Discourses of ‘femininity’: studies in the social psychology of gender

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"DISCOURSES OF 'FEMININITY': STUDIES IN THE SOCIA
PSYCHOLOGY OF GENDER"

by

ELIZABETH A. BARRETT

A Doctoral Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy of the Loughborough University of Technology.

7th September, 1990

c by Elizabeth Barrett, 1990
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ABSTRACT

The intention of this thesis is to examine representations of gender and gender roles in a variety of discursive situations, using the methodology of discourse analysis (a systematic method of investigating natural language data).

Within this brief, the aims of the research are twofold. Firstly, I wish to provide a critique, informed by discourse analysis, of several of the major approaches which have been used in the study of gender in the social sciences. To this end, the text contains critical reviews of the sex-stereotypes literature (as epitomised in the work of Sandra Bem), the study of female moral development (as envisaged by Carol Gilligan) and the psychoanalytic perspective (represented by Nancy Chodorow and Karen Horney). In addition to the above, I shall also look at some recent trends in gender research, considering developments deriving from psychoanalytic theory, deconstructionism, poststructuralism and social identity theory. The theoretical aspect of the thesis will be concluded with a section on issues of language, methodology and ideology.

The second aim of the research is to conduct a study of the practical application of discourse analysis. A number of pilot interviews and the review essays delineated three areas as important: women's conceptions of social change; images of gender in everyday discourse; the female self-concept. Each of the three empirical chapters will consider one of these topics, comparing the expectations of existing social psychological work to the findings generated through the discourse analysis of the data.

The conclusion of the thesis is that discourse analysis is a particularly useful methodology for considering data of the type presented in this project, as it circumvents many of the problems encountered by more traditional social psychological research methods.
I wish to express my gratitude to Margaret Wetherell, for her unstinting patience and encouragement through the trials and tribulations of long distance supervision. I would also like to extend heartfelt thanks to my parents, for their immense support, in both emotional and financial (thanks dad!) terms.

I am also endeavoured to the Carnegie Trust, who have funded me for the last three years, and to all the subjects who agreed to participate in these studies. I especially wish to acknowledge M J Stones at the Stevenson College of Further Education in Edinburgh for providing my pilot group, Christine Ramsay for all her organising at General Accident (and to Gill for suggesting the idea in the first place), and my co-conspirator, Dave Calvert, for the student group and much more besides.

I finally wish to thank Andrew Goodwin, officially for his painstaking work on the diagrams throughout this thesis. Unofficially, however, I will always be endeavoured for far more patience, encouragement and love than I ever expected or deserved.
"Ordinary women come out with the damnedest truth. You ignore them at your own risk."
(Marylin French, THE WOMEN'S ROOM, p266)
INTRODUCTION

Gender is a topic with which social psychology has long been concerned. From the Victorian physiologists who related smaller female brain size to inferior intelligence (e.g. Coleman, 1889) to the experimental investigation of gender identity by psychometricians (e.g. Bem, 1974), gender has been a fundamental focus of interest for research.

The study of gender within mainstream social psychology is, however, not without shortcomings. This will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters but, in general, traditional social psychology tended to take an essentialist approach to gender (that is, psychologists have tended to build two mutually exclusive gender categories into their research as an a priori assumption). Adoption of this particular model of gender has a number of implications; primarily, it emphasises the differences between the genders rather than the similarities, the likely consequence of this being a strengthening of gender division.

As a number of researchers have indicated (notably Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963), such a categorisation tends to attune people to the differences between categories and the similarities within categories, i.e. women are perceived as similar to other women and dissimilar to men. This process of homogenisation not only ignores a whole host of potentially influential factors (race, class, disability etcetera); it also makes stereotyping far more likely (Tajfel et al, 1970).

Furthermore, it is inevitable that such a categorical division will be situated within a power dynamic. In modern society (as in the vast majority of cultures past and present), women are subordinate to men. Traits attributed to the category 'female' tend to be viewed as inferior to those associated with 'male' (McKee & Sherrifs, 1957; Rosenkrantz et al, 1968). In other words, traditional social psychology has tended to reinforce a particular ideology about gender and gender roles.

Traditional social psychology, hence, seemed to have little to offer to the feminist researcher. In response to perceived deficits in the mainstream subject, feminist social psychology has been a thriving discipline for many
years, and has aimed to correct many of the deficits and incorrect assumptions which the study of women within a predominantly male oriented traditional social psychology had perpetrated. However, as Lynne Segal (1987) pointed out, the majority of the feminist research which has been conducted contains its own set of problems.

The feminism of the 1980s has been dubbed 'cultural' feminism (Segal, 1987). Noting that the categorisations used by traditional social psychology had the effect of reinforcing stereotypes which were disadvantageous to women, 'cultural' feminism set about reinterpreting these stereotypes. The child-like, tender women and the assertive analytical men who populate mainstream psychological research from the likes of Sandra Bem (1974, 1976) were replaced by the reification of women as 'natural' and the denunciation of the war-mongering, technologically hide-bound male. One of the most prolific exponents of 'cultural' feminism is Mary Daly (others include Judith Arcana, 1981, 1983; Susan Griffin, 1984a, 1984b; Adrienne Rich, 1977 and Andrea Dworkin, 1988); to provide an example:

*Mary Daly quote

One of the major problems with this re-evaluation of female characteristics and experience is that it inevitably reinforces the very thing that the 'first wave' of feminists (such as Sheila Rowbotham, 1973) sought to challenge: gender division. In failing to address essentialism, 'cultural' feminism falls prey to the same problems as traditional social psychology. It offers no potential for individual differences, nor scope for social change; according to this line of thought, fixed characteristics typify the sexes, and men and women are eternally polarised. As such, there is little potential for individual action; as Segal (1987) indicates, 'cultural' feminism is:

"... a politics of despair and retreat ... which can be softened for some by asserting the superior virtues of women."

(Segal, 1987, p37)

Given this disaffection with both traditional and feminist social psychologies, there seemed to me to be scope for a new approach to the study of gender which averts some of the pitfalls present in existing ways of conducting gender research.
Once the basic data are obtained, be it in naturalistic or interview situations, the discourse is commonly transcribed, then extracts are broadly grouped into what Potter & Wetherell (1987) call "interpretative repertoires"; a set of terms, often centred round a particular metaphor or trope, which recurs across a body of data. The meaning of this term will become clearer in subsequent chapters.

With these interpretative repertoires, one can begin to look at variability (differences in either the content or the form) and consistency within and between accounts. Relating these variations and similarities to the context, and to the likely function to which a speaker is used a particular repertoire, is the basis of discourse analysis.

A significant part of the existing work using discourse analysis has concentrated on the language of racism (e.g. Potter & Wetherell's work on New Zealander's representations of Maoris in discourse, 1987). This research has indicated that discourse analysis is a potentially illuminating way of studying racism: moving away from the a priori assumption of racial categorisations (and the consequent suppression of variability and the likelihood of stereotyping), discourse analysis can study the way in which people use language variably, to establish or dispute racial categories, to justify or condemn racism. Rather than being an inevitable given, thus, racism can be studied as a social accomplishment; what discursive purpose does the use (or non use) of racial categories serve for that particular speaker in that specific context?

Although little discourse analysis based work has been done on gender (exceptions being Wetherell, 1986, and Hollway, 1989), it seems reasonable to suggest that the methodology will prove equally useful in the study of gender. If one shifts the focus of study away from fixed gender categories to how those categories are constructed and utilised in language, one circumvents many of the pitfalls (notably gender essentialism and homogenisation, as described above) of traditional and feminist social psychology.

Wetherell’s 1986 article establishes a theoretical basis for the discourse analytic study of gender; a methodology which does not make any fixed assumptions about gender categories, but rather explores the variability and contradictions which appear in the everyday discussion of gender issues.
However, little empirical work using this approach exists. A notable exception to this is Wendy Hollway (1989). Utilising the approach sketched out by Wetherell (1986), Hollway concentrates primarily on discourses of sexuality produced in consciousness raising sessions. Although not available until this thesis was all but completed, this work is an important precursor to my own, and will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five.

Notwithstanding this one example, there seemed to be vast tracts of gender discourse which remained to be addressed: for instance, how and under what circumstances do people deploy gender categorisations and stereotypes in discussion and argumentation; what sort of discourses surround women in the workplace; how do women construct their sense of self when telling their life story? There are, of course, many more possible topics of study (e.g. discourses of motherhood, the interaction of racial or class categories with gender) but, given the time constraints, I have chosen to concentrate on the three described above. Discourse analysis has the potential to produce research which transcends gender categories, instead being able to look at gender as a linguistic accomplishment. Furthermore, it can analyse the ideology and the function underpinning gender discourse; particularly significant in an area so firmly set within a power dynamic.

Having selected a methodology, the aims of the research were twofold, the first of which was to provide a critique of some of the existing research approaches, from a discourse analytic perspective.

The first area which I chose to review was the sex stereotypes literature (Chapter One); this is the dominant approach which traditional social psychology has used to study gender over the last fifteen years. I will also discuss Carol Gilligan's work on moral development (Chapter Two), as a representative of the advantages and problems of feminist social psychology's approach to gender. My reviews will also look at a radically different theoretical perspective on gender from the psychoanalytic field (Chapter Three). Chapter Four will look at recent developments in gender research, and Chapter Five will outline the issues of language, ideology and subjectivity which will be crucial to any discourse analytic approach to gender.

The second aim of the thesis is to conduct a number of empirical studies using discourse analysis. These studies will cover three areas: social change
(Chapter Six), use of gender stereotypes (Chapter Seven) and the female self-concept (Chapter Eight). The choice of topics was guided by the pilot studies and the review chapters, but is otherwise eclectic.

My intention, thus, is not to draw out and test a fully fashioned theory of gender. Rather, what I wish to do is provide a preliminary attempt at a discourse analysis theory of gender upon which further work may build.
THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF GENDER
CHAPTER ONE

FROM SEX DIFFERENCES TO SEX STEREOTYPES: THE EMPIRICAL APPROACH TO GENDER IDENTITY

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I would like to look at the branch of the psychology of women which has dominated gender research over the last fifteen years: the psychometric study of the self-concept, with specific reference to real or purported differences between the sexes. This body of work I will refer to as the study of gender identity. Following Oakley (1972), throughout this chapter I will use the term 'sex' to indicate biological sex (i.e. male or female) and 'gender' to refer to a psychological and cultural term (i.e. masculine or feminine) which may or may not correspond to biological sex. This distinction will become clearer as this chapter proceeds.

Within the study of gender identity, one can divide research crudely into two categories: those techniques which purport to measure sex differences, and those which deal with sex stereotypes. I would like to consider the former first, as it pre-dates other investigative methods used in the study of gender. Although there are several noteworthy studies falling into this category (notably the MMPI proposed by Hathaway & McKinlay in 1946), I have chosen to concentrate on the earliest major study: Terman & Miles (1936).

2. THE SEX DIFFERENCES TECHNIQUE

For many years the social sciences have taken differences between the sexes as one of their main foci of interest:

"... sex differences are more than a perennial stimuli to idle speculation, wit and literary art. Mass theories in regard to them are one of the most potent of all forces that operate in the shaping of human societies, from the most primitive to the most modern. In every culture they help to determine the accepted patterns of family life, of education, of industry, and of political organisation." (Terman & Miles, 1936, p. v)
The objective of initial attempts to study this area was the scientific validation of the common-sense notion that certain behaviours or characteristics are significantly more typical of one sex than the other:

"The belief is almost universal that men and women as contrasting groups display characteristic sex differences in their behavior and that these differences are so deep seated and pervasive as to lend distinctive character to the entire personality." (Terman & Miles, 1936, p 1)

Terman & Miles' M–F test took the form of a self-report questionnaire of 910 items, including biographical items (e.g. "Were both your parents responsible for your training up until the age of 16?") , questions about interests in various activities (e.g. travel, outdoor sports, religion) and occupations (e.g. aviator, plumber, poet), likes and dislikes (books, food etc.), work and ink-blot associations (e.g. "Draw a line under the word that seems to go best or most naturally with... POLE: barber, cat, North, telephone"), emotional and ethical responses (e.g. "Does being called a liar cause you anger?"), measures of introversion and personality traits (e.g. "How do you compare with the 'average person of the same age' on leadership?").

Items were selected for the test if they produced significant sex differences in response:

"The literature of the subject, both theoretical and experimental, was canvassed for clues as to the types of test responses most likely to reveal sex differences. Of those thousands of items which have been tried out only those have been retained which satisfied in some degree this criterion of discriminative capacity." (Terman & Miles, 1936, p 6)

The stated objectives of such studies were typically twofold: to experimentally isolate those attributes which actually do differentiate the sexes:

"The purpose of the M–F test is ... to obtain a more exact and meaningful, as well as a more objective rating of those aspects of personality in which the sexes tend to differ." (Terman & Miles, 1936, p 6)

and to provide a scale on which any individual, according to the combination of 'masculine' and 'feminine' weighted items they scored, could be placed:

"... the purpose is to make possible a quantitative estimation of the amount and direction of a subject's deviation from the mean of his or her sex."
The implication thus built into the study by the word 'deviation' (and repeated reference to the high cross-sex typed scores of delinquents and homosexuals) is that one's mental health is determined by how far one is congruent with one's appropriate sex type:

"The question involves much more than merely finding out whether and how commonly feminine-scoring boys and masculine-scoring girls develop into homosexuals. It is probable that many who do not so develop will experience other difficulties of adjustment as a direct result of their deviation."

(Terman & Miles, 1936, p 468)

To facilitate this 'siting' of individuals, this work was primarily psychometric in its methodology:

"Alleged differences between the sexes must give place to experimentally established differences. A measure is needed which can be applied to the individual and scored so as to locate the subject, with a fair degree of approximation, in terms of deviation from the means of either sex."

(Terman & Miles, 1936, p 3)

That is, it was assumed that masculinity—femininity (M—F) is a unidimensional construct (subjects cannot be masculine on one factor and feminine on another), and that masculinity (M) and femininity (F) represent the opposite ends of a single, bipolar continuum. On completion of the questionnaire, subjects were assigned a single score (which corresponded to a single point on the M—F continuum), derived from the algebraic addition of M (scored +), F (scored —) and neutral (scored 0) items. This assumption of bipolarity is also evident in the selection of items solely on their ability to discriminate biological sex.

There are, needless to say, a variety of problems deriving from such work; I would, however, like first to discuss a problem which is reproduced virtually throughout gender research — terminology. Difficulty in defining masculine and feminine is not unique to sex-differences research:

"The terms, masculine and feminine, have a long history in psychological discourse, but both theoretically and empirically they seem to be among the muddiest concepts in the psychologist’s vocabulary ... it seems as if the terms were taken over whole from the public with no attempt to explicate them."

(Constandinople, 1973, p29)

as is common where terms with powerful lay meanings are adopted by psychology (other examples include 'intelligence', 'ideology' and 'motivation'),
the 'common-sense' meaning of the term is often used with no attempt to explicate its specific contextual parameters:

"... we are dealing with an abstract concept that seems to summarize some dimension of reality important for many people, but we are hard pressed as scientists to come up with any clear definition of the concept or indeed any unexceptional criteria for its measurement."
(Constantinople, 1973, p 29)

This causes not only theoretical problems but also, in the area of gender, has disturbing implicature. If one attributes characteristics to one sex or the other, the connotation seems to be that these characteristics are rooted in a biological substrate. As such, the implication is that sex characteristics are fundamental and unchangeable (the significance of this will be underlined in the later consideration of stereotyping):

"M–F ... is assumed to be in some way inherent in the individual and to be at least partially determined by biological factors. As such ... (it is) thought to (have) limited potential for change through experience and their measurement is assumed to reflect some characteristic of the organism that is fundamental to its nature."
(Constantinople, 1973, p 29)

As McLellan (1986) intimates:

"It is obvious that to equate social facts with natural facts is to invest social facts with the same air of immutability that attaches to nature and thus has distinctly conservative implications."
(McLellan, 1986, p 64–5)

Further exacerbating this is the fact that gender is a value-laden area:

"Masculinity and femininity ... it often seems that value judgements are implicit in both general and professional application of these terms."
(Constantinople, 1973, p 29)

Given, thus, the proviso that we are working in a highly sensitive area, where enduring, value-laden lay beliefs are readily adopted into and supported by scientific research, what flaws are to be found in the sex differences work described earlier? It must be said that these 'flaws' are problematic only when viewed from the perspective of my own research. Within their intention (Terman & Miles were concerned with the identification of individuals who were, statistically speaking, abnormal, i.e. likely to be suffering from a psychiatric condition), Terman & Miles' work is valid and internally consistent.
This proviso given, this work is problematic from my research perspective for two reasons: bipolarity and unidimensionality. I would like to deal firstly with unidimensionality; the assumption that masculinity and femininity are separate entities, each characterised by a single cluster of traits. Several researchers (e.g. Webster, 1956) have suggested that M–F is a multi—rather than a uni—dimensional construct (that is, gender might better be characterised through patterns of sub—traits). This is supported by both correlational and factor analytic studies (see Constantinople, 1973, p 37/8, for a review), although the latter obviously prove more illuminating. To take an example, Lunnenborg & Lunnenborg (1970) examined 136 items from a variety of scales purporting to measure a unidimensional M–F construct, and split masculinity/femininity into 11 factors: feminine and masculine interests, emotional sensitivity, philistine versus artistic, self—confidence, rejection of adventure, neuroticism, indifference, social adequacy, extroversion and unsociable non—conformity.

Moreover, if one looks at Terman & Miles’ study itself, one sees that there is a lack of correlation (.27 to .49) between their 7 individual exercises. Although they admit to this, they still see a single score of the aim of their study:

"... it was not the intention that each of the 7 exercises should necessarily measure a unitary trait. All of them together present a wide sampling of sex differences and it is the total score with which we are chiefly concerned."

(Terman & Miles, 1936, p 5)

The second problem which arises is the assumption of bipolarity: many researchers have proposed some combination of unipolar masculine and feminine dimensions as an alternative. Jenkin & Vroegh (1969), for example, claimed that masculinity and femininity may be separate dimensions; Goodenough (1946) suggested that 'masculine' and 'feminine' may have differing meanings according to which sex they are applied (i.e. a 'feminine' man is not the same as a 'feminine' woman); and it has been proposed that a third dimension may exist alongside masculinity and femininity (called masculinity—femininity by Gonen & Lansky, 1968, and androgyny by Bem, 1974). Critics have also surmised that M–F may be contaminated by factors relating to social desirability (Jenkin & Vroegh, 1969), utilising idealised rather than average male and female concepts. Furthermore, it is possible to see the
bipolar scale as a product of the item selection procedure: if one devises a rating scale solely on the basis of biological sex, it is inevitable that the rating scale which is produced will be bipolar.

One might also add that the sex—differences approach may well produce a confound between actual (biological) and stereotypical (socialised) sex differences, as argued by Locksley & Colten (1979); the method of item selection (using the criterion of sex differences in item response) is likely to pick up any reliable, biologically based sex differences, but intertwined with these will be stereotypical sex characteristics which are acquired through a socialisation process usually too subtle and all—pervasive for the individual to recognize. This probably results in a selection of items which reflect an indissoluble combination of inherent sex differences and societal beliefs about sex differences. Although psychometricians appear largely aware of this problem:

"The M—F test rests upon no assumption with reference to the causes operative in determining an individual's score. These may be either physiological and biochemical, or psychological and cultural; or they may be the combined result of both types of influence."

(Terman & Miles, 1936, p 6)

no attempt is made to ameliorate it.


To summarise, the sex—differences technique is characterised by reliance on a unidimensional, bipolar continuum, upon which masculine and feminine are assumed to be opposing poles. Discriminatory ability on the grounds of biological sex is the criterion by which item selection proceeds. Mental health is defined by one's congruence to one's appropriate biological sex.
3. THE SEX STEREOTYPES TECHNIQUE

In studying the sex—stereotypes technique, I shall take as its exemplar the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), proposed by Sandra Bem (1974, 1976). Although Bem's approach initially seems based upon the 'sex differences' work just described, there are a number of significant differences. Firstly, as previously stated, Terman and Miles are concerned with the identification of 'abnormal' individuals. Bem's intention, conversely, was to measure individual differences within a 'normal' population.

Secondly, and from the perspective of my own research more importantly, the two techniques differ in the relationship which they conceive between biological sex and psychological gender. Whilst Terman and Miles et al assert that psychological gender and biological sex are congruent in the healthy individual, Bem and her followers suggest that it is psychological gender which accounts for individual differences in human behaviour. Potentially at least, Bem conceptualises psychological gender as logically independent of the biological sex of the individual.

The BSRI consists of 60 personality characteristics, 20 of which were designated as masculine (i.e. significantly more desirable in American society for men than women), 20 as feminine and 20 socially desirable or undesirable but gender neutral. Subjects were asked to indicate on a seven point scale how well each of these characteristics described him/herself. Table 1.1 lists the items and their assigned gender orientation.

Table 1.1

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<th>FEMININE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Affectionate</td>
<td>Acts as a leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheerful</td>
<td>Aggressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childlike</td>
<td>Ambitious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate</td>
<td>Analytical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not use harsh language</td>
<td>Assertive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eager to soothe hurt feelings</td>
<td>Athletic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flatterable</td>
<td>Defends own beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentle</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gullible</td>
<td>Forceful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loves children</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyal</td>
<td>Individualistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive to other's needs</td>
<td>Leadership abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shy</td>
<td>Makes decisions easily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft—spoken</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Self-reliant
Self-sufficient
Strong personality
Willing to take stands
Willing to take risks

GENDER NEUTRAL

Adaptable
Conceited
Conscientious
Conventional
Friendly
Happy
Helpful
Inefficient
Jealous
Likable
Moody
Reliable
Secretive
Sincere
Solemn
Tactful
Theatrical
Unpredictable
Unsystematic


In Bem’s initial conceptualisation (1974), from responses to these items (specifically, the difference between the subjects’ mean scores on the masculine and feminine items) and comparison to the median scores of the other people being tested at the same time, the respondent is categorized as masculine, feminine or androgynous (high levels of both masculinity and femininity). In 1976, Bem added the category of undifferentiated (low levels of masculinity and femininity) to her model. Figure 1.1 shows a comparison of the rating scales of the sex–differences and sex–stereotypes techniques.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
M+ \\
\text{Masculine Individual} & \text{Androgynous Individual} \\
M - - - - - F & F - - - - - - F + \\
\text{Undifferentiated Individual} & \text{Feminine Individual} \\
M- \\
\end{array}
\]

**FIGURE 1.1:** A comparison of sex differences and sex stereotypes rating scales (M = masculinity, F = femininity); (after Smith, 1981)
It is clear from Figure 1.1 how the BSRI allows for four possible identifications, whereas the sex differences scale enforces a rigid either/or distinction.

The independent scoring and scaling of masculinity and femininity in the BSRI results in the major problems of the sex-differences technique — unidimensionality, bipolarity, item selection and implications for mental health — being surmounted. Firstly, the BSRI is not forced to conceptualise gender in unidimensional terms, as it views masculinity and femininity as empirically and conceptually independent variables:

"... the Masculinity and Femininity scores of the BSRI are logically independent. That is, the structure of the test does not constrain them in any way, and they are free to vary independently." (Bem, 1974, p159)

Bipolarity, too, becomes a lesser problem when masculinity and femininity are not conceptualised as opposites, when one does not necessarily imply the negation of the other:

"... it was first necessary to develop a new type of sex-role inventory, one that would not automatically build in an inverse relationship between masculinity and femininity." (Bem, 1974, p 155)

Disregarding the sex-differences basis (discriminatory ability on the grounds of biological sex) for item selection, Bem instead takes social desirability as her criterion:

"... the final items were selected for the Masculinity and Femininity scales if they were judged to be more desirable in American society for one sex than for the other." (Bem, 1974, p 156–7)

The advantage of this is that social (rather than biological, with its implications of immutability) sex becomes the focus of study, sex-typing becoming a product of socialisation practices:

"... the BSRI was founded on a conception of the sex-typed person as someone who has internalized society's sex-typed standards of desirable behavior for men and women." (Bem, 1974, p 155)

rather than an uncertain biological imperative.

On the issue of mental health, Bem's stated intention was to question:
"... the traditional assumption that it is the sex-typed individuals who typifies mental health and to begin focusing on the behavioral and societal consequences of more flexible sex-role concepts."
(Bem, 1974, p 162)

To support this, she advanced the concept of androgyny:

"... a term that denotes the integration of both masculinity and femininity within a single individual."
(Bem, 1976, p 196)

That is, androgynous individuals, according to situational demand, may be both masculine and feminine, agentic and communal (a division put forward by Bakan, 1966, to describe the differences between the sexes), instrumental and expressive (likewise, proposed by Parson & Bales, 1955). This is represented in the BSRI by "the equal endorsement of both masculine and feminine attributes" (Bem, 1974, p 158), the androgyny score being calculated by subtracting the score on the Masculinity scale from that attained on the Feminine.

According to Bem, it follows from this that the strongly sex-typed individual is disadvantaged in regard to the androgynous, as (s)he lacks the behavioural flexibility and situational adaptability of the latter; androgyny, instead of appropriate sex-typing, becomes the ideal for mental health. This, proposed by Bem herself (1976), is supported in recent work by (amongst others) Glazer & Dusek (1985), Frank, Towell & Huych (1985) and Orlofsky & O’Heron (1987); it has been claimed that androgynous individuals have greater moral maturity (Block, 1973) and higher self-esteem (Spence et al, 1975; Bern, 1976). Although some researchers have suggested that undifferentiated (e.g. Ray & Lovejoy, 1984) or masculine sex-typed (e.g. Adams & Sherer, 1985) individuals may experience great psychological well being, such findings are in the minority. These points, along with the high internal consistency (.70 to .86) and retest reliability (.89 to .93), make the BSRI considerably superior to the MMPI (Hathoway & McKinley, 1943) and M-F Scale (Terman & Miles, 1936).

Bem’s final attempt to evolve a major theory around the BSRI was made in 1981, when she advanced her ‘Gender Schema Theory’. In a radical turn around, she de-emphasised the independence of the constructs of masculinity and femininity and the concept of androgyny, claiming instead that people have
a fairly stable gender schema; a tendency to see the world in gender stereotypical terms:

"... a generalised readiness to process information on the basis of the sex-linked associations the constitute the gender schema."
(Bem, 1981, p 355)

This process is facilitated through normal socialisation practices:

"Clearly the developing child is learning context-specific information, the particular behaviors and attributes that are to be linked with sex... in addition... the child is also learning to invoke this heterogeneous network of sex-related associations in order to evaluate and assimilate new information. The child, in short, learns to process information in terms of an evolving gender schema."
(Bem, 1981, p345-5, her emphasis)

in a society which places great emphasis on heterosexuality and gender division:

"... society's ubiquitous insistence on the functional importance of the gender dichotomy."
(Bem, 1981, p 362)

Furthermore, because the schema becomes assimilated into the self-concept, Bem claims that gender schema theory can (at least partially) explain sex typing:

"... sex typing results, in part, from the fact that the self-concept itself gets assimilated into the gender schema."
(Bem, 1981, p 355)

It is claimed that this schema can vary in strength according to the extent of the socialisation, and that it is this individual variation in the strength of the schema which the BSRI measures:

"... sex typing is accompanied by a readiness to process information about the self in terms of the gender schema, and they indicate that the attributes on the BSRI are themselves processed in this fashion."
(Bem, 1981, p359)

Since its inception in 1974, the BSRI has been virtually omnipresent in gender identity research. By way of illustrating the enormous popularity of the scale, over a decade after it was first published, the BSRI is still being used in a multitude of social and psychological studies. As a glance through recent work will reveal, the BSRI has been used in the explanation of gender differences in areas as disparate as participation in sport (Caron, Carter & Brightman,

The all-pervasiveness of the BSRI, however, does not equate with inherent merit; the BSRI is not without problems. I should like to consider problems which pertain specifically to the BSRI, then go on to consider more wide-ranging criticisms which related to the assessment of gender identity by use of sex-stereotyping methodologies and quantitative methods in general.
4. PROBLEMS WITH THE SEX STEREOTYPES TECHNIQUE

4.1 Procedural Flaws

The BSRI is subject to two main procedural flaws which relate to item selection: the nature of the selectors themselves and the vagueness of Bem's instructions to them. Firstly, as Eichler (1980) pointed out, the item selectors themselves are a biased sample: like many of her predecessors (notably Spence & Helmreich in their 1972 'Attitudes to Women' scale), Bem used young, well-educated and comfortably wealthy students. This is further compounded in that item selectors were restricted to a range of 400 personality characteristics which Bem and several assistants had previously generated on wholly subjective grounds:

"... a list was compiled of approximately 200 personality characteristics that seemed to the author and several students to be both positive in value and either masculine or feminine in tone."

(Bem, 1974, p 156, my emphasis)

A second problem arises from Bem's vague terminology in her instructions to her item selectors (a criticism levelled by Pedhazur & Tetenbaum, 1979). Selectors were asked to rate the 400 items described above on their social desirability, using a 7-point scale which ranged from 1 ("Not at all desirable") to 7 ("Extremely desirable"); a typical item was "In American society, how desirable is it for a man to be truthful?". As Pedhazur & Tetenbaum note, the problem with this is the term 'desirable'; it was not specified whether moral, socially normative or socially exemplary 'desirability' was expected.
4.2 Theoretical Flaws

I'd now like to go on to discuss what is potentially the most damaging flaw contained within the BSRI (or certainly the dispute which has generated the most journal articles over the years): the question of what the BSRI actually measures.

The method of item selection used by the MMPI and M–F scales ensured that the test contained only those items to which the sexes responded differentially. However, although Bem claims that the BSRI measures:

"... the degree of sex-role stereotyping in the person's self-concept."
(Bem, 1976, p 51)

she herself vacillates, frequently indicating that she regards the BSRI as a measure of fairly stable personality characteristics which arise from socialisation:

"... the BSRI was founded on a conception of the sex-typed person as someone who has internalised society's sex-typed standards of desirable behavior for men and women."
(Bem, 1974 p 155)

By this, I do not mean that individuals will exhibit the same characteristics on every occasion; although Bem suggests that sex-typed individuals will exhibit such consistency, she claims that androgynous individuals are showing more masculine or more feminine personality traits, depending on which are more appropriate in any given context. What I do, however, mean, is that an individual will consistently be masculine, feminine, androgynous or undifferentiated, across different times and situations.

The inception of the gender schema theory complicates the issue still further. As Spence & Helmreich (1981) rapidly pointed out, this directly contradicts Bem's earlier claim: the same set of measures cannot yield both a single, unidimensional continuum (as implied by gender schema theory – one pole is a weak gender schemata, the other is strong) and two independent factors (masculinity and femininity).

Left with the unsatisfactory nature of Bem's last major attempt to define what her scale measures, one is forced to conclude that the BSRI only assesses women and men's willingness to endorse sex stereotypes; it deduces little about the actual or perceived nature of masculine or feminine concepts and self-
concepts. Should a satisfactory theory emerge which links adherence to socially defined stereotypes to identity (i.e. it is reasonable to suggest that the former is incorporated into the latter), the Bem scale may yet prove a useful method of assessing identity, but until such time, other methods must be evolved to access gender identity.
5. PROBLEMS WITH THE QUANTITATIVE APPROACH AS A WHOLE

From examining problems which pertain specifically to the BSRI, I would like to consider several criticisms which relate to the use of quantitative methodologies and their attempt to empirically codify gender identity in general, again using the BSRI as my example.

5.1 Implicature

It is important to consider the implicature of the BSRI and its counterparts: the perpetuation of stereotypes and the maintenance of an ideology of female inferiority may both be aided by the BSRI.

The item selection procedure for the BSRI has been criticised not just on procedural grounds but because it also reifies stereotypes:

"Sex role stereotypes, as established, serve as a gauge for reality, rather than reality serving as a corrective for the stereotypes." (Eichler, 1980, p 68)

For the sake of argument, one could imagine a social situation where BSRI stereotypes of femininity, masculinity and the androgynous become defined as the hallmarks of normal and average, this effect being enhanced through their aura of scientific authenticity. Codol (1975) has argued that social comparison processes work in such a way that there is a 'primum inter pares' effect. The average person in the street consistently assumes that they possess more of a desirable attribute than the average other members of their group. One possible outcome, therefore, is an exaggeration of sex—stereotypes as people compete, for example, to be more 'masculine' than the average. Whether or not sex stereotypes and the BSRI categories are taken up in the process of social comparison, however, the point is that the BSRI legitimises and normalises a certain ideology of femininity, masculinity and androgyny, and reinforces this ideology as a taken for granted orthodoxy.

Furthermore, as work by Clifton et al (1976) demonstrated, Bem's 'femininity' is a particularly narrow stereotype: Clifton asked people to generate descriptions of various types of women (e.g. 'career woman', 'bunny', 'woman athlete', 'housewife') and found that only 'housewife' corresponded to Bem's 'femininity' construct.
Finally, at no stage of the procedure, be it the initial (400) item selection, final (60) item selection, or the subsequent use of the completed scale on other subjects, do situational influences on the subjects play a significant part in Bem's analysis. As an inevitable part of self-presentation and impression management, people will tailor the image they present to the world to suit perceived situational demands (to give an example, an individual at a job interview would present a very different persona from that same individual having a drink with friends). As a value-laden attribute, gender has considerable social salience, therefore one would anticipate that an important part of impression management would be the emphasis or de-emphasis of masculinity and femininity. Perceived situational factors (for instance, the sex of the experimenter, the authority of the experimental situation etc.) may well be factors which influence one's BSRI score. One might thus well expect the BSRI score (obtained in a laboratory situation) to differ substantially from that which might be expected on the basis of subjects' actions in specific normal, everyday situations. The ideals which one endorses in the laboratory have no necessary link to one's normal range of response (Locksley & Colten, 1979).

