presumption’, the speaker does not say ‘but none of them are butch’ (which would be logically, equally extreme), or ‘but what’s the problem with butchness anyway, and butch lesbians do disproportionately like rough sports, dontcha know’, or even ‘some butch women like rugby just as some non-butch women like rugby’. Instead, speaker R has simply worked to soften a generalization that was based on the numbers or proportion of rugby players who are butch. She offers only a partial counter to the extreme generalization (marked with the ‘but’ on line five), which simultaneously portrays her as reasonable and knowledgeable about all the cases of women rugby players (and see line 9), while, at the same time, leaving open the possibility that a team with a high proportion of butch players might be a problematic, to be accounted for phenomenon (rather than a perfectly acceptable, non-comment-worthy one).

Speaker R’s remarks are particularly resistant to the imputation of prejudice, precisely because of the softened format, which shows her to be, or displays that she is undermining a prejudicial claim. This makes it particularly hard to come back to her and assert that she is producing just such a claim herself. As Derek Edwards says, ‘although a non-extreme generalization is logically-semantically weaker than an ECF, it can be rhetorically-interactionally stronger’ (in press a: 6).8

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8 My analysis of this extract suggests something slightly different from the way Edwards has formulated it. While Edwards shows how participants use softeners in self-repair (in press a: 8), and after an explicit challenge (in press a: 6-7), he does not look at the rhetorical uses of this move from ECF to softened version as a resource - as constructions that are interactionally useful in and of themselves.
In this extract, then, the speaker uses claims about the world to convey the existence of, and her orientation towards, what counts as a prejudicial claim. In doing so, she inoculates herself from the possibility that her own claims might be criticized for being motivated by similar assumptions. It would not be necessary for speaker R to refer to the existence of prejudice and contrast that with her own (constructed as factually more accurate) views, were there not some possibility that her own claims might be interpreted as motivated by the same prejudice.

In the extracts considered so far, we have been dealing only with potential counters to 'heterosexist' remarks, and with the internal rhetorical design of utterances that preempt or inoculate the speaker from such counters (and which, in doing so, display the speaker's orientation to some form of trouble). Extracts four and five demonstrate an alternative way in which such talk is managed, where the counter, or softener to some potentially troublesome claim, comes from another speaker, or the recipient of that remark, in the form of a next turn repair initiator (marked →). The NTRI repeats a problematic part of the prior utterance, thus encouraging the original speaker to repair it (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977).

Extract Four: SAS 26/12/97: B: 3

Participants: S: Sue, M: Matt, K: Keith.

1  K: =it's a little bit like getting the ladies
2  [in the services]=
3  M: [they (. .) they]=
4  K: =[actually]
5  M: =[always] make you think they-
6  [they all- all look like]=
7  K: [I don't mind ladies in the]=
8  M: =[dykes don't they?]
9  K: ={services driving] vehicles [{( )}]
10 → S: [All look like]
11  dy(h)kes "hh hh hh"
12  K: [I don't]
13  S: [that is,] - that's what a lot of people say
14  but like at Birmingham [we've got lots of]
15  M: [they prob]'ly are
16  not, actually (. .) [but] I mean=
17  S: [yeah]
18  M: =they- it's just that they don't look
19  feminine

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9 This is rather like a disclaimer, where the speaker suggests that they are not prejudiced, and then proceeds to make a prejudiced claim (Hewitt and Stokes, 1975; Van Dijk, 1992).
Extract Five: SAS 26/12/97: B: 12

Participants: S: Sue, M: Matt, C: Chris.

what, -what would you s-consider female-like sports?

( hh ) ✈ just the job. (. .) I've got a male ballerina

Ten (0.8) [tennis]

[Well] they're mostly all queers [anyway]

[HA HA HA]

. hhh Ohh this [is brilliant!] not all of them.

[No, I wouldn't]

[heh heh heh]

[say, - prob'ly not all of them]

[girls like - er- like] tennis mostly ✈ don't

Both extracts have very similar structures: An extreme case formulation, an NTRI and a softened ECF. Keith (extract four) is in the middle of explaining why he objects to women playing rugby. Before long Matt offers the reason for his own objection: 'Always make you think they- they all- all look like..dykes don't they?' Notice that here, again, sexuality is made relevant via ECFs and factual 'out there in the world' impersonal claims about how 'you' 'always' think they 'all look like dykes' (lines 5-8). Matt is careful not to own his view, by saying 'you think' rather than 'makes me think' (line 5), thus generalizing his opinion to others. Everyone is implicated in Matt's (constructed as) typical or common-place observation about what women rugby players look like.

Sue attends to the problematic (and extreme) nature of these remarks, with an NTRI in the form of a partial repeat of the prior turn, interspersed with disbelieving laughter particles: 'All look like dy(h)kes? *hh hh hh* (lines 10-11) (see Jefferson, 1985). Even before Sue's qualifier (lines 13-14), Matt interrupts, offering a softened 'they prob'ly are ✈ not, actually', and an alternative 'it's just that they don't look feminine' (lines 18-19). As before, the extreme case softener is rhetorically robust, yet does not deconstruct the assumptions embedded within the original remark (that there might be something accountable - even newsworthy, about looking like, or being a 'dyke'). It simply refers to a possibility or probability that they are 'not dykes' - another worldly claim. Matt satisfies the interactional demand to repair his (attended to by Sue, on lines ten to eleven, as derogatory) claim, yet his alternative 'they don't look feminine', allows him to recycle his complaint by referring to gender rather than sexuality. The
nature of the complaint has changed, but the degree of objection has not (i.e., the objection itself remains largely intact). Moreover, and centrally, Matt's original claim is constructed in a way that anticipates a negative uptake. Its internal rhetorical design, and its extremity, simultaneously display Matt's investment in the claim, and builds in his own (easy to soften, should it be necessary) 'get out clause': The potential to soften the ECF.

Extract five is strikingly similar, highlighting the generality and robustness of disputable proposition management via the move from ECF to ECF softener. Sue (lines 3-4) shows the participants a picture of a male ballet dancer. Here, the NTRI is not a partial repeat of the prior turn, as it was in extract four. The extremity of Matt's disputable proposition, 'mostly all queers anyway' (lines 6-7), is received by Sue - in the context of a social science investigation where such comments make interesting data - with spontaneous delight: 'HA HA HA .hhh Ohh this is brilliant!' (lines 8-9). Unlike previous extracts, however, the NTRI not only constitutes what's gone before as hearably extreme, and laughable as such, but is also a reflexive comment on the nature of the interaction as a social science investigation, where commenting on sexual identity is worked up as just the type of thing Sue is after.

Matt does not respond to Sue by upgrading his prior statement - or by offering more of the same (as one would expect if Sue's remarks were interpreted as a literal description of 'brilliant' comments). Instead, Matt treats Sue's remarks as an NTRI, as attending to something problematic in his prior statement. He softens his original extreme case: 'Not all of them' (lines 10 and 13). Again, the extremity of 'mostly all queers' is interactionally rather easy to soften, to show that one has engaged in a repair, without completely undermining the status of the original objection. Matt leaves implicit the view that, if all of them are not queer, then at least some of them will be.

The important thing about the extracts in this section, is that by initially describing something in an extreme way, the speaker provides themselves with a ready-made counter to any potential criticism. That is, by making an ECF generalization, one can always counter accusations of prejudice with 'well not all of them', thus avoiding having to attend to the specifics of pretty much any objection. One could argue that it is the nature of this structure and the interactional necessity for it in the first place, which
could be said to demonstrate, in action, participants' orientation to the potential uptake of their remarks as prejudiced.

Our sixth extract constitutes a departure from the structure of ECF to ECF softener exemplified in extracts four and five. The rhetorical effect, however, is rather similar.

**Extract Six: SAS 26/12/97: B: 10**

**Participants:** S: Sue, M: Matt, K: Keith.

1  K: Marilyn Monroe (. ) I could never s- (. )
2   visualize that type of lady (. ) playing
3   rugby.
4  (0.8)
5  M: No but [I mean if you were interested]
6  K: [the- the ones who do are] butch ( . )
7  in many cases]
8  ⇒ S: [Butch?]
9  K: Butch, (. ) quite butch.
10 M: If you were interested in a girl, (0.6) you
11   know, and she was nice looking and
12   everything, you wouldn't want her to go out
13   and get all smashed fup.

Rather than suggesting 'most' or 'all' women rugby players are 'butch', K says instead that they are butch 'in many cases' (lines 6-7). This is more cautious than an ECF claim about all, or most instances. Nevertheless, in order to make such a claim, one simultaneously requires (and Keith displays himself as having) knowledge of the degree of 'butchness' of all cases. Sue offers a next turn repair initiator in the form of a partial questioning repeat of the prior disputable utterance: 'Butch?' (line 8). K then repeats the derogatory statement, though this time, interestingly, qualifying - not the numbers of instances of butch individuals - by saying 'well okay there's only one or two' (which would be the logically parallel softener to the 'many cases'), but rather, by referring to, and qualifying the degree of the 'butchness' of any particular individual (line 9). This construction is particularly hard to counter, since the possibility for exceptions to the rule is built into both utterances (one can always say, 'well I didn't say all of them', and 'I didn't say they're totally, butch - only quite butch', for example).