Bem does claim that the BSRI has a predictive value for behaviour:

"... because the BSRI was founded on the conception of the sex-typed person as someone who has internalised society's sex-typed standards of desirable behavior for men and women, these personality characteristics were selected as masculine or feminine on the basis of sex-typed desirability."

(Bem, 1974, p 155, my emphasis)

However, this assertion is based largely on laboratory experiments. Outwith the experimental situation, the range of response which individuals produce may be very different. As Deaux comments:

"A dedicated commitment to laboratory experiments may not be sufficient (and some would argue not even necessary) to develop a full understanding of human behavior ... The social reality of gender cannot be removed from or fully controlled by the laboratory experiment."

(Deaux, 1985, p 53)

Perhaps even more seriously, as well as reinforce ideology, scales such as the BSRI may actually bolster gender inequality. As indicated earlier, in this approach androgyny is held as the key to psychological well-being and, although the occasional report does propose masculinity or undifferentiation as the ideal state, I am unaware of any findings which claim femininity to be compatible with mental health in either males or females, be it on the sports field (Colley, Roberts & Chipps, 1985) or in the job market (Gaeddert, 1985);
science clearly defines femininity as disadvantageous. It is a well documented fact that men and women tend to be evaluated differently, even when performance is constant (c.f. Wallston & O'Leary's 1981 review), confounded by the fact that people tend to offer different explanations for the same performance in males and females (Deaux, 1976; Frieze et al, 1978; Hansen & O'Leary, 1983).

It is impossible to say whether science has contributed to the socialisation of the ideology of female inferiority (although this does seem to be a distinct possibility), but those traits which Bem defines as feminine are less socially desirable than those which are defined as masculine (McKee & Sherrifs, 1957; Rosenkrantz et al, 1968).

To be fair to Bem, she is merely following a historically derived tradition in categorising her traits; for example, Jung's anima traits include passivity, suffocation, inarticulation, vanity and pettiness. Even though he explicitly specified that these traits were mythical, used by individuals to make sense of surrounding social and environmental conditions, they still coalesce into part of the agency–communion distinction which lies beneath much of the 'self–evident' background knowledge which forms the building bricks of research. Bem's subscription to this tradition adds further scientific credibility to the image of passive malleability which comprises the core of the stereotypical woman.

Although the Bem Scale is an advance on sex differences measures (in that it does not assume sex differences a priori), it tests conformity to stereotypes generated in one particular situation. As Wetherell (1986) comments:

"It seems probable that the force of femininity/masculinity discourse lies in the very assumption of meaningful categorical difference rather than in the specific content identified through research as constitutive of that difference."
(Wetherell, 1986, p 81)

That is, the simple utilisation of the categories of male and female is a political act which may reinforce the status quo. As indicated earlier, research of this nature legitimates and strengthens gender division, thus, by association, gender stereotyping and gender inequality.

It has been argued (Tajfel et al, 1970) that the mere fact of division into categories is sufficient to cause discrimination. Once categories are established,
a process of second order signification (Barthes, 1964, 1972), whereby initially neutral concepts are overlaid with mythical connotations, is inevitably put into action. Furthermore, given the ideological basis on which this is carried out in society (i.e. patriarchy), it is unsurprising that the contents of the 'femininity' category (although initially derogatory) come to be associated with inferiority. Spender (1980) has documented a similar process which she calls 'Plus male, minus female', whereby language forms (e.g. adjectives, Christian names) which are associated with the female come to be downgraded. Spender considers, for example, how adjectives (such as 'spinster') which denote women come to have negative connotations, whilst equivalents denoting men (such as 'bachelor') incur no such associations. She also comments that, once words are associated with women (such as the Christian name Lesley), they are no longer considered suitable for men (the use of the name Leslie has declined since the female form became widely used).

This raises one further problem with the BSRI and its counterparts. An assumption central to sex stereotyping research is that adjectives have a fixed meaning along with their genderized connotations (e.g. Rosenkrantz et al, 1967; Williams & Best, 1977). In other words, history and the process of social change are neglected in the general movement to fix the 'facts' of gender identity. This presentation of contingent culturally variable sex stereotypes as valid truths of basic sexual division makes them even more difficult to challenge.
5.2 Reproduction of the Assumptions of the Researcher

Researchers do tend (consciously or unconsciously) to bring their own set of a priori assumptions to their work; most gender research begins with the assumption of two categories, 'male' and 'female', incorporating the existence and nature of biological sex differences as an immutable fact (Condor, 1987). On the level of psychological gender, the assumption of these two categories tends to incorporate a whole host of stereotypical beliefs about sex differences and sex roles (Spence & Helmreich, 1972) into the research. These categories and assumptions pervade the methodology and analysis, and are imposed upon the subjects in a manner which reproduces these structures in the results. There are three main ways in which this is carried out:

i) Assumption of Two Discrete Gender Categories

Psychological research into gender identity tends to take the existence of two discrete gender categories as fact, even though the validity of this is questioned in sex—difference types of research (e.g. Adams, 1979; Smith, 1985). The constructed nature of these categories (i.e. when they are produced and to what purpose) is largely ignored. Although developmental psychology does deal with the acquisition of gender categorisation (e.g. Kohlberg, 1966; c.f. Ashmore et al, 1986, for a review) it is assumed that, in the process of normal maturation, individuals come to recognize the existence of gender categories. This suggests both that the categorisation of gender is indicative of an external reality (Kessler & McKenna, 1978) and that gender differentiation is a normal individual process; the implication, thus, is that (once acquired) gender differentiation is an unchanging and unchangeable part of the psyche (e.g. Miller, 1982). The potentially influential factors of situational flexibility of content and implementation of these categories are also ignored; gender is seen as a stable 'fact of life' (Kessler & McKenna, 1978), thus analysable without recourse to context.

As noted earlier, some recent work has attempted to avoid using global sex category labels as stimuli (e.g. Clifton et al, 1976; Deaux et al, 1985), but as Condor (1987) remarks, this shift has merely resulted in more stimuli being presented to the subject; the subcategorical distinctions (e.g. 'housewife', 'career woman', 'woman athlete' instead of 'woman') are still presented as having external reality and still channel the subject's response into gender—
oriented categorisations; furthermore these 'improvements' still fail to address the functionality or the situational factors influencing the production of these labels.

ii) Assumption that Sex Stereotypes Encapsulate the Factors which Differentiate Males and Females

The first point which must be raised here is are there actually any factors which differentiate males and females? Despite decades of research, convincing evidence for sex differences has only been found in four areas: aggression, visuo-spatial, mathematical and verbal ability (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), although even these findings are open to disputation (c.f. for instance Rosenthal & Rubin, 1982, who, over a twenty year period of study, found that bar aggression sex differences in all the above areas are diminishing; Frodi et al., 1977, linked sex differences in aggression to the differing situational factors to which each sex reacts). The whole premise that there are factors which can differentiate the sexes, or that the sexes can be psychologically differentiated on the basis of the sex-typing they have internalised, is thus shaky.

Although psychologists typically assert a distinction between stereotypes and 'real' sex differences, there is a tendency to define sex stereotypes as those factors which actually differentiate males from females seems common in psychology; for instance, Rosenkrantz et al (1968) defines sex stereotypes as:

"... consentual beliefs about the differing characteristics of men and women in our society."
(Rosenkrantz et al, 1968)

which seems strange, given that no similar process occurs when dealing with national or ethnic stereotypes (Condon, 1987). This assumption is apparently also tacit in the inception of many gender researcher's work, thus influencing what stimuli are selected and how the results are interpreted. Typically, such work yields lists of traits which are divided into 'masculine' or 'feminine', either by the subjects themselves (e.g. Sherriffs & Jarrett, 1953; Williams & Best, 1982) or by the researcher (e.g. Rosenkrantz et al, 1968; Bem, 1974).

It seems impossibly reductionist to try to define a complex and ideologically potent representation such as 'femininity' by reference to a sequence of numbers or points on a normal distribution (a criticism levelled at the BSRI
by Lubinski, Tellegen & Butcher, 1983); furthermore, as Locksley & Colten (1979) commented, global stereotypes (such as those which provide the stimuli for the BSRI and other quantitative methodologies) are rarely used in description of the self or other real (as opposed to 'typical' or 'idealised') men and women (Sherriffs & McKee, 1957; Locksley et al, 1980; Taylor, 1981) or in response to open-ended questions (Cowan & Stewart, 1977), except in circumstances where sex is a particularly salient variable (e.g. a woman describing herself as a mother may well produce a fairly stereotypically 'feminine' self-concept).

Recent research has attempted to explore the content of sex categories (e.g. Ashmore & Del Boca's 'cataloguing approach', 1979), to look at environmental influences on stereotypes and stereotyping (Taylor, 1981) and to assess the differing propensity of individuals to apply sex stereotypes (following Bem's 1981 Gender Schema theory). However, this work still assumes that sex stereotypes are real, fixed structures (otherwise there would be little point in trying to define the content of a forever fluctuating structure). Some research has gone so far as to turn the stereotypes into imaginary people (e.g. Ashmore & Del Boca, 1979; Williams & Best, 1982): here, the sex stereotypical characteristics are given additional weight via their fixation to individual category members as well as to the category labels.

The implications of this are two fold: certain adjectives are associated exclusively with one sex category (e.g. 'tender' = female; 'assertive' = male) and, paradoxically, also have sex independent meanings (Condor, 1987), despite the fact that earlier psychologists (e.g. Allport, 1954; Saenger & Flowerman, 1954) were well aware that the meaning and evaluative connotations of an adjective were highly context specific.

iii) Assumption of Cross-Situational Consistency

As stated above, sex-stereotyping literature (by regarding sex stereotypes as relatively fixed and stable) assumes cross-situational stability, whereby the gender differentiation schema held by an individual is fairly stable across time and across different situations. It is, however, generally admitted that some kinds of life experience (e.g. contact with a particular group, e.g. women athletes) may result in the evolution of a subcategory of the sex categorisation (Taylor, 1981). This idea has been represented in psychological literature in
the concept of level of prototypes (Cantor & Mischel, 1979). This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter seven.

This assumption of cross-situational stability reached its zenith in the movement from the visualisation of the stereotype as a social fact to the idea that it is a psychological structure, a cognitive schema (Bem, 1981). Illustrative of this assumption of the internal fixity of stereotypes is the suggestion made in the literature that the term 'sex-stereotype' should only be applied to the images held by the individual (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1979), and that research could usefully focus on the discrepancies and correspondences between individual stereotypical images and those existing in society at large. Results which contradict this supposed 'stability' of gender categorisations (Condor, 1987, used the example of a woman talking about her husband, which is very likely to contradict the male stereotype) are assumed to be the product of 'distorted' data in 'contaminated' studies. As Deaux (1985) comments:

"Questions of context and process have not yet been thoroughly addressed."
(Deaux, 1985, p 53)
CONCLUSION

My aim in this chapter was to examine the two foundations on which empirical social psychological research into gender identity has been based: the sex differences and the sex stereotypes approaches. The sex stereotypes approach effectively revealed the problems with the earlier sex differences assumption and I have tried to indicate how and why the sex stereotypes approach has, in turn, failed to deliver a contextually and socially sensitive analysis of gender identity.

In conclusion, I would argue that the omnipresence of the BSRI in gender research, and the generalised concentration on quantitative methodologies, reflects not their suitability for the topic, but rather is more clearly related to the desire, pervading the entire discipline of psychology, to be regarded as a form of biological or natural science. It may be argued that the use of quantitative (rather than qualitative) data and the preoccupation with statistical 'proofs' are manifestations of psychology's preoccupation with the attainment of scientific status rather than validations of the efficacy of the quantitative approach per se.
1. INTRODUCTION

Although the vast majority of research in psychology on gender identity has been conducted along the sex differences/sex stereotypes lines described in Chapter One, several major pieces of work have emerged outwith this boundary, significantly Karen Horney and Nancy Chodorow on psychoanalytic theory and Carol Gilligan on moral development. Although Horney was writing in the 1940s and Chodorow and Gilligan in the 1970s, their work shares common concerns; the thread underlying the work of all these writers is their dissatisfaction with the prevailing tendency in psychological theory and research to universalise male characteristics. The findings of work on men are often applied to women who, because of their non-inclusion in the initial devising of the scale or theory, are classified as aberrant. Gilligan, Horney and Chodorow are united in their wish to change the male-oriented frame of reference by which women are often judged. Gilligan’s work will be reviewed in this chapter, Chodorow and Horney in Chapter Three.

Gilligan’s work on moral development and the ‘different voice’ of women has generated a considerable amount of critique and reaction over the years. To understand Gilligan’s perspective, it is firstly necessary to set it in the context of the work she was reacting against: Kohlberg’s stage theory of moral development.

Using Piaget’s (1932) theory of cognitive development as a basis, Kohlberg hypothesized that moral development proceeds through a series of hierarchical stages, each contingent upon the appropriate cognitive stage, and each characterised by a qualitatively different mode of thinking. As in Piagetian theory, development proceeds via the subject’s active interaction with the environment, and is likewise assessed by performance on a number of standardised tests (in this case moral reasoning dilemmas). Kohlberg’s conceptualisation of each stage of moral reasoning is illustrated in Table One.
TABLE ONE: KOHLBERG'S STAGE THEORY OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Preconventional
(Children relate to rules and social expectations external from self)

STAGE 1 Avoidance of punishment, obedience to authority;
STAGE 2 'Instrumental hedonism'; focus still on rules, but with a movement towards individualism.

Conventional
(In late adolescence/early adulthood, the social orientation, social rules and expectations of others have been internalised)

STAGE 3 Mutual interpersonal expectations: right is defined by shared feelings;
STAGE 4 Obedience to authority in relation to the welfare of society.

Postconventional
(Moral values and principles independent of group authority are paramount; immediate social expectations are subordinate to this)

STAGE 5 Laws are not necessarily appropriate to every situation; justice lies in social consequences tailored to individual situations and people;
STAGE 6 A universal principled orientation.

Kohlberg consistently claimed that females fixated at stage three in this hierarchy of moral development, whereas the superior stage four was claimed to be more typical for men:

"While girls are moving from high school to college to motherhood, sizeable proportions of them are remaining at stage 3 while their male age mates are dropping stage 3 in favour of the stages above it."
(Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969, p108)

This result, furthermore, is described in overtly sexist terminology:

"Stage 3 personal concordance morality is a functional morality for housewives and mothers; it is not for business men and professionals."
(Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969, p108)

One of Gilligan's major achievements was to highlight this male bias inherent in Kohlberg's work, as in so much social psychological research:

"The quality of embeddedness in social interaction and personal relationships that characterizes women's lives in contrast to men's, however, becomes not only a descriptive difference but also a developmental liability when the milestones of childhood and adolescent development in the psychological literature are markers
of increasing separation. Women’s failure to separate then becomes by definition a failure to develop."
(Gilligan, 1982, p8/9)

For many years, women have learned about themselves through theories which evolved from research conducted exclusively on males; as Erica Jong says:

"I learned about women from men. I saw them through the eyes of male writers. I didn’t think of them as male writers. I thought of them as writers, as authorities, as gods who knew and were to be trusted completely."
(Jong, 1974, p145)

Gilligan argues that the fundamental problem of these theories was that, although the research which had formed the basis of such theories had not included women, they were subsequently applied to women. A male-derived norm was thus established with women interpreted as aberrant and deviant, rather than taking the approach, for example, that women may be "equal but different":

"However, as long as the categories by which development is assessed are derived from research on men, divergence from the masculine standard can be seen only as a failure of development. As a result, the thinking of women is often classified with that of children."
(Gilligan, 1982, p69/70)

Gilligan’s own attempt to develop an alternative theory of moral development retained Kohlberg’s dilemmas and stage structure as the basis of her theory, supplementing it with direct questions, concerning for example the subject’s definition of morality. Using this theoretical and methodological apparatus she claimed to discover a "different voice" of moral reasoning. "Different" is variably taken to mean specifically feminine (Gilligan, 1977; 1982) or concerned with care, communication and relationships (1980), but was always contrasted to Kohlberg’s detached, rational, ‘masculine’ voice, which emphasises separation and individuation:

"It is my belief that systems of law are valid only in so far as they reflect or embody the sort of moral law which most rational men recognize and all rational men can accept."
(Kohlberg, 1981, p162)

The ‘masculine’ goal is defined by Gilligan as achieved within a "hierarchy" (1982, p62), where distinctiveness is attained through being 'better' than others, whereas the feminine is represented by a "web" (1982, p62): for women, success is to be found in the centre of connectivity. Consequent upon this,
men are said to focus on justice in moral reasoning (connection to others is subsumed by the welfare of society in relation to the individual), whilst women seek to preserve connectivity by hurting as few people as possible (rules are secondary to individual connection).

Gilligan, roots this apparent sex difference in socialisation:

"Because early social environment differs for and is experienced differently by male and female children, basic sex differences recur in personality development. As a result, in any given society, feminine personality comes to define itself in relation and connection to other people more than masculine personality does." (Gilligan, 1982, p7)

In so doing she echoes Chodorow:

"... I argue that the contemporary reproduction of mothering occurs through socially structurally induced psychological processes. It is neither a product of biology nor of intentional role-training." (Chodorow, 1978, p7)

In the studies which led to her identification of the 'different voice', the majority of Gilligan's subjects were women engaged in pre-abortion counselling. These women faced a complex decision, having to weight the conflicting rights of the child and mother, a decision further complicated by the involvement of others (eg boyfriend/husband, parents) and concomitant economic, social and religious issues. Using these women's rationalisations and accounts as they moved towards an abortion decision as a basis, Gilligan produced a three stage alternative to Kohlberg's initial six stage conception.

According to Gilligan, progression involves a move from egocentric reasoning, via increasing connectiveness in communication and relationships, to self-actualisation (Table Two).

**TABLE TWO: GILLIGAN'S STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Level One: Orientation to Individual survival**
Stage one is characterised by egocentric reasoning and self-preservation. The interests of others are immaterial.

**Transition One: From Selfishness to Responsibility**
During this transition, the subject realises, through an increasing awareness of the connection (s)he has to others, that level one is selfish, and progresses toward responsibility to others.

**Level Two: Goodness as Self-Sacrifice**
The subject focuses on goodness and the needs of others (whereas for
Kohlberg the criterion is the acquisition of justice); expectations become more important than individual survival (the latter is "now seen to depend on acceptance by others"; Gilligan, 1977, p476). This level is akin to Kohlberg's "conventional" stage).

Transition Two: From Goodness to Truth
This transition involves a shift from priorities of goodness/social acceptance to reality: truth and feasibility of solutions. Subjects typically weigh up both their own needs and the needs of others who will be affected by her/his action, and take responsibility for the resultant decision.

Level Three: The Morality of Non—Violence
This level involves higher level decision making (like Kohlberg's "postconventional" stage, but substituting "dynamic interdependence", Gilligan, 1978, for justice and "abstract principled thought"). Typically, subjects will weight up both their responsibility to themselves and their connectivity to others, and view the problem in terms of all its consequences. Conflicting immediate priorities are subsumed as the subject can view the dilemma with respect to the whole of the world (s)he occupies. (S)he is self actualised.

Gilligan's work is interesting from the perspective of my project as she worked with interview material and engaged in the interpretative analysis of discourse to produce a broad theory of gender. However, in my view there are a number of crucial ambiguities and tensions in Gilligan's work which, in the end, undermine her approach and led me to look for role models for my own work elsewhere.
2. METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Gilligan's methodology has been criticised on a number of counts. Some of the problems raised are specific to her particular qualitative approach, whereas others raise broader issues about the analysis of interview material. The latter are obviously relevant to all feminist researchers interested in qualitative work, and I would like to present these not as specific criticisms of Gilligan, but to delineate them as problematic areas for my own work, and as points on which my own approach should be evaluated. The function of the next section is thus, in part, to provide an awareness of the problems pertaining to qualitative research.

2.1 Sample Selection

As noted earlier, Gilligan states that her theory is based on data from interviews with twenty nine pregnant women undergoing pre-abortion counselling. However, she also used a group of Harvard University philosophy students (apparently of both sexes). The rationale for this sample selection is unclear. As Luria states, "Gilligan's juxtaposition of disparate samples pose problems about combination rules" (Luria, 1986, p317); it is difficult to see how the combined data from both male and female students can be used to argue for two separate voices.

Although Gilligan's sample does have a reasonable range of ages and diverse backgrounds, Boston women facing an abortion are a distinctly unrepresentative sample from which to produce a general theory of morality: it seems probable that issues of care, communication, relationships and the needs of others will be prominent in these women's minds, but this response may be very transient. Harvard students are likewise atypical of the general population.

Even within the abortion group, Gilligan's subjects are probably very restricted: she herself states that no attempt was made to make the sample representative, even of the clinic ("no attempt was made to select a representative sample of the clinic or counselling service population"; 1982, p3: "Since the study focused on the relation between judgement and action rather than on the issue of abortion per se, no effort was made to select a sample that would be representative of women considering, seeking, or having abortions"; 1982, p72). Although the study of one group in detail is obviously
reasonable research practice, the problem lies in generalising these data to all women, in the move to posit a 'feminine voice' on the basis of one analysis.
2.2 Interview Technique

Gilligan’s interview techniques are only loosely defined:

"The method of interviewing was to follow the language and the logic of the person’s thought with the interviewer asking further questions in order to clarify the meaning of a particular response."

(Gilligan, 1982, p2).

There seems to be no consistency in the number or nature of questions asked, and Gilligan does not specify how many of the questions were actually introduced to the subject, as opposed to those which were extensions of answers to previous questions. Again, open-ended interviews are not problematic per se; the difficulty arises in relating the interviewer’s role and the context provided by Gilligan’s questions into the analysis. A more satisfactory method would perhaps be to provide an appendix detailing the basic interview schedule, or to include the question as a fundamental part of the analysis.
2.3 Undefined Scoring Procedures

Gilligan has been criticised on her undefined scoring and interpretative procedures; as she does not state her rationale for selecting certain extracts and ignoring others, it is impossible to work out the interpretative practice she is following. Unexplicated interpretative procedures lead to her ignoring plausible readings, as in the following extract:

"It's very hard to defend yourself against the rules."
(quoted in Gilligan, 1982, p66)

which is coded as (female) "sense of vulnerability" (Gilligan, 1982, p66), whereas it could equally be coded as (male) preoccupation with rules.

Likewise, she reads:

"It was also, I think, sort of designed to hurt him as deeply as he hurt me."
(quoted in Gilligan, 1982, p61)

as:

"... women's ... experience illuminates a territory where violence is rare and relationships appear safe."
(Gilligan, 1982, p62)

whereas an alternative interpretation might be that her subject's experience is of relationships as psychologically violent and far removed from emotional "safety".

As Luria recommends:

"... interviews that yield discursive data such as explanations, personal histories, and discussion of abstract questions require objective rules that categorize the respondents' texts ... must be specified to ensure that all investigators make the same decisions about what particular responses mean, regardless of the theory under study."
(Luria, 1986, p317)

This is a particularly pertinent criticism, as it potentially is equally applicable to discourse analysis. However, Luria is arguing from the substantially different perspective of content analysis, where contextuality is sacrificed for inter-rater reliability. In moving towards the goal of contextualised analysis, discourse analysis may appear to lack the rigour of other qualitative methodologies such as content analysis, but, as Potter & Wetherell (1987) indicate, this deficit may be illusory:
"If a discourse analysis report sometimes looks less rigorous than a report of content analysis research, this is probably more to do with the rhetorical effectiveness of tables of numbers than any lack of stringency."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p173, their emphasis)

Given clearly explicated interpretative procedures and substantiation by specimen extracts, it has been argued that discourse analysis can be as rigorous, if not more so, than quantitative methodologies:

"The goal is to present analysis and conclusions in such a way that the reader is able to assess the reader's interpretations. Thus a representative set of examples form the area of interest must be included along with a detailed interpretation which links analytic claims to specific parts or aspects of the extracts. In this way, the entire reasoning process from discursive data to conclusions is documented in some detail and each reader is given the possibility of evaluating the different stages of the process, and hence agreeing with the conclusions or finding grounds for disagreement. In this sense discourse analysis could be said to be more rigorous than experimental reports as it is often impossible to independently check the analysis in these cases."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p172)

In the context of this debate, the problem with Gilligan's work is that she is extremely vague about her practice of interpretation and provides a minimal number of decontextualised extracts. It is important to note this criticism, as it is a problem into which discourse analysts can readily fall and consequently must be aware of; however, with careful attention to the description and substantiation of interpretative procedures, it can be circumvented.
2.4 Treatment of Language Data

Gilligan notes that:

"... the way people talk about their lives is of significance, that the language they use and the connections they make reveal the world that they see and in which they act."
(Gilligan, 1982, p2)

Clearly, this emphasis guides her analysis, but it is worthwhile to look at the theory of language she adopts to develop her studies. Gilligan claims to subscribe to a functional model of language, which suggests that utterances are tailored to different social contexts; however, her use of 'moral stages' implies that utterances are simple reflections of consistent mental states. The consequence of this is that her approach forces her to label the entire discourse of any one subject as belonging to one category: in consequence, she cannot deal with inconsistency of response. To provide an example, Gilligan's basic tenet that women are caring, ostensibly substantiated in the following extract:

"I personally don't want to hurt other people. That's a real criterion, a main criterion for me."
(quoted in Gilligan, 1982, p65)

is contradicted by what the subject goes on to say:

"Even today, though, I want approval and love, and I don't want enemies. Maybe that's why there is morality — so people can win approval, love, and friendship."
(quoted in Gilligan, 1982, p65)

The speaker could be read as variably endorsing altruistic ideals (level two) in the first extract and self-interest (level one) in the second; this questions the feasibility of assigning a single stage to an individual. Furthermore, the second extract contradicts her fundamental argument for the more 'caring' nature of women; it suggests that women are exhibiting 'caring' behaviour simply because it gains them friendship, and as a mask donned to win social approval. The whole premise of the "different voice" thus moves towards the pressure to conform to certain gender specific social roles.
3. SOME THEORETICAL ISSUES

3.1 Universalistic Assumptions

Gilligan presents conclusions and maintains assumptions with very little evidence; she supplies only a few investigations and, as stated above, with relatively small and (in the case of the abortion group, admittedly) unrepresentative samples. Although she justifies this lack of evidence by use of a disclaimer ("No claims are made about the origins of the differences described or their distribution in a wider population, across cultures or time", 1982, p2), she still uses this limited information to support a global theory which requires precisely that kind of cross-cultural, cross-temporal evidence.

Although she does point out that she is engaged in a preliminary, rather than a definitive, study, and acknowledges that further studies are necessary to test out her hypotheses ("longitudinal studies of women's moral judgement are necessary in order to validate the claims of stage and sequence presented"; 1980, p515), the assertions which she makes belie these limitations. For instance, while considering Chodorow, Gilligan refers to gender identity as "the unchanging core of personality formation" (1982, p7), ignoring many other potentially influential factors.

To give another example, despite Gilligan's criticism of Freud's misogyny, she uncritically accepts his idea that separation from the mother is necessary for the son, almost in its entirety:

"For boys and men, separation and individuation are critically tied to gender identity since separation from the mother is essential for the development of masculinity."
(Gilligan, 1982, p8)

else the male child would:

"... make himself dependent in a most dangerous way on ... his chosen love-object, and expose himself to extreme suffering if he should be rejected by that object or lose it through unfaithfulness or death."
(Freud, 1930, p101)

According to Gilligan,

"... although aggression has been construed as instinctual and separation has been thought necessary for its constraint, the violence in male fantasy seems rather to arise from a problem in communication and an absence of knowledge about human
relationships."
(Gilligan, 1982, p.45)

"... male fantasies and images ... reveal a world ... where betrayal threatens because there seems to be no way of knowing the truth."
(Gilligan, 1982, p.45)

Why should only men feel this Damoclean Sword of betrayal? Why should only men react in this way (it is plausible that many female fantasies may show equal amounts of violence)? Despite the supposedly closer relationships of females, betrayal still happens, and if Gilligan is correct in saying that relationships are more important to women, such a fracture of communication may affect women more intensely.

It must be said that I am not criticising Gilligan for her laudable attempt to evolve a new psychological analysis on a global scale; what I am criticising is the validity of making assumptions on the basis of broad generalisations and truisms about gender and the nature of women (e.g. supposed differing attitudes to betrayal) with insufficient substantive evidence; global claims require a far more sustained analysis.
3.2 Problems with Stage Theories

Gilligan's reliance upon Kohlberg's stage theory is also, I would argue, problematic. She interprets the major difficulty of Kohlberg's work to be his claim that women consistently appear to fixate at stage three (as opposed to men's stage four), and finds it consequently necessary to develop an alternative set of stages to accommodate her "different voice". Ironically, there is dispute over whether women are fixated in this way. Recent studies suggest that, if the sexes are matched for age, education and class, no differences are found (Walker, 1984), making Gilligan's critique somewhat redundant.

I would argue, however, that the major difficulty arising from Kohlberg's theory is not disputes over differences but the very notion of a moral stage.

A stage theory makes the following assumptions:

1) Sequentiality: subjects are assumed to move upwards from stage to stage, perhaps at a variable rate, but always progressing, never regressing. This is contradicted in Gilligan's own data (eg 'Claire', Gilligan, 1982, p54 - 5).

2) Skipping stages is deemed impossible. Subjects must acquire stage one before stage two; the individual is required to build on abilities acquired in the previous stage in order to attain the next.

3) There is deemed to be a clear cut division between stages: subjects cannot straddle stages. This implies that subjects will score equally well across all dilemmas.

Gilligan notes no classification problems, unlike Carol Dwyer (1980) in her retest of Gilligan. Dwyer constructed six dilemmas (two of which were sex - role reversed versions of Kohlberg's originals; the woman in the dilemma had to make the decision), and found that subject's responses were variable, sometimes contradictory, and refuted simple Kohlbergian stage categorisation. Other studies confirm the existence of classification inconsistencies; Jane MacGregor (1981) indicated the inadequacy of Kohlberg and Gilligan's stage theories, proposing that an examination of social representations or discourses of morality may prove more useful; Emler & Reicher (1987) found that if you vary the salience of different political identities, the same person will respond at different stages depending on the identity mode operating at that particular time.

The above point highlights the acontextuality of stage analyses. Variation in
response to different dilemmas may be due to the different situational factors posed by each: Gilligan (and stage theorists more generally) assume that if a subject shows a 'high morality' over relatively trivial issues (eg stealing), they will respond on the same level to different, more serious levels (eg euthanasia). Although Gilligan claims that:

"The psychology of women ... implies a more contextual mode of judgement and a different moral understanding."
(Gilligan, 1982, p22)

mirroring her emphasis on "contextual relativism" in her 1979 paper, she does not apply this call for more consideration of context to the dilemmas.
3.3 Assumption of discrete gender categories

A further problem exists which, I would argue, has more serious implications than those discussed above. Gilligan seems to assume the existence of two separate voices, the masculine distinct from the feminine. This is worthy of questioning in the light of points already made in Chapter One about the implications of use of discrete gender categorisations (such as inevitability, unchangeability and the likelihood of stereotypical characteristics being attributed to the categories).

Gilligan, in fact, prevaricates on this point: it is impossible to work out from her writing whether she is arguing for a 'justice' path and a 'caring' path which combine to form one voice with different forms of thought or paths which are forever divergent because of their origin in differences in male/female experience.

John Broughton (1983) provides evidence, from Gilligan's own data, to support the claim that Gilligan's gender dualism is unfounded: he finds a cross over between the gender stereotypes Gilligan purports, for example, Gilligan's subject number 15 (male) states:

"I have a great mother complex. I want to help people and be kind to them ... I guess I really like to communicate with people and get feedback from people on a deep level... (what obligations do you feel towards these people?) To be honest with them, not to do anything which would hurt them."

(quoted in Broughton, 1983, p597)

Broughton urges that this man shows aspects of what Gilligan theorises to be the "different voice" (he shows concern over connection with others and avoidance of hurt); an implied feminine voice.

Likewise, a female subject (number 63) shows a 'masculine' orientation towards justice, when asked about the Heinz dilemma:

"You can break laws because the laws are not too just."

(quoted in Broughton, 1983, p606)

This would be categorised according to Kohlberg as stage five (decisions are made beyond authority and social expectations).

Gilligan's apparently essentialist approach to gender possibly arises from her tendency to regard sex as the only determining characteristic:
"... when the observer is a woman, the perspective (on human life) may be of a different sort ... different ideas about human development, different ways of imagining the human condition, different notions of what is of value in life."
(Gilligan, 1982, p5)

Gilligan seems to consider gender to be the fundamental factor which influences how one views the world. In so doing, she relegates the influence of other factors (such as age, class, ethnicity or sexuality) to secondary importance, and neglects the differential reactions to gender labelling, which may vary situationally as well as from individual to individual:

"... women and men relate with varying degrees of acceptance, ambivalence, tension, conflict and antagonism to social definitions of 'feminine' and 'masculine'."
(Segal, 1987, p x)

One danger of Gilligan's work is that it may perpetuate a particular ideology of femininity. Following Miller's (1976) call for "a new language in psychology that would separate description of care and connection from the vocabulary of inequality and oppression" (Gilligan, 1982, p49) and Chodorow's reinterpretation of Freud ("Chodorow thus replaces Freud's negative and derivative description of female psychology with a positive and direct account of her own"; Gilligan, 1982, p8), Gilligan's approach seems to insist that the indecision and passivity stereotypically associated with women be redefined as constructive and humane. For example, May (1981) comments that men, interpreting women's stories, tend to attribute the absence of violence to a denial of danger or to a repression of aggression; Gilligan reinterprets the lack of violence to "activities of care" (Gilligan, 1982, p43), carried out in the interests of the fictional characters.