Keith's 'butch, quite butch'(line 9), then, work as a display of responding to Sue's NTRI, yet it does not explicitly repair the disputed proposition on its own terms (in terms of the numbers of butch ladies). It is also productively ambiguous (being
bearable as either an increase, or a decrease in the strength of the prior claim, a repair or reassertion of the disputable proposition), again, leaving much of the legitimacy of the original proposition (lines 6-7) intact. Because of this ambiguity, and the possibility it can be heard as a repair, there is little interactional room to get K to repair this a second time (with another NTRI such as 'quite butch?', for example). In any case, the repetition in 'Butch, quite butch' makes it a forceful 'end of story' type construction, which closes the discussion down.

(iv) Conceding Positive Features

One particularly clever and rhetorically robust way in which participants manage potentially derogatory statements, is with a three part structure rather like that identified by Antaki and Wetherell (1999), in their paper on 'Show Concessions'. Antaki and Wetherell argue that 'making a show of conceding by using a three-part structure of proposition, concession and reassertion has the effect... of strengthening one's own position at the expense of a counter-argument' (1999: 7). Broadly speaking, this structure consists of:

'(i) saying something vulnerable to challenge;
(ii) conceding something [counter-evidence] to that challenge; then
(iii) qualifying that concession and reasserting what one first said' (1999: 8-9).

It is precisely this three part structure which seems to be exploited by Mick and Wayne in the following extract, which is taken from a television documentary that was set up to see if 'two homophobic rugby players from Yorkshire' can change their views about gay men, after living with them in London's Soho for five days. Mick and Wayne are keeping a video diary, and we join them as they recall their day in Soho.

Extract Seven: Living With the Enemy (1998, October 7), BBC2: 6

1 M: ((to camcorder)) Walking down that street
today 'n and there were people there- I jus' could have twatted 'em all.
3 W: hhh hhh [heh heh] heh .hhh hhh
5 M: [Horrible].
6 I mean like these two kids with Wayne, (0.2)
they're like [trying] their 'ardest=

they're really trying their 'ardest to

like (0.4) make us like (.) feel welcome

and (0.4) we've had arguments with them,

we've had a few arguments with them, (0.8)

but at end of V day (0.8) no matter what they

\( \text{do, (1.0) they're gay bastards.} \)

There are two markers which bracket the concession and which signal that it is part of a concession structure: The concession marker ‘I mean’ (line 6), and the reprise marker ‘but’ (line 13). The concession marker works both retrospectively - casting what’s been said as ‘disputable’, or ‘to cast what has gone before as somehow dangerous to one’s presumed impartiality’ (Antaki and Wetherell, 1999: 13) - and prospectively: It introduces what follows as counter-evidence to the original proposition. The reprise, on the other hand, ‘signals that the concessionary material is over and heralds that what is to come is in opposition to what has gone before’ (1999: 14).

The first part of this structure - the initial ‘derogatory’ proposition that is ‘vulnerable to challenge’ - appears on lines two to three with ‘I jus’ could have twatted ‘em all.’. This construction is hearably extreme. It does not sound like the kind of behaviour one man would physically be able to engage in, let alone get away with. Indeed, the term ‘twatted’ would support the claim that this is a display of investment in a view, the strength of Mick’s dislike, rather than a literal description of his intentions at the time. ‘Twatted’ (in contrast to terms such as ‘kicked’, ‘punched’, or ‘hit’), gives Mick’s remarks an ironic, not to be taken seriously, tone (and implies that one should not necessarily perceive Mick as dispositionally given to such a reaction) (see Edwards, 1997: 264-265). The laughter retrospectively constructs these remarks as ironic or invested in some way (Edwards, in press a). The show of conceding comes on lines six through ten, with the concession marker ‘I mean’, and ‘they’re really trying their ‘ardest to like....(0.4) make us like (0.2) feel welcome’. This concession softens the original, ironized extreme case, and presents Mick and Wayne as reasonable human beings who are able to recognize good hosts. Mick and Wayne have tried to engage with them like ‘real blokes’, having ‘arguments' with them, for example (lines 11-12).

This type of construction is rhetorically quite robust, precisely because of its concessionary format. Making a show of conceding in this way not only draws
attention to the very ‘disputability’ of the original proposition, but displays an orientation to it as problematic in some way. Mick and Wayne demonstrate that they are able to recognize potential opposition to their claims, and they voice (and thus foreclose) that potential opposition in their concessions. While no one challenges Mick and Wayne, then, their ‘recognition’ of the potential for challenge is built into the design of their utterances.

Having made the concession, Mick complains that, in the final analysis, ‘no matter what they do, (1.0) they’re gay bastards’ (lines 13-14). This idiomatic reprise (marked with ‘but’), provides closure to the argument, which in total undoes the work that the concession does on its own. In its entirety, then, this construction has ‘the rhetorical effect of bolstering the speaker’s original proposition against implied (or explicit) challenge, and weakening, or even dismissing, the counter case’ (Antaki and Wetherell, 1999: 10). The strength of Mick’s original claim is enhanced rather than undermined. The rhetorical design of this extract, then, shows how Mick and Wayne both display the possibility that their ‘views’ might be heard as problematic, and, in doing so, manage, and work to deflect accusations of prejudice.

Effectively, this extract contains a mixture of rather ‘extreme’ mind claims: ‘I jus’ could have twatted ‘em all’ (lines 2-3), and world claims, ‘they’re gay bastards’ (line 14), that are organized in such a way as to manage the speaker’s identity. As Antaki and Wetherell put it: ‘The structure attends to some vulnerability of stake or interest (as Edwards and Potter, 1992, call it) in the speaker’s starting claim... with the twist that it does so while, at the same time, proving the speaker against complaint’ (1999: 23 and 25).

A similar way in which recipients counter the negative, possibly ‘heterosexist’ claims of others, is to assert that, in spite of being gay, ‘poofs’, or whatever, such individuals also possess other culturally valued characteristics (such as strength, skill, attractiveness, reasonableness, friendliness, and so on). This structure has similarities to some features of ‘sexist’ and ‘racist’ talk (see Gill, 1991, 1993; Van Dijk, 1992; 10 It is not clear how close to the original proposition the wording of the reprise should be for it to count as a bonefide reprise. Antaki and Wetherell argue that it should be ‘a recognizable reprise of the original proposition’, and ‘(a version of) something that came earlier’. However, they also suggest ‘it is a matter of discovery in the text just how far back a speaker can go, and how far they can change the wording, and still produce a ‘recognizable’ reprise of earlier material’ (1999: 14). The reprise in extract seven does not echo the wording of lines 1-2, though it does seem to make a similarly extreme claim about gay men, and its idiomatic quality provides some closure to the three-parted argument (see Drew and Holt, 1988).
Chapter Seven: Heterosexism in Action

Wetherell and Potter, 1992). It has the dual effect of managing stake and interest - making the speaker appear more ‘liberal’ than others - while, again, leaving the presuppositions of the original, disputed claim intact.

Extract Eight: SAS 28/12/97: Tape 1: B: 36

Participants: S: Sue, K: Keith, P: Pamela, D: Donald, A: Alice.

1  S:  what about ballet (.) o'kay?
2  K:  [Oh my God!]
3  P:  [For men?]
4  S:  Yep.
5  A:  ‘Well let Donald have it’.
6  K:  Oh yes(h). See(h) what Donald thinks(h) about
7  th(h)at(h) ha ha .hh .hh He’s a RIGHT POOF!
8  [HA HA HA HA]
9  A:  ["hh .hh .hh .hhh"]
10  P:  [But BY: JOYVE do they have to be strong.
11  D:  [Yeah]
12  K:  Ohi yeah. [It’s a]
13  D:  [Yeah you’ve] got- you’ve got to
14  have men in ballet (0.4) to make it really
15  work I think . (0.4) Erm.
16  A:  For-for the lifting

Again, we join the interaction at a point where Sue has just shown the participants a picture of a male ballet dancer. Keith exclaims ‘He’s a RIGHT POOF!’ (line 7), to which Pamela responds, ‘But BY: JOYVE do they have to be strong’ (line 10). As we have already seen, the word ‘but’ signals that what is to come is in opposition to what has already been said, and so Pamela’s statement is constructed ‘to be heard as’ a display of disagreement with Keith. At the same time, however, its construction (as a concession) implies that the strength of ‘poofs’, at least, is not self evident, and needs to be emphasized. Pamela displays herself to be more liberal than the other speakers, with an ‘awareness’ of ‘poofs’ redeeming qualities, while cleverly avoiding any references to sexuality, or criticizing the precise terms of Keith’s original claim. There may be a sense, then, in which Pamela’s response, and Keith’s (subsequent) agreement, are recipient designed, possibly taking into account the sentiments of the interviewer. Indeed, Keith’s emphatic ‘Ohi yeah.’ (line 12) is evidence that he does not treat Pamela’s statement as undermining the central point of his earlier claim.

In all of the extracts considered so far, there is some display (either rhetorically, in the design of the utterance, or by another speaker), that a proposition about sexuality is a
challengeable or disputable one. I have argued that this retrospectively works to construct the statements as requiring care or delicacy in the first place. However, it is important to remember that the precise meaning of a statement has to be worked up by the participants in the interaction. Labeling somebody a ‘poof’ or a ‘queen’ will not always be taken by the parties to the interaction to be a negative thing, as negativity is not built into certain words. These terms may (not inconceivably) be used as terms of endearment between close friends or partners, for example. In the next extract, the words ‘queens’ and ‘poofs’ do not seem to be used in a derogatory way.

(v) Ironizing ‘Heterosexist’ Scripts: A Deviant Case


Participants: RF: Richard Fairbrass

1 RF: This is a >really curious thing<. (.) You
2 have erm (.) all these queens here (.) who:
3 at any other time during the week, >would be<
4 out clubbing and er, getting all their gear
5 together and er, having a wonderful time and
6 .hhh and >everything else< and being queens,
7 (.) and then you come here, (.) and suddenly
8 football has turned everybody (.) into a
9 lager swilling >yob<. (.) I mean they just (.)
10 and they all sing the team >songs< and they
11 all- they all start ‘GO ON MY SON’ and er y-
12 you know it’s j’st- where’s it all >come
13 from?
14 ((cameras cut to football match))
15 Man shouts:’It’s a game for men not poofs’
16 RF: This heterosexuality suddenly came out of
17 nowhere.

In this extract, Richard Fairbrass - the host of a television documentary on the gay games - constructs, and then contrasts, two seemingly incompatible scripts (see Edwards, 1995, 1997): Those of homosexuality and football playing. First, he constructs the typicality and normative category boundedness of what it means to be a ‘queen’: ‘Clubbing’, ‘getting all their gear together’, ‘having a wonderful time’, ‘and >everything else< and being queens’ (lines 4-6). This is then contrasted with (what Fairbrass constructs as) the script for footballers: ‘Lager swilling >yob’ , ‘sing the team >songs’, ‘GO ON MY SON’ (lines 9-11), which together constitute ‘this heterosexuality’ (line 16).
The irony comes in the juxtaposition of these two rather simplistic (stereotyped) scripts - and in the 'ambiguity, inconsistency, and contradiction' their juxtaposition engenders (Mulkay, 1988: 3). We have an 'incongruity' (1988:21) between two, seemingly incompatible frames of reference, through which Fairbrass appears to to 'challenge... and disrupt existing social patterns' (Mulkay, 1988: 5). How can one 'be a queen' and engage in heterosexual behaviour at the same time? If sexuality is fairly rigidly associated with certain activities, then how can football turn 'queens' into 'heterosexuals' - a seemingly implausible, if not ridiculous, proposition? Fairbrass constructs this as a peculiar phenomena; a puzzle that requires explanation: 'This is a really curious thing' (line 1), 'where's it all come from?' (lines 12-13), ‘This heterosexuality suddenly came out of nowhere’ (lines 16-17). Of course, it needs no explanation. In drawing attention to its peculiarity, Fairbrass constructs it as non-normative. At the same time, he makes a mockery of stereotyping and category boundedness, by playing up the implausibility in an extreme and scripted fashion. In this way, the implausibility itself appears ridiculous.

This is reinforced by the man on the sidelines shouting ‘It’s a game for men not poofs’ (line 15). The irony of this statement lies precisely in the way in which the speaker seems to be working to make available the very possibility that he might be stereotyping gay men, or engaging in some form of sexual reductionism. In doing so, however, he is not stereotyping gay men at all, but implicitly highlighting the non-essentialist, social construction of sexuality (albeit via ‘sending up’ stereotypes which assert the opposite). It works as an ironic comment on the linking of a particular activity (football) with sexual identity. Thus, in an ‘explain your heterosexuality!’ type construction, Fairbrass makes heterosexuality, and not homosexuality, accountable, which is precisely the opposite of what is constructed as normative and accountable in culture.

Discussion

I have demonstrated several context-sensitive ways in which participants manage what may be heard as ‘heterosexist talk’:

(i) Constructing the ‘Problem’ as a Feature of the World, not the Mind;
(ii) Owning Psychological Trouble;
(iii) Softening the Blow; and
(iv) Conceding Positive Features.

These findings extend what we know about the constitution of prejudiced talk in general, and ‘heterosexist talk’ in particular. For example, I have shown how ‘heterosexist talk’ is not a straightforward emptying out of preformed, stable, homophobic ‘attitudes’ by the ‘heterosexist person’, nor something one can easily identify prior to analysis. Instead, statements and evaluative descriptions, assessments and so on, are often produced in ways which show a concern for the accountability and identity of the speaker. Participants use various conversational and interactional resources, and descriptions of mind and world, to portray themselves as reasonable, rational, unprejudiced, responsive to potential or actual criticism, able to recognize their views as extreme, invested, and so on.

The central point is that the orientation to potential trouble, and the necessity for management, implies that such remarks are oriented to as requiring care in the first place. This is seen most clearly in the internal rhetorical design of the utterance, but also in response to an explicit challenge. It is in this orientation, this attending to potential trouble, that we can find the very constitution of what the participants take to be prejudicial, accountable ‘heterosexist talk’ (cf. McKenzie, 1997). In this respect, then, it does not require the participants to be well versed in sexual identity politics, the analyst’s concept of ‘heterosexism’, or use the words ‘heterosexist’, ‘homophobic’ or ‘prejudiced’, for them to nevertheless manage their talk in a way that is sensitive to its potential uptake.

Participants’ talk may or may not always sound explicitly derogatory, like the positively scored statements contained in the ATLG scale (Herek, 1994). However, there does seem to be some interesting work going on in such talk, which displays the participants’ sensitivity to possibly being heard as heterosexist, or prejudiced, and, at the same time, constructing their arguments in a way which forecloses possible counter arguments and challenges. The participants both display orientations to (potential accusations of) prejudice, and, in doing so, manage such (potential accusations of) prejudice.

The last extract problematizes just what counts as a ‘derogatory’ remark. The labeling
of somebody a 'poof' or 'queen', for example, is not inherently, and always negative, as words do not necessarily come with their negativity built into them (Wetherell and Potter, 1998, cf. Armstrong, 1997). They have to be worked up as such. As I argued in chapter five, and again in chapter six, this is because words come both inference rich (or 'ready-made'), and indexical (Sacks, 1992/1995): They only become troublesome, prejudicial or otherwise for participants in situ, in specific interactional situations, as their meanings are produced and negotiated. The 'reclaiming' of words such as 'queen' and 'dyke' by gay men and lesbians (and the sometimes affectionate uses of these words), is testament to this latter point (cf. Cameron, 1992).11

In chapter five, I argued that there is no straightforward relationship between assertions of 'difference' (which reinforce essentialist 'binaries') and sexism, just as there is no automatic relationship between assertions of 'sameness' (which invoke non-essentialist 'continuums') and 'egalitarianism'. Similarly, in this chapter, I have shown that when we look at talk that makes sexuality relevant in specific interactional situations, it is rather difficult to divide up statements (as is done with the ATLG scale) into 'homophobic' versus 'non-homophobic' talk. From a discursive and CA perspective, the issue of what is going to count as prejudiced, derogatory, or whatever, is far more complicated than that, and is an issue for participants as well as analysts. What counts as 'heterosexism', like 'sexism', is not pre-determined, but is oriented to. Moreover, if one were to divide the world into those individuals with heterosexist attitudes and those who are (apparently) more liberal, one would overlook the point that the complicated contours of prejudice need to be understood in their interactional particulars. Indeed, I have demonstrated how a detailed analysis of talk-in-interaction can help us gain a much better understanding of how participants bring off hearably heterosexist, derogatory remarks.