Gilligan thus follows a precedent set by 'cultural' feminists (eg Arcana, 1981, 1983; Daly, 1979; Griffin, 1984a, 1984b; Rich, 1977; Spender, 1980). However, her work risks dealing only with the symptoms of inequality by positively redefining stereotypes: as Segal warns:

"... there has always been a danger that in re-valuing our notions of the female and appealing to; the experiences of women, we are reinforcing the ideas of sexual polarity which feminism originally aimed to challenge."
(Segal, 1987, p xii)

Gilligan legitimates a particular image of women and femininity and we need,
as feminists, to question this legitimation and its effects:

"Today the public fare of feminism has changed. At any feminist gathering you are far more likely to hear assertions about the special nature of women and their values, with special references to the separate and special 'world of women'. It may seem ironic that radical ideas and strategies should rely on conventional assumptions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity', but it is this traditional gender ideology which has become the new 'common sense' of feminism."
(Segal, 1987, p 2, her emphasis).

More specifically, Gilligan separates and divides male from female on the 'accepted' instinct (female) versus rationality (men) dichotomy:

"In my research, I have found that women's moral development centers on the elaboration of that (intuitive or instinctual) knowledge."(Gilligan, 1982, p17)

She argues:

i) Women focus on relationships, men on rules, e.g.

"... while women thus try to change the rules in order to preserve relationships, men, in abiding by these rules, depict relationships as easily replaced."
(Gilligan, 1982, p44).

ii) Men perceive threat in personal intimacy; a conclusion drawn from data provided by Pollak and Gilligan (1982), which intimated that men use more violent imagery in connection with intimacy:

"The men in the class, considered as a group, projected more violence into situations of personal affiliation than they did into impersonal situations of achievement."
(Gilligan, 1982, p41)

Gilligan links this to the Freudian theory of male development through separation from the mother figure already described.

iii) Conversely, women see threat in interpersonal competition: Pollak and Gilligan's female subjects, "saw more violence in impersonal situations of affiliation" (Gilligan, 1982, p41) than the male, which Gilligan links to Horner's (1968, 1972) 'fear of success' hypothesis; women feel that ambition and achievement are unfeminine:

"... for most women, the anticipation of success in competitive achievement activity, especially against men, produces anticipation of certain negative consequences, for example, threat of social rejection and loss of femininity."
(Horner, 1968, p125)
iv) Women are more ineffectual than men:

"The essence of moral decision is the exercise of choice and the willingness to accept responsibility for that choice. To the extent that women perceive themselves as having no choice, then correspondingly excuse themselves from the responsibility that decision entails. Childlike in the vulnerability of their dependence and consequent fear of abandonment, they claim to wish only to please, but in return for their goodness they expect to be loved and cared for."

(Gilligan, 1982, p67)

Although this could be paraphrasing the beliefs of the subject quoted above, this is not stated and it is easy to read it as a statement of Gilligan's own belief.

The above four factors comprise a perhaps more complex formulation than that from which stereotypes are normally fashioned, but the net result is the same: women are confirmed as non-aggressive and functioning primarily at the personal level; this being scientifically verified, the association of 'personal' with indecision, ineffectuality and inferiority (to the 'public' domain inhabited by stereotypical men) will automatically follow.

It may be argued that Gilligan's "different voice" is never specifically labelled as feminine, and that she claims the caring aspects she locates are neither specifically male or female:

" ... the care perspective in my rendition is neither biologically determined nor unique to women."

(Gilligan, 1986, p327)

likewise, she claims to use women as subjects merely to,

" ... highlight a distinction between two modes of thought and to focus a problem of interpretation rather than to represent a generalisation about either sex."

(Gilligan, 1982, p2)

However, this is continually contradicted by her reference to a "feminine voice" (eg 1982, p71, p79) and "women's thinking" (eg 1982, p70), although it must be said that her emphasis on the "female" nature of the "different voice" varies over the years: the specifically "feminine voice" of 1982 is contradicted by an asexual voice distinguished by a concentration on communion and care in 1980. She even talks about the problem of women (obviously gender specific):
"My studies of women locate the problem of female development not in vales of care and connection or in the rational definition of self, but in the tendency for women, in the name of virtue, to give care only to others and to consider it selfish to care for themselves."
(Gilligan, 1986, p332)

However, this clear gender stereotype is destroyed in the next sentence:

"The inclusion of women's experience dispels the view as selfless and reveals the activities that constitute care and leads to responsiveness in human relationships."
(Gilligan, 1986, p332)

That is, there is more to the behaviour than superficial caring. With no clear connective statement, it is difficult to work out exactly what she means.

Broughton (1983), in particular, is vehement in his condemnation of Gilligan's stereotypy:

"Small wonder then that Gilligan's women offer little resistance to traditional views of what women are and what their place is. Much as her interview offers them no way to penetrate their own self – mystification, it offers them no way to penetrate the cultural mystification of femininity. They are left without reason or desire for emancipation."
(Broughton, 1983, p633)

Like the panacea offered by traditional women's magazines, which redefine housewifery and child rearing as technical, rewarding occupations in which women find satisfaction, Gilligan can be viewed (albeit cynically) as acknowledging that society does not and will not view women as equals. Her attempt to improve women's attitude to their situation (her reinterpretation of the female care/connectiveness attribute as positive) can be seen as ameliorating women's incentive to change, thus further embedding us in subordination.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the major advantage to Gilligan's work is a critical approach to existing male-biased social psychological and developmental literature, but it also raises several points which must be incorporated into any subsequent work. Firstly, Gilligan's work suffers through the lack of any systematic interpretative procedures for dealing with interview data. Secondly, methods must be developed to relate that data to the context in which it was generated. Thirdly and finally, social psychological analyses of gender must take into account the ideological context in which representations of gender are generated, and in this way question the images of women and men reproduced in our social science.
CHAPTER THREE

THE PSYCHOANALYTIC TRADITION IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF GENDER IDENTITY: KAREN HORNEY AND NANCY CHODOROW

1. INTRODUCTION

I would like to devote this chapter primarily to the psychoanalytic work of Nancy Chodorow, and the implications of her book, THE REPRODUCTION OF MOTHERING, for the study of gender. However, before beginning my analysis of this text, I would like to place her work in its historical context by providing a brief resume of the work of the earlier female psychoanalyst, Karen Horney, from whom Chodorow derives much of her approach. Together, Horney and Chodorow sum up an important and influential alternative tradition in research on the psychology of gender identity.

2. KAREN HORNEY

Karen Horney was born in Germany at the turn of the century. Emigrating to the USA before the outbreak of the Second World War, through the 1930s and 40s she evolved a detailed theory of 'feminine psychology', using her own experience to inform her interactions with her white, middle class, largely heterosexual clients.

Horney's work is marked as important by its radical reassessment of the Freudian psychoanalytic tradition; as Westkott (1986) indicates, her work represents:

"... a courageous attempt to reform the accepted psychoanalytic ideas on women ... (a) challenge to a system that derived female psychology from a male standard."
(Westkott, 1986, p9)

Horney's approach, in brief, developed a psychoanalytic theory of female character which emphasised the role of cultural values and social relations. She roots female neurosis (although - especially in her later work - Horney does claim that her work is gender neutral, her work does seem to describe a typically female pattern) in childhood, the consequence of growing up in a society where women are devalued. Horney's "feminine type", thus, is in
conflict, both internalising and opposing cultural expectations of 'femininity'.

In the remainder of this section, I would like to draw out three elements of this theory in more detail: the societal devaluation of women; the resultant character conflict; and Horney's "feminine type". In so doing, I will be drawing heavily on the analysis provided by Westkott (1986).

**Horney's Theory of "Female Psychology"**

Horney regarded society as unequivocally male dominated:

"The new point of view of which I wish to speak... is this: our whole civilization is a masculine civilisation. The State, the laws, morality, religion, and the sciences are the creation of men." (Horney, 1926, p55)

The consequence of this "masculine culture" (Horney, 1926, p55) is the devaluation of women:

"No matter how much the individual woman may be treasured as a mother or as a lover, it is always the male who will be considered more valuable on human and spiritual grounds." (Horney, 1926, p82)

In this "culture" female character is developed, and in which a sense of her inferiority will be conveyed:

"... a girl is exposed from birth onward to the suggestion — inevitable, whether conveyed brutally or delicately — of her inferiority." (Horney, 1926, p69)

As well as examining how women incorporated this ideology of female inferiority, Horney was also interested in how they rebelled against it, through, for instance, a rejection of female roles (1926), frigidity (1926–7) or resentment and envy of men (1934).

Against this backdrop, Horney saw adult neurosis as the product of contradictory and devaluing experiences in childhood:

"The consequence of cultural contradictions and constructing expectations that block the development of a whole self." (Westkott, 1986, p66)

Her theory combines an explanation of character development with a social critique of the relations and cultural values which promote character conflict,
and thus neuroticism:

"Horney argued that the neurotic is a victim whose suffering is not an individual failure but the rational human response to a culture that is sick."
(Westkott, 1986, p13)

Applying this to women, neuroticism may be seen as a conflict between two definitions of 'femininity' (mirroring the modern day divisions between career woman/housewife, Madonna/whore): on the one hand, the traditional view of women as subservient to men, on the other, the newly opened (albeit limited, in Horney's time) opportunities for independence through work:

"Woman’s efforts to achieve independence and an enlargement of her field of interests and activities are continually met with a scepticism which insists that such efforts should be made only in the face of economic necessity, and that they run counter to her inherent character and natural tendencies. Accordingly, all efforts of this sort are said to be without any vital significance for woman, whose very thought, in point of fact, should center exclusively upon the male or upon motherhood ... This attitude towards women ... represents the patriarchal ideal of womanhood, of woman as one whose only longing is to love a man and be loved by him."
(Horney, 1933, p182)

These two identities conflict, as women try to reconcile their desire for independence with societal prescriptions for the 'true' nature of women:

"... there may appear certain fixed ideologies concerning the 'nature' of woman; such as doctrines that woman is innately weak, emotional, enjoys dependence, is limited in capacities for independent work and autonomous thinking."
(Horney, 1935, p231)

This choice is made doubly difficult because, in rejecting the traditional female role, women also make themselves undesirable to men:

"The influence that these (traditional) ideologies exert on women is materially strengthened by the fact that women presenting the specified traits are more frequently chosen by men. This implies that women's erotic possibilities depend on their conformity to the image of that which constitutes their 'true nature'."
(ibid, p231)

As Westkott comments:

"Modern women are torn between love and work and are consequently dissatisfied in both."
(Westkott, 1986, p14)

This, Horney argued, was not an individual, abnormal problem, but
symptomatic of a generalised societal malaise; women who become neurotic in response to this contradiction (particularly those who exaggerate the 'feminine') are not deviant, but actually exemplify societal standards:

"From this (Horney's) perspective the neurotic is not abnormal but supranormal, not socially deficient but the cultural ideal. She is the feminine type, the female paragon who exaggerates the qualities that masculine civilisation promotes in women. Her success, however, is achieved at the cost of suffering experienced as inner conflict."
(Westkott, 1986, p18)

This particular set of conditions (the conflict between the subservience of the traditional gender identity and the modern desire for independence) leads to the evolution of what Horney called the "feminine type". Her paper "The Over-Evaluation of Love" (1934) developed an idealised and extremised version of this "type", seeing it as constituted from two elements, the first of which was male identification: an over-estimation of the value of masculine love and career success (which is also defined as masculine). Secondly, it involves a depreciation of the woman's own skills and abilities as insufficient to match these 'masculine' ideals of love and success:

"... we see how the same woman who disparages all men, nevertheless regards them as very much her superior. She has no faith in women's capacity for any real achievement and is rather inclined to identify with the masculine disregard for women. Though herself not a male, she at least aspires to share his judgement of women."
(Horney, 1926–7, p75)

Horney argued that the craving for male love and approval does not originate in instinctual biological drives, but rather represents a secondary expression of female rivalry. Horney roots this in childhood experience, where a female child grows up in competition with other females in the household to gain male approval. This approval is necessary to ameliorate the feeling of worthlessness engendered in her by her internalisation of the cultural devaluation of women. In order to gain such approval, she has to conform to the traditional image of women, learning to devalue her abilities and act as a sexualised being.

This is a vicious circle because, as Westkott says:

"The feminine type wants to triumph over other women by securing the love of men, but she feels fundamentally unlovable. She therefore deprecates her successes and discounts any man
who is attracted to her."
(Westkott, 1986, p16/17)

Summary

In this section, I have outlined Horney's theory of 'feminine psychology'. There are a number of problems with Horney's hypothesis (not least of which is the close dependence of her findings upon her particular subject group, which leads her to make assumptions about the centrality of motherhood and heterosexuality, for example). Horney's work indicates the possibilities of a psychoanalytic approach informed by feminism; this critical psychoanalysis reached its most developed form in the work of Nancy Chodorow, and I will go on to describe Chodorow's analysis as the touchstone for the evaluation of this psychoanalytic tradition.
3. NANCY CHODOROW

Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* poses something of a problem for researchers in the field of gender. Its importance is determined firstly by its provision of an internally consistent, intellectually satisfying argument which seems far superior to anything offered by social psychology and, secondly, the subsequent change in perspective it is seen as engineering:

"Chodorow's Mothering is important ... because it has helped formalize and give credence to a broader and more literary endeavour of recent years."
(Steedman, 1987, p87)

However, despite this, the implications underlying her theory appear deeply reactionary.

The basic tenet advanced in *The Reproduction of Mothering* is that, because mothers and daughters are of the same gender, and because the former have been girls themselves, mothers will experience daughters as less distinct from themselves than sons:

"I argue that the relationship of the mother differs in systematic ways for boys and girls, beginning in the earliest period."
(Chodorow, 1978, p91)

The consequence of this is a closer mother—daughter bond, reciprocal identification producing female children with less differentiated selves, thus a greater capacity for sympathy, dependency and sensitivity to others; in other words, daughters who are 'primed' for mothering:

"Development in the infantile period and particularly the emergence and resolution of the oedipus complex entail different psychological reactions, needs, and experiences, which cut off or curtail relational possibilities for parenting in boys, and keep them open and extend them in girls."
(Chodorow, 1978, p91)

Before one can consider Chodorow directly, it is first necessary to consider the shortcomings of the traditional biological and bioevolutionary explanations of women mothering, and to understand the stance which Chodorow takes within her general psychoanalytic framework.
3.1. Repudiation of Traditional Ideas of Why Women Mother

Chodorow's first task is to expose the inadequacies of traditional explanations of women's mothering. Typically, these explanations have either a biological or a bioevolutionary framework.

i) Biological Model

The biological/psychoanalytic explanation (eg as proposed by A Balint, 1939; M Balint, 1961; Benedek, 1949, 1959; Rossi, 1977 amongst others) of women's mothering assumes the structure of parenting to be self-explanatory: universality implies that women's mothering arises from instinct, and instinct is inevitable, unchanging. Women mother because they have some kind of hormonal and/or physiological basis which makes it 'natural' for them to mother.

The little evidence which does support this view comes from animals (eg Harlow et al, 1970), begging the culture question, and work on hormonal and chromosomal abnormalities (eg Money & Ehrhardt, 1973; Ehrhardt, 1973), and as Chodorow points out, evidence from these sources does not support the biological inevitability of women mothering:

"Beyond the possible hormonal components of a woman's early mothering of her own newborn ... there is nothing in paturient women's physiology which makes them particularly suited to later child care, nor is there any instinctual reason why they should be able to perform it. Nor is there anything biological or hormonal to differentiate a male 'substitute mother' from a female one."
(Chodorow, 1978, p30)

ii) The Bioevolutionary Model

The bioevolutionary account of women mothering, put forward primarily by anthropologists, is that women parent now because they always have. Two arguments are commonly used to explain the original sexual division of labour:

a) Men's greater agility, strength, speed and aggressivity made it natural for them to hunt, therefore by default women gathered food and reared the children (Lee & DeVore, 1968; Tiger, 1969; Rossi, 1977)

b) The demands of pregnancy and childcare kept women permanently involved
with the children: lactating women need to be close to their children, and
women's pregnancy and lactation conceivably made it inefficient and/or
dangerous for them, their children and the whole group to hunt (Barry,
Bacon & Child, 1957; D'Andrade, 1966; Friedl, 1975; Brown, 1971; Lancaster,
1976)

This perspective does have supportive evidence deriving from the premise that
the evolutionary basis of the original sexual division of labour lies in the
necessity of this division to species survival; with small groups and high infant
mortality, women would have to be pregnant and/or lactating continually just
to maintain group numbers:

"As long as basic subsistence was problematic, population small, social organization simple, and women spent much of their adult lives bearing or nursing children, it made sense that they should be largely responsible for older children and more associated with the domestic sphere than men." (Chodorow, 1978, p21)

These arguments do not suggest that women have greater mothering capacities
than men, but that men's caring for children was inconvenient and detrimental
to group survival. However, when these researchers begin to surmise about
why the original division of labour has been maintained, problems arise:
anthropologists often resort to concepts of biological coding, suggesting that
because the original division was essential to species survival, the 'maternal
instinct' has been built into human physiology to maintain it (Chodorow
includes a lengthy critique of Rossi, 1977, which effectively repudiates this
opinion).

Rather than accept women's mothering as a biological 'given', Chodorow
provides anthropological evidence which indicates firstly that labour does not
necessarily have to be divided according to gender (she quotes Brown's 1971
study of members of the Chukchee tribe, whose participation in reindeer
herding is determined by child-minding/non child-minding, rather than
division by gender), and secondly, that women's gathering in subsistence
societies is actually incompatible with the specified requirements of childcare
(i.e interruptable, non-dangerous occupations which do not take women far
from the home): in reality, gathering is dangerous and involves travel many
miles from the home base, necessitating the use of children and old people as
child-watchers. Furthermore,
"...the sexual division of labor in which women mother has new meaning and functions, and is no longer explicable as an outcome of biology or of the requirement of survival." (Chodorow, 1978, p21)

Women's mothering is not now essential for species survival, therefore discussions of the sexual division of labour cannot explain the continued existence of the phenomena today.

The combined implications of the biological and bioevolutionary approaches is to present women's mothering as inevitable, unchanging and functional: a natural fact. In consequence:

"Natural facts, for social scientists, are theoretically uninteresting and do not need explanation." (Chodorow, 1978, p14)

despite the fact that:

"The assumption is questionable...given the extent to which human behavior is not instinctually determined but culturally mediated." (Chodorow, 1978, p14)

Chodorow's alternative is to see the original division of labour as maintained through, "assumed convenience and cultural ideology" (Chodorow, 1978, p21), adopting the Marxist argument that the sexual division of labour is necessary to economic production and stratification: the woman at home ministers to her man's needs and releases that man into the economy as a worker ("The housewife's work remains productive, for what she produces is workers for industry: her husband with his clean clothes, well-filled stomach and mind freed from the need to provide daily care for his children"; Oakley, 1981, p166); the woman in the work-place allows for stratification within the working class as she is typically located in the most menial jobs. Chodorow's argument is that:

"We should see the original sexual division of labour as a once necessary social form used by and modified by other social forms as these have developed and changed." (Chodorow, 1978, p21)

Regarding role training as insufficient to produce the intensity, complexity and universality of women's mothering, Chodorow's tenet is that mothering is transmitted from mother to daughter on a subconscious level as an aspect of a wider cultural ideology about masculine and feminine attributes and social positioning. As a result, the dominant social structure is reproduced in generation after generation. Chodorow's fundamental justification for
conducting her work is encapsulated in the following quote:

"... the social organization of parenting produces sexual inequality, not simply role differentiation ... Even though it is an arrangement that seems universal, directly rooted in biology, and inevitable, it can be changed."

(Chodorow, 1978, p214)
3.2. Chodorow’s New Hypothesis

Before explaining Chodorow’s stance, one must first understand the psychoanalytic lynchpin of her argument: the different experiences of the two sexes during the Oedipus conflict:

"The different structure of the feminine and masculine oedipal triangle and process of oedipal experience that results from women’s mothering contributes further to gender personality differentiation and the reproduction of women’s mothering." (Chodorow, 1978, p207)

Psychoanalytic theory proposes that children (of both sexes) initially have no comprehension of their separateness from their mothers: this gives rise to an intense mother–infant bond (the pre–oedipal attachment). However, if the child is to develop distinct ego boundaries (i.e. a sense of self, detached from the mother) and a heterosexual orientation to non–familial members, (s)he must go through a period of crisis and transition, whereby the mother is rejected: the Oedipus complex.

Freudian psychoanalysis differentiates the impetus pushing children towards the Oedipus complex, although in both boys and girls the catalytic event is the discovery that the mother lacks a penis (seen by the children as synonymous with power, as well as being a salient part of the anatomy), and the judging of her as deficient because of this. A boy rejects his mother because her absence of a penis indicates the possibility of castration (the castration complex) by his father; the father sleeps with the mother, therefore the boy fears that if he has a continuing bond with the mother, he will be perceived as a threat and castrated by the father. Boys thus come to fear intense attachment through the castration complex, and internalise aspects of the father in order to lessen the possibility of castration. In so doing, they turn away from the mother, whom they begin to perceive as inferior, because she lacks a penis; misogyny is thus inbuilt in Freud’s conception of ‘normal’ masculine development.

The young girl, however, responds to the ‘cataclysmic’ discovery that her mother does not have a penis in a different way. She develops ‘penis envy’, despising the mother figure for the mother’s perceived deficiency, for the girl’s own lack of a penis, and for the mother’s sexual possession of the father. In rejecting the mother, the child turns instead to the father: he
possesses the penis she so desires and also, on a symbolic level, the father can provide the daughter with a penis of her own; he can impregnate her so that she gives birth to a male child.

Chodorow, following Freud, argues that the different way in which the catalyst (of the discovery that the mother lacks a penis) is interpreted has far reaching effects. Masculine development is considered to be the norm, as it involves a complete break from the nurturance of the mother and a move towards the more individuated, less intense affection for the father (the father, unlike the mother, is perceived as separate even by the very young child as he is not the primary caretaker and — in the psychoanalytically typical nuclear family — is often absent; he is also less likely to engage in nurturant behaviour towards the child). However, the consequence of this 'complete' Oedipal resolution is that males develop with a less firm sense of self: separation from the mother may be problematic, due to anxiety:

"A boy's identification processes are not likely to be so embedded in or mediated by a real affective relation to his father. At the same time, he tends to deny identification with and relationship to his mother and reject what he takes to be the feminine world: masculinity is defined as much negatively as positively."

(Chodorow, 1978, p176)

The establishment of a secure gender identity through attachment to the father may be equally problematic. Given the predominance of the nuclear family (in psychoanalytic theory, if not in reality), the typical father (with a five day, nine—to—five working pattern) is likely to have very little contact with his son. In consequence:

"A boy must attempt to develop a masculine gender identification and learn the masculine role in the absence of a continuous and on—going personal relationship to his father (and in the absence of a continuously available masculine role model)."

(Chodorow, 1978, p177)

This is further compounded by the threat which too close a father—son relationship poses to the son's development of a normal, extra—familial heterosexual orientation: this may also contribute to the more insecure masculine sense of self.

Girls, however, are in a different situation:

"My reading of the psychoanalytic account of the feminine oedipus
complex suggests that the asymmetrical structure of parenting generates a feminine oedipus complex with particular characteristics. Because mothers are the primary love object and object of identification for children of both genders, and because fathers come into the relational picture later and differently, the oedipus complex in girls is characterized by the continuation of preoedipal attachments and preoccupations, sexual oscillation in an oedipal triangle, and the lack of either absolute change of love object or absolute oedipal resolution."

(Chodorow, 1978, p133–134)

Their turn from their mother occurs later and is less absolute, as it is more societally acceptable for girls to remain attached to their mothers, and the nurturant qualities which the mother–daughter relationship embodies are those which fall within feminine gender identity (unlike masculine gender identity, which stresses separation and individuation). Girls, thus, develop without "repressed affective needs" (Chodorow, 1978, p196), as separation is a less essential part of their development:

"Women have not repressed affective needs ... Because her sense of self is firmer, and because oedipal love for her father is not so threatening, a girl does not "resolve" her oedipus complex to the same extent as a boy."

(Chodorow, 1978, p196)

The basic oppositions in gender identity which arise from the sexes' differing experiences of the oedipus conflict are Chodorow's theoretical lynch-pin. She argues that specific features of the female oedipus experience facilitate the reproduction of mothering, through both the mother and the daughter.

Firstly, the less complete, later occurring oedipus conflict which girls experience results in maternal contact which is more sustained and more intense than that which sons obtain: more opportunity thus exists for transmission of the dominant cultural ideology. As Chodorow comments:

"Women develop capacities for mothering from their object–relational stance. This stance grows out of the special nature and length of their preoedipal relationship to their mother; the nonabsolute repression of oedipal relationships; and their general ongoing mother–daughter preoccupation as they are growing up."

(Chodorow, 1978, p204)

Secondly, through making the assumption that the goal of every individual is to recreate the exclusivity of the mother–infant bond as an adult:

"Adults unconsciously look to recreate and are often unable to avoid recreating aspects of their early relationship."

(Chodorow, 1978, p51)
"The exclusive symbiotic mother–child relationship of a mother’s own infancy ... a relationship which all people who have been mothered basically want to recreate."
(Chodorow, 1978, p201)

Chodorow argues that their differing oedipal experiences leads the sexes to view attachment differently. The boy’s development is threatened by continuation of the sexualised nurturant mother–son relationship of the preoedipal period:

"... a boy’s mother has treated him as an extension of herself and at the same time as a sexual object."
(Chodorow, 1978, p196)

and he evolves separation as a strategy to cope with this:

"... he learns to use his masculinity and possession of a penis as a narcissistic defense."
(Chodorow, 1978, p196)

with consequences for adult life:

"Because their sexualized preoedipal attachment was encouraged, while their oedipal–genital wishes were thwarted and threatened with punishment, men may defensively invest more exclusively in the instinctual gratifications to be gained in a sexual relationship in order to avoid risking rejection of love."
(Chodorow, 1978, p196)

ie men largely suppress their relational needs, fulfilling them in their sexual relations.

However, for girls the position is again different:

"Girls’ identification processes, then, are more continuously embedded in and mediated by their ongoing relationship with their mother. They develop through and stress particularistic and affective relationships to others. A boy’s identification processes are not likely to be so embedded in or mediated by a real affective relation to his father. At the same time, he tends to deny identification with and relationship to his mother and reject what he takes to be the feminine world."
(Chodorow, 1978, p176)

This incompatibility between the sexes (women "have not formed the same defenses against relationships as men"; Chodorow, 1978, p204) means that men do not provide the love which women need. Furthermore, men are not the primary love object for women:

"... they are emotionally secondary and not exclusively loved – are not primary love objects like mothers."
(Chodorow, 1978, p197)
Coupled together, the inadequacy of men as love objects for women:

"... intense primary relationships, which men tend not to provide both because of their place in women's oedipal constellation and because of their difficulties with intimacy."
(Chodorow, 1978, p203)

means that women will look elsewhere for the deep, affectionate relationship they need:

"Women come to want and need primary relationships."
(Chodorow, 1978, p203)

Women will perhaps look to women friends to provide these primary relationships:

"One way that women fulfil these needs is through the creation and maintenance of important personal relations with other women."
(Chodorow, 1978, p200)

although this is unlikely:

"... both because of internal and external taboos on homosexuality, and because of women's isolation from their primary female kin (especially mothers) and other women."
(Chodorow, 1978, p203–4)

It is more feasible, however, that women will fulfil their desire to recreate the bond they had to their mother through their own children: by becoming,

"... more involved with ... (her) children ... she recreates for herself the exclusive intense primary unit which a heterosexual relationship tends to recreate for men."
(Chodorow, 1978, p202)

a process which is more likely with a female child due to identification.

A sustained mother–infant bond, thus, is forged through residual sex differences arising during the oedipal conflict, ensuring that women will bond to their children due to the inadequacy of men's fulfilment of their needs. Via resolving the need to recreate the mother–infant bond, women, "develop capacities for mothering" (Chodorow, 1978, p204): women are trapped, finding complete satisfaction only in mothering.
3.3 The position of Chodorow's Theory in Gender Research

Chodorow's THE REPRODUCTION OF MOTHERING is a major piece of work within the psychology of women: as Rossi (1981) stated, Chodorow's "core insight" (p492) of the differential, less individualistic treatment of daughters by their mothers is, "a brilliant one that contributes to an understanding of results in personality research" (p492). However, it is not without a significant number of problems, which I would like to consider in the remainder of this chapter.

Chodorow's work is a significant contribution to the psychology of women in that, whilst utilising concepts from Freudian psychoanalysis, she attempts to redress the fundamental problems of Freud's work; its misogyny and its asociality. She devotes an entire chapter in THE REPRODUCTION OF MOTHERING to "Freud: Ideology and Evidence", her justification being:

"We do a disservice to the psychoanalytic cause Freud professed if we accept his claims unquestioningly."  
(Chodorow, 1978, p142)

It is not stating the case too strongly to say that historically, psychology in general has been permeated by male bias; what Chodorow calls:

"...the normal tendency in most social and psychological thought to equate maleness with humanness."
(Chodorow, 1978, p143)

Specifically, Freud's "androcentric view of development" (Chodorow, 1978, p145) has had a long—lasting impact on psychoanalysis and psychology more generally: his view of sexual differentiation as the presence or absence of masculinity, and his incorporation of patriarchal assumptions about passivity, activity, and so on, have had far reaching theoretical repercussions. As Chodorow comments:

"Psychoanalysts continue to assume a biological and instinctual basis for the sexual division of labor, gender personality, and heterosexuality. Writing concerned with gender has continued to emphasize oedipal, libidinal issues and sexual orientation, has continued to see women as appendages of their libido, has continued to emphasize feminine sexuality, penis envy, masochism, genitality, frigidity, more than object—relations and ego development."
(Chodorow, 1978, p54)

Chodorow's contribution to the understanding of how mothering is transmitted
is a crucial step towards combating the male bias which at once both reifies and denigrates motherhood.

Chodorow also recognizes the restrictive nature of the basis of much psychoanalytic theorising:

"... psychoanalytic writers, who focus on primary relationships themselves, by and large do not analyze, or even notice, these relationships in the context of a particular historical period and particular social arrangements. They tend rather to reify arrangements that in our society ensure that women who are at least social, and usually biological, mothers do provide almost exclusive care."
(Chodorow, 1978, p73/4)

that is, they study:

"... a socially and historically specific mother–child relationship of a particular intensity and exclusivity – a particular infantile development that this relationship produces."
(Chodorow, 1978, p76)

Chodorow's approach to redressing Freud's asociality is to incorporate into her understanding of psychoanalysis the ideas of the cultural school (e.g. Horney, as discussed in section 2 of this Chapter; Fromm, 1941; Thompson, 1964), which emphasises not instinct but "the importance of society and culture" (Chodorow, 1978, p46) for mental life, personality and development. The result is a book based on object–relations theory, a branch of psychoanalysis which, "incorporates a view of the place of both drives and social relations in development", (Chodorow, 1978, p47).
3.4 Problems Related to the General Psychoanalytic Framework

The object—relations approach which Chodorow uses does have advantages over Freudian psychoanalysis, but, concentrating primarily upon Freud's misogyny, she ignores several other problems inherent in the psychoanalytic framework: arbitrariness of concepts, asociality, sample selection and problems of interpretation. I would like to consider each of these in turn.

i) The Arbitrariness of the Theoretical Concepts

Psychoanalytic theory, due to the nature of its topic of study (the 'unconscious'), is unique in that it is not amenable to empirical testing; as Weisstein commented, despite the analyst's degree of experience:

"Years of intensive clinical experience is not the same thing as empirical evidence."
(Weisstein, 1970, p210)

Although I am not suggesting that clinical evidence is worthless, I think, due to the difficulty of empirical validation, it is particularly important to validate psychoanalytic claims with evidence from other areas of psychology, anthropology, sociology etc. (eg there is a wealth of relevant research in developmental psychology which has been traditionally ignored by psychoanalytic writers).

In consequence, the concepts on which psychoanalysis is based (eg the ego/id/superego division) are arbitrarily related to the empirical evidence, although they are coherently related within the overall model:

"The literature does not make either a theoretical or empirical argument for the exhaustiveness or inevitability of the tripartite division (ego/id/superego), though it proceeds as if such arguments had been made. Critics argue that the division has been unnecessary and arbitrarily rigidified ... There is no obvious reason for combining these functions (of the superego) into a single structural entity, nor for expecting that other experiences and psychic operations do not produce other differentiations within the psyche."
(Chodorow, 1978, p44)

Psychoanalytic concepts tend to reflect relatively historically specific societal beliefs about mental processes, rather than necessarily reveal anything about those processes; for instance, Freud's belief about the immature and inflexible development of women:
"A woman ... often frightens us by her psychical rigidity and unchangeability."
(Freud, 1933, p135)

This reflects the prevailing Victorian view. Likewise, I would argue that Horney's assumption of inherent heterosexuality is determined by social opinion rather than empirical findings.

ii) Asociality

Freud's work, and psychoanalysis in general, is very asocial: once the relative strengths and weaknesses of the various structures (id, ego, superego) have been established, and the appropriate stages (oral, anal, genital) and traumas (oedipal conflict, castration complex) have been undergone, social factors act upon, but do not change, these unconscious structures, which can only be accessed through analysis.