As I demonstrated in chapter six, and again in this chapter, we do not necessarily need to go beyond the data to understand what is going on within it. The type of approach I have demonstrated here treats matters of ideology and normativity as patently, observably, participants' issues, to be constructed, managed, inverted or whatever (Edwards, in press b). However, by deconstructing what an act of heterosexism looks

11 Words such as 'queer', which have, for a long time, been terms 'of insult and self-loathing', have been reclaimed by lesbians and gay men, as a proud and confrontational 'declaration of nonconformist sexualities' in a world where 'normality is defined in rigid and suffocating terms' (Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1997b: 409).
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like, and exploring it from a participants' perspective, I am not implying that we
cannot, as analysts, specify that an act of 'heterosexism' has occurred (when, or if the
participants do not seem to be attending to it as such). Rather, what it does mean is
that it is important not to mix up the two analytic levels: On the one hand, what the
participants take the interaction to mean (as derogatory and offensive, or perfectly
acceptable, for example), and on the other hand, what we, as analysts, choose to make
of that piece of interaction, over and above, or regardless of what its status is for the
participants.

Global, crudely quantified definitions of what counts as homophobic talk, may help us
to challenge the most extreme manifestations of heterosexism (such as hate crimes), and
can be useful weapons in a political struggle, but they tend to ignore its more insidious,
and subtle manifestations. As Potter and Edwards argue, attitude scales 'systematically
strip off the indexical, rhetorical features of discourse which discursive psychologists
have shown to be fundamental' (in press a: 15). Moreover, such definitions cannot
account for the way that (as with the disclaimer), within any one stretch of talk we
might find evidence of heterosexist and expressly anti-heterosexist views. In this
respect, it makes little sense to suggest that we can map a type of talk onto a type of
person. It is for this reason that attitude scales do not really capture the phenomenon
they set out to explicate. As Potter argues: 'If you want to understand evaluations you
need to consider carefully what people are doing with them in their "home"
environments, rather than in the more arcane contexts or filling in attitude scales'
(Potter, 1998b: 242). Rather than starting with the pencil and paper measures
developed with undergraduate psychology students, then, the discursive approach
highlights heterosexism's mundane, everyday manifestations. It is important that
educators and trainers recognize this, and ultimately we will be in a better position from
which to deconstruct and disarm the mechanisms which construct and maintain such
prejudice.

The resources identified here are not unique to 'prejudice talk' but are common features
of all talk (Edwards, in press b). Indeed, the arguments in this chapter are not just
relevant to discursive psychology and CA, but contribute to wider, ongoing debates
concerning the way we analyze phenomena typically understood as rooted in 'wider
power structures', in ideology, or in cognitions, 'under the skull'. A discursive
approach (with a strong element of CA), 'presupposes neither cognition nor reality'
(Potter and Edwards, in press a: 15), but shows how descriptions of cognition and context, mind and world, the micro and the macro, are oriented to and invoked in talk to do business (in press a: 15). Ultimately, the crude distinctions between these dualisms (like the distinction between ‘cultural’ and ‘psychological’ heterosexism) dissolve. The value, and radical potential of this type of approach, lies precisely in this dissolution of dualisms, and its ability to build the bridges (between the ‘macro’ and the ‘micro’ realms) that social theorists have been attempting to build for decades (see Ellis, 1999; Mouzelis, 1995).

Summary

This chapter has worked on two levels. First, it offers a contribution to leisure theory and research on heterosexism in sport and leisure, by respecifying how ‘heterosexism’ itself might be conceived and studied. Feminist leisure theorists have shown how heterosexism is pervasive in sport and leisure, and that heterosexist discourse and labelling is central to lesbian and gay oppression. However, unlike previous research, in this chapter, I have demonstrated how practices of labeling work in action, in specific situations where leisure activities are discussed. I have argued that such an approach may ultimately help us to gain a better understanding of the subtle, and not so subtle ways in which oppression works to undermine lesbians' and gay men's participation in sport and leisure - as well as how it may be constructed to deflect accusations of prejudice.

Second, this chapter offers a distinctive contribution to discursive and CA approaches to prejudice, by reworking the whole notion of ‘heterosexism’, and by problematizing just what counts as ‘heterosexist talk’. I have developed some of the ideas explored in chapters five and six, by examining precisely what we mean by participants' orientations to prejudice. It is commonly assumed, for example, that if participants are being prejudiced, and yet do not attend to their talk as such, then we, as discursive and conversation analysts, can not say that an act of prejudice has occurred (without resorting to features beyond the text). In contrast to much existing discursive research in this area, however, I have used a more CA-aligned approach, which has helped me to show how, even in their most extreme utterances, participants can be shown to be attending to their talk as problematic in some way.
Finally, as in chapters five and six, where I demonstrated the variable uses of injury arguments and the construction and deployment of masculinity as a participants’ resource, in this chapter I have examined the constitution (and indexicality of) what counts as ‘heterosexist’ talk. The final extract provides further evidence of the way in which irony functions as a comment on, at the same time disrupting, normativity.

In the concluding chapter, I draw together some of the threads of the arguments developed in this thesis. I consider their implications, and set out some questions for future research.
Chapter Eight: Questions and Conclusions

Introduction

This thesis has provided a discursive and conversation analytic approach to how people talk about gender in the context of discussions about leisure. In chapter one, I argued that the thesis would work on two levels, reflecting its potential contribution to two different audiences. I suggested that it would make a general contribution to mainstream and feminist leisure theory, sport sociology and psychology, and a more technical contribution to debates at the intersection of feminism, discursive psychology, and CA.

In this concluding chapter, I will draw together some of the threads of the arguments developed in the thesis. I will consider their reflexive and epistemological implications, and set out some questions for future research. It will be divided into three sections:

(i) Contributions and Implications 1: Feminist Leisure Theory
(ii) Contributions and Implications 2: Feminism, Discursive Psychology and CA
(iii) Questions and Issues for Future Research

I conclude by challenging researchers with an interest in gender and ‘ideology’ to take this approach seriously.

Contributions and Implications 1: Feminist Leisure Theory

First, this thesis offers a distinctive contribution to mainstream and feminist leisure theory, sport sociology and psychology. In chapter two, I used leisure theorists’ own arguments about the theoretical and methodological ‘problems’ in leisure studies to establish the basis for, and necessity of, a discursive and CA reworking. I argued that a CA-aligned, discursive approach can help transcend some of these theoretical and methodological ‘problems’ - including the way that the concept of leisure might itself be conceived and studied.
I identified and described three structuring concerns in feminist leisure theory. These three concerns mapped onto the topics covered in each of the analytic chapters:

(i) Justifications for the Non-Participation of Women in ‘Male-Identified’ Activities;
(ii) Hegemonic Masculinity; and
(iii) Heterosexism.

I argued that research in each of these areas (indeed, in all non-discursive, non-CA leisure research), suffers variously from five problems, the problem of definition outlined in chapter two, being just one of many closely related ones:

(i) Leisure ‘Meanings’ are Reified
(ii) The Action Orientation and Indexicality of Talk is Ignored
(iii) Dualistic Constructions of Macro and Micro ‘Contexts’ (and ‘Structure’ and ‘Agency’), are not Problematized
(iv) Analytic Conceptualizations Overlook or Distort Participants’ Orientations
(v) The Problem of Realism

I argued that these problems are not mutually exclusive but are closely related, meshing with and implicating each other. Indeed, they require us to adopt a completely different approach to the topic of our research, and our data.

In chapter three, I introduced the work of Betsy Wearing. I described how each of these five problems are manifested in her work, and provided a discursive and CA reworking of each of them. In chapter four, I outlined the discursive and CA approach to method, and the materials and procedures used in this thesis. In chapters five, six and seven, I applied this approach to offer a distinctive way of (re)conceptualizing issues around the three structuring concerns described in chapter two, and listed above.

In chapter five, I offered a discursive and CA approach to our first structuring concern: Justifications for the non-participation of women in ‘male-identified’ activities. Building on the work of Kane (1995), I examined the various ways in which injury arguments are used to justify women’s non-participation in activities ‘non-traditional’ to
their sex. While Kane has provided some important insights into the ‘mechanisms’ through which women’s non-participation is justified, this chapter offers a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of the way justifications, or practices of evaluation work in specific settings. This chapter also contributes to our understanding of the variable and subtle ways in which arguments about gender difference (binaries) and similarity (continuums) are constructed and used in interaction. I identified several mechanisms through which such arguments are sustained, and explored their internal rhetorical constitution and action ‘pay-offs’. In sum, this chapter has argued against the rigid, non-indexical treatment of gender and sexism.

In chapter six, I provided a discursive and CA reworking of ‘hegemonic masculinity’; the second structuring concern described in chapter two. I explored the relationship between masculinity and certain category bound (leisure) activities. Masculinity is often treated as a reified, mapping notion, a cognitive schema that exists inside the heads of individuals, or a shared mental ‘representation’, against which members measure their own and others’ success at ‘doing being masculine’ (see Marshall and Wetherell, 1989: 125). In this chapter, I argued against this approach, and, as in previous chapters, worked to undermine the view that gender is a relatively stable feature of identity that can either determine or account for what participants say. Instead, I demonstrated how gendered, leisured identities are fluid resources; interactionally useful ‘versions’ that can be used to position the self and other in various, context sensitive ways.