As previously stated, Chodorow explicitly states her intention to socialise traditional psychoanalysis by adopting object—relations theory:

"Object—relations theory ... incorporates a view of the place of both drives and social relations in development."
(Chodorow, 1978, p47)

and her work is permeated by repeated calls for consideration of social factors. Chodorow skillfully interweaves sociality into her work, eg:

" ... a main argument of the book is that women's mothering itself is a social structure, which affects other structures; it is not something apart from social structure or society."
(Chodorow, 1981, p501)

However, despite her claim that:

" ... I argue that the sex—gender system is a social, psychological, and cultural totality. We cannot identify one sphere as uniquely causal or constitutive of the others."
(Chodorow, 1981, p502)

Chodorow's analysis ultimately gives primacy to the psychoanalytic level; her approach is typified in the following quote:

"However, even as I argue that women's mothering is a fundamental part of social structure, I also argue that this mothering cannot be understood without understanding the psychodynamics of the mother—daughter, mother—son, and husband—wife relationships."
(Chodorow, 1981, p502)
Furthermore, Chodorow’s stance is to recognize the influence of society on the child’s unconscious only as transmitted through the family:

"... society constitutes itself psychologically in the individual not only in the moral structures of the superego. All aspects of psychic structure, character, and emotional and erotic life are social, constituted through a "history of object choices". This history, dependent on the individual personalities and behavior of those who happen to interact with a child, is also prevalent psychological modes of society."
(Chodorow, 1978, p50)

which supports her argument that the nuclear family arrangement, where female mothering is the norm, is a major organ by which male dominance is perpetuated:

"... the family ... is a primary constituent of the male dominant social organization of gender and, as such, is as fundamental a constituent feature of society as a whole — of "social structure" — as is the economy or political organization."
(Chodorow, 1981, p502)

Although there is evidence to support this position, it ignores other potential influences on the child, such as older siblings, media, contact with non-familial members, education and peer group influence; it may be argued that the latter two come to bear on the child only after the structures of the unconscious have been fixed, but as Chodorow never specifies the ages of the children she is writing about (a criticism made by Rossi, 1981, p496), they may be influential.

Furthermore, she devalues non-psychoanalytic factors by regarding social factors as overlaid upon the psychoanalytic level, reinforcing rather than forming basic tendencies, eg:

"... relational issues and needs predate and underlie her identification, and come out of normal family structure regardless of explicit role training. Usually, however, this training intensifies their effects."
(Chodorow, 1978, p202)

even whilst she explicitly includes social factors:

"(The mother's) mothering, then, is informed by her relationship to her husband, her expectations of marital inequality, and her expectations about gender roles."
(Chodorow, 1978, p86)

ultimately, her text is nothing more than an "exegesis of psychoanalytic theory"
In short, although Chodorow’s work is punctuated by an elaborate system of
disclaimers which call for an approach which integrates social and psychological
factors, she herself deals exclusively with the latter, ultimately suggesting that
personality determines the social:

"Chodorow argues ... that modern social institutions respond to
and are supported by the intrapsychic needs of males and females
as they are created in a nuclear family whose division of labor
assigns women to the role of primary parent."
(Lorber, 1981, p483)

rather than seeing it, for instance, as a reciprocal process. This is a
particularly significant problem, given the tendency of Lorber (1981) and others
to argue that, "social structures are the crucial variable" (Lorber, 1981, p483),
which can entirely explain women’s mothering (mediated through social and
historical factors such as separation of home and work, inequality of male and
female income, the ideology of patriarchy etc.) without recompense to
psychoanalytic levels of analysis.

In particular, the system of social rewards within society for women who
"conform" is likely to be influential (eg. Lorber, 1981, uses this as the crux of
her argument: "I would argue that they mother ... not because of intrapsychic
forces but because ... it is likely to maximise their social rewards", p484). Chodorow
gives scant respect to this, dismissive of all factors involving
conscious, rather than unconscious, processes:

"Conscious aspects of development ... reinforce the less intended
and unconscious development of orientations and relational
capacities that the psychoanalytic account of feminine development
describes."
(Chodorow, 1978, p51/2)

iii) Sample Selection and Other Methodological Issues

Leading from the criticism of asociality, a further problem pertaining to
psychoanalysis in general is that of making universalistic claims on minimal
evidence: Freud established a precedent whereby theories could legitimately be
substantiated by a small number of clinical case studies, which gives rise to
two distinct problems.

Firstly, subjects are generally all drawn from the same population: in Freud’s
case, middle-aged, wealthy Viennese women; for Chodorow, women involved
"... a certain kind of mothering — middle-class, psychologically oriented, and achievement oriented (husbands and sons towards careers, mothers and daughters towards perfect children) — in short the hothouse tending of two or three offspring in an isolated nuclear family."

(Lorber, 1981, p485)

Chodorow does not explain the 'universal' phenomena of female mothering in, for instance, kibbutzim, single-parent and other father-absent children (her account offers no explanation of how a girl growing up with no "secondary parenting figure" — Chodorow, 1978, p139n — gains any individuation and sense of self), nor the impact of the unconscious processes supposedly promoting mothering in voluntarily childless women (cf Steedman's 1987 claim that the latter may signify a refusal to reproduce "the circumstances of their exile", p7, an interesting extension of Chodorow's concept).

Although she states that:

"Culture and personality theory has shown that early experiences common to members of a particular society contribute to the formation of typical personalities organized around and preoccupied with certain relational issues."

(Chodorow, 1978, p51)

Chodorow makes no attempt to validate her universalistic claims with an analysis of these "early experiences" in any culture other than modern Western society, in any other form of parenting but the nuclear family. Chodorow's analysis of mothering, thus, is "culture and time bound" (Lorber, 1981, p485); she does consider a universal phenomena, but succeeds only in explaining its occurrence in one particular culture, at one particular period in time.

Secondly, clinical case studies represent the abnormal. A long historical precedent of regarding the pathological as an exaggeration of the normal exists, which leads to the former being regarded as more revealing than the latter (for instance, Rossi comments on the "depth of insight" they provide; Rossi, 1981, p494).

I do not feel qualified to argue whether, as Rossi states,

"... pathology can involve not simply exaggeration of normal tendencies but actual reversals from normal tendencies."

(Rossi, 1981, p494)

or, as Chodorow argues,
"Drawing from clinical cases does not mean drawing from the randomly atypical. Pathology reflects normal tendencies and becomes useful sociological evidence when a number of clinical cases reveal systematic, patterned responses."
(Chodorow, 1981, p504)

However, regardless of this debate, a theory (such as Chodorow’s explanation of mothering), which purports to explain behaviour in normal adults, must be substantiated by (if not wholly based upon) evidence from non-pathological individuals.

Despite the limitations of her sample (compounded by the fact that Chodorow has no empirical data of her own, and is thus relying on the accuracy of other — uncited — data: "A final difficulty with my own use of clinical evidence is that, as I am not a clinician, I must rely entirely on the evidence gathered and reported by others."
(Chodorow, 1981, p505), Chodorow still uses it to make universalistic claims such as:

"... mothers treat and experience differently preoedipal boys and girls."
(Chodorow, 1978, p98)

"... the subtleties of mothers’ differential treatment and experiencing of sons and daughters and of the different development that results."
(Chodorow, 1978, p99)

"The clinical and cultural examples I have discussed all point to the conclusion that preoedipal experiences of girls and boys differ. The girl’s preoedipal mother—love and preoccupation with preoedipal issues are prolonged in a way that they are not for the boy."
(Chodorow, 1978, p108)

Given these two criticisms of her sample selection, the claims which Chodorow makes are far too assertive, for instance:

"The early relationship generates a basic relational stance and creates potential parenting capacities in everyone who has been mothered, and a desire to recreate such a relationship as well."
(Chodorow, 1978, p90, my emphasis)

is far too strong, not allowing for different degrees — both in qualitative and quantitative terms — of mothering, or for different reactions from the child.

Even accepting the flaws in Chodorow’s data source, a further problem arises from her interpretation of that data. Psychoanalysis in general is troubled by
the necessarily subjective nature of the interpretation of unconscious mental experiences (illustrated beautifully by Freud’s application of conclusions, based on his introspections into his own male childhood experiences, to his Viennese matriarchs). Although Chodorow is at least aware of this limitation:

"... unconscious mental experiences are the major data and subject of psychoanalysis, and all claims about unconscious mental activity must be inferential."

(Chodorow, 1981, p505)

but does not take any steps to circumvent it.

A further interpretative problem arises because Chodorow is studying infancy: as Rossi (1981) indicates:

"... it is precisely because psychoanalytic theory is rooted in clinical practice that it can never be adequate as an approach to understanding infant development. Clinical practice relies on verbal recall and hence ... cannot tap preverbal stages of infant development in the first year ... these early months are critical to Chodorow’s theories."

(Rossi, 1981, p495)

Chodorow counters this by claiming that her text includes experimental and observational literature on child research, but there is little evidence of this in the single-mindedly psychoanalytic approach she advocates. Moreover, as Rossi again states, citing Brim and Kagan (1980):

"Psychoanalytically inclined theorists do not like to come to grips with the growing evidence that very little of what occurs under six years of age predicts characteristics in adolescence and adulthood, or that hormonal events and physical changes in puberty can extinguish all but minor trace effects of early experiences and substitute a whole set of characteristics predictive of adult personality."

(Rossi, 1981, p496n)

in other words, the entire validity of the psychoanalytic study of infancy is questionable.
3.5 The Reproduction of Mothering as the Reproduction of Ideology

Thus, a specific number of problems arise in Chodorow's work as a consequence of her subscription to a psychoanalytic mode of analysis. However, I would argue that the most serious flaw in The Reproduction of Mothering derives from Chodorow's own internalisation of the prevailing cultural stereotype of women: she works back from the stereotypical image of women being 'good' at relationships, whereas men as 'bad' at them, taking this for granted as a simple fact about men and women. However, this apparently natural observation can equally be regarded as an ideological construct, therefore Chodorow's unquestioning acceptance of it is disturbing.

Likewise, Chodorow retains the absolute gender division in the distinction between male = work, female = home (thus the points made earlier about Gilligan's use of discrete gender categories apply equally here), and she further perpetuates stereotypes in her image of females as more caring:

"Girls emerge from this (oedipal conflict) period with a basis for 'emerge' built into their primary definition of self in a way that boys do not. Girls emerge with a stronger basis for experiencing another's needs or feelings as one's own."
(Chodorow, 1978, p167)

and less sexual:

"Differences in the oedipal experience have important implications ... a girl does not turn absolutely from her mother to her father, but adds her father to her world of primary objects. She defines herself, as Deutsch says, in a relational triangle ... although most women emerge from their oedipus complex erotically heterosexual ... heterosexual love and emotional commitments are less exclusively established."
(Chodorow, 1978, p167)

"Boys and girls experience the sexual wishes and fantasies of their oedipal triangles differently, and thus emerge with differently constructed sexual needs and wants."
(Chodorow, 1978, p169/170)

ignoring the very real possibility that women may appear less sexual because it is less socially acceptable for them to demonstrate overt sexuality, as compared to men. Likewise, women are collectively seen as communal, men as loners:

"Men ... do not define themselves in relationship and have come to suppress relational capacities and repress relational needs. This prepares them to participate in the affect-denying world of alienated work, but not to fulfil women's needs for intimacy and primary relationships."
Chodorow's, at times, ill-advised use of language also provides grounds for concern, eg she talks of:

"A mother's regression to early relational stances in the course of mothering."
(Chodorow, 1978, p89, my emphasis)

reflecting the Catch-22 situation in which both science and popular culture place mothers. On the one hand, motherhood is seen as instinctual and primitive, indicating that it requires neither intellect nor, indeed, any degree of civilisation:

"In the ordinary things you do you are naturally doing very important things, and the beauty of it is that you do not have to be clever, and you do not even have to think if you do not want to ... If a child can play with a doll, you can be an ordinary devoted mother ... Isn't it strange that such a tremendously important thing should depend so little on exceptional intelligence!"
(Winnicott, 1964, p16–17)

Whereas, on the other hand, motherhood is reified and set apart by psychologists:

"Analysts do not consider their prescriptions difficult for most 'normal' mothers to fulfil. This is because of their view of the special nature of mother's mothering, and mother–infant relationships ... They suggest that women get gratification from and fulfil maternal role expectations at a fundamentally different level of experience from that of any other human relationship."
(Chodorow, 1978, p85)

As discussed in Chapter Two, the latter may cynically be viewed as an attempt to make mothers more contented with the often unpleasant, often boring, task of raising children:

"Masculine culture delegates to them (women) the care of not only humanity's lowest needs (the 'lavatorial' function of housework, the cleaning of small children, etc.) but its 'highest necessities' — 'the intense emotionally connected co-operation and creativity necessary for human life and growth' (Miller, 1976, p25–6)."
(Oakley, 1981, p81).

Like Gilligan, Chodorow could be seen as engaging in a process of positive reinterpretation, rather than replacement, of existing theories of female psychology.
Chodorow's "solution" to the inequalities which derive from women's mothering is to suggest co-parenting:

"My expectation is that equal parenting would leave people of both genders with the positive capacities each has, but without the destructive extremes these currently tend toward." (Chodorow, 1978, p218)

Given the improbability of this happening, as critics note:

"I find it difficult to accept Chodorow's belief that it is feasible and possible to effect so fundamental a change in parenting practices that sons and daughters would grow up with similar psychological characteristics." (Rossi, 1981, p497)

"... if most men have developed non-affective personalities and strong ego boundaries, where are you going to find enough men with psychological capabilities to parent well and thus break the general pattern of the emotional primacy of the mother." (Lorber, 1981, p485)

and Chodorow herself admits:

"I would like to think we could simply initiate these transformations (equal parenting) on a societywide scale. However, women's mothering is tied to many other aspects of our society, is fundamental to our ideology of gender, and benefits many people. It is a major feature of the sex-gender system ... Assumptions that the social organization of parenting is natural and proper ... have continued to serve as grounds for arguments against most changes in the social organization of gender. Certainly resistance to changes in the sex-gender system is often strongest around women's maternal functions." (Chodorow, 1978, p219)

Co-parenting may be a particularly difficult task to achieve: firstly, male antipathy to involvement in a task traditionally perceived as female (and hence inferior) must be overcome, but perhaps more difficult to eradicate is the distinctively different approach of the sexes to parenting (cf for instance, Rowe, 1978, whose account of parenting in a mixed sex collective shows marked sex differences). As Chodorow gives no indication as to how this objective may be attained, her analysis serves only to put more pressure on mothers: what should they do in the interim, given that the shared parenting advocated by Chodorow is a goal rather than an attainable end? The mother's role in establishing gender identity is critical (the child's "total dependence is on the mother"; Chodorow, 1978, p60), as Chodorow suggests, following Anna Freud:

"...the actions of the mother and her libidinal cathexis and involvement with the child exert a selective growth of some, and hold back, or fail to stimulate and libidinize, the growth of other
potentialities."
(Freud, 1962, p241; quoted in Chodorow, 1978, p58)

therefore should mothers raise their children to be societally 'normal' (ie daughters primed for mothering) and, "...contribute to the perpetuation of their own social roles and position in the hierarchy of gender" (Chodorow, 1978, p209), or risk problems by taking an unconventional tack. Chodorow's analysis is applicable only to mythical 'happy families', offering little insight to real mothers, whose attitude to their children is often deeply ambivalent (cf, for instance, Spare Rib Collective, 1980; Arcana, 1983). Reading Chodorow's discussion (1978, p58–9) of the personality defects which can arise from deficiencies in early parental care, potentially liberal minded mothers are likely to be frightened into opting for 'normal' patterns of child-rearing.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Chodorow's *THE REPRODUCTION OF MOTHERING* has many advantages, not the least of which is its critique of orthodox Freudianism. Her radical approach to mothering, which uses psychoanalysis to examine the psychological basis of the female desire to mother, and attempts to set mothering within the wider political context of male dominance, represents a significant advance on Freudian misogynism.

However, as I have pointed out, Chodorow's work is beset by problems (asociality, sample selection, problems of interpretation etcetera) which compromise its usefulness as a theoretical model. It is perhaps more useful to see Chodorow as providing a comprehensive study of one particular image of mothering, which is tied to one particular culture at one particular time. Many other images of motherhood have existed over the last century; for instance, the Marxist-Feminist perspective accounts for motherhood in terms of the material demands of society and the position of women as a reserve army of labour; Marxist-Feminism sees the societal ideology of motherhood as radically different according to whether society requires them as workers or not.

In consequence, although Chodorow's work is too valuable to reject totally, one must be aware of the contextual specificity of her claims, and of the possible existence of equally viable alternative images of motherhood, and thus different explanations of the problem.
CHAPTER FOUR

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS: THE WOMEN'S THERAPY MOVEMENT, SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY AND DECONSTRUCTIONISM

1. INTRODUCTION

In the proceeding chapters, I reviewed some of the main theoretical perspectives used in the psychological study of gender, and began to indicate some of the problems they are subject to. These problems will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

In this chapter, I would like to conclude this selective account of trends in work on gender identity by describing development in psychological research. The first of these is the work of the Women's Therapy Centre. I intend to discuss this in some detail, as, from my perspective, this is a particularly significant research trend, both as a therapeutic extension of Chodorow and as an illustration of how recent research has tended to reproduce the problems of the antecedent work.

In concluding this section, I would also like to look at two other developments in gender research, which are perhaps more successful than the Women's Therapy Centre's conception in combating these problems: 'modified' Social Identity Theory, and the deconstructionist trend as exemplified by the work of Celia Kitzinger and Wendy Hollway.
2. PSYCHOANALYTIC RESEARCH

Rather than use this section to provide a superficial outline of recent feminist psychoanalytic work, I would like instead to review one particularly influential movement within feminist research: the Women's Therapy Centre (WTC).

The most prolific author within the Movement, Susie Orbach, uses a Chodorow-esque theory of the feminine psyche to support a therapeutic analysis of body image. In the following section, I would like to review several of the key assumptions of the WTC's research.

2.1 Impoverished Sense of Female Identity

The WTC's conceptualization owes a great deal to the Cultural School of Psychoanalysis; a fundamental assumption derived by the WTC from Chodorow and her compatriots is that women have a weaker sense of identity than men:

"... women's psychology is one of unclear boundaries, of an insecure or illusive sense of self. Women often search for themselves in others, seeking definition in contact. The central aspect of women's psychology, the one that embodies most of the major themes, is the lack of psychological separateness, the absence of boundaries within which a secure sense of self is contained."

(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p138)

The WTC provides two reasons for this impoverished sense of identity: firstly, Orbach et al. propose that young girls have far greater difficulty in differentiating themselves from their mothers, as they have no sexual differences from which to work (this ignores other factors, such as power structure, physical size etcetera, which may well be more salient than gender to a young child:

"The distinction between the two of them (mother and daughter) is blurred, so that the daughter's development towards independence brings feelings of loss as well as pride."

(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p56)

"Since women are not accepted as equal human beings but are nevertheless expected to devote enormous energy to the lives of others, the distinctions between their own lives and the lives of those close to them may become blurred."

(Orbach, 1978, p24)
whereas male children, with their sexual differences, find this establishment of a identity separated from the mother much easier:

"Built into a mother's experience with a son from the beginning of his life is the knowledge that he will become his own person in the world."
(Orbach, 1978, p56)

Secondly, the WTC also endorses Chodorow's hypothesis that mothers also react differently to daughters because they are the same gender, and thus they experience them as less separate from themselves:

"Mothers and daughters share a gender identity, as social role, and social expectations ... Because of the social consequences of gender, mothers inevitably relate differently to their daughters and their sons ... all mothers were and are daughters themselves ... all daughters are brought up by their mothers to become mothers ... all mothers learn from their mothers about their place in the world."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p37)

"Mother comes to be frightened by her daughter's free expression of her needs, and unconsciously acts toward her infant daughter in the same way she acts internally toward the little-girl part of herself. In some ways the little daughter becomes an external representation of that part of herself which she has come to dislike and deny. The complex of emotions that results from her own deprivation through childhood and adult life is both directed inward in the struggle to negate the little-girl part of herself and projected outward onto her daughter."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p44)

The outcome of this is that males are more self-possessed, more secure and have a better defined sense of identity than women (pp50 – 66), and women are forced to resort to coping strategies (e.g. gaining weight) in an attempt to gain an identity:

"We know that the female role requires the woman to be a nurturing, caring person who gives emotional sustenance to the people around her ... Being fat expresses an attempt both to merge with others and, paradoxically, to provide an impenetrable wall around herself."
(Orbach, 1978, p83)
2.2 The Social Construction of Gender

In brief, the WTC’s conceptualization sees the social construction of gender as promoting female inferiority. The family (specifically the mother – daughter relationship) is seen as the mechanism whereby such social constructions are reproduced.

Like Chodorow, the WTC strongly rejects the biological/bioevolutionary model of femininity:

"Money and Erhardt ... argue that to understand concepts of masculinity and femininity we must separate the biological basis from the cultural. Their work shows very clearly that the ideas we held about femininity and masculinity relate to the cultural practices of a given society and not to biological imperatives. Human beings are not born with a masculine or a feminine psychology; rather, women’s and men’s psychologies are fashioned to fit with what is thought of as masculine and feminine. These researchers argue that apart from biological sex ... the attributes we associate with femininity and masculinity are cultural constructions."

(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p23/4)

Instead, Orbach et al evolve a Cultural School type image of gender as a social construction:

"The present psychic structure of women derives from current child-rearing arrangements in which women bring up the children of a patriarchal society, and it is based on a translation of culture, material conditions, actual personal relationships, power relationships within the family, and the psychodynamics of relationships."

(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p191)

"In contrast to the views of many psychologists, we stress the importance of culture on shaping the needs, desires, and psychic life of both women and men, so that femininity and masculinity are psychological entities within a social context. Gender identity and a sense of self emerge together and reflect the prevailing culture and pattern of parenting."

(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p25, their emphasis)

In an argument borrowed from Chodorow, the WTC indicates that the social practice which constructs femininity also connotes inferiority:

"The consequences of being raised as a daughter in a patriarchal society is that women see themselves as inferior. This sense of inferiority is not formed at the Oedipal stage when the girl realizes..."
she is not a boy; it is intimately linked to the very beginning of a girl's life and the acquisition of gender identity."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p29)

The above constitutes the WTC's theoretical approach. Their therapeutic argument is that this theory can be used to explicate eating disorders. The first stage of this is to suggest that body image is socially ordained:

"The perspective is always to see the social dimensions that have led women to choose compulsive eating as an adaptation to sexist pressure in contemporary society."
(Orbach, 1978, p14)

"... women are continually manipulated by images of proper womanhood, which are extremely powerful because they are presented as the only reality. To ignore them means to risk being an outcast ... women are caught in an attempt to conform to a standard that is externally defined and constantly changing."
(Orbach, 1978, p21, her emphasis)

Observance of societal standards for women is seen as both immensely difficult:

"The feminist analysis of women’s psychology shows the enormous extent to which their actions and feelings have been concentrated on trying to cope with society's rules about what and who women should be."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p7)

And also tantamount to acceptance of the dominant female stereotype; a stereotype which is at once prescriptive and derogative:

"... women unconsciously fear being thin. If one is thin, then one is expected to fit the norm. If one is thin others will equate conforming in body size with conforming with stereotyped female behaviour."
(Orbach, 1978, p103)

It thus follows that refusal to conform to the prescribed body size and shape (e.g. by compulsive eating or anorexia) can be seen as a political act; rejection of society's idealised image implies rejection of the female stereotype:

"Fat is a response to; the many oppressive manifestations of a sexist culture. Fat is a way of saying 'no' to powerlessness and self-denial, to a limiting sexual expression which demands that females look and act in a certain way, and to an image of womanhood that defines a specific social role."
(Orbach, 1978, p32)
"Anorexia reflects an ambivalence about femininity, a rebellion against feminization that in its particular form expresses both a rejection and an exaggeration of the image." (Orbach, 1978, p165)

That is, a woman can symbolically gain some of the qualities automatically accorded to men (power, desexualisation, respect for work, the ability to act in the environment) by not accepting the prescribed female image:

"... my fat gives me substance and physical presence in the world. It allows me to do all the things I have to do." (Orbach, 1978, p45)

"She felt that her bulk and substance was an expression of her need to be noticed as a productive human being (at work) rather than a decorative accompaniment to the environment ... 'The fat made me one of the boys'." (Orbach, 1978, p45/6)

"... the most frequently stated advantage women saw in being fat had to do with sexual protection ... To expose their sexuality means that others will deny them their personhood." (Orbach, 1978, p60, her emphasis)

However, becoming fat or anorectic is not an unproblematic strategy:

"While fat serves the symbolic function of rejecting the way by which society distorts women and their relationships with others ... getting fat remains an unhappy and unsatisfactory attempt to resolve these conflicts. It is a painful price to pay, whether a woman is trying to conform to society's expectations or attempting to forge a new identity." (Orbach, 1978, p34)

and Orbach claims that her combination of 'feminist psychotherapy' and the rediscovery of "one's own authentic experiences" can reveal to patients that the underlying cause of compulsive eating/anorexia is social pressure, put women back in touch with their 'true selves' and suggest alternative strategies which might enable women to cope more satisfactorily with their problematic social conditions.
2.3 Reproduction of Inferiority Through the Family

Again following the tradition of psychoanalytic predecessors such as Horney and Chodorow, the WTC proposes that the mechanism whereby the ideology of female inferiority is transmitted is the family. The Woman's Therapy Centre see the family as a microcosm of society, wherein females are conditioned:

"The family is our first social world ... A feminist psychotherapy is interested in how the social practices of a given culture are transmitted to its members and how the individual internalizes the power relations, sex roles, and psychodynamics of the family."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p26)

Specifically, the reproduction of this ideology of inferiority occurs via the mother–daughter relationship:

"The mother prepares her daughter for a life in which the major decisions are made for her rather than by her. The girl will be taught to accept that her needs come second and that keeping quiet is safer than assertion."
(Orbach, 1978, p58, her emphasis)

The WTC proposes that, in this relationship, what they call the "'little—girl' dynamic" (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p207) is reproduced:

"Women therapists were all girls who were taught to be women; we all have little—girls inside us; we all share on some level the same struggle."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p122)

This "'little—girl' dynamic" is promoted as a major aspect of female psychology, which manifests itself in a problematic dependency and need for affection:

"Dependency feelings are terribly painful for the woman ... The picture she must present to the world is of an adult woman, but inside she feels like a child, and her feelings of dependency painfully confirm her smallness."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p87)

The mother–daughter relationship, thus, creates a dynamic which problematises heterosexual relationships:

"The tension between women and men in heterosexual relationships often centers on this dynamic, with women alternately curbing and exposing their dependency needs and men being perplexed, angered
or intimidated by them."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p87)

and lays the "seeds for the behavior" (Orbach, 1978, p58) of compulsive eating:

"As long as a patriarchal culture demands that women bring up their daughters to accept an inferior social position, the mother's job will be fraught with tension and confusion which are often made manifest in the way mothers and daughters interact over the subject of food."
(Orbach, 1978, p113)

2.4 Methodological Problems

Although the work of the Woman's Therapy Centre is a useful therapeutic extension of Chodorow, which has proven immensely valuable to a great many women, it is not unproblematic.

The WTC strongly advocates the use of qualitative methodologies, to make the link between social conditions and the internal representation of those conditions:

"Through the process of trying to change our society we had made ourselves more conscious and had begun to understand how social expectations were affecting us on a psychological level ... This discovery on a feeling level led us to try to discover the vital connections between the social world that women inhabit and the inner private world that governs us in the deepest reaches of our personalities."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p69)

Society is approached through analysis of how individuals perceive it:

"... through listening to an individual's experience we could draw a much richer picture of how society is put together ... The women's movement built an analysis of society founded on the nuts and bolts of individual life experience ... Through in-depth analysis of an individual's conscious and unconscious life, psychoanalysts have theorized about the workings of society, for the investigation of a person's psyche reveals the ensemble of social relations."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p26)

However, this is little more than a set of promises and programmatic statements, with little actually being delivered. With no coherent theoretical basis, they put
forward 'feminist psychotherapy' as their therapeutic model:

"Psychoanalytically oriented feminist therapy is also concerned with trying to understand the workings of the mind, with the aim of relieving the distressing symptoms that prevent a woman from feeling comfortable with and within herself." (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p69)

and as their proposed link between the social and 'inner' worlds:

"While psychoanalysis gives us useful tools to discover the deepest sources of emotional distress, feminism insists that those painful personal experiences which derive from the social context into which female babies are born, and within which they develop to become adult women." (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p130)

Using this approach of therapy informed by a feminist ideology, the WTC claims that the "little–girl' dynamic" (whereby, through the mother–daughter relationship, the ideology of female inferiority is transmitted) can be revealed and corrected:

"Feminist therapy is about learning to love the little–girl inside that patriarchy has taught us to fear and despise; it is about allowing her to grow up and become part of the autonomous woman; above all, it is about being loved by another woman and helped by her to grow and become separate." (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p107)

This colour supplement speak, at best unconvincing, lacks the coherent theoretical basis which would give it weight; the rationale behind the switch to a qualitative methodology for the study of women is not adequately explained.

In their description of the various reasons given by their patients for compulsive eating, they use 'repertoires' supported by quotes, e.g.:

5. GUARANTEED PLEASURE: 'Eating goodies is the only way to give myself a real treat. it's the one pleasure that I know how to give myself.'

6. NERVOUS EATING: 'I just have to have something. What I can cram into my mouth.' (Orbach, 1978, p114/5)

This, with its similarity to discourse analysis, necessitates a theory of language;
however, the WTC never addresses itself to this issue.

As well as the absence of a theory of language, the WTC also lack a coherent theory of subjectivity, particularly in relation to the construction of the self with regard to cultural images of feminists. Orbach's therapeutic approach is to attempt to break the isolation of women and attune them to what she calls their "authentic self":

"The feeling that one is odd – unlike others in a negative way – occurs frequently because of the social and psychological requirement that women should live in an outer-directed way, focussing attention on others. Turning inward and tracing one's own authentic experiences may well bring up feelings, sensations, and ideas that are not only unfamiliar but at odds with one's self-conception." (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p125)

This seems to propose two selves: a feminine social norm and a real self, the latter of which can be 'rediscovered' through the WTC's 'feminist psychotherapy'. Co-existing with this dualistic representation of the self, however, is a division into a 'fat' self and a 'thin' self (characterised by impermanence, sexual attractiveness and untrustworthiness), the relationship of which to 'real' and 'social' selves is unclear:

"The compulsive eater does not develop a confidence that she will remain thin. She has become a thin woman, someone who looks different and acts in different ways from her fat self, but a new woman whom she does not know very well. She is someone she is not sure she can trust or really get to know because she is unsure of how long she is going to be thin. If she is habitually thin for two months every year ... and fat for the remaining nine, then she is bound to be more familiar with her fat self." (Orbach, 1978, p89)

"Is the thin you a foreigner or, as some women comment, so decidedly different from your habitual self – image that you feel that you have two distinct personalities – fat and thin." (Orbach, 1978, p141)

This lack of an adequate theory of the self promotes confusion between cultural constructions and women's selves/nature. In consequence, stereotypes are perpetuated, e.g. women are more emotional than men:

"(A woman) will be expected to deal with the emotional realms of
family life ... Emotions will be her concern."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p7)

"The requirements of being connected to others and of deferring to they lead to another psychological concomitant of women's social role: that of having emotional antennae ... The woman handles the emotional reins."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p9, their emphasis)

"The experience of being understood is startling, for in our therapy we make an assumption that the woman has rarely felt herself to be accurately heard or understood, that she has not had the opportunity to describe in detail the complexities of her psychological experience. Much of her energy will have gone towards helping others understand their experiences."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p74)

2.5 Other Problems

Laying aside the problems which pertain to the psychoanalytic framework (which have already been discussed with regard to the work of Chodorow and Horney), and the lack of any intelligible theory of self or language, there are a number of other difficulties with the work of the WTC.

The WTC makes a political decision to exclude men from their treatment and theorising: their organisation is explicitly named 'The Women's Therapy Centre', and their bias is linguistically expressed:

"When a child cries from hunger and is fed ... then her cues will have been responded to appropriately and as the child develops she will be able to trust that she can both recognize and fulfil her needs."
(Orbach, 1978, p110, my emphasis)

Although there is nothing intrinsically wrong with such selectivity, the researchers of the WTC do tend to make universalistic generalisations about the 'nature of women' on very limited data:

"This is a dramatic conformation that women's experience, though individually felt and structurally isolated is socially similar."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p109)

My earlier comments about the problems of gender essentialism thus pertain to
the WTC's work, notably that of perpetuation of stereotyping. In the WTC research, one does not have to search hard to find them endorsing (thus helping to sustain and reproduce) stereotypes. To provide an example, in the following extract, Eichenbaum & Orbach support the stereotypical image of women as characterised by nurturant behaviour:

"... precisely because of women's capacity to give, there is an atmosphere of tremendous caring and concern."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p112)

"Related to their psychological skill of giving is women's ability to tune into others, to pick up the nuances and significance of other's experience."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p112)

Likewise, they support the notion that women are more passive than men:

"One anticipates that initiating activities are problematic."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p92)

"Expressing anger is an assertive act. Assertion for women is difficult."
(Orbach, 1978, p57)

Although the origin of greater passivity is defined as social rather than inherent:

"Girls are taught to be aware of the ways in which their actions affect others, and as a result become conscious about their actions. They almost always bear someone else in mind when they make their decisions about appropriate behavior."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p138)

Without a theory of subjectivity to dissociate 'real' and 'social' selves, the impact of this is simply to reproduce and give validity to the stereotype.