Finally, in chapter seven, I provided a discursive and CA re-specification of the way heterosexism - the third of our structuring concerns - might be identified, conceived and studied. Feminist leisure theorists have shown how heterosexism is pervasive in sport and leisure, and that heterosexist discourse and labelling is central to lesbian and gay oppression. In this chapter, I demonstrated how practices of labeling work in action, in specific situations where men and women’s participation in certain leisure activities is discussed. I argued that such an approach may ultimately help us to gain a more sophisticated understanding of the subtle (and not so subtle) ways in which heterosexism works to undermine lesbian and gay men’s participation in sport and leisure. It may also help us to understand how participants construct their talk to deflect accusations of prejudice. As a result, we may be in a better position from which to deconstruct and disarm it.
While this thesis has two potential audiences, the contribution that it makes to discursive psychology and CA is perhaps the most significant (as we shall see below), since this approach transcends individual topics. In other words, discursive psychology and CA can be applied to a potentially infinite range of issues - leisure being just one of them.

Contributions and Implications 2:
Feminism, Discursive Psychology and CA

Second, this thesis provides a more technical contribution to debates at the intersection of feminism, discursive psychology, and CA. In particular, it has contributed to research on the relationship between gender and talk (Edwards, 1998; Hopper and LeBaron, 1998; Wetherell and Edley, 1999), by problematizing and developing our understanding of the way femininity (and sexism), masculinity and heterosexism 'get done' in talk. These issues map onto the three structuring concerns described in chapter two, and listed above. I have considered how these identities/features of talk, are constructed, oriented to, and managed by speakers.

Each analytic chapter also addresses key debates within the discursive and CA literature. For example, I have explored the relationship between the ‘inference rich’ and ‘indexical’ properties of gender categories, and considered their rhetorical and contrastive usefulness; the extent to which masculinity and femininity are fluid and variable accomplishments; the analytic tractability of ‘macro-contexts’ and ‘prejudice’, and the way in which an analysis of participants’ orientations might help us to answer ‘why’ questions. Since these issues transcend the topical focus of each chapter, I will consider them under thematic headings, below.

(i) The Conversational Construction of Gender

One of the main aims of this thesis has been to demonstrate how gender is made relevant by participants and constituted in the course of their discussions, and to explore what those constructions are used to do interactionally. I have provided a critique of traditional feminist linguistic, and some early discursive and CA approaches to gender and language, which positioned gender as an ‘independent variable’ that can
determine and/or account for quantifiable differences between the language use and speech styles of men and women. Indeed, the ‘sex differences’ approach to interruption by some feminist linguistic and CA researchers, such as Tannen (1990), and Zimmerman and West (1975), reifies gender, treating it as relevant to the interaction when it may not in fact be relevant to it at all. A CA-aligned discursive approach highlights the problems of implying that gender determines or constrains the structure or content of talk. As I argued in chapter three, there are an infinite number of contextual variables and identities that may be relevant to what’s going on in talk, and the analytic challenge is to identify them as a result of, not prior to analysis (Schegloff, 1997).

This research has not only problematized, but also built on the early discursive studies of gender, by using insights from membership categorization analysis in CA (Edwards, 1998; Hester and Eglin, 1997; Sacks, 1992/1995). I have shown how the flexible and ‘inference rich’ (or ‘indexical’ and ‘ready-made’, ‘context sensitive’ and ‘context free’) nature of gender categories, can be exploited by participants in variable and interactionally significant ways (Edwards, 1991). In chapter six, for example, I demonstrated a number of ways in which participants construct masculinity and position themselves, and others in relation to it. I argued that ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is not an abstract, reified ‘thing’ that they aspire to or reject. Instead, masculinities, like all (gender) identities, are resources for interaction, which can be subject to a range of rhetorically effective constructions and reconstructions.

Indeed, participants may use stereotypes and ‘gendered scripts’ (Frith and Kitzinger, under submission) for interactional business. The claim ‘I am not a typical bloke’, for example, may, on some occasions (where ‘blokishness’ is being held accountable), manage the dilemmatics of the interview situation - of wanting to appear ordinary in the context of potentially negative alternative identities. What it means to be masculine, feminine, hetero/homosexual is constructed by co-participants, negotiated and argued about locally, in the course of interaction, and is always tailored to local interactional demands (see, for example, Speer, in press a).

In sum, I have demonstrated how gender identity need not be conceived as a relatively fixed, cognitive, biological, learned, or performative feature of one’s identity, or as something which is constrained or determined by Foucauldian ‘discourses’ or ‘wider’
Chapter Eight: Questions and Conclusions

‘macro’ power structures. Instead, gender identities are endogenously produced (Schegloff, 1997) and flexible resources, which exist to do business, and variable sorts of business for the participants.

(ii) Orientations to Prejudice: Sexism and Heterosexism

A key debate at the intersection of feminism, discursive psychology, and CA, is the analytic tractability of prejudice. Many feminists are sceptical of an approach which relies almost exclusively on participants’ orientations. If participants do not explicitly attend to their talk as problematic, then on what grounds can we say that an act of sexism, heterosexism, or some other form of prejudice has occurred?

Hannah Frith, for example, highlights what she sees as the limitations of an approach which relies on participants explicitly attending to the topic under investigation. It is questionable, says Frith, whether all the dimensions relevant to a piece of interaction such as participants’ ‘shared whiteness’, will be ‘interactionally displayed’ (1998: 535). Indeed, criticisms like these have led many feminist psychologists to suggest that we need to go beyond participants’ orientations to be able to say anything politically effective (see Wetherell, 1998, chapter six, and Speer, in press a).

This thesis, has, in part, set about about addressing such concerns, showing how prejudice (or the possibility that talk will be interpreted as prejudiced), is indeed something that is oriented to. In chapter five, for example, I identified a number of ways in which participants work to bolster and sustain justifications for women’s non-participation. These included a number of rhetorically effective contrasts that exploited the ‘inference rich’ and ‘indexical’ nature of gender categories, and a range of other mechanisms which reified or ironized the factual status of descriptions. Many of these features worked in anticipation of possible counters, thus displaying the speaker’s orientation to, and interactional ‘awareness’ of the possibility that their remarks might be heard as troublesome or prejudiced. In other words, they worked to preempt and foreclose accusations of prejudice.

I developed this approach to participants’ orientations in more detail in chapter seven, where I considered the constitution of heterosexism ‘in action’. I examined whether participants themselves orient to their talk as problematic in some way, even in their
most 'extreme' utterances. Indeed, I developed some of the ideas explored in chapters five and six, by examining precisely what counts as an orientation to prejudice. I showed how 'heterosexist talk' is not a straightforward emptying out of preformed, relatively stable, homophobic 'attitudes' by the 'heterosexist person', nor something one can easily identify prior to analysis. Instead, building on the approach developed in chapter five, I demonstrated how potentially derogatory, evaluative descriptions, assessments, and so on, are often produced in ways which show a concern for the accountability and identity of the speaker. Participants use various conversational resources, and descriptions of mind and world, to portray themselves as reasonable, rational, unprejudiced, responsive to potential or actual criticism, able to recognize their views as extreme, invested, and so on.

These findings indicate that we cannot find sexism or heterosexism in a concrete, objective sense. What counts as sexism and heterosexism is not pre-determined, invariable, and legislated in advance of interaction (although, it can be, for political or legal purposes), but is always something that is oriented to. I argued that it is in this orientation, this attending to potential trouble, that we can find the very constitution of what the participants take to be prejudicial, accountable 'sexist' or 'heterosexist talk' (cf. McKenzie, 1997). And this does not mean that we cannot, as analysts, specify that an act of 'prejudice' has occurred (when, or if the participants do not seem to be attending to it as such). Rather, it is important not to mix up the two analytic levels: What the participants take the interaction to mean, and what we, as analysts, choose to make of that piece of interaction, over and above, or regardless of what its status is for the participants.

(iii) Irony as a Comment on Normativity

The notion of indexicality helps us to understand how certain words are not inherently and always 'sexist' or 'heterosexist' (cf. Spender, 1980; Cameron, 1992). As I argued, above, for example, accounts do not come with their negativity (or prejudiced status) built into them, but are oriented to. Sometimes, participants invoke and ironize (what they construct as) prejudice, in order to highlight its normative (and problematic) nature. The deviant cases and ironic uses considered in chapters five, six and seven, for example, offer productive insights into precisely what the participants take to be
normative and/or problematic. I showed how certain claims can be *exploited* and ironized by undermining their factual status, at the same time *demonstrating* their rhetorical, and invested nature (see Potter, 1996a: 112-113). As I argued in chapter five, for example, dualistic gender logic can be invoked in a rhetorically gross and ironic way, in order to highlight the normativity and futility of just such arguments. While not directly promoting or encouraging women's participation, then, these ironic commentaries nonetheless work to undermine justifications for non-participation. Therefore, irony can work as a powerful *social comment*. Like discursive psychology, it can 'de-naturalize' common sense (Marshall and Wetherell, 1989: 125), problematizing what is taken for granted. It offers some productive insights for future research.