Likewise, the lack of a theory linking cultural constructions to the self means that female dependency is variably seen as part of the general therapeutic problem:

"... men's dependency needs are most often met within marriage and their emotional worries are processed by their wives. No equivalent place exists for women."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p87)

A social stereotype:
"Women are thought of as dependent people. Dependency is associated with qualities such as clinging, helplessness, and weakness." (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p87)

"Men's dependency needs are generally less recognized, because the sex-role stereotypes go very deep in our culture and shape the way we view this dynamic in couples." (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p181)

And a conscious behaviour exhibited by women to manipulate men:

"Dependency behaviors such as displaying physical weakness, or the lack of understanding of 'complicated', unfamiliar phenomena such as accounting or car mechanics, are ways in which women attempt to get taken care of." (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p92)

Co-existent with this are problems of homogenisation: a characteristic of the WTC research is the making of universalistic assumptions. They make the usual assumption of heterosexuality; their representation of mother-love leads them to suggest that a love for men is directly derived from this:

"Women look to men to mother them, but remain bereft." (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p52, their emphasis)

Their radical feminist orientation leads them to make unequivocal universalistic statements; all women are oppressed in a patriarchal society, therefore there must be underlying similarities:

"We listen again and again to the stories of our lives – lives of oppression, compromise, disappointment, frustration, unexpressed rage, and staggering bravery. We see again how much of this pain stems from the sexual arrangements within patriarchy, distilled through the individual nuclear family." (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p123)

This links to Coward's (1984) critique of the assumption made by radical feminist literary criticism that all women share a commonality of experience.

In an assumption common to Chodorow and the majority of psychoanalysts, the WTC presupposes that all children are brought up in a nuclear family. They claim that the presence of a father is necessary if a young girl is to establish
her own separate sense of identity:

"Feeling herself to be the 'other' with the father aids the little girl in her developing sense of separateness."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p22)

Assuming that all daughters were mothered themselves, the "little girl' dynamic" and its implications are seen as a universalistic phenomenon; all women, according to the WTC, are "needy":

"Over the years in our practice we have seen many women reveal the part of them that is needy and uncared for, undeserving, inadequate, and inarticulate."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p40)

And daughters and mothers universally experience themselves as less separate from each other than fathers and sons:

"When a mother looks at an infant son she sees someone who is quite other, who is going to have a very different life and for whom she can imagine a whole world of differing possibilities. But she knows that her daughter will follow her own footsteps."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p41)

"... the daughter’s sense of self is fused with her sense of mother, so that in her attempts to separate from mother she may not know who she herself is. Trying to be her own person, she is nevertheless confused about where she begins and mother ends."
(Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p54)

Although, in proposing a "push—pull dynamic in the mother—daughter relationship" (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, p44), the WTC do recognize that mothers may show ambivalence between, on one hand, the bringing up of a daughter according to societal standards and, on the other, the wish not to replicate her own oppression in her daughter:

"... mothers do and do not want their daughters to be like them. For a daughter to be like her mother is a way, at least partially, to validate the mother’s life. But, the mother’s life remains an invalidated life and the daughter’s act of reproducing her mother’s lifestyle can be no more than a perpetuation of powerlessness. In her love for her daughter, the mother must inevitably want a different life for her."
(Orbach, 1978, p28)
Although this represents an extension of Chodorow’s conceptualisation, there is still no coherent feminist strategy recommended for unconventional forms of child-rearing.
3. SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

3.1 Traditional Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory (SIT), originally devised by Henri Tajfel (1974, 1978, 1984), and John Turner (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1981; Turner, 1982) has recently formed the basis of a number of papers addressing the issues of essentialism and acontextuality in gender research.

Social identity theory, in brief, states that identity formation is dependent upon social comparison, both between and within social groups; social identity is thus the internalization of these comparisons. Tajfel defined social identity as:

"... that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his or her knowledge of his or her membership of a social group (or groups), together with the emotional significance attached to that membership."
(Tajfel, 1978, p30)

SIT sees the need for a positive social identity as paramount; self-esteem is dependent upon group comparisons on valued dimensions being positive (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). However, the group's capacity for this is determined by its relative status (Hogg & Abrams, 1988): dominant groups have the power to enforce their own value systems and ideologies, thus legitimating and maintaining the status quo. This comprehension of power dynamics is both unusual in psychology:

"What is missing from most social psychological approaches is a recognition of the far from random sets of power differentials on which (different) social situations rest."
(Skevington & Baker, 1989, p178)

and potentially useful to the study of gender.

The need for a positive social identity also provides a mechanism for social change. According to Tajfel (1978), low status groups have two options whereby they may attain positive comparisons. If possible within the specific societal conditions, social mobility can allow individual low status group members to elevate their social position. Where no such social mobility is possible, low status group members may attain positive comparisons by three forms of action:
co-operation between high and low status groups can result in assimilation/merger (the low status group adopts positive features of the high group; the consequence of this is to bring high and low status groups closer together); social creativity, whereby the low status group tries to create new positive images for itself (either by removing the basis for comparison by stressing new or alternative characteristics, or by reinterpreting negatively evaluated features as positive/enhancing); and the final option is social competition, where the low status group challenges the status hierarchy.

So how does this relate to the study of gender? Tajfel's original conceptualisation concerned intergroup relations in general, and it was not until 1978 that a substantive paper focusing on gender emerged. Williams & Giles (1978) conceptualised women as a disadvantaged group; negative characteristics and inferior status are the consequences of deriving their social identity through comparison with men. Williams & Giles hypothesized that a number of strategies for attaining a positive social identity are available: for instance women may redefine themselves in terms of their husband's occupation. Squire (1989, p15) has also commented that female psychologists tend to be defined through their association with their male co-workers or mentors; she cites Carol Gilligan, Anna Freud and Carolyn Sherif as examples, calling it the "Queen Bee Syndrome". Other strategies are available, such as challenging the social hierarchy as carried out by the 1970s Women's Movement, or redefining femininity positively.

3.2 Problems With Traditional Social Identity Theory

SIT, as formulated by Tajfel and Turner, thus appears to be a viable theoretical framework for the study of gender. However, it is not clear how this framework can be extended to the study of discourse and whether it successfully deals with the social basis of gender and the heterogeneity of women and men as groups.

The original laboratory bias and the short term nature of the groups used (typically, groups were formed for the duration of the experiment only) produced ahistorical, acontextual results, but this is readily circumvented; as first proposed
by Duveen & Lloyd (1986), historical and contextual information is easily incorporated through the use of:

"... research techniques which are designed to bring to light subjective interpretations of reality and/or which take into account personal history and social existence."
(Skevington & Baker, 1989, p9)

However, as Breakwell (1979) indicates, the application of SIT to the study of gender has not eliminated the problem of homogyny; a fact which becomes abundantly clear when one moves away from the minimal group situation towards the inclusion of the cultural meaning of social groups. Although Tajfel and Turner were aware that individuals may subscribe to membership of more than one social group, multiple identity was never examined (and, indeed, was not examinable) in the minimal group situation and, in consequence, SIT tends to see women as a unified social category with clearly known and accepted characteristics. It is, however, obvious that women are going to perceive 'womanhood' differently; as Griffin remarks:

"Although some aspects of womanhood are common to all women, the group 'women' includes a multitude of sub—groups, some in direct contradiction to each other."
(Griffin, 1989, p176)

Identity tends to be multi—faceted and variable according to context; personal, social (from a variety of group memberships, e.g. race, class, occupation) and gender identity interact:

"... the experience of being female varies with class, age, race, sexuality and region; and it must be understood in social and historical context."
(Skevington & Baker, 1989, p174)

and situational factors are influential:

"... the intensity of identity for women also varies within as well (as) across situations ... (and) at different stages in their lifespan."
(Skevington & Baker, 1989, p195)

"... the centrality of gender to young women's experience is an extremely complex and contradictory phenomenon, which was highly situationally specific."
(Griffin, 1989, p177)

The consequence of this is that:
"... we cannot view women as the unified, coherence and homogeneous social category, with a single explicit meaning for all members of society ... there is not a single social identity of women but many ... gender usually forms only one of several social identities for women. (Skevington & Baker, 1989, p195)

Although it is not explicitly stated, Skevington & Baker do offer a mechanism which may explain this homogeneity in terms of contextual functionality:

"There is tremendous variability between women in the way they perceive their group's status. Some women believe that they belong to a high-status group while others support the notion of subordinated women, perceiving themselves and others to be of low status (Stanley & Wise, 1983)." (Skevington & Baker, 1989, p200)

Informed by a discursive perspective, we could suggest that several different versions of female status are available to women, and may be flexibly drawn upon by the same respondent, depending upon the function of each resource for the speaker in a specific discursive context. For example, a woman might endorse caring and compassion as indications of female superiority, but might also represent women as low status when discussing occupational issues. This point will be clarified in the empirical chapters.

3.3 A 'Modified' Social Identity Theory?

Recent work has suggested an alternative approach, loosely based on SIT, whereby a fixed definition of group identification and consciousness is replaced by an interpretation of identity and consciousness as historically and socially contextualised and situationally flexible. Illustrative of this is Griffin's work on the feminist identity:

"My main argument is that feminism is not a unitary category which encapsulates a consistent set of ideas within a readily identifiable boundary ... open and qualitative methods (reveal) ... there is not one feminism but many, the concept is under a continual process of negotiation, and for most women, the identification of oneself as a feminist is not a straightforward process." (Griffin, 1989, p174)

A recent turn away from positivistic, quantitative methodologies has provided
some solutions to these problems, as Skevington & Baker's work has suggested: un- and semi-structured interview techniques (Abrams, 1989; Griffin, 1989); discourse analysis (Marshall & Wetherell, 1989); questionnaires (Gurin & Markus, 1989); 'memory work' in groups (Skevington, 1989) and repertory grid (Baker, 1989) methodologies have all proven illuminating. They provide suitable research tools for the examination of a variable, contextualised identity; a context which incorporates not only the interplay of personal identities, situational factors and gender identity, but also locates the participants within ideological space, looking at the power dynamics which surround and shape that individual. As Skevington & Baker remark:

"A modified version of social identity theory which allows space for the inclusion of an assessment of different ideologies seems to provide the best way forward."

(Skevington & Baker, 1989, p202)

However, much more work needs to be done to fulfil this promise. Skevington & Baker's book ends by introducing ideology, but this is not embellished; there is still considerable scope for a study of gender fully incorporating the concept of ideology. Their book utilises a variety of qualitative methodologies which derive from a number of theoretical perspectives (discourse analysis, different versions of social identity theory, social constructivism, experimentally based studies) and there is a consequent lack of coherence in the modelling of identity. Is it, as socio-cognitive psychologists would suggest, a mental structure, or, as discourse analysts would have it, a linguistic construction? Does one retain Tajfel and Turner's move towards tying identity to the cognitive process of categorisation, or adopt the 'construction of identity in discourse' approach favoured by Marshall & Wetherell (1989)? Do we take the traditional view of the basis for social identity being the maximisation of self-esteem, or favour a model based on context and functionality, which implies a move towards a theory of identity and subjectivity very different from that proposed by 'traditional' SIT? Finally, does the 'modified' type of SIT toward which these and other researchers (Condor, 1989; Marshall & Wetherell, 1989; Gurin & Markus, 1989) appear to be moving have so little in common with its progenitor that it is a misnomer to refer to them as the same thing?
4. THE OBFUSCATION OF THE POWER DYNAMIC

Before proceeding to a review of the last of the new trends in gender research – deconstructionism – which I would like to discuss, it might be useful at this point to firstly consider the issue of the obfuscation of the power dynamic in psychology as this is a powerful theme in this new research trend.

Traditional social psychology has a variety of methods through which issues of power become marginalised, two of which I would like to discuss here: the cultivated appearance of scientific objectivity and the privileged position of the researcher. To look at first at scientific objectivity, psychology is empowered by its scientific prestige:

"... psychology uses this expert status of its practitioners to dismiss theoretical uncertainties, and guarantee its objectivity ... (aided by) the explicit institutionalisation of their expertise through chartering, for instance."
(Squire, 1989, p10)

It can endow beliefs with a veneer of scientific credibility: in society, thus, beliefs become validated, and take on the status of 'facts'. A classic case occurs in relation to the 'syndrome' of P.M.T.:

"The premenstrual syndrome provides scientific legitimacy for the traditional 'raging hormone' theories. As it assumes the status of a 'known' illness, a syndrome, it gives scientific backing to discrimination against women."
(Ussher, 1989, p45)

Psychologists are thus powerful (privileged position of the researcher): in Foucauldian terms:

"... researchers, through their position as experts, will have considerable power ... power is present and productive in all social relations and the relations of research are no exception."
(Hollway, 1989, p22)

Psychologists maintain this power through 'mythologising' themselves (e.g. through chartered status and the use of jargon) as an exclusive, expert group. They also control channels of publication and promotion which means that 'unacceptable' work will be suppressed:

"... the canons of scientific orthodoxy still dictate what is accepted in mainstream journals and what most examiners will find acceptable in research."
The power dimension also determines both research questions (this is discussed by Garfinkle, 1981, in more detail) and research perspectives:

"... the bulk of work in a given area typically shares certain unquestioned first principles or indubitable propositions which determine the research questions considered appropriate."
(Kitzinger, 1987, p4)

"... there has also been a Western tradition of studying 'other' groups, invariably groups that are less powerful ... This in itself is a dynamic that reproduces the power relations prevailing in the social realm."
(Mama, 1987, p169 – 170)

It follows that this 'selection procedure' introduces a value laden element into research:

"Psychologists exert powerful influences on experiments, making the resultant data unreliable."
(Squire, 1989, p10)

This is made more problematic as psychology, as part of the establishment and as an ideological state apparatus (Althusser, 1971), has a vested interest in maintaining the status quo: psychologists in high positions tend to be white, male and middle class:

"... spurious findings are published and advertised because of their support for the dominant ideology."
(Ussher, 1989, p63)

This socially reflective nature of research is particularly significant as psychology deals with areas which have a real impact on people's lives: it reflects and reproduces social norms primarily through its assimilation into self-concepts, lay knowledge and the media:

"... ideologies (about female inferiority) have real effects on women's lives ... women accept the labels attached to them and experience their bodies and reproductive cycles as debilitating, and through the way in which these ideas of women are woven into the fabric of society."
(Ussher, 1989, p69)

Psychology also has a direct impact on government policies (c.f. the effect of intelligence testing and the creation of intelligence norms and the 'subnormal'; Gould, 1981, provides a good review). This problem of the social role of
psychology becomes particularly pertinent in those value laden areas (race, class, gender etc.) in which there exists a clearly defined power dynamic:

"Scientific debates and differences ... hinge on ... bigger, politically charged questions about the nature of the world and of human relationships – and paradigm changes here are a good deal nastier, messier, and more machiavellian."
(Parker, 1989, p24)

It has been argued (for instance Bhaskar, 1978, makes this distinction between the natural and the social sciences) that the inevitably social role of science is not a great problem in the pure sciences because their subject matter is, to a large extent, fixed. In psychology, on the other hand, the nature of the research topics and the difficulty of controlling all variables make replicability, a cornerstone of pure science, difficult if not impossible (Parker calls it a "pretend science": 1989, p12); variability is an inevitable consequence of the topics of study with which psychology deals. However, research which does not make sweeping conclusions in not highly valued; variability has come to be associated with methodological flaws, 'noise' in the data, rather than it being seen as indicative of contextual and individual differences. The consequence of this is that only the researcher's reading of events is heard:

"Most sociological analyses are dominated by the authorial voice of the sociologist. Participants are allowed to speak only when they appear to endorse his story."
(Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984, p2)

using unexplicated interpretative procedures:

"... it is always possible to extract plausible versions of events from qualitative data, so long as the analyst's interpretative practices are not subjected to detailed scrutiny."
(Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984, p13)

This is particularly significant if one adopts the discourse analytic argument that language is essentially functional and that people produce variable, situationally dependent accounts (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). This suppression of variability thus introduces distortion:

"... the traditional sociological goal of providing analyses of social life which build upon the interpretation furnished by participants is made unattainable by participant's ability to engage in the creative use of language."
(Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984, p8)
Rather than the objective interpretation of 'facts' possible in pure science (although this distinction itself has been extensively criticised, e.g. Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984), interpretation of psychological data tends to be dictated by the covert power dimension, be it in the interests of maintaining the status quo, or just to get work published.

However, psychology desires the scientific status accorded to pure sciences; it is thus necessary that the essentially subjective nature of psychological research is consciously obscured in this quest for scientific status:

"... the discipline's dominant view of itself is as an objective science, capable of consistent, complete explanation, and prediction." (Squire, 1989, p9)

From 1971 onwards, and Szasz's claim that social science serves to reflect and reproduce existing social norms and power dynamics, a small but significant deconstructionist trend has begun to question the whole premise of scientific objectivity. Particularly significant in this field is work by Gilbert & Mulkay (1984) on the subjectivity of research in biochemistry and the rhetorical devices which scientists use to present their work as objective and 'factual'.

This deconstructionist trend has suggested that psychologists, like other scientists, utilise a variety of rhetorical devices and argumentative strategies to obtain the appearance of objectivity.

"... social psychology has been described as an 'outstanding example' of the inherently rhetorical nature of science, appealing to subjectively shared, rather than indubitably true premises, and containing extrafactual, extralogical arguments designed to persuade and seduce." (Kitzinger, 1987, p2)

This, coupled with the pressure upon social science to obtain scientific status (Gellner, 1985):

"... the social sciences confront a certain reluctance on the part of the public to accord them the prestige attached to inclusion within the charmed circle of 'science'." (Kitzinger, 1987, p2)

"In science, the paradigms which inform images of the world, and in social psychology the paradigms which inform our views of people, are coercive. There are ... deceptions organized into a series of interpretations held in place by language. There are always sets of statements in and around science which tell us how
leads to more determined efforts — Psychology's "obsession with scientific method" (Hollway, 1989, p14) — to produce research with the appearance of objectivity:

"This credibility problem leads to the incorporation into psychological and sociological accounts of comparatively more overt and conscientious efforts to depict themselves as 'truly scientific'."

(Kitzinger, 1987, p3)

Research with the appearance of objectivity is much more difficult to question, therefore is more likely to be accepted; the underlying power dynamic (i.e. the various ways, both covert and overt, in which the still prevalent and still influential ideology of female inferiority is reproduced in society) is obfuscated. As psychology is a product of social norms, it is contemporary ideology which it reproduces; the anti—scientific perspective of Szasz (1971) amongst others states that:

"Deconstructing the traditional claims of science to represent a dispassionate search for objective truths ... social science reflects social norms, functions to reinforce and legitimate the ideological hegemony of the powerful ... social science is expressly influenced to fulfil this controlling and manipulative function."

(Kitzinger, 1987, p6)

Psychology, consequently, has a part to play in the reproduction of the power dynamic:

"Psychology is a discourse, a structure of knowledge and power. The structure is constituted by and in turn helps to determine social relations."

(Squire, 1989, p2)

Research, thus, is far from objective; the privileged position of the researcher (and the effect this has on research questions, assumptions and interpretation of results) has typically been concealed under the veneer of objectivity which is characteristic of scientific work. Feminist psychology has typically explicated the power dimension, and through the questioning of the whole experimental procedure and methodology which obscures the privileged position of the researcher (and the part this plays in reproducing the status quo). Further work is, however, necessary, in order to move away from the feminist focus on
'feminine ways of knowing and researching' (Stanley & Wise, 1983, p174) in order that all the "different voices" (in the sense of positions suppressed by the researcher in the projection of objectivity; Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984, p2) may be heard.

However, researchers have tended to interpret this need for a contextualised, politically aware feminist psychology as a call to take research into "women's areas", as Wilkinson indicates:

"... feminist research is based on an exploration of women's own knowledge and experience, in as disciplined, scholarly, and rigorous way."

(Wilkinson, 1986, p2)

Illustrative of this is Fine & Gordon's eloquent call for work on "social secrets" (of privilege, sex, danger, oppression, fear — issues which they claim are largely lost in male oriented research; Fine & Gordon give as an example black women's attitude to caring for white children) and "the stuff of relationships":

"If you really want to know ... us, do not put us in a laboratory ... Watch me with women friends, my son, his father, my niece, or my mother and you will see what feels most authentic to me. These very moments, which construct who I am when I am most me, remain remote from psychological studies."

(Fine & Gordon, 1989, p159)

Although this picture of authenticity and the rediscovery of the 'real' self has an intrinsic appeal, ultimately it is in danger of constituting another form of gender essentialism (the instrumental—expressive dichotomy again is seen as differentiating men and women: in this case, women are more "nested" — p161 — in relationships than men, therefore it is in relationships that they should be studied).

There is thus a need to change not just the topic of study (admirable and illuminating though this change may be) but the research method itself:

"... feminist research is not simply the extension of traditional research in non—sexist ways, and/or including topics of relevance to women; rather, it entails a critical evaluating of the research process, in terms of its adequacy in tapping women's experience."

(Wilkinson, 1986, p2)

What is required, thus, is a methodology and a theoretical approach which can
relate gender (and the other factors listed above) to prevailing situational
determinants; one which can incorporate power asymmetries through the concept
of ideology, and one in which gender can be seen as a social construction (used
to variable degrees according to context) rather than taken as an a priori
assumption.
5. DECONSTRUCTIONISM

The deconstructionist trend in the psychology of gender and its endeavour to build a feminist analysis extends from the terms just described. It attempts to deconstruct accepted notions about social scientific topics, examining power relations and ideology as part of the substance of science and social life. To illustrate in a more concrete fashion approaches to gender research inspired by deconstructionist ideas, I shall briefly review the work of Celia Kitzinger (1987) and Wendy Hollway (1989).

5.1 Celia Kitzinger

Celia Kitzinger's basic premise is the need for the deconstruction of the liberal humanist ideology which has underpinned much recent research on lesbianism. This ideology, (which evolved in response to the traditional model of lesbianism as pathology) stresses, in contrast, that lesbianism is advantageous, as it leads to self-actualisation and fulfilment. Far from being enabling, however, Kitzinger argues that the actual impact of the liberal humanist framework is to obscure the male biased societal power dynamic, and prevent women from becoming aware of their oppression:

"I argue that liberal humanist ideology, especially when used ostensibly in support of lesbianism, as in much recent social science research and within the contemporary feminist movement generally, prevents women from recognizing male power and identifying our oppression ... (promoting) complicity in the silencing of lesbianism as a political reality."

(Kitzinger, 1987, p viii)

In a manner similar to the method adopted by Gilbert & Mulkay (1984), Kitzinger argues that accounts of scientific research are constructed products, and hence cannot be objective. The task she thus sets herself is to deconstruct the rhetorical elements which obscure the subjective nature of reports and report writing. As an illustrative example, in her book THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF LESBIANISM, she sets out to deconstruct the liberal humanist ideology in research on lesbianism:

"All scientific writing is necessarily rhetorical ... The question is not whether to use rhetoric in scientific writing but how to use it, in whose interests, and how to recognize and analyse its use."
Kitzinger's research reinforces many of Gilbert & Mulkay's observations: academics tend to endorse faith in the inevitability of scientific progress (what Kitzinger calls the "up the mountain' saga", 1987, p7), the superiority of scientific over lay knowledge and understanding (the "mythologising of expertise", 1987, p10, which is aided by the use of jargon and arcane language), the presentation of one's work as useful ("utility accounting", 1987, p20), and what Kitzinger refers to as "textual persuasion and literary effects" (1987, p22); a range of rhetorical and persuasive devices (e.g. 'snappy' titles, pseudo-questions, passive sentence constructions) which she claims appear in scientific writings.

Kitzinger discusses how rhetorical devices contribute to the perception of objectivity; e.g. passive sentence constructions (for instance, "the findings suggest ... ") "edit out" the authorial voice, giving the impression that the findings speak for themselves and are free of any interpretative dimension. The impact of this elimination of the authorial voice is to conceal the subjective element in research, which (as earlier discussed) ultimately contributes to the perpetuation of the status quo:

"... regardless of the motives underlying researcher's continued use of traditional scientific rhetoric, their collusion with such practices serves to reinforce the institutionalized power base of social science and perpetuate its claim to be the only legitimate purveyor of valid knowledge about the social world."
(Kitzinger, 1987, p28)

Noting these problems of objectivity in existing research, Kitzinger advocates a switch in the theoretical framework in order that accounts (both of a scientific nature and those produced by respondents) can be viewed as constructed versions of events rather than (as is characteristic of 'traditional' social psychological research) 'true' representations:

"Rather than attempting to match accounts against some objective standard of what lesbianism is 'really' like, I have accepted and discussed the accounts as attributions and constructions interesting as such in their own right."
(Kitzinger, 1987, p71)

Rather than assess interview material on its literal truth value, Kitzinger
evaluates an account on the function it may serve for the respondent in a particular discursive context. This emphasis on the rhetoric of science, the importance of versions and the deconstruction of ideology sums up Kitzinger's distinctive contribution to the development of a feminist psychology.

5.2 Wendy Hollway

Hollway, in her research, has also advocated an examination of the ideological underpinnings of the 'gender as natural' perspective and has promoted a shift towards a 'gender as social construction' perspective:

"What psychological method lacks is a theory of how meaning is achieved; a theory which can be applied to understanding how accounts are produced and how they should be analysed." (Hollway, 1989, p4)

Dissatisfied with existing methods for studying gender relations, Hollway sets out to develop an alternative methodology for studying gender (specifically gender differences and the reaffirmation of those differences in adult heterosexual relationships) which can consider issues of identity and power:

"... what I call interpretative discourse analysis ... provides a way of understanding subjectivity within discourse and power relations which can explain gender differences." (Hollway, 1989, p17/2)

Her characterisation of subjectivity is as a non-rational, non-unitary phenomenon:

"My approach to subjectivity is through the meanings and incorporated values which attach to a person's practices and provide the power through which he or she can position him—or herself in relation to others." (Hollway, 1984, p227)

Hollway hypothesizes that discourses constitute a range of positions which are available for respondents to take up; these positions site the respondent according to the other. Although these discourses are culturally derived, they are adopted by individual men and women because of the function they provide
for that particular person and male and female "investment" (that is, the "pay off" which a person acquires from taking up one particular position in discourse; Hollway, 1984, p238). The positions which are available to men and women differ, because of gender differentiation in traditional discourses about sexuality.

This particular perspective on accounting and available discourses has a number of advantages, as Hollway indicates; using this method:

" ... it is possible to avoid an analysis which sees discourses as mechanically repeating themselves — an analysis which cannot account for change. By showing how subjects' investments, as well as the available positions offered by discourses, are socially constituted and constitutive of subjectivity, it is possible to avoid this deterministic analysis of action and change."

(Hollway, 1984, p237)

Her book, SUBJECT AND METHOD IN PSYCHOLOGY, uses a variety of data, including her own journals, but focuses mainly on sixty hours of tape-recordings of consciousness—raising group sessions. The network of participants who took part in these sessions were mainly friends of Hollway, and Hollway herself took part in the sessions, claiming that this was likely to have "demystified" (Hollway, 1989, p22) her position as a researcher to the other respondents. This also allows her to present her interpretation of the data as a non—privileged 'reading' rather than a definitive account.

Her analysis of the accounts yielded three main discourses on the topic of sexuality, which have very different implications for the power balance between the sexes; her objective was:

" ... to understand how at a specific moment several coexisting and potentially contradictory discourses concerning sexuality make available different positions and different powers for men and women."

(Hollway, 1984, p230)

The three discourses are as follows:
i) The 'discourse of the male sexual drive'

This discourse contains assumptions about gender differences in sexuality. It suggests that male sexuality is the product of a primitive biological imperative to reproduce:

"... men are driven by the biological necessity to seek out (heterosexual) sex ... sex is natural and not mediated socially."

(Hollway, 1989, p54)

Conversely, women are seen as the objects of the male sexual drive rather than the subject of their own sexuality:

"Women's sexuality, if it is not seen as an absence in contrast to the presence of the male sexual drive, is seen as governed by the biological need to reproduce, rather than to have sex."

(Hollway, 1989, p54, her emphasis)

This has obvious implications for the accountability of men for their actions in this area: the presentation of sex as a biological imperative for men can be used to discursively mitigate rape, sexual aggression and so on.

ii) The 'have/hold discourse'

The 'have/hold discourse' represents the Christian family values of the monogamous heterosexual couple who have sex and stay together to bring up children. The man is presented as the head of the family, responsible for his wife. Although theoretically gender-blind, Hollway indicates that this discourse is primarily applied to women, thus serves the purpose of laying down norms of conduct for females: women who express sexuality outwith marriage are whores or mistresses. Like the previous one, however, this repertoire portrays women as more concerned with husbands and children, more interested in building relationships and establishing commitments than with sex; female sexuality is represented as a lack.
iii) The 'permissive discourse'

The 'permissive discourse' is described by Hollway as a product of the Sixties and a reaction against the monogamy prescribed by the 'have/hold discourse'. It represents the idea that sex is natural and should not be repressed, and that both sexes have an equal right to express their sexuality. Rather than requiring legitimation in a relationship, sex is seen as the responsibility of the individual.

Again, this discourse is supposedly gender-blind, and gives women as active role in determining their sexuality. However, as permissiveness is informed by traditional ideas about sexuality, the 'permissive discourse' has positive connotations only for men: this is not a gender-blind discourse, as Hollway comments:

"The differences between men's and women's positions in the traditional discourses were never banished in permissive practices."
(Hollway, 1984, p235)

To sum up, Hollway's approach may be regarded as deconstructive in the sense that her work is intrinsically concerned with the constructed nature of accounts, and the representations of subjectivity and social meanings which these accounts contain. She is also interested in the implicature (in terms of power and social positioning) of certain forms of accounting for the respondent; certain discourses about sexuality are more enabling than others, but all are seen as reflecting the fundamental genderized power imbalance in society.
CONCLUSION

So what solutions do the disparate perspectives discussed in this chapter (particularly modified SIT and deconstructionism) offer to the problems I have raised. If one returns to the work of the WTC discussed at the beginning of this chapter, one can identify a number of problems: Orbach et al. may be accused of homogenisation (the assumption that women are a unitary group, sharing a commonality of experience), which produces research which is both acontextual and suppresses variability. They also promote gender essentialism by making a categorical distinction between men and women, which can contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes. To this list of problems, I would also like to add the obfuscation of the power dynamic (scientific "objectivity" and the privileged position of the researcher) as discussed in section four.

'Traditional' research has, in the main, evaluated accounts on a true/false basis; the critical element in the recent research trends I have reviewed in the move towards a version of accounts as constructed (Kitzinger, Hollway). This applies equally to the accounts presented by academics as scientific research. Work by Gilbert & Mulkay (1984) in this area, taken up by Kitzinger (1987), answers the first of the problems delineated above: the obfuscation of the power dynamic in scientific research. This view of accounts as constructed also applies to participants in psychological research, which ameliorates the privileged position of the researcher; using this theory of accounts, it is possible to represent the researcher's interpretation as one of a number of possible 'readings' of the research findings, rather than concealing subjectivity under a veneer of rhetoric. Hollway's work is a good example of this presentation of the researcher's perspective as non-privileged.

In accepting the constructed nature of accounts, we are moving towards a very different conception of subjectivity to that proposed in 'traditional' research. In the 'modification' of SIT described earlier, the unitary, rational female or male subject is replaced by a participant who can and does subscribe to multiple identities. This is taken a stage further by Hollway, who sees subjectivity as relational: a range of cultural positions are available to individuals, each of which places that individual in relation to other people. As 'modified' Social Identity Theory suggests (in its view of identity as derived from social
comparison), this subjectivity is intrinsically linked to the social and historical contexts of its production and, as such, may vary according to the operating context.

This model of subjectivity resolves the problem of homogenisation: it is nonsensical to study a socially derived and socially variable subjectivity in isolation, but must be contextualised. Furthermore, rather than suppressing variability, this becomes a topic of interest in its own right to the deconstructionists; what particular contexts relate to the expression of particular identities?

This leaves the final problem of gender essentialism. Obviously, as one is looking at how gender is constructed and represented in accounts (rather than assimilating gender categories as an a priori assumption into the research), this is not a problem one would anticipate arising in deconstructionist research.

Finally, recent work has shown that it is necessary to invoke the concept of ideology to explicate the power dynamic, both in scientific research (Kitzinger) and in society more generally, and to look at the reproduction of this power dynamic through language. However, as the topic of ideology is not dealt with in any great detail in the work discussed in this section, I shall outline my perspective on ideology in the next chapter.

This focus on subjectivity, social meanings, constructed accounts and power also leads us to the study of language, and the need for a systematic method for the analysis of interview material; the method which I wish to use, discourse analysis, will also be discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE

TOWARDS A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF 'FEMININITY'

1. INTRODUCTION

To recap, in previous chapters I have delineated several areas of traditional gender research in which further work is required or which contain what seem to be problematic assumptions. At this point, it is worth pointing out that this work has, of course, been viewed through a particular lens – the critical perspective provided by discourse analysis – which has led me to highlight and anticipate certain issues. By and large, these areas are not, in the context of their own theoretical framework, problematic, but they become so when one attempts to use them to interpret the discourses which people actually articulate in naturally occurring talk about gender.

In the conclusion of the previous chapter, I drew attention to four main points of contention to which any new approach to gender must address itself. Firstly, for reasons discussed in the last chapter, any new theory of gender must involve a consideration of power and ideology. Secondly, there is a need for a convincing theory of language use, as the work of Gilligan, as well as the recent deconstructionist studies, suggest. Thirdly, such a new approach must deal with the linked issues of gender essentialism, homogenisation, acontextuality and the suppression of variability, which were also noted in the previous chapter.

Perhaps the most widespread characteristic of previous research – gender essentialism – refers to the a priori assumption of two discrete gender categories: the categories 'male' and 'female' are generally accepted unquestioningly as valid experimental variables or topics of study. As discussed in Chapter One, one danger of this is the reproduction of an ideology of gender difference, which potentially perpetuates gender stereotyping. In this research literature the categorical features attributed to the genders tend to fall along the instrumental/expressive dichotomy. It is further assumed that sex stereotypes in some way encapsulate the factors which actually differentiate males and females. This is a dubious assumption, further confounded by the
fact that those attributes which are associated with females are commonly those which are less socially desirable.