(iv) Reformulating Context

This thesis provides a reformulation of context. It has reconsidered how we might conceive of the relationship between the macro/micro (or structure/agency) dualism, especially as it relates to gender and prejudice.

As I highlighted in chapter six, some researchers have objected that CA - as a 'micro' approach to interaction that concentrates exclusively on the participant's perspective - cannot account for the ways in which 'wider, macro power structures' (such as gender, class, and race), exert a determining effect on action. Neglecting this 'top-down' or constraining feature of culture, society and context, some feminists argue, leads to apolitical and reductionist forms of analysis. Moreover, a CA-aligned discursive psychology seems to offer no way of commenting on patriarchal power or the oppressive constraints on women's lives. Indeed, the assumption that we need to subsidize 'micro' analyses with features *extrinsic* to the interaction, does not just pervade feminism, but is central to debates across the whole of the social sciences.

As I argued in chapter three, where the macro-micro dualism is *retained* by feminists (and others), and the importance of macro-structure argued for, a reified, Foucauldian understanding of discourse tends to be adopted (see Burman and Parker, 1993 and Gavey, 1989). Alternatively, researchers mix (what they refer to as) 'top down' and 'bottom up' analyses (see Edley and Wetherell, 1997 and Wetherell, 1998), and 'embrace' 'the fact that people are, at the same time, both the products and producers of
language’ (Wetherell and Edley, 1999: 338), or ‘the master and the slave, of discourse’ (Edley and Wetherell, 1997: 206; 1999: 182). The impetus behind this style of research, as we saw with Wearing’s work in chapter three, is the desire to account for both constraint and creativity, determinism and agency in women’s (and men’s) lives. For these researchers, a more detailed, Schegloffian informed, or CA-aligned version of discursive psychology is simply inadequate on its own.

This thesis works to oppose the idea that the context somehow determines what gets said (or who says what) in an interaction, and/or inevitably effects the distribution of ‘types’ of talk (institutional/mundane, and so on). In chapter three, for example, I argued that features of ‘macro contexts’, and of institutions, are analytically tractable (see Drew and Heritage, 1992). Indeed, the focus on participants’ orientations, described above, demonstrates precisely how things that have typically been associated with macro contexts (such as gender and prejudice), are oriented to in interaction.

The importance that I have attached to the local production of context, and participants’ orientations to that context, is a theme that reappears in chapters five, six and seven, where I treat gender as an endogenously produced, and variable resource (rather than as something which determines or works as a kind of ‘container’ for what participants say). Chapter six, in particular, shows how a CA influenced, discursive psychology of gender does not necessarily need to be subsidized with Foucauldian poststructuralism to understand why participants say what they do, or to be able to say anything politically effective. I suggested that there is no better way to convince sceptics of the inequalities in society, than with a line-by-line demonstration (and validation) of their workings and constitution on the page.

In chapter four, I applied this approach to the local production of context to the natural/contrived and mundane/institutional distinctions. I argued that these distinctions have a tendency to reify the method as a kind of Foucauldian ‘discourse’, or ‘macro-context’ that will determine or constrain what participants say, and the ‘type’ of data one will obtain. I demonstrated (in line with Schegloffian principles), how the method is just one of many potentially relevant contexts to an interaction, and that an interaction’s status (as of a certain ‘type’), and participants’ roles within it, has to be oriented to as such.
The type of approach I advocate here, then, treats matters of context as patently, observably, participants’ issues, as live, analytically tractable concerns. Indeed, the arguments about context developed in this thesis are not just relevant to feminism, discursive psychology, and CA, but contribute to wider, ongoing debates concerning the way we analyze phenomena typically thought to be rooted in the ‘mind’ or the ‘world’. As I highlight in chapter seven, for example, a CA-aligned discursive approach, ‘presupposes neither cognition nor reality’ (Potter and Edwards, in press a: 15), but shows how descriptions of cognition and context, mind and world, the micro and the macro, are invoked in talk to do business (in press a: 15). Ultimately, the crude distinctions between these dualisms dissolve. Again, as I argued in chapter seven, the value, and radical potential of this type of approach, lies precisely in this dissolution of dualisms, and in discursive psychology and CA’s ability to build bridges (between the ‘macro’ and the ‘micro’), that social theorists have been attempting to build for decades (see Ellis, 1999; Mouzelis, 1995).

Questions and Issues for Future Research

(i) What Counts as an Orientation to Gender?

This thesis has provided a contribution to the analysis of gender in talk, extending some of the ideas and analysis exemplified in the early discursive studies of gender and prejudice. However, it has been concerned with the analysis of data where gender is made explicitly relevant (in the form of a category ascription, for example). This approach risks implying that an orientation to gender only occurs where such definitive category references are made. While the distinction is a rather crude one, I have tended to look at data where participants are commenting on, rather than doing gender. Therefore, one productive, if not urgent question for future research, is precisely what counts as an orientation to gender? How, and in what ways, is gender oriented to in gossip in the workplace, over lunch, in the pub, or while flirting, for example? What does it mean to be treated as gendered in an interaction?

(ii) The Analytic Tractability of Power and Asymmetry.

As I have already argued, much of the early research on gender in talk, treated gender as an independent variable, and set about identifying, or accounting for sex differences
by demonstrating how men interrupt more often than women, etc. This type of research has been criticized by conversation analysts such as ten Have. Citing Zimmerman and West (1975), who explore the relationship between gender and interruption in conversation, ten Have states:

Such studies tend to take the form of quantitative correlation analyses relating the 'fixed property' of gender and an objectified measure of the amount of a pre-defined category of actions, such as 'interrupting'... What such studies do is to construct an etic picture of the distribution of behaviours across generalized population categories, rather than a context-sensitive analysis of emic action sequences

(ten Have, 1999: 197, emphasis in original)

In other words, this type of research assumes that asymmetry is caused by a pre-given variable, and does not allow for the indexicality and local production of gender.

Many conversation analysts warn against interpreting asymmetries in terms of gender difference. As we saw in chapter three, explanations of interaction that make reference to institutional identities or to (what members may perceive as) 'fixed' givens, or 'constants', such as gender and age, 'are not acceptable to a CA analysis until their local procedural relevance is demonstrated' (ten Have, 1999: 54-55; Schegloff, 1997). Feminist linguistic and the early interruption studies have overlooked this understanding of context and asymmetry. While this type of research has been widely criticized, the issue of precisely how power and asymmetry may be identifiable in talk, has been under-explored. The lack of research on such issues has, to date, prevented feminists, discourse and conversation analysts from engaging in a productive dialogue.

Though not concerned with gender issues, some conversation analysts offer insights into how such a dialogue might proceed. In CA, discussions about asymmetry do not centre on gender, but on one's conversational or interactional role, or the contextually sensitive actions one is performing. In courtrooms, for example, there is an asymmetry in terms of who can and cannot speak (Atkinson and Drew, 1979; see also, Drew, 1991). Indeed, Hutchby and Wooffitt suggest that 'CA can provide compelling accounts of how power is produced through talk-in-interaction, rather than being predetermined by theoretical features of the context' (1998: 166). For example, they claim that in 'talk radio', there is a difference in power, an asymmetry, between hosts and callers (1998: 166; see also, Hutchby, 1996, 1999). Callers typically proffer an
opinion, and then hosts debate such opinions ‘frequently taking up opposing stances in

Drawing on the work of Harvey Sacks, Hutchby and Wooffitt argue those who ‘go
first’ in an argument and set their opinion on the line, are in a weaker position than
those who ‘go second’, ‘since the latter can argue with the former’s position simply by
taking it apart’ (1998: 167). Those in first position are required to build a defense,
expand on, or account for their claims, whereas second position arguers do not. Callers
do not need to be maneuvered into this position: This asymmetry is built into the very
structure of talk radio and the management of calls. The host, by virtue of going
second, gets to point to the weaknesses in the caller’s stance. This is a powerful
resource, since it constrains callers to produce ‘defensive talk’ (1998: 167).

I suggest that an extension of this type of research, applied to feminist issues and data-
sets, may offer a productive avenue for future inquiry. Indeed, this approach may be of
particular interest to feminists, since, as Hutchby and Wooffitt argue, it ‘does not lead
us back to the container view in which pre-existing hierarchical features of the context
exert causal forces over the available actions of the participants’ (1998: 170). In other
words, it provides an analytic demonstration of the in situ operation of power.

(iii) Can we Reconcile Relativism and Politics?