This a priori assumption of discrete gender categories, thus, leads to homogenisation:

"... feminist psychology ... allows gender, a variable cultural structure ... to be reduced to the fixity of biological sex. As a result, feminist psychologies often ... treat all women and men as if they were the same."
(Squire, 1989, p3)

Whereas it is likely that gender is one of a number of influential factors which interact with social class, race/ethnicity, age, disability etcetera:

"In so far as age, race and class are also social categories in which membership is obligatory, their meanings moderate gender group membership along essential gender dimensions."
(Lloyd, 1989, ix)

These factors interact with context to produce "socially and historically constituted subjectivities" (Fine & Gordon, 1989, p147). An example of the distorting impact of homogenisation is the automatic assumption of innate heterosexuality, on which ground both Bem and Chodorow have been criticised (c.f. Deaux, 1984, on Bem; Lorber, 1981, on Chodorow). Even when homogenisation has been addressed (in a process parallel to Clifton et al's (1976) substitution of 'housewife' and 'woman athlete' for 'woman' as stimulus categories) typically the only advance, as I noted earlier, has been to substitute sub-categories for the single category 'woman':

"Feminists encounter ... problems in dealing with differences between subjects; often they simply subdivide the category of 'women' to make differences of sexuality, 'race' and class. But such analyses do not take the discursive power of historical and social relations seriously enough. They render subcategories of 'women' equivalent and independent."
(Squire, 1989, p17)

Furthermore, the assumption is made that there are fixed, relatively invariant mental structures (gender schema, according to Bem; poorly differentiated self-concepts for Chodorow; Gilligan's 'stage' of moral development) in which 'genderisation' is coded, and through which women and men process their reactions to social life; research has thus tended to suffer from acontextuality. Homogenisation is one method of suppressing variability; ignoring contextual and individual influences makes generalisation far easier.
As well as the suppression of variability in groups, any new approach must also address the variability which is an inevitable feature of language (this will be amply demonstrated in the empirical chapters).

Fourthly and finally, leading on from this, a new approach must be supplemented by a new theory of identity. If language is functional and contextually sensitive, it follows that constructions of the self in language will also be variable (this, again, will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters); existing theories of subjectivity — which almost uniformly assume that an individual has a single, relatively enduring identity — are thus inappropriate. Any new approach to gender research, thus, must adopt a new theory of subjectivity.
2. THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE

2.1 Discourse Analysis and its Origins

In this section, I would like to investigate one theory which attempts to deal with the problems I have drawn attention to, a theory which I intend to use as my methodological basis: social psychological discourse analysis.

The most articulate work in this region is Potter & Wetherell's 1987 book DISCOURSE AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY, in which a detailed exposition of the form of systematic discourse analysis I intend to use is to be found; the synopsis of discourse analysis I shall provide here is drawn from their work.

The first step in describing discourse analysis is to look at the three trends in language research which it tries to encapsulate: speech act theory, ethnomethodology and semiotics. This will be followed by an exposition of its major research principles.

Rather than provide an extended critique of each tradition (which can, at any rate, be found elsewhere, e.g. Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p9–31), it is sufficient for my purposes simply to list the points within each research trend which discourse analysis has taken up.

i) Speech Act Theory

In contrast to the psycholinguistic models which found much favour in the Fifties and Sixties with their concentration on generative grammars (i.e. the use of a small number of rules to generate grammatically correct sentences; e.g. Chomsky, 1965), Austin's Speech Act Theory (1962) looked at natural language (Chomsky used made-up examples). Furthermore, Austin advanced a functional view of language, proposing that all phrases both state things (constatives) and do things (performatives). Performatives are important for what they do, rather than for their descriptive role, e.g. "I declare war on the Phillipines" is not in itself either true or false, but (if uttered in the right circumstances) has practical consequences (i.e. bringing into being a state of war). Constatives are phrases which describe a state of affairs, and their veracity can thus be checked.
ii) Ethnomethodology

Originated by Garfinkel (1967), ethnomethodology concentrated upon the methods whereby ordinary people conduct and make sense of their day to day social lives. Significantly, several researchers in this tradition have looked at the everyday use of language (e.g. Wieder's classic study of the informal set of rules operated by ex-convicts in a half-way hostel: 1974a, 1974b).

Ethnomethodological studies of language have three main features; reflexivity, open-endedness and indexicality. To firstly consider reflexivity, ethnomethodology does not regard talk about features of the social environment as simply descriptive; rather, discourse is seen as actually constitutive of those features. Secondly, the ethnomethodological approach stresses the open-endedness of general rules (what Garfinkel - 1967 - called the "etcetera clause", which allows the typically wide-ranging general principle for understanding one's social world to be specified in order that novel or unexpected events may be accommodated). Finally, ethnomethodology proposes that discourse is largely indexical; meaning changes according to its context of use. Participants in a conversation thus have an interpretative role to play, fleshing out the utterances (s)he hears with information about the context, the speaker, the speaker's likely intentions and so on.

iii) Semiology

The product of the Swiss linguist Saussure (1974), semiology proposes that there is no natural or inevitable relationship between concepts (the 'signified') and the sound images associated with them (the 'signifier').

The consequences of the lack of any natural relationship are twofold. Firstly, both the signifier and the signified are arbitrary, as is the relationship between them (the combination of signified and signifier is called the linguistic 'sign'). As evidence, Saussure indicates that different cultures use a different range of sound images (e.g. South Sea Islanders and Kalahari Bushmen use clicks, Germans have difficulty pronouncing 'w'); different sound images are used to represent the same concept in different cultures (e.g. 'hund', 'chien' and 'dog' all are signifiers for the same signified barking quadruped). As regards signifieds, different cultures divide up their conceptual world in different ways.
(e.g. Russians regard dark and light blue as two different primary colours; 'sheep' and 'mutton' distinguish a living animal from its meat in English, whereas in France the single signifier — 'mouton' — indicates both). The conclusion of this is that convention and social/cultural practices determine the relationship between the signifier and the signified.

Secondly, whereas traditional approaches envisage language as a naming process, semiology sees language as relational: each signifier acquires meaning only through its relation to other signifiers (e.g. any object may replace a lost chess piece, so long as it is not confusable with the other pieces; defined by the context of a chess-board, a matchbox can thus become a rook, bishop or queen). The range of signifiers (and their relationship to signifieds and other signifiers) form a sign system which tends to be fairly consistent within any one speech community.

Saussure may be described as dealing with first order signification: the representational elements of language; however, it establishes the idea of a culturally structured language which reflects the cultural concerns of the speech community which uses it.

Roland Barthes (1964, 1972, 1974, 1985), in a series of books and papers, took Saussure's conceptualisation a stage further. He proposed that, as well as a signified and a signifier combining to form a sign in the manner described by Saussure (first order signification), the resultant sign simultaneously acts as a signifier for a second signified. This is illustrated in figure 5.1.
This second order signification is termed myth and derives its power from being shared throughout a culture; for instance, a car with the first order signification of a particular type of body styling, engine capacity etcetera, may simultaneously have second order signification as a mythological symbol of freedom, power and masculinity. The importance of second order signification will become apparent in the empirical chapters.

**Summary**

The developments which I have described above provide the theoretical basis for an analysis of discourse within social psychology, the research principles of which I shall lay out in detail in the next section.

The three traditions I have described are not unproblematic, and neither are they interchangeable. However, they do yield a number of points which are central to social psychological discourse analysis: language as active, the social practice of signification, and the constructive nature of language.

iv) Rhetoric

Before proceeding to look at discourse analysis, I would like to look at one further area of research, in which social psychologists such as Billig (1987) and Simons (1989) have drawn upon the ancient study of rhetoric as a means of approaching the same topic of language use in social situations.

There are a number of features of ‘rhetorical psychology’ (as proposed by Billig, 1987; Billig et al, 1988; Billig, in press). Billig suggests that, as rhetoric is about thinking, it must also involve ideology:

"It can be assumed that the ways of thinking, which are created by and within ideology, are themselves inherently rhetorical. In this way, the problems of ideology, psychology and rhetoric are interlinked."
(Billig, in press, p1)

Billig incorporates rhetoric into Marxist conceptualisations about the reproduction of dominant ideologies:

"It might be claimed that in every age the ruling class possesses the ruling rhetoric. The ownership of the means of rhetoric, by which messages can be presented persuasively."
(Billig, in press, p2)
Rhetorical psychology takes the perspective that knowledge is socially shared and, in consequence, variable:

"... the rhetorical approach does not start by considering individual motivations or individual information processing. It starts from the assumption that knowledge is socially shared and that common sense contains conflicting, indeed dissonant, themes." (Billig et al, 1989, p20)

Rhetoric is intrinsically related to a functional view of language:

"Potter & Wetherell argue that people, in using language, are doing things. Accordingly, the social psychologist should be studying what is accomplished by acts of speech. The rhetorical approach, too, shares this assumption, but it also has a specific type of speech: namely, argumentation. In so doing, the rhetorical approach stresses the importance of argumentation in social life and as a form of thinking." (Billig, in press, p10)

As formulated by Billig, thus, the study of rhetoric appears to contain many of the elements I have delineated as valuable in other studies of language, but extends them through connectivity with ideology. Utilising these ideas in conjunction with a systematic method of analysing language may prove extremely illuminating; discourse analysis may prove to be such a methodology.
2.2 Research Principles

Discourse analysis has been defined as follows:

"Discourse analysis focuses on the constructed and constructive nature of language and on the functions and consequences of language use."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p206)

The traditions from which discourse analysis derives — speech act theory, ethnomethodology and semiology — yield three research principles which determine discourse analysis: function, variation and social constructivism.

i) Function

Speech act theory and ethnomethodology both stressed that people use language to perform particular tasks: to accuse, to ask, to persuade, to command. However, this functionality is not mechanistic: accusations, for instance, may be oblique, recognisable as accusations only within the operating context.

Functionality also is not confined to a task as specific as accusation; language can serve a more global function (e.g. to present oneself in a good light).

Language is thus seen not as a neutral representation of events, objects, people etcetera, but as subjective and value-laden, tailored to achieve certain discursive purposes: discourse analysis takes a functional view of language.

Note, however, that functionalism is not an unproblematic concept: Bowers (1988) indicates that some researchers (specifically those, like Hempel (1965), who come from the logical, positivistic tradition within the philosophy of science) would regard functionalism (the explanation of something in terms of its effects) as inappropriate; they would suggest that explanation should be in terms of causes. Functionalism is a defensible position (c.f. Cohen, 1978), but reference to its problematic nature should be made.

ii) Variation

Discourse analysis assumes that participant's language is functional, and that this functionality is related to context. It thus follows that, as the context changes, the representation of events, motives and actions which is functional
within that context will also change. Thus, one would anticipate considerable variation in people's accounts, and Potter & Wetherell (1987) intimate:

"In general, we find that if talk is oriented to many different functions, global and specific, any examination of language over time reveals considerable variation."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p33, their emphasis)

However, Potter & Wetherell's claim goes further than this. they suggest that, as variability arises because of the discursive functionality of a particular discourse, through examination of that variability, one can begin to deduce what function for the speaker is served by that discourse:

"As variation is a consequence of function it can be used as an analytic clue to what function is being performed in a particular stretch of discourse. That is, by identifying variation, which is a comparatively straightforward analytic task, we can work towards an understanding of function. We can predict that certain kinds of function will lead to certain kinds of variation and we can look for those variations."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p171)

This seems to leave us in something of a quandary: the traditional research goal of formulating global rules and generic principles from 'representative' samples becomes nonsensical in the face of such variability. however, what we are looking at is variability at the level of the individual:

"... discourse is variable in the sense that any one speaker will construct events and persons in different ways according to function."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p172)

Potter & Wetherell go on to indicate that there is regularity in discourse, but one has to look more broadly, at larger tracts of data involving more than one subject and/or the same subject talking in a variety of discursive situations. The search becomes for patterning in response; under what circumstances do we regularly find particular kinds of discursive representations?

With this end in mind, Potter & Wetherell draw upon the concept of 'interpretative repertoires' (originally evolved in a number of studies, e.g. Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984; Potter & Mulkay, 1982, 1985; Wetherell, 1986), which they define as follows:

"Interpretative repertoires are recurrently used systems of terms used for characterizing and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena. A repertoire ... is constituted through a limited
range of terms used in particular stylistic and grammatical constructions. Often a repertoire will be organized around specific metaphors and figures of speech."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p149)

Using such a concept, it is possible to examine variability as a topic of interest in its own right, rather than dismiss it as a research anomaly or 'noise' in the data.

iii) Construction

The final element of discourse analysis is an emphasis on the constructed nature of language:

"... people are using their language to construct versions of the social world. The principle tenet of discourse analysis is that function involves a construction of versions, and is demonstrated by language variation."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p33, their emphasis)

Language is seen as both a product of the social world and constitutive of that world. The key metaphor here is that of manufacture; language is not simply a reflective representation of an independent reality, but an account which is put together, built upon, and which in turn constructs that reality.

One final point must be made about the particular form of discourse analysis which I intend to use: discourse itself is seen as the topic of study, and no attempt will be made to access 'true' versions of events, attitudes or internal states from the discourse. As Potter & Wetherell (1987) demonstrate, variability is an inevitable consequence of experimental social psychology (they cite account variability in the areas of social perception, impression management, cognitive dissonance and speech accommodation, 1987, p36–39), then show how this variability is suppressed through three main strategies (restriction, gross categorisation and selective reading). It is therefore inappropriate to claim that the researcher is providing the one and only true representation of events; the researcher's version is simply one reading amongst many, as informed by his or her preoccupations as is any lay reading.
2.3 Power and Subjectivity

By adopting this methodology, we are moving towards a theory and method of language use. The empirical study of discourse using this approach is still in its infancy, but a number of attempts to apply discourse analysis do exist (Edwards & Potter, forthcoming; Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984; Hollway, 1989; Marshall & Wetherell, 1989; Potter & Edwards, in press; Potter & Reicher, 1987; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell, 1986; Wetherell & Potter, 1989), and seem to suggest that this is a more promising way of systematically analysing transcripts.

It seems as if this approach may avoid the problems of gender essentialism (one can look at how gender categories are constructed in discourse, rather than build them into the research assumptions as an a priori given), homogenisation (likewise, discourse can look at differences in how men and women construct themselves and represent gender differences in discourse) and the suppression of variability (as stated earlier, rather than be suppressed, variability becomes the topic of interest).

However, there are two other issues which were raised in the introduction to this chapter which have yet to be covered: the treatment of the power dynamic and the specifications of a discourse analysis theory of subjectivity. I would like to deal with each of these in turn.

i) A Discourse Analysis Theory of Subjectivity

Traditional approaches to the self have tended to assume that the self-concept is fixed and enduring:

"The key assumption behind all the traditional models ... is that the self is an entity and, like any other entity or natural physical object, it can be described definitively, once and for all. In other words, it is assumed that the self has one true nature or set of characteristics waiting to be discovered."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p95)

The alternative, 'social constructivist' position (drawing upon semiotic and post-structuralist insights) criticises this perspective (Gergen, 1985), instead envisaging the self as constructed in discourse:
"There is not 'one' self waiting to be discovered or uncovered but a multitude of selves found in the different kinds of linguistic practices articulated now, in the past, historically and cross-culturally."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p102)

Hence, rather than the traditional view of the self as a fixed and enduring structure, the discourse analysis approach regards the ways of theorising about the self (both in lay and scientific contexts) as historically and culturally specific:

"... certain constructions of the self may survive because they serve important social functions or maintain a particular kind of society."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p108)

Consequently, they will vary according to their functionality in a particular context:

"Some versions of the self will thus come to predominate in some contexts."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p108)

Accepting functionality and variability as the cornerstones of discourse analysis, Potter & Wetherell specify the following topics of interest:

"Not only do we need to be able to describe the content of representations of people in different contexts or the sheer range of self-images available in ordinary talk, but we also need to ask how these images are used and to what end, and thus what they achieve for the speaker immediately, interpersonally, and then in terms of wider social implications."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p110)

They are thus moving towards a theory of subjectivity which assumes no 'true' self behind actions and discourse, but rather presupposes a variety of culturally available selves which are constituted in discourse itself. However, as Bowers (1988) comments, Potter & Wetherell (abbreviated to P&W by Bowers) cannot sufficiently dissociate themselves from the traditional image (of the 'true' self overseeing the social 'masks') to completely bring this off:

"A tempting understanding of these passages ... is that P&W are proposing a kind of role theory raised to a second power. The selves of orthodox role theory and trait and humanistic theories can all be constructed in discourse by speakers who—nevertheless—maintain a unity behind all the discursive versions.
But as with orthodox role theory, there remains the one, the speaker at the 'causal' centre voluntaristically constructing selves." (Bowers, 1988, p187/8)

Laudable ideas, thus, need to be developed into a coherent theory of subjectivity.

ii) Power

This methodology seems to have the potential to relate discursive self-representation to power and the reproduction of that power in society: recent Marxist research (e.g. Althusser, 1971; Coward & Ellis, 1977) has specifically addressed the links between subjectivity, discourse and ideology; as Potter & Wetherell (1987) observe:

"The main thrust of (the Marxist) work is to demonstrate how the discursive articulation of certain kinds of selves or human subjects is intimately involved in the reproduction of certain kinds of society. In this tradition, people become fixed in position through the range of linguistic practices available to them to make sense. The use of a particular discourse ... maintains power relations and patterns of domination and subordination." (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p109)

However, although Potter & Wetherell describe this approach, they fail to fully incorporate it into their own work. Bowers (1988) indicates the potential of the discourse analytic approach for the study of power:

"Rather than relate discursive functions 'down' to the cognitions of individuals, we might attempt to forge links between discourse and elements of a gender social theory." (Bowers, 1988, p187)

However, this is a potential which Potter & Wetherell fail to realise:

" ... generally P&W are content with an analysis which first identifies recurrent kinds of speech-act or repertoire and secondly associates them with functions. They do not go further and seek explanation for the functions themselves ... (They) do not link their empirical work with any broad account of the nature and constitution of societies." (Bowers, 1988, p187)

It goes without saying that this is a monumentally difficult task, and, although noteworthy, I regard a thorough response to Bowers' criticisms as beyond the scope of this thesis. However, bearing in mind Bowers' criticisms, the aim becomes a progression towards a version of discourse analysis which fully incorporates a theory of how power and ideology operate in language, as well as a coherent, model of subjectivity. The next section, thus, will contain a
brief resume of some of the more enduring theories of ideology, in the search for potentially useful insights.
3. IDEOLOGY

At this point it is important to note that I am viewing ideology as a social psychologist, not as a social theorist; it is sufficient for my purposes to briefly comment on the debates about ideology rather than produce my own definitive account. Using Billig (1982) as my prototype, what I wish to draw from ideology is not a complete exegesis of the concept, but a number of useful ideas for relating the combination of society, language, power and subjectivity found in my empirical work.

Debates Within the Ideology Problematic

To offer a broad definition of the term, G McLennan described ideology as follows:

"... ideologies refer to beliefs about society or ideas having social significance."

(G McLennan, 1986, p3)

However, to adopt this definition is to ignore the considerable debate which the precise nature of the concept of ideology has generated over the years.

One of the most useful functions of the concept of ideology is that it clearly illustrates controversial issues about the relationship between ideas, consciousness, power and social practices. Using Marx as my exemplar, I would like to spend the first few pages of this section reviewing four important debates within ideology: the standpoint problem; the possibility of a material reality independent of discourse; the relationship between ideas and the social structure and Marx's theory of the individual. In so doing, I do not hope to do any justice to the scope of Marx's conceptualisation, but rather I hope to clarify the terrain which the social psychology of discourse must cover.

i) The Stand—point Problem

One of the central debates within the ideology problematic is that of the analytic standpoint: the French rationalist view (represented by de Tracy and Durkheim, amongst others), of ideology proposed that there is an objective truth about reality which can be ascertained through careful and reasoned observation. However, a second 'Germanic tradition (encompassing the work of Hegel, Mannheim and Habermas) saw truth as a societally manufactured
(through laws, media, culture and so on) product, rather than as a mirror—image of an objective reality: societies are viewed as continually in a state of flux, conflicting beliefs being the norm rather than the rational consensus suggested by the French approach.

Marx's work resists straightforward classification with either of these trends. On the one hand, he argued (predominantly in his later works) that the development of knowledge and consciousness is inextricably tied to the development of material and social practices. However, particularly in his earlier works, he assumes that there is a 'reality' underlying ideological distortions. His notion of ideology is often simplistically equated with 'false consciousness', although this was a term he never actually used (it was instead coined by Engels). 'False consciousness' suggests that any class (or unified social group) has a specific 'real' position in the social and economic structure, and that it is hence possible for the scientist or the revolutionary to have 'true knowledge' about one's group's position. Following this, the group can have 'true' ideas which are consistent with or appropriate to its socio-economic position: 'true consciousness'. However, a class can also have ideas which are inappropriate to this position: 'false consciousness'.

The important point to note from this debate are that there are two possible ways of viewing truth and objectivity: in one approach (the 'objectivist'), true representations of society are potentially available to the analyst and objectivity is possible. In the second (the 'discursive') it is impossible to completely extricate oneself from ideological frameworks (as all theoretical perspectives will be informed by the writer's ideological circumstances), hence any attempt at objectivity is bound to fail. Instead, relativistic criteria must be used to adjudge the validity of a theory.

So what implications does this debate have for the sociology of knowledge and discourse analysis? Debates around ideology immediately raise the problem of the status of any social scientific analytic interpretation. Relativism may be unavoidable in social science, if undesirable in daily life, but it is still incumbent upon the analyst to communicate theories to others and argue for a particular perspective. Perhaps the best way of dealing with this dilemma (rather than to attempt and fail to eliminate the irrevocable subjectivity in one's analysis) is to make the political and social context of the research available to the reader; to represent the researcher's interpretation as only one
possible reading of events. At least, under these circumstances, readers can, to some extent, be empowered as the researcher's own power to construct a privileged version is revealed.

ii) **Material Reality and Social Structure**

Closely linked, and indeed central, to the resolution of the problem of the analyst's standpoint is the issue of the relationship between ideas and material reality and the effectiveness of material practices encoded into social structures and social processes.

Marx argued that all mental processes originated in the 'material practice' of labouring to fulfill one's basic needs:

"The materialist conception of history held that it was the way in which human beings responded to their material needs that determined the rest of society."
(McLennan, 1986, p12, his emphasis)

Ideas are thus seen as originating in material practice; however, ideas only become ideological because of their connection with:

"... the conflictual nature of social and economic relationships which characterised the labour process."
(McLennan, 1986, p13)

In a capitalist society, Marx argued, this conflict arises from the unequal division of labour and the concept of private property (which necessarily brings the interests of the individual into conflict with those of the community): exploitation and inequality are inevitable.

This twofold inequality gives rise to class conflict and, to maintain their position, the ruling minority (that is, those who control economic production and distribution) must conceal this conflict through the perpetuation of ideologies negating class inequality:

"Society was in fact riven by conflicts of interest, but in order for it not to fall apart these oppositions were covered up by ideas which represented attempts to portray society as cohesive rather than conflictual by justifying the asymmetrical distribution of social and economic power."
(McLennan, 1986, p13)
The ruling classes, it goes without saying, also control the mediums by which ideologies are disseminated, thus the dominant ideology in any society is that of the ruling minority.

The major achievement of Marxist analyses of ideology is the way in which ideas become concretely tied to social circumstances with material conditions always represented as the crucial determinant of the form ideas take. Marx provides for a specification of the structure of social organisation and shows how ideas are disseminated in line with this organisation.

The issue for the discourse analyst is this: do we accept such a close determining relationship between the material (defined as the means of production) and the representational or the discursive and, secondly, what independent action or autonomy do we allow to the discursive? In common with other developments in post-structuralist theory, I wish to argue that not only is a relativist or reflexive position inevitable in discourse analysis, but that the realm of representations and ideas is more contradictory, fragmented and autonomous than classic Marxist analyses allow for. This argument will be developed in section 5 in relation to Foucault's claims about power and subjectivity.

iii) Subjectivity

Marx argued that individuals are first bounded by their class, and then by their knowledge:

"... it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but their social existence that determines their consciousness."

(quoted in Beechey & Donald, 1986, p8)

Not surprisingly, Marx can be read as a humanist in that he privileges the individual, defined as a group member, and studies that individual and materially constituted subjectivity outwith discourse. The individual is seen as a cognizing, experiencing being standing outside discourse, the possessor of knowledge, rather than being constituted by that knowledge.

This issue of whether subjectivity is best viewed in this way, as rational, integrated and unitary, has been raised already. In the next section, I would
like to discuss the work of two social theorists whose work may indicate in what direction discourse analysis might extend: Althusser, who utilises a unitary, rational subject who is produced and reproduced through the action of ideology in society; and Foucault, whose post-structuralist approach conceptualises subjectivity as a non-unitary, fragmented phenomenon.
4. ALTHUSSER

Once more, the goal of this review is not to do justice to or to evaluate Althusser's complex social formulation, but to indicate some of the directions in which discourse analysis might extend; what I intend to do here is to very briefly precise some of Althusser's work on ideology, with a view to extracting useful insights rather than performing a complete exegesis of his work.

I would like to spend the first part of this review outlining Althusser's formulation of the State, paying particular attention to the role of ideology (through ISAs) and reproduction, and to the relative autonomy of the ideological level. I will then proceed to look at two more specific concepts: interpellation and the formulation of ideology as imaginary.

i) Althusser's Theory of Society

Althusser (1971) tried to redress the reductionism, economism (the economic determination of ideas) and class essentialism of Marxist theorising. As an alternative, he proposed a relationship between politics and ideology, and suggested that they are a "condition of existence" of the economy. His work is an example of the 'structuralist' approach to ideology.

Althusser draws his conceptualisation of the State from Marx, who envisaged society as constituted on two levels: the infrastructure (the economic base) and the superstructure, which itself contained two levels (politico-legal and ideology). This can be represented diagrammatically as follows:

![Figure 5.2: Althusser's Conception of the State](image-url)

Figure 5.2: Althusser's Conception of the State
In Marxist writings, the State is seen as a repressive State Apparatus (SA) which, incorporating government, administration, police, courts, prisons and the army, enables the ruling classes to dominate and exploit the working class. Marxism also distinguished the SA from State Power, the obtainance or maintenance of which is the objective of political class struggle. Althusser, seeing that the SA functions (ultimately) by violence, renamed it the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA).

As well as the RSAs, Althusser saw the State as containing a second element: the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). The diagrammatic representation of this becomes:

![Diagram of State Power, State Apparatus, Infrastructure, RSA, ISA](image)

Althusser defines the ISA as:

"...a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions"

(Althusser, 1971, p65)

ie religious (system of different churches), educational (public and private schools), family, legal, political (the political system, including the different parties), trade union, communications (press, radio, TV etc.) and cultural (literature, the Arts, sport etc.) ISAs.

There are thus a variety of discrete ISAs operating in a society, which are "relatively autonomous" (Althusser, 1971, p68), both from each other and from
the economic base (they take their form from the latter, but are not wholly
determined by it).

Generally, as ISAs are under the control of the ruling class (i.e. the possessors
of State Power), they will reflect the ideology of that class, the dominant
ideology in that society. ISAs will thus appear relatively uniform.

However, ISAs do have the potential to reflect other, non-dominant,
ideologies (e.g. those of deposed ruling classes or the working class); in
consequence, ISAs reflect the contradictions which emerge in a class-struggle
riven society. In Althusser's rather florid terminology:

"This concert is dominated by a single score, occasionally
disturbed by contradictions those of the remnants of former ruling
classes, those of the proletarians and their organisations); the
score of the ideology of the current ruling class."
(Althusser, 1971, p71)

The differences between the RSA and the ISAs are threefold: a society has
only one, unified, RSA, whereas it has a multiplicity of ISAs which, apparently,
need have little unification. Secondly, the RSA is positioned in the public
domain, whereas ISAs belong largely to the private domain. Thirdly, although
all SAs function both by repression and by ideology, the RSA functions
primarily through violence and repression and only secondarily by ideology; the
ISAs, however, function predominantly by ideology.

The unifying factor between the different ISAs thus becomes the dominant
ideology, which is that of the ruling class (i.e. the possessors of State Power).

Althusser's analysis of Law, the State and Ideology uses reproduction of the
conditions of production as its key concept. Althusser argues that, for
production to occur, society must reproduce the conditions of production: that
is, not simply the material replacement of raw materials, redundant machinery
etc., but the continued supply of willing, skilled labour. Wages play a part in
this reproduction of labour as does repression (through the RSA), but alone
are insufficient to explain it: educational and other external institutions (ISAs)
play a substantial part in providing labour which is appropriately skilled and
appropriately submissive to the ruling body. Ideology, therefore, has a crucial
role to play in the reproduction of the conditions of production.
ii) Interpellation

In his 1971 article on ISAs, Althusser asks the question of how an ideology recruits social subjects, persuades them to identify with that ideology, and become themselves conveyors of that ideology. This was framed in the question of how ideology recruits individuals as subjects.

Althusser proposed an answer to this in the concept of "interpellation"; this assumes that an individual is 'recruited' as a subject of a particular ideology, i.e. they 'recognize' something of themselves in the ideology. His or her subjectivity is thence constituted in language by that ideology. Althusser illustrates this idea through the depiction of an hypothetical street scene, where an individual is hailed ('Hey you there!' or something similar) by, for instance, the police (in theoretical terms, the hailer is the ideology). The individual recognizes that it is 'really' (s)he who is being hailed and turns around; (s)he thus becomes the subject of that ideology.

This process succeeds because of the concealed nature of ideology, which makes this process appear 'natural' to the interpellated individual, as Althusser indicates in somewhat tautologous prose:

"... what thus seems to take place outside ideology ... in reality takes place in ideology. What really takes place in ideology seems therefore to take place outside it. That is why those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one of the effects of ideology is the practical denegation of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says, 'I am ideological'."
(Althusser, 1971, p82, his emphasis)

That is, as Hall (1986) comments:

"... these ideological categories and concepts work or operate on our consciousness largely outside of our awareness – they are the underlying 'rules' of thought outside awareness ... Althusser claimed that ideology functioned unconsciously."
(Hall, 1986, p17, his emphasis)

The individual (wrongly) assumes that (s)he is the creator of this ideology, whereas in actuality (s)he is subscribing to an ideology already existing in society. The logical extension of this is that, as the ideology acting as 'hailer' is typically that of the ruling class (because they control the mediums whereby
ideology is disseminated), the vast majority of people will subscribe to an ideology which represents the interests of the ruling classes.

iii) Ideology as Imaginary

Althusser proposed that ideology represented "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser, 1971, p75). By this, he means that, although ideology does not have a direct correspondence to reality, it does allude to it. In consequence, by a process of interpretation, it is theoretically possible to work back from the ideological representation to the 'real' world which it represents.

However, Althusser poses a problem with this: why should people need to represent their real, material existence in this imaginary fashion? He rejects both the Eighteenth Century answer (falsified representations of the world were promulgated by a small number of dominant individuals in order that they might exploit the majority) and the early Marxist explanation (ideology is a distortion of material reality because the individuals themselves perceive distortions through their alienating conditions of existence), on the grounds that both of these presuppose that a true representation of material reality does exist somewhere.

Althusser puts forward the alternative tenet that it is not the 'real' world which people represent to themselves in ideology, but rather their relation to that 'real' world:

"What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live."
(Althusser, 1971, p77)

Ideology is thus, necessarily, imaginary, although Althusser also advances the thesis that ideology exists only insofar as it is constituted in material practices:

"... an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice or practices. This existence is material."
(Althusser, 1971, p77)

From the point of view of the discourse analyst, therefore, Althusser adds three new points for consideration: the possibility of ideology being
autonomous from the economic (although defined by the economic in the last instance), the independent effectivity of ideology in society (constituting individuals and reproducing conditions of existence) and, finally, steps towards a new picture of subjectivity and individual consciousness.
A second social theorist who potentially may have a profound influence on the development of discourse analysis within social psychology is Foucault, the work of whom falls under the general rubric of 'post-structuralism'. Broadly speaking, post-structuralism represents an attempt to link the individual and the social, with a view to seeing how the particular structuring of social relations in a society (be it patriarchal, class-based, racist or whatever) is reflected in the thoughts and actions of individuals. It assumes the centrality of the study of language:

"Language is the central focus of all post-structuralism. In the broadest terms, language defines the possibilities of meaningful existence at the same time as it limits them."
(Clegg, 1989, p151)

Post-structuralism is a broad ranging movement, with roots in psychoanalysis (specifically Lacan), feminism (especially 'new French' feminists like Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray) as well as the Saussurian and Barthian philosophies already discussed. It perhaps finds its clearest representation in the works of Derrida and Foucault. Despite this plurality of origins, one can pick out a number of common themes:

"... themes characteristic of the genre ... would include the centrality of conceptions of language, the relational nature of all totalities, the practices of linguistic signification, the de-centring of the human constitutive subject, and a concern with discourse."
(Clegg, 1989, p150)

In post-structuralism, the concept of ideology is replaced by an analysis of subjectivity and representation within the context of the structuring of social relations:

"The meaning of and membership within the categories of discursive practice will be constant sites of struggle over power, as identity is posited, resisted and fought over in its attachment to the subjectivity by which individuality is constructed. Identity is never regarded as being given by nature; individuality is never seen as being fixed in its expression."
(Clegg, 1989, p151, his emphasis)

The above extract incorporates three important aspects of post-structuralist theory: both subjectivity and language are seen as relational, conflict is interpreted as an inevitable consequence of the non-fixed nature of language,
and attention is paid to the power dimension. I would like to discuss each of these in turn.

i) Language as Relational

As discussed earlier in this chapter, semiology proposed that signification is relatively fixed within a particular speech community. Post-structuralism (after Derrida and the deconstructionist school) takes the semiotic hypothesis one stage further, placing greater emphasis on arbitrariness and the processes of change. Their theory is that (even within the Saussurian single speech community) there is no fixed relationship between and within signifiers, signifieds and signs. In consequence, all meaning is relational; rather than having any inherent or implicit meaning, each sign has a plurality of meanings, and attains meaning only through its relationship to other signs:

"... where structuralist theorists of language like Saussure (1974) regarded signification as fixed by the conventions of particular speech communities, post-structuralists like Derrida (1976) dissolved the focus on signs having an already fixed meaning to one in which there are no fixed signifieds or signifiers. Instead, meaning exists in the difference between relational terms to which current representations defer."
(Clegg, 1989, p151)

And through a temporary relationship of meaning to discursive context:

"Signifiers are always located in a discursive context and the temporary fixing of meaning in a specific reading of a signifier depends on this discursive context."
(Weedon, 1987, p25)

ii) Subjectivity as Relational

Subjectivity has been defined as:

"... the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world."
(Weedon, 1987, p32)

Traditional humanist approaches have assumed that an individual's subjectivity rests in an unchanging, essential core which is both unique and internally consistent. Adopting post-structuralism's foci of interest, any analysis of subjectivity must look at how it is constructed in language:

"Through language, our sense of ourselves as distinct subjectivities is constituted. Subjectivity is constituted through a myriad of
what post-structuralists term 'discursive practices': practices of talk, text, writing, cognition, argumentation and representation generally.
(Clegg, 1989, p151)

However, the post-structuralist approach goes further than this; applying the concept of relational meaning to subjectivity, it follows that identity, too, becomes relational:

"Identities are not absolute but are always situational: one can only ever be seen to be something in relation to some other thing. Identity is always defined in terms of difference, rather than as something intrinsic to a particular person or category of experience."
(Clegg, 1989, p151)

Post-structuralism goes so far as to suggest that subjectivity has no location other than as a social product which is constituted in language:

"Language ... is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed. The assumption that subjectivity is constructed implies that it is not innate, not genetically determined, but socially produced."
(Weedon, 1987, p21, her emphasis)

"Post-structuralism admits of no rational, unified human being, nor class nor gendered subject which is the locus or source of the expression of identity."
(Clegg, 1989, p151)

iii) Conflict

The logical extension of the rejection of an observable material reality is that the precise nature of this reality is likely to be the source of considerable debate. This applies to conflicting discourses around social organisations and social meanings:

"For poststructuralist theory ... Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organisation and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested."
(Weedon, 1987, p21)

Likewise, a post-structuralist version of subjectivity, thus, is likely to incorporate a range of conflicting subject positions:

"Subjectivity is produced in a whole range of discursive practices — economic, social and political — the meanings of which are a constant site of struggle over power. Language is not the
expression of unique individuality; it constructs the individual’s subjectivity in ways which are socially specific."
(Weedon, 1987, p21)

In consequence, a post-structuralist subjectivity is likely to be:

"... a subjectivity which is precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak."
(Weedon, '1987, p33)

iv) Power

Post-structuralism links the concept of the relational nature of signification to power: if there is conflict over the meanings of signs, it is likely that power will be brought to bear to promote or change that meaning:

"... there is no reason to expect that representations will remain contextually and historically stable but every reason to think that they will shift. Power will thus be implicated in attempts to fix or uncouple and change particular representational relations of meaning."
(Clegg, 1989, p151/2)

Foucault's work is concerned with the relationship between knowledge and power rather than with ideology per se: his work may be described as post-structuralist in that he sees 'truth' as created in discourse rather than possessing an objective existence:

"Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is the type of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true."
(Foucault, 1985, p93, my emphasis)

According to Foucault, there is no such thing as objective truth or falsehood; 'truth' is that which is defined as such in the channels of dissemination; that is, in scientific discourse as influenced by dominant economic and political concerns, through "a few great political and economic apparatuses" (Foucault, 1985, p93) such as universities, the army, writing and the media.

"Truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements."
(Foucault, 1984, p94)

In other words, 'truth' has a reciprocally sustaining relationship with power:
"'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it."
(Foucault, 1985, p94)

Foucault's conceptualisation of power is rather different to that of Marx and Althusser: Foucault does not see power as necessarily residing with the State:

"...the State, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and further because the State can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations...the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology and so forth."
(Foucault, 1985, p92)

For Foucault, power is fragmented, rather than being located in one body or set of apparatuses. Power is not simply encoded in structure or institutions which produce ideology, but is contained within discourse itself. Power is present whenever individuals choose to represent events in one way rather than another. Furthermore, power is tied to knowledge therefore, in opposition to the Enlightenment notion that knowledge is empowering per se and a good thing in itself, Foucault opposes the insight that knowledge can be disabling to the extent that others are empowered by the position we are subjected to within a discourse.

Foucault's notion of power is fluid and flexible; power circulates rather than – as Althusser and other dominant ideology theorists proposed – be disseminated from the top of the hegemony.
Summary: The Links Between Discourse Analysis and Ideology

In the previous section, I outlined three important viewpoints in the study of ideas, representations, power and social relations: classic Marxism, Althussarian structuralism and post-structuralism (Foucault). What I would like to do in this summary is to show how some of the points derived from Althusser and Foucault are compatible with the discourse analysis developed within social psychology and which could be used to inform it.

The first point which may be made is that ideology is inevitably linked to everyday language use:

"To study ideology is...to study the ways in which language is used in everyday social life." (Thompson, 1984, p2)

This corresponds to social psychology discourse analysis which, as discussed earlier, proposes that the construction and re-construction of the social world is conducted within this everyday language:

"People are using their language to construct versions of the social world." (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, 33, their emphasis)

Rather than being peripheral activities, the study of discourse and the study of how truth and factual description are produced in discourse becomes central to the study of power and social reproduction: the key concerns of the social sciences. That is, if we bear in mind the insights yielded by the study of ideology and post-structuralism, it is possible to generate a more substantial form of Potter & Wetherell's notion of construction and version: thus, this provides a way of fleshing out these concepts which moves towards Bower's expressed hope for a theory of discourse.

The second link between discourse analysis and ideology is the notion of the subject which begins to emerge in post-structuralist thought. Traditional social psychology typically proposes a rational, unified subject, where the single, self-concept is firmly rooted in enduring cognitive structures. In contrast, rather than having such an inviolable cognitive substrate, the subjectivity of the post-structuralist/discursive respondent has existence only in discourse. Without recourse to an observable material reality, the post-structuralist/discursive subjectivity becomes a multiplicity of potentially contradictory identities.
The final connection which I wish to draw between discourse analysis and the work reviewed in section four is that discourse is an appropriate method by which to study a constructed reality. Post-structuralism replaces the objectively observable material reality of traditional research with a version of a reality which is always constructed through a discursive regime. This led post-structuralists to see discourse as an appropriate means whereby their topics of interest (social structure, power etcetera) could be accessed; in studying discourse, one is performing an intimate and detailed scrutiny of the moment to moment construction of social realities. Although the relationship between discourse and material reality is obscure, the post-structuralist approach proposes that we can only know reality through its secondary reflection in discursive representations of that reality.
In this section, I would like to look at how post-structuralism has been taken up by feminism, using the work of Chris Weedon as my exemplar, and in this way flesh out in more detail the implications of the position developed in this chapter for the study of gender research.

Post-structuralism is potentially useful to feminist research: it does not reproduce the problems of positivistic scientific research (i.e. it does not present itself as objective and value free, it does not depend on experimental, acontextual data) and it has the capacity to examine power dynamics both between researcher and participants, and in society generally; Weedon (1987) defines feminist post-structuralism as:

"... a mode of knowledge production which uses post-structuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change."

(Weedon, 1987, p40/1)

There are three major theoretical elements which constitute Weedon's feminist post-structuralism: the post-structuralist conception of knowledge, the emphasis on language and discourse, and the version of subjectivity implied by post-structuralism.
6.1 Knowledge

Post-structuralism envisages knowledge as socially produced and inherently unstable. As previously discussed, post-structuralism assumes that it is impossible to ascertain any objective 'truth', because society is in a continual state of flux and conflict. Each attempt to objectively define the reality of a society will fail, the deconstructionists claim, as each author (be it politician, philosopher, psychologist or economist) will produce a version derived from his or her own particular stance. To take a simplistic example, a feminist will define society as a bastion of patriarchy, whereas a Marxist may use the terminology of surplus value and the exploitation of the working class.

Post-structuralism's alternative, thus, is to reject the notion of an objective view of reality, working instead on the basis of a multitude of constructed versions:

"Poststructuralist discourses reject the claim that scientific theories can give access to truth. As most scientists themselves would acknowledge, it can only ever produce specific knowledge, with particular implications."
(Weedon, 1987, p28)

Knowledge is seen as intrinsically linked to power:

"Knowledge is transient and inherently unstable — there are few, if any, universal truths. Furthermore, knowledge is understood to be not neutral — it is closely associated with power. Those who have the power to regulate what counts as truth are able to maintain their access to material advantages and power."
(Gavey, 1989, p462)

Although, in this way, post-structuralists recognize a variety of sources of power. As a feminist, Weedon argues that patriarchy must be considered as a crucial source intervening in the lives of women:

"As feminists we take as our starting point the patriarchal structure of society. The term 'patriarchal' refers to power relations in which women's interests are subordinated to the interests of men... Patriarchal power rests on the social meanings given to biological sexual differences. In patriarchal discourse the nature and social role of women are defined in relation to a norm which is male."
(Weedon, 1987, p2, her emphasis)

Forms of 'knowledge' and 'truth' in society, thus, are likely to represent male interests:
"As feminists have observed, dominant conceptions of reality and truth in patriarchal Western society have tended to be male constructions which reflect and perpetuate male power interests." (Gavey, 1989, p462)

The first task of feminist post-structuralism, thus, is to deconstruct the reproduction of knowledge in society, in order that the way in which it ratifies male interests may be exposed.
6.2 Subjectivity

One of the major feminist research topics over the years has been the female self-concept. To recap, the post-structuralist approach to language presupposes that knowledge has no necessary correspondence to an objective, accessible reality. It follows that knowledge has existence only in language, and that this language will be inherently subjective and value-laden.

It is with this set of assumptions that feminist post-structuralism addresses the topic of female subjectivity:

"Feminist post-structuralism is underpinned with the understanding that language (and discourse) constitutes subjectivity. Meaning is actively constituted through language and therefore is neither fixed nor essential. Meanings arise out of differences and distinctions, not out of direct and immediate essences and substances."

(Gavey, 1989, p463)

In consequence, the traditional liberal humanist version of the self (which tend to see it as a unified, rational phenomenon) is "decentred" (Gavey, 1989, p435); the post-structuralist self is "fragmentary, inconsistent and contradictory" (Gavey, 1989, p435).

This counters the accusations of homogenisation and gender essentialism levelled at much feminist research: instead of a quintessential female nature, the post-structuralist self is constituted from a shifting assortment of potentially contradictory identities.

With this morass of conflicting versions and identities, it follows that some are more enabling or disabling than others. As Weedon (1987) points out, society provides women with a variety of — often competing — subject positions from which to compose their self-concept: romantic heroine, femme fatale, diligent housewife, career woman. These can also be related back to Althusser's concept of "interpellation".

The scope of subject positions which are available is critically important, as Weedon comments:

"How we live our lives as conscious thinking subjects, and how we give meaning to the material social relations under which we live and which structure our everyday lives, depends on the range and social power of existing discourses, our access to them and the political strength of the interests which they represent."
It follows that competing discourses of the self can differ in their potential to be enabling or disabling (the importance of this point will be illustrated in the empirical work); they can contain both different social and political implications for women, and different conceptualisations of female subjectivity and potential for action and change:

"In poststructural feminism, we can choose between different accounts of reality on the basis of their social implications."

(Weedon, 1987, p29)

Weedon provides the following example:

"Biologically based theory, for example, and the common—sense positions which it forms, offer women forms of fixed subjectivity which rendered the status quo natural and marginalize attempts to change it as unnatural. Conversely, in radical—feminist biologism, the status quo is rejected as an unnatural, patriarchal distortion of the truly female, in favour of a separate women's culture based in women's biological nature, but defined in different, more positive ways."

(Weedon, 1987, p27)

As well as the deconstruction of the ideological basis of society, feminist post—structuralism must also address individual consciousness: why do women accept (and, in the majority of cases, reinforce and reproduce) an ideology which is detrimental to them? As Weedon, in developing her concept of a 'Feminist Post—Structuralism', noted:

"We need to understand why women tolerate social relations which subordinate their interests to those of men and the mechanisms whereby women and men adopt particular discursive positions as representative of their interests."

(Weedon, 1987, p12)

Conclusion: Advantages and Disadvantages of Post—structuralism

Feminist post—structuralism, as outlined by Weedon (1987), seems to have great potential for feminist research, particularly when used in conjunction with a systematic method of analysing language data: discourse analysis, as advocated by Potter & Wetherell (1987).

However, in her article on feminist post—structuralism and discourse analysis, Gavey indicates a number of problems with the approach. To feminists and 'traditional' social psychologists, the shifting, variable conception of identity may
It seems unreasonable, although one would envisage this posing little problem to the discourse analyst.

Perhaps of greater severity is a second problem raised by Gavey; traditional researchers have been fond of mythologising of expertise (as I described in the previous chapter). Post-structuralism is an extremely complex theory, utilising abstract concepts and often arcane language. In challenging long accepted assumptions about (for instance) subjectivity and the existence of a material reality, post-structuralism may well appear inimical to many readers. In consequence, it is difficult to make post-structuralism comprehensible to a large audience, especially if one wishes to fulfil the feminist directive of countering elitism by making one’s work accessible to lay readers. However, awareness of this problem is perhaps the first step towards combating it; it is surely preferable to make an attempt to clearly explain post-structuralism rather than to reject a potentially illuminating theory out of hand.

Gavey also cites relativism as potentially problematic. Given that post-structuralism rejects the notion of an objective division between true and false beliefs, there is a danger that the capacity to define true and false will come to rest solely with the dominant group. However, this fear ignores the capacity of minorities (e.g. feminists) to stake their own claims to the truth of specific beliefs; relativism is a universal and an unavoidable phenomena, and should be taken as a warning against the unquestioning acceptance of seemingly 'objective' 'truths'.

Given these provisos and warnings, it seems that post-structuralism is a potentially useful addition to feminist research methods; as Gavey (1989) comments:

"What feminist post-structuralism offers us is a theoretical basis for analyzing the subjectivities of women and men in relation to language, other cultural practices, and the material conditions of our lives. It embraces complexity and contradiction and, I would suggest, surpasses theories that offer single-cause deterministic explanations of patriarchy and gender relations. It not only gives credence to women's active resistance to patriarchal power (as well as our oppression by it), but it also offers promising ways of theorising about change — all of which are important to feminism."

(Gavey, 1989, p472)
7. TOWARDS EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Having outlined several of the crucial theories which have been used to examine inter-relationships between language, power, subjectivity and knowledge, I have demonstrated in this chapter both the utility of a post-structuralist/discourse analytic approach to feminist research, and have indicated some of its potential shortcomings and limitations. I now wish to outline the work to which I wish to apply this general theoretical approach.

In selecting areas for empirical research, I was informed both by my review chapters and by key areas in the psychology of women. From my reviews, I gleaned awareness of the importance of the study of stereotypes (Bem), and of the centrality of the female self-concept (the psychoanalytic work of Chodorow, Horney and the Woman's Therapy Centre). To this I wish to add the study of social change, as this topic has been the focus of much feminist research interest over the years, particularly within social identity theory.

Several topics, therefore, became of interest. Firstly, I wished to look at how women represented and made sense of their social position, the conflict between career and motherhood and the potential for social change in those areas. I also wanted to look at how women talked about themselves, or represented their identity and life history in particular circumstances. Finally, I wanted to examine more general talk about gender in debate, argument and conversation; how do people generalise about gender, and what commonplace conceptions do they draw on? In each case, the empirical work provides an opportunity to try out not only discourse analysis, but to develop a contrast between a discourse analysis perspective and the research perspectives reviewed in Chapters One, Two and Three of this thesis.

Having established the broad areas in which I wished to work, the next step was to select a sample. Due to the extremely labour intensive nature of discourse analysis, sample size was considerably smaller than it would have been using traditional research methods. The research on women's representations of their social position and social change (Chapter Six) is based upon eighteen interviews conducted with young, professional women working for a major insurance company; it was felt that, due to their occupational position, this group would most keenly feel the impact of these issues. The study of stereotypes (Chapter Seven) involved seventeen first year students; this
group was chosen because of its accessibility. The final study, on the self-concept and the representation of life history (Chapter Eight), consisted of seven interviews with mature women working in the caring professions.

The analytic strategy in each chapter will also differ. In the new approach to gender I have outlined, there emerged three important elements: ideology, subjectivity and the functional nature of language. Rather than examine each topic with regard to each of these issues (which, at any rate, was not possible, given the time constraints of the Ph.D.), I have chosen to use each chapter to highlight one of these elements. I also felt that, in sketching out an area in which little work has been done rather than working with tried and tested research tools, such a theoretical pluralism might prove more illuminating than adopting a single approach. There is, however, significant scope for an integrated study which incorporates all of these elements.

In consequence, Chapter Six will concentrate on ideology, and will follow the more traditional route suggested by studies of ideology, rather than that of the post-structuralist feminism detailed in this chapter. Chapter Seven will use the study of argumentation and rhetoric to look at how gender stereotypes are used in conversation and argumentation. Chapter Eight will draw upon a post-structuralist subjectivity to illuminate self-representations and life-histories.

All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. The form of transcription which was adopted concentrated simply on what was said; due to the time constraints and the objectives of the studies, no attempt was made to reproduce pause length, hesitations, intonation or overlaps. Although these features are undoubtedly important, it was felt that they were unnecessary to the particular types of research questions which were being asked: questions such as 'how do people use stereotypes?' and 'how do individuals construct a self-concept?' can be answered without reference to a full conversational analysis type transcription (such as that adopted by Atkinson & Heritage, 1984, etcetera).

In broad terms, thus, Chapter Six uses discourse analysis and a traditional perspective on ideology to examine representations of gender in an occupational environment, using as respondents a group of young professional women. Chapter Seven, using a sample of male and female students, will look
at discourse about masculinity and femininity in the light of socio–cognitive theories of stereotyping. Chapter Eight considers another major topic in social psychology from a discourse analytic perspective: the presentation of the self and the telling of life histories.
CHAPTER SIX

WOMEN’S CONCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

1. INTRODUCTION

The broad issues which I wish to study in this chapter are discursive representations of gender in the workplace and one group of women’s conceptions of social change.

I interviewed 18 women working in the head office of a leading insurance firm to obtain material for this study. The women I interviewed were all white, living in Scotland, and probably best described, in terms of their occupation, as middle-class. The interview topics will be described in detail later, but in general terms covered the following areas: equal opportunities, the atmosphere of the workplace, the combination of children/families and jobs, discrimination and social change. The interviews produced a rich body of material outlining hopes and fears about career and family aspirations, reactions to the biases operating both within and outside the workplace, and perceptions of strategies for change.

In considering this material, I wish to look specifically at areas of conflict in the subjects’ lives; what Billig et al (1989) termed 'ideological dilemmas'. Specifically, I would argue that, for professional women, conflict arises between identities constructed differentially in occupational and personal spheres: as I shall attempt to show, they draw upon a historically derived construction of the workplace as masculine, which sits unhappily with their articulation of their feminine personal identity and their representation of what is traditionally seen as women’s position in society. This conflict finds form in two central dilemmas: the disparity between the public and the private, and the problems encountered in reconciling the separate demands of work and family.

There are a number of reasons why I felt this area to be of importance: it is central to many women’s lives, and the dilemmas created by career–family conflicts are the source of much anxiety for female workers. It also has a strong relationship to the work on Social Identity Theory discussed earlier in Chapter Four; what do the identities of 'career woman' and 'housewife' imply for respondents?
In this chapter, I chose to follow the more traditional route suggested by studies of ideology, rather than the route of post-structuralist feminism described in section 5 of the previous chapter. The other two studies which comprise this thesis were based more closely on the post-structuralist framework and the general point which emerges from this disjuncture is that, in the actual practice of discourse analysis, I found a theoretical pluralism to be helpful.

In considering how to investigate women’s discourse about social change and conflicts between work and home, Thompson’s (1984) directive that there are three areas with which the analysis of ideology should be concerned proved useful.

Thompson sees the three stages of analysis as follows:

(i) A description of the social historical conditions in which agents act;

(ii) Analysis of the structures of discourse and sequences of expression (although it is unclear what exactly Thompson means by this, he seems to be indicating everything except meaning, therefore work on conversation analysis or the grammatical logic of argument would be relevant here);

(iii) An interpretation of narratives: the meaning of utterances and their implications.

In this chapter, the analysis will be primarily concerned with the third component of an interpretation of content and meaning of the discourse of one group of women about their career identities. Firstly, however, following Thompson’s recommendations, I shall attempt to briefly describe the socio-historical conditions of female employment and the consequent social positioning of the women. That is, I am assuming that any analysis of discourse involves not just the discourse itself, but some attempt to characterise the broader social and discursive context in which particular accounts arise.

So what are the socio-historical parameters in which this group of women’s discourse might be located? It may be described on two levels, both of which are constitutive of the final view of society which respondents reproduce. On one level we can specify the general position women take up in a capitalist society and, secondly, describe how this position is typically interpreted and turned into 'common-sense'.

1.1 Social Content: Women in the Workforce

In our society, women and men are positioned differently in relation to pay and job status, hours worked, and within the domestic. Women, for instance, are consistently less prevalent than men in the workplace, a trend which seems to have stabilised at a difference of some 20% (figure 6.1).

![Figure 6.1: Persons of working age: economic activity by sex and for women by marital status, 1971–1987 (Source: OPCS, 1988, figure 5)](image)

Secondly, Table 6.2 clearly shows the gross discrepancy between male and female earnings in full time workers of all ages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>male</th>
<th>female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average gross weekly earnings (£)</td>
<td>245.8</td>
<td>164.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which overtime</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which shifts etc.</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average gross hourly earnings (p)</td>
<td>573.6</td>
<td>431.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(inc overtime pay and hours)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average total weekly hours</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which overtime</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2: Average gross earnings and hours by sex (Source: Department of Employment, 1988, table A1)

As can be seen, the longer hours and greater amounts of overtime and shift work carried out by men are contributory factors, but these are not, in themselves, sufficient to explain the disparity. Even in professions categorised
identically by the Department of Employment, both manual and non-manual, serious discrepancies in pay arise, as Table 6.3 demonstrates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Female earnings as a % of male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary teachers</td>
<td>285.7</td>
<td>247.3</td>
<td>86.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office managers</td>
<td>352.7</td>
<td>237.2</td>
<td>67.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales supervisors</td>
<td>223.0</td>
<td>148.4</td>
<td>66.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packers, bottlers etc.</td>
<td>172.9</td>
<td>119.7</td>
<td>69.23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3: Average gross weekly wage in pence, by sex and profession. (Source: Department of Employment, 1988, tables 86 and 87)

In considering differences in job status, the first task is to establish a relatively objective way of assessing the status of an occupation. To this end, I have drawn upon the classification system produced by the Department of Employment in 1988 (Table 6.4), although this schema does produce some anomalies which are discussed below. I have also reinterpreted the figures for each category as a percentage of the total sample, in order to more clearly illustrate the jobs in which the majority of women are situated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DoE class.</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Male%</th>
<th>Female%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NON - MANUAL</td>
<td>Prof supporting management/admin</td>
<td>8.20</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Prof in education/welfare/health</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>19.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Literary, artistic, sports</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Prof in science/engineering/tech</td>
<td>7.96</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>6.98</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Clerical and related</td>
<td>8.90</td>
<td>41.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Selling</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>5.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Security and protective service</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANUAL</td>
<td>Catering, cleaning, hairdressing</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>8.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Farming, fishing and related</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Materials processing</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Making and repairing</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Processing, making, repairing</td>
<td>16.43</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Painting, repetitive assembly etc</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>5.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Construction, mining etc</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Transport operating etc</td>
<td>10.47</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Misc.</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Non-manual occupations 46.21 76.34
Manual occupations 53.79 23.65
Sample size 88 444 44 734

Table 6.4: Sample by sex and occupation, expressed as a percentage of the total sample. (Source: Department of Employment, 1988, tables 86 and 87)

* - No figure is given if category contained less than 100 people.
From the above table, the greater percentage of females working in jobs defined as non—manual initially appears positive. However, these figures obscure patterns of job status. To take three examples, if one removes the impact of clerical jobs from the analysis, there are more males than females in non—manual work (although 'clerical' is classified as non—manual, thus the implication is of high status, the majority of females in clerical work are likely to be employed as secretaries, receptionists and typists: hardly high status jobs).

Secondly, the slightly larger percentage of males (29.58% as opposed to 27.61%) in the top six brackets would be far higher if one excludes low status jobs like nursing and primary school teaching which are included in category 2. In particular, females are disadvantaged in the high status areas of management and professional jobs in science, engineering and technology.

Likewise, in the manual section, women tend to be concentrated in the low status areas of cleaning, catering etc. (again, this discrepancy would be higher if the classification did not include high status male—dominated jobs like chefs), and are all but excluded from agricultural and construction related occupations.

A smaller study, concurring with the Registrar General's classification of occupations, perhaps more clearly illustrates differences in job status (Table 6.5): the same predominance of women in uncategorised non—manual jobs is found, but the substantial sex differences at the distal ends of the status spectrum (men in high status, non—manual occupations; women in low status, manual categories) more clearly emerges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers/managers</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non—manual</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled manual</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi—skilled manual</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forces/undefined</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample size 13 962 and 9 328

Table 6.5: Percentage of Persons Aged 16 and Over in Employment by Socio—Economic Group and Sex, UK, 1981
(Source: OPCS, 1982, table 4.25)
Sex differences also exist in the ratio of full to part time work; Table 6.6 unquestionably shows that, in all part time categories, females vastly outnumber males; over 20% of women who are employed work only part time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours per week</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – 8</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 – 16</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>8.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 21</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.6: Part time workers, by sex and hours worked, expressed as a percentage of the total sample (includes only those who have specified normal basic hours)
(Source: Department of Employment, 1988, table 161)

I would like to finally consider the division of labour in the household; as Table 6.7 shows, responsibility for household tasks (with the exception of the traditionally 'masculine' tasks of repairing household equipment and dealing with money) is largely assigned to women. These figures show the percentage of married respondents who reported that they allocated tasks in a certain way; figures for non-married showed similar trends but had a greater emphasis on sharing, as did married respondents beliefs about how tasks should be allocated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Tasks</th>
<th>Mainly Man</th>
<th>Mainly Woman</th>
<th>Shared Equally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washing/ironing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of evening meal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household cleaning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household shopping</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening dishes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation of household money/bills</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairs of domestic equipment</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.7: Household Division of Labour, 1984
(Source: Social and Community Planning Research)

To summarise, the patterns which are evident in these tables suggest that we can identify, as the background for the discourse study, a sexual division of labour, whereby women are expected to perform most of the work in the
The is exacerbated by a twofold gender-based inequality in the workplace, ie:

i) The majority of women work in jobs with lower pay and prestige than men; "the horizontal division of labour by which women are concentrated in particular types of work." (Barrett, 1980, p154/5)

ii) Those women who do work in high pay/prestige jobs tend to fixate at lower grades than men; "the vertical division of labour through which women are disadvantaged relative to men in pay and conditions of work." (Barrett, 1980, p152)

Barrett summarises the sexual division of labour as follows:

"The division of labour in contemporary capitalism involves a sharp differentiation between male and female workers. Women are concentrated in particular industries at particular level, and are systematically subjected to poorer pay and working conditions." (Barrett, 1980, p152)

The lives of the women I interviewed are inevitably structured and organised by the sexual division of labour evident in the patterns noted above. However, their social context is not simply defined by the conditions of production in which they engage, but is also structured by the way in which, in our society at this time, divisions are represented and accounted for. In making sense of their own situation, the women I talked to were grappling with their social position and the frameworks in which that position has typically been understood. What are those frameworks?
1.2 Social Context: The Sexual Division of Labour as 'Common Sense'

Accompanying the sexual division of labour are various 'common sense' notions about who does 'real' work and what constitutes 'real' work. As Billig (1982) noted, these 'common sense' notions are typically regarded as unquestioned purveyors of truth, and, as such, are powerful sources of reference for speakers.

Broadly speaking, popular culture tends to see the sexual division of labour as normal and natural, an assumption which is buttressed by the 'common—sense' distinction between 'real' work and housework. Gender inequality in the workplace is exacerbated by inequality in the domestic sphere: it is largely unquestioned that women do the vast majority of the housework. Again this is a belief expressed in popular culture ('Women's place is in the home' no longer has the same validity as it once had, but it still represents the cultural pressure on women to take responsibility for domestic tasks; the media finds role reversal a suitably extraordinary situation to base a new situation comedy — "The Upper Hand" — around). Oakley comments:

"WHO DOES HOUSEWORK? Obviously women do...Through upbringing and the social pressures of various kinds...it is women's fate to have the description 'housewife' as an inseparable part of their self—images."
(Oakley, 1981, p176)

The modern capitalist society can be divided into two domains: the private, where individual households have an internal division of labour, and the public (the economy), where the division of labour in society as a whole is precipitated by exchange (of goods/services for other goods/services via money). The 'common—sense' definition of what constitutes 'real' work in Western capitalist society is critically related to this public/private distinction, and the relative capacities for earning which the two provide. Generally speaking, work in the public domain earns money, whereas work in the private domain is largely unpaid: it is not involved in the capitalist lynchpin of exchange of money for goods and services and therefore tends to be seen as economically non—productive. In a society where the status of a person is largely determined by their earning capacity, unpaid work in the private domain tends to be devalued to the extent to which it is not accorded the status of 'real' work at all. This is the case, even though the domains are, of
course, interdependent: workers in the public sector have to be fed, provided with clean clothes and a conducive living environment — in the terminology of Coulson et al (1980), "Domestic labour thus contributes indirectly through the reproduction of labour power to surplus value" (Gittins, 1984); the public domain provides both employment for the members of households and produces the consumer goods/services they require.

To summarise, work in the private domain tends to be accorded low status in popular culture and lay common sense because it is unpaid and makes no material contribution to the economy defined as the public world of work. Consequently, workers in this sphere tend to be seen as less valuable to society. As women constitute the majority of the private domain workers, it is women's work which is devalued and not regarded as 'real' work. The implication is that men's work in the public sector makes a real and valuable contribution to the economy, whereas women's private sector work is worthless; the relative status of the work of the sexes is thus established.
Procedure

In this section, I have indicated the general social context in which discourse around gender—work issues is likely to be oriented. So what implications does this have for the participants of my study? They are enmeshed in a sexual division of labour, and have to confront and make sense of that organisation. They are also faced with a common sense account which tends to place value on work outside the home. The remainder of this chapter will consider how they make sense of their position, and how they deal with these dilemmas in discourse.

The interviews conducted between 19th and 21st December, 1989, in Perth, Scotland. The parameters of the subject group were as follows: interviewees were female, aged between twenty and thirty years old, graduates, and employed by the General Accident Insurance Company. Eight of the subjects were married, and all but one were childless (subject characteristics are summarised in Appendix 6.1). This group were chosen because it was anticipated that women of this age and professional status would most keenly feel any disparity in the demands of their occupational and gender identities.

An interview schedule (which is reproduced in Appendix 6.2) was drawn up to examine areas of interest appearing in a pilot interview (also conducted on a single, female, graduate trainee working for General Accident). The interview covered a variety of topics; equal opportunities, working in a male environment, careers and children, discrimination and social change. Questions were open—ended, designed to elicit a large body of discourse around the issues of gender and work. The interview situation was relatively formal (the interviews were conducted on a one to one basis in conference and interview rooms at General Accident's head office in Pithleavis, Perth), but the style of the interviews was informal and conversational.

My intention in the remainder of this chapter is to firstly describe the basic discourses and repertoires which the women drew upon, and thence to look at how these are combined and articulated to deal with the dilemmas tapped into by the questions.
2. BASIC REPERTOIRES

Before proceeding to the main text of this chapter, I would like to introduce some of the interpretative repertoires which will assume centrality both in this and later chapters; I shall discuss repertoires of gender and self in this section. I also wish to illustrate that the variability and functionality of language found in other discourse analytic studies is also found in this corpus of data. These repertoires are the basic 'building blocks' from which participants assemble and construct explanations and accounts of dilemmatic topics. This identification of the basic units represents the first stage of analysis, the second being to show how these 'building blocks' are mobilised into explanations.

2.1 REPERTOIRES OF GENDER

I would like to begin by examining the two repertoires of gender which subjects typically articulate: essentialist and social. These are commonplace repertoires which have been documented in several other pieces of research (Potter, Stringer & Wetherell, 1984; Wetherell, Stiven & Potter, 1986; Marshall & Wetherell, 1989; Wetherell & Potter, 1989)

i) The Essentialist Repertoire

In this repertoire, gender is represented as an essential state; gender characteristics are fixed in individuals and constitutive of that individual's identity, e.g.