This thesis has shown how a discursive and CA approach challenges many of the
traditional assumptions employed in leisure research, and prompts us to ask completely
different questions of our topics and data. However, many feminist researchers (and
others with an explicitly political agenda), are sceptical about how such a
constructionist approach to knowledge and reality can be reconciled with a desire to
make political interventions (in leisure policy, women’s lives in general, and so on).
One might ask, ‘so what if participants talk about gender and leisure in such-and-such a
way?’ ‘If everything is constructed, if we can never make inferences beyond the text,
then how can we ever take a position and improve the lives of those members whom
we research?’ Indeed, one question that has preoccupied feminists since the
‘postmodern turn’, is how we can reconcile the very different experiences of women
with a common political goal. Is a discursive, constructionist approach incompatible
with these aims?
One problem, of course, is that feminism has traditionally needed to have a stable object (patriarchy, men etc) that is intrinsically negative, measurable, and linked up with identity to work with, and against which we can collectively mobilize. There is no room for an ‘always indexical’ element to masculinity, femininity, sexism and heterosexism, as one would never be able to pin these things down and capture them for long enough to make claims about the workings of social power. To some extent, then, selective reification of the object of our critique is unavoidable (Woolgar and Pawluch, 1985).

Nonetheless, some discursive researchers have rejected this ‘bottom-line’ realism, in favour of a form of relativism, where all claims (including the researcher’s) are viewed as constructed and partial. From this perspective, there are no independent means of determining what is ‘true’ (Edwards et al., 1995; see also, Potter, Edwards and Ashmore, in press). While some feminists, such as Margaret Wetherell, suggest ‘it is entirely possible to be an epistemological relativist and be morally and politically engaged’ (1999: 404; and see also, Wetherell and Potter, 1992: 66; and Hepburn, 2000), many feminist psychologists treat relativism as the demon to be escaped from at all costs. They claim that it leads to ‘political paralysis’ (Wilkinson, 1997: 186). It is destructive, ‘nihilistic’ (Kitzinger, 1992: 247), and has no ‘vocabulary of value’ (Gill, 1995). At its worst it constitutes a form of ‘ethical relativism’ (Kitzinger 1992: 247), that offers no grounds for choosing between competing versions. In one recent edited collection, relativism has been referred to as a ‘trap’ (Jackson, 1998: 61-2), ‘feminism’s nemesis’ (Squire, 1998: 81), ‘a theoretical and political thorn in the poststructuralist flesh’ (Willott, 1998: 185), and as providing ‘no grounds for critique or political action’ (1998: 185).

Ros Gill (1995) addresses some of these issues in her critique of the version of relativism supported by some discursive psychologists, in particular, the version offered in Edwards, Ashmore and Potter’s ‘Death and Furniture’ (1995; see also Potter et al., in press). She argues:

Precisely those features of discourse analysis’s theoretical commitments which make it so productive for feminists - its problematizing of truth claims, its stress on the socially constructed nature of all knowledge, its rejection of the idea of the unified, coherent subject, and its attention to power as a local practice - also make it problematic. The stress on difference, so valuable within, as well as outside, feminism... threatens to mask the fact that there are also differences of power... the notion that subject positions are multiple and fragmented can lead to the denial of any identity around which we can collectively mobilize; the emphasis upon looking at

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the micro-politics of power - how it is practised in particular discursive contexts - can serve to make structural inequalities invisible and lead to a neglect of the institutional bases of power... and the discourse analytic commitment to relativism - which has led some commentators to identify it as postmodern... means that the grounds for feminist politics are disavowed.

(Gill 1995: 168 emphasis in original)

While Gill says that she has 'considerable sympathy' with the critique of realism (1995: 171), she suggests that relativists offer 'no principled alternatives to realism by means of which we might make political interventions' (1995: 171 emphasis in original), and that scepticism seems to be their only goal (1995: 172). Even more pessimistically, she says 'like overzealous deconstructionists, relativists appear to have no aims but relentlessly to interrogate and dissolve every last claim, highlighting its status as construction and deconstructing, with surgical precision, each last shred of meaning' (1995: 172). We are left, therefore, with no way forward, with no means of challenging the status quo, and unequal power relations. Relativism, is, according to Gill, debilitating, and 'devoid of progressive impulses' (1995: 172).

'Death and Furniture' (Edwards et al., 1995) sets about disrupting accounts which cite death (the holocaust, for example) and furniture (tables, chairs) as arguments against relativism. The existence of these things - so the realist argument goes - is unquestionable. They are absolutes that exist independently of the researcher, and whose existence we can know with certainty. They are not socially constructed, and to assert otherwise not only leads to moral quietism, but is bad theory. Realists thus refute the idea that everything is constructed, and assert, instead, that, in the last analysis, we need realism, 'coz things like tables and rocks exist and we treat them as real when we bang on them, fall over them, throw them' etc. From a realist perspective, the relativist argument is circular, and ultimately self-refuting.

However, as Edwards et al. (1995) point out, this ignores how arguments in favour of realism and against relativism are constructed rhetorically, and can themselves be analyzed and deconstructed. In this sense, Gill's own claims can be used to support those of Edwards and colleagues. Indeed, Gill actually seems to align with relativist arguments in her assertion that all knowledge claims are 'partial, socially situated and contingent' (1998: 39). Relativists are not trying to escape from the reflexive paradox, as Gill claims, but are intimately bound up in highlighting this very point. Indeed, the
relativist approach is entirely compatible with Henwood, Griffin and Phoenix's (1998) call for a critical perspective which involves the continual 'questioning and reflexive ways of approaching' (1998: 5) its subject matter.

Edwards et al (1995) argue that relativism is not debilitating and need not lead to 'moral dissolution'. On the contrary, it is morally and politically strong:

> It is potentially liberating, dangerous, unsettling, with an appeal that is enduringly radical: nothing ever has to be taken as merely, obviously, objectively, unconstructedly, true. Reality can only ever be reality-as-known, and therefore, however counter-intuitive it may seem, produced by, not prior to, inquiry.

(1995: 39)

Relativists actually insist on justifying why one argument should be favoured over and above another. They do not rule out this possibility (1995: 39). Nor do they assert that political interventions cannot, or should not be made. In fact, relativism's healthy scepticism makes it more, and not less likely to be able to contribute to political debate and argument, if only because it can point out the rhetoric inherent in such claims. Relativism, unlike realism, does not seek 'truth' as the satisfactory end point of analysis, but continually questions the mechanisms that construct something as true, as the most 'appropriate' version (see Potter, 1996a):

We, the 'amoral' relativists, are the ones who insist upon the right to inquire and who are thus (arguably, of course) the true keepers of the flame of the ethic of science. Realists, as religious conservatives, want inquiry, disputation, argument, contention to...finally...CEASE...

(Edwards et al., 1995: 40, emphasis in original)

Indeed, as Potter argues, 'relativism is used most happily against authority, against the status quo, against established versions and taken-for-granted realities' (1998a: 41):

> Its political contribution, then, such as it is, supports freeing up from established systems, change and openness... relativism promotes a resistance to 'settlement'; it most easily supports critique, plurality, multiplicity of voices, a need for justification. Relativism does not simply do politics; but political implications can be built out of it.

(1998a: 41)

If Gill wants permanent contestation, this is precisely what relativism offers (Potter, 1998a: 41). While feminist researchers are beginning to acknowledge this (see
Hepburn, 2000), the radical potential of relativism (for feminism) has tended to be asserted rather than demonstrated.

One way in which feminists have attempted to manage the dilemma posed by endless deconstruction, is to keep their politics separate from their academic life (which avoids, rather than overcomes the problem), or treat politics as primary, and use theory and method strategically, depending on their feminist goals. Kitzinger’s solution, for example, ‘is to be a radical lesbian first, a social constructionist (or essentialist) when it suits my radical feminist purposes, and a “psychologist”, as conventionally defined, virtually never’ (1995: 155). However, if, following relativism, we view all claims as rhetorical, political, and thus strategic, then claims to strategic essentialism become redundant. This need not lead to a form of immorality, or an absence of critique, but will force us to consider the techniques used in claims making (both our own, and those of the ‘oppressor’), and prevent us from reaching a dangerous, and premature form of closure.

If one views politics as rhetoric, then a CA-aligned discursive psychology is compatible with feminist goals. As discursive psychology draws attention to this (especially in its more reflexive moments), rather than leading to amoral forms of analysis, it is, in fact, the approach most likely to lead to debate and argument, and challenge potentially dangerous assumptions. A pressing issue for future research, then, is to demonstrate this, by applying discursive psychology and CA to feminist issues.

(iv) A Reflexive Paradox?

A relativist approach ultimately leads us to reflexivity, where the analyst treats their own research and writing as a constructive business:

Reflexivity encourages us to consider the way a text such as this is a version, selectively working up coherence and incoherence, telling historical stories, presenting and, indeed, constituting an objective, out-there reality.

(Potter 1997b: 146; see also Potter, 1988a)

Reflexive anthropology and ethnography of the type discussed by Atkinson (1990, 1992), Clifford and Marcus (1986), Rosaldo (1989), and Van Maanen (1988), draws
attention to its own constructed nature. It demonstrates the potential of multiple 'tellings' or 'tales' of the field, the literary devices deployed by the author to achieve any specific 'version', and the ways in which the subjects of our research are constructed and represented (see Billig, 1994).

Some authors have embraced reflexivity in their writing, experimenting with new literary forms, such as multi-vocal, or playful textual innovations. Ashmore’s thesis for example, draws attention to its own construction throughout, and finishes with a mock viva. In this thoroughgoing, reflexive piece of research, Ashmore blurs the distinction between method and topic, conducting a sociology of scientific knowledge on interviews with sociologists of science (1989, see also, MacMillan, 1996a; 1996b).

The reflexive turn has generated a number of problems for feminism. Gill, for example, discusses the postmodern ‘crisis of representation’, and the ‘reflexive paradoxes’ this crisis has engendered (1998: 20). How can one write about the experiences of women, when the writing itself constructs the experience? Is there no ‘transcendent standpoint from which the ‘real’ can be apprehended’? (1998: 20).

Gill offers a critique of the work of both feminist standpoint theorists, such as Harding, Haraway and Hill Collins, and the ‘radical constitutive reflexivity’ of sociologists of scientific knowledge (SSK), such as Steve Woolgar and Malcolm Ashmore. She argues that both perspectives, though very different, ‘share a desire to escape from the reflexive paradox’ (1998: 21), thus avoiding its full implications (1998: 38). Standpoint theorists, with their focus on ‘strong objectivity’, ground knowledge claims ‘in the experiences of marginalized groups’ (1998: 38), yet have not acknowledged the politics of constructing such standpoints in the first place (1998: 38). Advocates of SSK, on the other hand, use ‘new literary forms’, which, says Gill, reinforce, rather than challenge ‘authorial authority’ (1998: 35). She asserts that the type of reflexivity practised by many discourse analysts actually works to reinforce the power of the researcher, which is ‘antithetical to feminist concerns’, and that our particular readings and interpretations should be made ‘as transparent as possible’ (1995: 166). Gill is vehement: ‘SSK has faced the problem by obsessing about it - like picking at a scab...ceaselessly deconstructing their own discourse’ (1998: 39). Developing the argument of her 1995 paper, Gill argues for an approach which centres politics and accountability (1998: 19). Rather than trying to find a way out, this approach
Chapter Eight: Questions and Conclusions

Gill’s critique of reflexivity can be problematized in a number of ways. For a start, there is nothing in reflexivity which reinforces the power of the researcher. On the contrary, reflexive discourse analysts continually draw attention to the power of the author to construct the text, and in doing so, make that power visible, and accountable (see Potter, 1998a: 34-35). As Potter states in relation to fact construction:

This raises important questions about the sorts of status and authority that accrue to social scientists’ own factual constructions. Are we sure we know better? Second, it encourages us... to consider the reality-producing practices of social scientists and the tropes that they (we!) use to establish versions as solid.

(1998a: 40)

Reflexive discourse analysts do not increase their power by pointing to the constructed, authored nature of texts - including their own. Indeed, it could be argued that they are more likely (than any non-feminist, non-reflexive account), to illuminate power differentials between the researcher and the researched.

While it may be a mistake, or sheer arrogance, to suggest that a CA-informed, reflexive discursive approach is better than feminism at giving voice to its participants (and as MacMillan argues, ‘an inevitable feature of any representation and ‘speaking for’ is a usurping of the subject’s’ voice’ (1996b: 145, my emphasis)), it is nonetheless the case that, as an approach which questions all knowledge claims, it is extremely good at exposing the political rhetoric of its own, as well as others’, constructions. Future (feminist) research, therefore, might take care to explore precisely down what avenues reflexivity can (and cannot) take us.
(v) Applications?

Getting the analysis right is only one hurdle in the development of a feminist, CA-aligned, discursive psychology. A second is the issue of practical relevance and applications to feminist leisure theory, feminism in general, and the world beyond academia. Indeed, much CA work, in particular, has been centred around issues which do not have political concerns at their heart.

In two recent CA books, ten Have (1999), and Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998) advocate the utility of CA to the world beyond academic research, and the ‘role of talk in wider social processes’ (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 1). They attempt to demonstrate how the techniques of CA can be applied to some of the major problems in the social sciences, and not just (as the criticisms often levelled against it imply), to the small scale features of interaction. Such applied CA studies, claims ten Have, may be used ‘to support efforts to make social life ‘better’ in some way’ (1999: 162).

Many feminists will be particularly attracted to claims such as these. However, CA has typically not been very good at delivering in terms of this objective. For example, Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998) tell us how CA can help politicians make their speeches more persuasive, how human-computer interaction might be improved, and its relevance for helping people with speech disorders. Similarly, ten Have (1999) focuses on human computer interaction and ‘impaired communication’ (specifically, the communication of deaf people). Apart from the examples of speech therapy and ‘impaired’ communication, however, it is not clear that these are the most likely topics to attract feminists new to the field (cf. Wilson, 1999). Moreover, exactly who these studies benefit in the ‘real world’; ‘the world outside of academic social science’ (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 229), is debatable, given the primary focus on the talk of those in positions of power. It remains the task of others to demonstrate how CA can actually influence research and policy in the areas that most feminists would see as the crucial test ground for the value of this kind of work (in the areas of gender, sexism and heterosexism, for example).

The CA approach can be applied to a whole range of feminist concepts and issues. For

1 Compare Kitzinger and Frith (1999), who are amongst the first to attempt to apply CA to explicitly feminist issues (see also, Speer, in press a; Speer and Potter, in press; Stokoe, 1998).
example, we might explore how those in positions of power define and target leisure needs, and justify their (non)interventions and any injustices resulting from them. How are complaints about gender inequality managed and interactionally resisted? How do feminist pressure groups interact with policy makers? Can CA be used to make feminist arguments more persuasive? Indeed, one issue for future research might centre on what happens if sexuality and gender are not made relevant in talk. Would this mean we have reached a situation of equality?

Despite the non-feminist emphasis of much CA, and applied CA's general under-development, CA does offer important insights into how we might be able to demonstrate analytically, the features of phenomena which have typically only been asserted. It would appear there is nothing intrinsic to the type of CA which Hutchby, Wooffitt (1998), ten Have (1999) and others propose, that would prevent feminists - and others with a critical agenda - from using it to ask politically motivated questions, or to reach politically efficacious outcomes.

Therefore, as I have argued elsewhere (Speer, 1999a), claims about the essential incompatibility of feminism and CA may be premature. Indeed, it makes little sense to reach such conclusions before and not after taking up the kind of challenge Schegloff (1997) proposes. The former is ultimately more dangerous, and more likely to silence debate and argument than the latter, which confronts the implications of CA head on. It is time to take CA seriously, to see just how far it can take us, on its own terms. Only then will we see a more productive dialogue between discursive psychology, CA and feminism, and their radical potential may be realized.

Leisure theorists, and others with political impulses would do well to take on board and apply the claims for a discursive and CA approach made here, if only because it is about time it interrogated its own assumptions. It is only through a deliberate, continuous questioning of our beliefs about the most appropriate way to study social life, that we will prevent our analyses from stagnating, and losing touch with the very phenomena we chose (through political impulses or otherwise), to explicate.
Appendix A
Transcription Notation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.</td>
<td>Micro-pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2.0)</td>
<td>Pause length in seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[overlap]</td>
<td>Overlapping speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>°</td>
<td>Encloses speech that is quieter than the surrounding talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>↑ ↓</td>
<td>Rising intonation / Lowering intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOUD</td>
<td>Talk that is louder than the surrounding speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underline</td>
<td>Emphasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;faster&lt;</td>
<td>Encloses speeded up talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Brackets)</td>
<td>Enclose words the transcriber is unsure about (empty brackets enclose talk that is not hearable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.hhh/ hhh</td>
<td>In-breath/Out-breath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rea::Illy</td>
<td>Elongation of the prior sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.</td>
<td>Stopping intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>Immediate latching of successive talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((laughs))</td>
<td>Comments from the transcriber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funn(h)y</td>
<td>Laughter within speech</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A simplified version of Jefferson's transcription conventions (see ten Have, 1999).
Appendix B

Sample Picture Prompts

(i) Diva, June 1997
    Women's Realm, July 30th 1996

(ii) Cosmopolitan, October 1995
    Diva, April 1995
    Girlfriends, May/June 1997

(iii) Source Unknown
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288


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290
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312


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327


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