I'd like to know what you think about positive discrimination; you know where a woman's preferred over a man just because she's female. Do you think it's a good thing?
S Depends what the em person is looking for; I mean I think men and women have different qualities and for that reason they could prefer a man to a woman or a woman to a man.
{GA8:12}

This extract embodies essentialism as it makes a categorical distinction between males and females. Typically, gender essentialist repertoires also attribute certain features to the sexes on the basis of those categorisations. For instance, women are assigned the categorical attribute of being less assertive than men:
S I feel that I have to be as assertive, which I think women perhaps sometimes struggle in being.  
{GA7:9}

S I certainly think more men eh don't suffer from it (lack of assertiveness). I think they are more generally assertive.  
{GA7:10}

S 'Cause I think men probably are well they are definitely more assertive in general than women ... I just think that em in general — a sort of women are less assertive. Yeah.  
{GA17:12}

Likewise, they are commonly represented as less ambitious than men:

S I think in this company er there's a lot of women at grade two clerical level, but whether that's because they haven't been given the chance or because they've been married, gone and had kids and come back, or don't have the ambition to get on, I don't know.  
{GA8:1}

S ... I was the only girl that did maths up to that = at the level at school, but it wasn't because we were discouraged, it's just the girls didn't seem to want to do it. (I: Mm) And I don't know whether ehm, they don't seem to have the same ambition in a lot of the cases, sort of '(I'll) go and get married and have children' was their ambition.  
{GA8:3}

Essentialist repertoires often invoke the notion of biological or 'natural' sex differences:

S ... maybe I wouldn't like being subservient to a man; whereas perhaps maybe I think it's sort of more natural somehow.  
{GA12:7}

The implicature of using an essentialist repertoire is that gender division is presented as an inevitable, unchangeable, natural and sometimes biological fact; neither social change nor individual action can affect it.

ii) The Social Repertoire

Gender is an artificial division in society; the reflection of social practices and social habits. 'Masculine' and 'feminine' traits, thus, are not tied to those specific genders but may be adopted by both sexes.

S Em - well - I think - (sighs) it's just the you know there seems to be women are women and men are different and there
doesn't seem to be any you know it’s just the way society’s based, you know and em people are just brought up to think of women in different roles than men, you know, and I know within myself there’s I’ve got lots of prejudices, you know, em er not for myself but for other people who are — it really all comes back to your upbringing.

{GA18.1}

S I mean females are all different, they all act differently. Em — I think probably the general view of females is that they’re more caring, now that’s a generalisation but I think that people tend to assume that that’s something associated with women.

{GA9:23}

Respondents using this repertoire often make explicit reference to social conditioning into gender roles:

S I know havin a family it’ll end up being my responsibility ... it’s something I’ve just been conditioned to accept.

{GA18:5}

S It’s well I think this goes back to the roles we’re brought up to play, because yeah the male knows he’s got to go out there and make a career for himself for the next twenty or thirty years and that he’s probably going to get married and having to support a wife and a couple of children, so yes I think there’s a lot more of this thrusting up the ladder, whereas yeah women don’t tend to do that as much. They do tend to be more satisfied lower down, which is which is probably wrong but then you’re saying it could be because they’re sticking with their husbands and boyfriends and whatever.

{GA15.19}

These extracts represent a social theory of gender because (unlike the essentialist repertoire where gender categories are an unquestioned assumption, something inherent within the genders), here participants attribute different gender characteristics to social conditioning, rather than to any 'natural' or biological difference.
2.2 REPERTOIRES OF SELF

i) Trait Repertoires

A trait account of the self assumes that individuals have a number of relatively enduring personality characteristics:

S I'm the type of person that makes a decision and stands by it. {GA5:22}

S I'm a pretty easy going person; if you're nice to me and you're a pleasant person, I'll like you. That's the honest truth. I have loads of friends and I'm you know don't look for any particular qualities at all. If you're a very easy going person, and you know game for a bit of a laugh, that's fine with me. {GA15:24}

Like the essentialist repertoires of gender, participants often invoke 'natural' or 'inherent' metaphors:

S I myself – it's not my nature to be assertive. {GA7:9}

S I feel as if I've got to be better than everyone. That's not particularly male, it's just me, I'm competitive. {GA2.121}

S I lack the confidence, ehm, you know to say things and do things, but that's just something (I mean) that's part of me, that's inbred as it were. {GA5.12}

A common modification to this repertoire is to attribute traits to socialisation:

S I've been told my personality profile tells me that I'm very intolerant of people who don't come up to my own standards ... I admire people who have em who have shown that they have succeeded, and I think I particularly admire them if they've started from nothing or next to nothing, you know; people who have inherited is not my idea of er fun. Er no I like to see people doing well. Again it's probably my background you know being self employed parents you tend to sort of appreciate the hard work that goes into it. {GA10.23}

Participants can readily switch between the inherent and socialised variants of trait theory, as in the following extract, where the first line suggests as inherent basis for personality and the remainder implies a socialisation theory:

S I think if they've got it in them it'll come through. Eh, I think
right from the start... Ah, it depends a lot on upbringing as well, if you’ve had brothers, sisters, been to a coeducational school the way up through = you’ve gone through University... If you’re going to be assertive it’s shown by that time whether amongst members of your own sex or in a mixed company. I don’t think you can teach somebody to be assertive =.
I = Mm.
\{GA5.11\}

ii) Roles

An alternative to the simple trait model of personality is to see individuals as performing a number of social roles, tailored to suit particular contexts: wife, mother, career woman, daughter, for instance.

The group under study used both gender-based roles:

S = I think ’cause you feel that you have sort of different roles to play to a certain extent, in that you’re the child’s mother, you should act as his (it’s) mother =
\{GA6.7\}

S In work you’re in you know you’ve got to sort of not maintain an image but you’ve got to try and be professional em whereas if you’re at home or just with friends you can just relax and = I probably am different. I probably when I go home yeah I suppose when I go home I take on the role ’housewife’ which is quite different as well, you know I mean that’s that’s it.
\{GA13:24\}

and occupational roles:

S It’s in my personality (not to be assertive), but em I think in work it probably would help me because you do take on a different well I take on a different personality when I come to work, you know, em you know I push myself more and I’m em and in that way I think it (assertiveness training) would help.
\{GA18:17\}

These two sets of roles are depicted as requiring different characteristics and behaviours.
2.3 VARIABILITY AND FUNCTIONALITY

As one examines the data, it rapidly becomes apparent that the essentialist and social repertoires of gender are not mutually exclusive alternatives: as can be seen in the following extract, subjects draw upon these conflicting resources variably, apparently perceiving no contradiction between, in this case, adopting an individual differences argument (which concurs with the social rather than the essentialist model of gender in implying that personality traits have no necessarily genderised origin) in the first sentence, then moving to talk about essential gender traits in the second:

I: You said that you preferred to work for a man; why?
S: Well because you can't really generalise; it depends on the person. I think I quite enjoy working for men: they're more direct, em — more down to earth, sometimes, you know. Women can be a bit bitchy, women can you don't know how to take them sometimes.

As will be seen throughout the subsequent empirical work, these repertoires of gender can be used to serve a wide variety of functions for respondents. In the above extract, for instance, one can largely attribute the variability noted by the analyst to the contextual demands as perceived by the subject: the first phrase can be interpreted as the subject reneging on a statement made earlier in the interview which, when repeated by the interviewer, perhaps sounded discriminatory. Subsequent talk, however, is a reiteration of her initial perspective. As other studies have indicated:

"Both repertoires are very useful in different contexts for achieving a variety of goals."
(Marshall & Wetherell, 1989, p121)

The following extracts illustrate how language is used to achieve certain functions; several participants in this study used an essentialist repertoire to justify their preference for male co-workers:

S: No actually I get on me(n)=with men better, than with women, generally. I had 2 older brothers, much older, and I always felt that I spoke to them better, than I did to other women. I think women tend to niggle a bit, and argue a bit. And men are a bit more receptive to ideas. I=I find that there's no problem there actually, speaking to them, that they're quite easy to speak to. They're very friendly as well, and it's not the same everywhere. But that Department's good. It's very easy to speak to (them); they're cooperative and, I =I don't mind the fact that they're all men at all. I'd probably prefer it than working with an all-female group.

{GA6:12}
I think to a large extent they're (male managers) probably a lot easier to work with. There's a lot of in middle junior management although females are now coming into these areas, I think males are much more straightforward, and they'll lay their cards on the table, whereas I think there can be quite a lot of bitchiness between females, so in a way I prefer to work under a male manager.

{GA3:5}

or to represent 'feminine qualities' as advantageous to employers:

S ... you should get the company to do it; make them feel the conscience that they're preventing themselves from probably getting some good people in because there's no childcare facilities or women can't afford to get a childminder or whatever. And there's no doubt I think from experience that employers find women do tend to work harder and are a lot more loyal. I know I've gone on about women getting married and leaving jobs, but if I look back on my university friends who left at the same time as me the women have tended to stay in the same job a lot longer than the male counterparts who just move on after a couple of years. You do get a lot more loyalty and stability from a woman; I don't know why that is.

{GA15:18}

This section has set up some of the basic repertoires around which are central components of discourse about gender. Their use will be further exemplified in the next section, where I shall proceed to an examination of how they are used in response to the interview questions and the dilemmas these pose.
3. MAKING SENSE OF THE SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOUR

3.1 The Division of Labour Within the Workplace.

In the introduction, I indicated that there is a 'common sense' expectation that women will do the majority of domestic duties which — as they are unpaid and conducted in private — are not regarded as 'real' work.

How did my participants represent the workplace and the relative roles of women and men? Participants' discourse almost unequivocally noted the gender division in the workplace, whereby women were concentrated in menial or clerical jobs, and senior levels were almost exclusively male. Using Barrett's (1980) division (c.f. p159), they saw gender inequality both within professions:

S I think it's easier for men to get on. And I think there are many more men in higher positions. {GA12:1}

S ... the higher up you go 'n' the higher grades you have to deal with they're male dominated. {GA5:4}

S ... there are a lot of women that seem to be in lower-graded jobs ... In that there are very few women who ehm, go on to management. Yeah. And there even very few women in the top-graded jobs. {GA7:7}

S ... the people who seem to make most of the decisions are men, and the people who do the very routine boring work are women. {GA9:7}

and between professions:

S ... if you look at the split in the Departments. If you're looking at the same job, you know, maybe an Underwriter who would maybe be fairly sort of middle-line type person, the chances are that Underwriter will be a man=
I =M—hm
S If you look at the lower end of the work — the Clerical work — there's more women I'd say than men. So probably the=the jobs that are more sought after are more inclined to go to men. I (mean) I suppose that's a—an inherent thing in Insurance. {GA6:1/2}

S ... when I started there used to be a very big section of data prep. operators, girls that keyed in a lot of the numbers ... it was just like a huge typing pool ... women do seem to do the menial jobs, like typing.
Several did qualify their statements by envisaging the situation as improving:

S ...there are certainly more women being promoted to Senior positions if they show themselves capable — over the last few years, I know that myself, I've been promoted.

S ... the computing em service side if you like; em there's no doubt about it; women seem to be I don't know there just seem to be more women in moderately to fairly senior posts. Em I think because it's a more recent growth area, you know it has advanced (I: Mm) faster probably than underwriting which you know some of the people have been there for thirty years; it's inevitable it's fairly old fashioned in a lot of ways.

As can be seen from the extracts from GA6 reproduced above, respondents could switch between positive (envisaging the status of female workers as improving) and negative (conceiving gender division as inherent) views of the situation, according to the context.

Participants proffered a variety of explanations for the unegalitarian division of labour; several perceived male prejudice as the root cause:

S ... having looked at the numbers of women who succeed in getting to that stage (management), I just wonder why that is. I don't think it's likely that there are em no women applying for any jobs, so that the only conceivable interpretation is that at the end of the day, even in a corporation this size, there is still a bias.

S And I think there's still a =a bias over 'We'll train a woman, and she'll leave and go and have a family, and... '

S ... I still=you get that impression whether it's enti(rely)=I don't=I wouldn't say it's entirely true; they wouldn't have taken them on at all if that was the case, because obviously, ehm, I could leave one day and say 'Thanks very much', and I'm going to get married, and have a family and I won't be back'. So they must have some feeling in some people =

I =M−hm=

S =think there's still a strong bias to taking on men rather then women.

A significant proportion, however, attributed the division to the women themselves; lack of female ambition was suggested by one participant as a
likely cause:

S Em I think there's still a lot of female predominance in lower grades, but maybe that's because some women don't want to get on, some are quite happy in the grades they've got, em maybe older ladies who just come in part time or are quite happy to sit there and haven't really got any ambitions; it's just a bit of pocket money.

{GA2:2}

The same respondent also suggested that a lack of confidence in women may also be influential:

S Because not enough women have got the em conviction of their own ideas. They might have a gut feeling that it's right, but might not have the the courage or the confidence to stand up there and put them across in an acceptable manner.

{GA2:7}

Gender inequality in the workplace is exacerbated by gender division in the home:

S ... women have got kind of the role of rushing about and doing all of the organising, keeping things together you know and doing all the tidying up and everything you know. It would be quite difficult in er for everybody to go away and do their own thing; there needs to be somebody there em but – it's just that it's always expected to be the woman that would do that, you know.

{GA18:3}

S He just doesn't take responsibility for er – like constant household chores, you know like if I see something lying in a big pile I'll tidy it up and he would just leave it lying in a big pile ... But em – and we'll just come to some kind of arrangement about er – picking picking the child up and doing the household chores. But it'll probably most of it'll fall on me ... It's just the way I've been brought up.

{GA18:14/15}

Several participants commented on the fact that superficial egalitarianism had not ameliorated the societal expectation that the ultimate responsibility for childcare still rested with the woman:

S I think that although I don't think it's women's role to give up or to look after the children I think as I said that fundamentally, the responsibility or the primary responsibility does rest with the woman. If she goes back to work, she's still under pressure if the child's ill or something happens, it will be the mother I think who's turned to and who's expected to cope ... I think in most cases it is the woman who bears ultimate responsibility for dealing with any problems that arise.
Although no question was directly aimed at assessing participants' evaluation of the value of housework against paid work, some representations did emerge in response to questions about the importance of work and 'house—husbands'.

The majority of subjects expressed their (paid) work in a positive light:

S I couldn't imagine not working, em I like working, I need to work, I think. I miss it, when I'm not working, you know if I'm off for any length of time I feel the need to get back to work. I Is it the intellectual stimulation you miss? S I think — probably that, yes. My brain goes stale (laughs). Em and the company as well, probably; we work in a team downstairs and er the company's good there and the conversation, and also that you know along with the work you know it's quite interesting.

S I like you know to be in a job that you know I have to do quite a bit of thinking; I wouldn't be happy with just sort of a job er you know that was just bordering on mundane. I So it's the intellectual challenge which interests you. S Yes, hm. I Does the social element have anything to do with it? S Yeah, mhm. I like I like working with people and er—they've got a good sports centre here and I do such sporting activities as I can.

These extracts tend to suggest that participants would feel their lives to be impoverished if they were not working; one respondent goes so far as to portray her work as a crucial determinant of her mental health:

S If if my work isn't right, then I'm not right. It affects I have to say that it probably affects everything em my mental state my psychological state outside work; if things aren't going well then that's going to put me on a downer, whereas if things are going extremely well then I'll enjoy my weekend a lot more. Em it's very important.

Housewifery was not generally seen as a worthy alternative, nor was 'housewife' represented as a desirable personal identity:
S I've always been very career minded and I've wanted to do specific things at specific times, and I really wouldn't want to have a gap in my career to look after children; I wouldn't want that ... I would definitely want to come back to work, because my career is very important; I wouldn't want to be at home all the time. definitely would be a problem ... it's not something I would want to do. I wouldn't want to take that length of time off I don't think. It's just not me.

{GA16:12/13}

The positioning of housewifery as inferior to paid work is exemplified in discourse around 'house-husbands' (i.e. husbands who do the housework and look after the children whilst the wife goes out to work). The following extract, from GA5, demonstrates the antipathy towards such role reversal:

I You can't imagine a situation where your partner would stay at home and look after the kids?
S I don't think so. Ehm, I can't visualise that no ... Ehm, I still don't see men taking the equivalent of Maternity Leave though, or whatever, you know — 5 years out, to look after kids until they're at school age.
I Even if you had a better job than him?
S Personally, (pause) I would take the time out, even if I had a better job. Maybe it's just traditional views, traditional upbringing. I wouldn't ehm, I wouldn't think it was wrong for somebody else ehm, the male to stay at home now, the one go out work — that may be right for them, but I don't think it'd be right for me.
{GA5:8}

S I'd rather have my husband with a career, I think. he's higher up than I am so it probably would be wrong for him to give up his work ... he likes to think he's the breadwinner.
{GA13:18}

However, most subjects do not describe their reservations about role reversal so directly; typically, such misgivings are presented as unacceptable to their husbands:

S I don't think he would (agree to act as a 'house-husband') I don't think he would no. Em — he likes to think he's the major breadwinner.
{GA12:19}

S I don't think he'd really be happy, for long anyway em staying at home (I Mm.). You know looking after the children and so on and so forth you know if he didn't have a job I don't think it would be so good.
{GA17:11}

I You can't see a situation maybe where you'd carry on with your job and your husband would look after the kids?
S Em — I would like to say yes but knowing my husband no.
{GA18:14}
There thus seems to be good evidence for presupposing that participants are relating their personal opinions and position to the common sense assumptions outlined in the introduction. However, as indicated earlier, this is only one feasible reading, and alternative ones are available.

To provide an example of this, GA15 virtually reverses the world view given by the participants in the extracts above; she constructs 'house—husband' as a viable, desirable identity:

S ... he would love to be a house—husband, it's incredible ... he can't see any reason why I should give up my job and stay at home looking after these kids; why couldn't I continue working for forty years and he stay at home, and I can see his point of view entirely that we're so stereotyped into these roles that he yeah h—he's got a pretty unattractive life ahead of him, slaving away, perhaps at something ultimately he won't enjoy to provide for me and you know various other dependents and things, and yet I might have the opportunity ... to give it up and say oh well I think we'll have a couple of babies and stay at home, which in many ways is an easy option. So yeah he'd be delighted to stay at home and have coffee mornings (I laughs) and go and play golf with his friends or whatever ... I'm sure there are people who do this and it works out for them and there's no reason really why it shouldn't; it's just people's attitudes, it's just the husband is not expected to ... There is absolutely no reason why he shouldn't. I mean we're talking here about equal opportunities and that's his opportunity for parenthood; to take over that role, and after all it's only a role, role playing. So yeah, he'd love to!
{GA15:10/11}

This, interestingly, is consistent with this subject's endorsement of 'housewife' as a positive identity:

S I think I would like to have some of my time at home, doing the type of things that women do in the home because I enjoy that side of life as well.
{GA15:7}

S I mean for some people it is the right thing and I mean yeah they make excellent mothers and super homes.
{GA15:8}

and a negative image of the workplace and 'career women':

S I have a friend who left university with an arts degree and joined Next Retail Group and has shot to the top, absolutely shot to the top, but she is completely single minded; she never talks
about anything but her work, and I feel she has she's gone too far that way. Okay she's maybe achieved her ultimate aim, but I think her life has suffered slightly because she hasn't got a balance; it's all work, nothing else. And I wouldn't want to get into that situation, because there's a lot more to life. Where as I say I do enjoy things in the home; I love entertaining, I don't mind doing my cleaning, I like all that sort of stuff as well. But there's a balance between the two.

\{GA15:23\}

S ... he's (husband) got a pretty unattractive life ahead of him, slaving away, perhaps at something ultimately he won't enjoy to provide for me and you know various other dependents and things ... I must admit if I thought I was in General Accident for the next forty years I would think that was a pretty miserable prospect, but I'm hoping that you know it won't come to that and I can imagine that many people in here come in at eighteen and work all their lives in pretty dead end jobs, and I think that's absolutely miserable but you know I suppose that is life.

\{GA15:10/11/12\}

It thus follows that the 'common—sense' about women's work, although it may well be the dominant perspective in contemporary Western society, is not the only interpretation available to individuals when they are constructing a version of their world in discourse.
3.2 Confusion of Gender Categorisations with Economic Distinctions

It can be argued that one way in which society maintains the genderised status quo is through the confusion of gender categorisations and economic distinctions, a process which the social context described in the introduction helps to perpetuate.

One way in which participants represent this confusion is through the discursive 'genderisation' of the workplace; whereas the household responsibilities are termed 'female', the office is a 'male' preserve (this obviously relates back to the version of gender—work practices described in the introduction). For instance, several participants commented on the informal male networks of connectivity and privilege operating throughout the company:

S I think also because maybe women aren't so they maybe don’t promote themselves so much, don’t you know they don’t er go around with all the men and talk with them and things like that= (I =Hm.) So it’s hard to unwrap this; to get yourself noticed, you’ve got to push yourself forward ... I mean a couple of men that who I’ve got the impression of well they just like to be got on with with you know, these other men, they like to work with other men.
{GA12:5/6/7}

This is taken a stage further in the following extract, which implies that only males, or women who can be accepted as token men, have the right to work:

S I got on well with males sort of thing and I find quite often downstairs I’m I’m just treated as one of the boys actually almost.
{GA13:12}

Participants also tend to genderise specific jobs (note also that GA12 vacillates between using an essentialist model of gender — in 12.2, certain jobs are inherently masculine or feminine — and regarding gender division as rooted in societal organisation, as in 12.14):

S I think it (work in the operations room) was just always regarded as a male job; it’s quite dirty you know, you have to sit up all night with a lot of men. It’s it’s not a very feminine job at all.
{GA12:12}

S ... it does tend to be a case of it’s em 'the boys' sort of thing 'cause it’s sort of a boys' place downstairs if you like, so they’re
all very buddy—buddy.
{GA16:15}

S ... women do seem to do the menial jobs, like typing.
{GA12:14}

S ... it's a lot of administration that's done here, a lot of clerking jobs which tend to attract women.
{GA16:12}
4. THE DILEMMAS OF THE FEMALE WORKER

In 1989, Billig et al published a book entitled *IDEOLOGICAL DILEMMAS*, in which they proposed a novel approach to the study of everyday thinking. They took the perspective (expounded in chapter five) that ideology was inherently contradictory:

"Ideology is not seen as a complete, unified system of beliefs which tells the individual how to react, feel and think. Instead, ideology, and indeed common sense, are seen to comprise contrary themes."

(Billig et al, 1989, p2)

That is, individuals do not blindly endorse to the dominant ideology, but can subscribe variably to the variety of ideologies which exist in any one time in any one society. This provides the basic requirement for dilemmatic thought: if ideology is not an internally consistent, unitary entity, but rather is constituted of shards of a host of shifting and contradictory ideologies, conflict and debate become possible:

"... ideology is not reproduced as a closed system for taking about the world. Instead it is reproduced as an incomplete set of contrary themes, which continually give rise to discussion, argumentation and dilemmas."

(Billig et al, 1989, p6)

This possibility of debate, Billig et al argue, enables ordinary people, in the discussion of mundane events and everyday happenings, to think meaningfully about themselves and their world:

"... the contrary themes enable people to discuss and puzzle over their everyday life."

(Billig et al, 1989, p3)

This approach manifestly has considerable correspondence to my own. Not only does it concentrate on everyday language use, but it also picks up on many of the themes drawn out in chapter five, providing a coherent linkage of individual subjectivity with history and ideology. Billig et al argue that a dilemmatic version of thinking suggests a social component, but (adopting the argument of Billig, 1987) dialogue and debate can and do occur within the individual. However, the content of this debate has historical and ideological roots, as it is drawn from socially shared beliefs, which in turn are determined by the way in which a particular society constructs meaning.

Taking this conception a stage further, Billig et al argue that 'common—sense'
beliefs contain contradictory themes, and these contradictions are the prerequisite for thinking and arguing to occur:

"... common sense contains contrary themes, and these enable the emergence of social dilemmas. In this sense, common sense is dilemmatic. More than this, the contrary themes of common sense represent the materials through which people can argue and thing about their lives, for people need to possess contrary themes if they are to think and argue."
(Billig et al, 1989, p8/9)

As regards this study, the interview schedule yielded two inter-related dilemmas. For the participants who choose to represent it in this way, the discursive genderisation of the workplace can be seen as the source of two dilemmas: firstly, their status as female workers in a 'male' workplace becomes anomalous and, secondly, their 'failure' to fulfil the 'traditional' female role of housewife and mother. I would like to discuss their discursive representations of each of these dilemmas in turn, and the possible solutions which participants propose.

4.1 The Female Worker in a 'Male' Workplace

Accepting that a significant number of participants are drawing implicitly or explicitly on the general theory of society outlined above, their position as women in junior management is in obvious opposition to the expectancies about women's position in society which are put forward by the theory. As Oakley indicates:

'There was felt to be a need to explain why women took paid jobs, whereas, historically speaking, what really needed to be explained was the rise of ideology, material conditions and gender relations that placed women in the home.'
(Oakley, 1981, p148, her emphasis)

Given that the workplace is thus constructed as 'male', a dilemma is set up between this and the subjects' female personal identity, which requires explanation: what constructions of femininity do they draw upon to account for this anomaly and what coping strategies do these particular constructions throw up? One can argue that explanations could take three forms: if one adopts an essentialist model of gender, since the category 'female' does not coincide with the 'masculine' workplace, female characteristics must be either
detrimental or advantageous; alternatively, if one regards gender as a social construction, one would anticipate arguments stressing the individual’s capacity to overcome the social pressure which depicts the workplace as a male preserve.

I would now like to discuss these in turn, beginning with the female as deficit/female as advantageous categories stemming from an essentialist model of gender.

i) Female as Deficit

To explain this it is useful to go back to the accepted view of gender and work described above, and look at the sex—role expectations it implies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>home</th>
<th>work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The associations indicated vertically are 'commonsensical'; they fit with traditional sex role expectations, and subjects largely do not perceive them as requiring explanation. However, the diagonal oppositions have to be explained: 'career woman' and 'house husband' (a more detailed discussion of the usage of which was been provided earlier) both contradict society's sex role prescriptions.

The 'female as deficit' repertoire emerges strongly in GA4's interview, as she endorses the idea that women who wish to 'get on' in business have to adopt male traits:

S I think any woman for any woman to get on at the moment she has to become so male anyway in her characteristics and attitudes.
{GA4:8}

S ... a woman who is good at her job but is a silly simpering individual is not going to get anywhere. For a woman to get on over and above being good at her job, I think she has to be if not masculine, she certainly has to display a lot of masculine character traits. Having said that I suppose the same applies to men; men who are terribly effeminate and not very effective or em aggressive and things like that would probably be in the same position; I've seen men in the same position. So I think the
same character traits apply to both, but I think a woman has to be more single-minded. {GA4:9}

This repertoire was first described in Marshall & Wetherell’s 1989 study of female lawyers. One common construction which they encountered was that of ‘femininity as lack’; women lack traits such as objectivity and confidence which are necessary for a lawyer. Consequently, if they wish to succeed as lawyers, women must suppress or overcome their ‘feminine’ traits. Furthermore, Marshall & Wetherell noted no such contradiction between professional identity and masculine characteristics in their study.

The association of ‘male’ with ‘work’ implies that women are somehow inferior to men as workers, the theoretical equivalent of which is possibly the Marxist argument that capitalist society represents women "deficient labourers" (Oakley, 1981, p135): a historically/economically based ideology which suggests that men possess qualities which make them more suitable as workers than women.

A more subtle version of this repertoire suggests that ‘career woman’ is not a naturally occurring identity; as the following quote suggests, it has to be worked at:

S It’s in my personality, but em I think in work it probably would help me because you do take on a different well I take on a different personality when I come to work, you know, em you know I push myself more and I’m em and in that way I think it would help. {GA18.17}

Subjects using the ‘female as deficit’ model orient to the gender–work dilemma in several ways; a common coping strategy is to draw upon a trait model of personality and argue that work in a professional setting requires the suppression of female and/or the adoption of male characteristics. I’d now like to consider each of these in turn.

**Suppression of female characteristics**

S I came from Aberdeen University and they took me on for a job against other males that I knew. And after that they then they must have thought I was okay from Aberdeen even as a woman and they kept taking on more. {GA15.13}

The key phrase in this extract is "even as a woman", which implies that the speaker has convinced employers of her worth despite her sex.
Adoption of male characteristics

S I'm from quite a large family and mostly male so em I've always been used to living in that sort of environment if you like so em I got on well with with males sort of thing and I find quite often downstairs I'm I'm just treated as one of the boys actually almost, you know if you're working with a male team you just sort of muck in with the rest of them.

The implication here seems to be that if you successfully assume a male identity, you will be accepted 'almost' as a token male.

ii) Female as advantageous

There is, however, an alternative to this 'female as deficit' model, which has been documented in other studies: 'female as advantageous'. Marshall and Wetherell (1989) picked out this repertoire in their group of female lawyers, whereby occupational and gender identities were still seen as in conflict, but the presence of 'feminine' traits in law were seen as promoting change in a desirable direction. This repertoire suggests that specifically female characteristics can bring some new dimension to the job, eg 'women are more loyal':

"...employers find women do tend to work harder and are a lot more loyal...You do get a lot more loyalty and stability from a woman."

The above extract uses an essentialist model of gender; this repertoire also can utilise a social model: in the following, women are seen as getting a better deal therefore it is advantageous to be a woman:

"...the head of the Investment Department, Mr B____, is very pro—women. As I say the women get a better deal in the Investment Department than often the men do, and I don't know why; he just he just likes employing women. He tends to take them on."
iii) Women Become Superwomen

If one adopts a social model of gender, however, the masculinisation of the workplace and the consequent subordination of women becomes a societal construction, rather than an expected state deriving from inherent personality traits. De Beauvoir's statement:

"A man is in the right in being a man; it is the women who is in the wrong...He is the Subject, he is the Absolute — she is the Other."

(De Beauvoir, 1949, p15/16)

echoes into the present day, producing a third solution to the dilemma generated by the genderised workplace:

S I do sometimes think as I say that you've got to make yourself work that bit more because you're a woman or you've got to be very correct in what; I'm very wary or at least I used to be not so much now that I'm always very wary that I'm going to be correct in what I say, so that I can't be picked up on if you know what I mean. (I Yeah.) Em I think men can get away with saying things that are not really that they haven't really researched properly, but if a woman says it then she hasn't you know she's just a silly woman she hasn't thought of that one properly.

Participants commonly suggested that women had to work harder, prove themselves more or (as GA13 suggests) had to be more careful in what they said or did than their male colleagues:

S ... you've got to be more careful about how you approach things, I think, to be taken seriously you've got — you've got to make more of an effort I think to be taken seriously than men do, so I suppose that could mean doing the job better, or trying to do the job better, and having a taking a very professional approach to everything, just because there is you've got I think you do have to make an effort to be taken seriously, let's say.

S I want to move from what I'm doing into the Underwriting side learn more about that, become quite competent. I think just prove to people I can do it — I always feel that you've got to prove a bit, you know, you've got to do things much much better
to prove that you’re capable of —
I Because you’re woman you mean?
S I think in to some people, not not everyone (I: Hm). I think
there’s a lot of people accept you know you’re either doing a
good job or you’re not. I think in a lot of cases that’s the case.
{GA9:6/7}

S ... like being you know one female in a group of men, where
you’ve really got to to be I don’t know perhaps overly assertive
to prove to them that you’re equally as good.
{GA11:12}

This gives rise to a different coping strategy: if social pressure is the problem,
this can be overcome on an individual basis, if that individual is above
average, either innately or through hard work. To provide some examples:

S I think em you probably are getting more women are getting
on better I think I think there are more women in higher places
and more influential jobs but I do still think they’ve got to prove
themselves a lot more than men.
{GA13.22}

S I genuinely feel if I really wanted to get on and pursue my
career to the highest level, I could. I mean maybe I’d falter by
the wayside because I wasn’t clever enough or whatever but if
you were, I don’t think there’s anything to stop you. Yeah you
you maybe do have to try as you say that little bit harder to be
that little bit better but in the end you’ll get there, definitely.
{GA15.23}

This, in consequence, is a relatively enabling discourse; although gender
inequality is still perceived, the meretricious or especially determined individual
can counter — act its effects.
4.2 The Career/Family Dilemma

Adopting the 'common-sense' division of the 'masculine', public workplace and the 'feminine', private home, a second dilemma is created for this particular group of women: not only do they have to account for why they work (such an accounting task is not required of men), but they also have to explain their 'failure' to fulfil their 'traditional' role as wives and mothers.

Typically, the social pressure upon them to enact this 'traditional' female role and their desire to continue working is discursively represented as a dilemma: how do they reconcile the disparate demands of their careers and the roles of wife and mother? As can be seen from the following extract, this is seen as a very real problem:

S I think if I was a man and I was working for General Accident in this position I would say oh I would want to be a manager in twenty years. I can see that family's going to get in the way, personally for me. So.
I And there's no way that you would say take statutory maternity leave then come back to work?  
S That's what I would do. It I definitely do want to carry on working but I I know that my position is going to be compromised by having a family. (I Hm.)
Em just from — well just basically from I know having a family it'll end up ultimately really being my responsibility, and em therefore I'm not going to be able to put as much into work as I am at the moment when I don't have a family, so I can see that I'm gonna have to let my career plans em fall by the wayside or go into limbo — for ten years or so.
I Mhm. That's a sacrifice you're not particularly happy about.
S Well no because you know well it's something I've just been conditioned to accept but it's really bad because you can't — it's terrible at the moment because I'm at the sort of age where I've been married for seven years now and people are absolutely waiting for me to get pregnant, you know.  
{GA18:5}  

It is perhaps relevant to indicate at this point that Perth is typical of many medium-sized Scottish towns in that it retains a strongly patriarchal attitude to gender roles, and provides little, if any, facilities for working mothers; an attitude keenly felt by participants:

S You may have noticed there's a more chauvinistic attitude up here ... I mean Yorkshire's supposed to be you know a male you know 'lads stick together' sort of area anyway (I: Hm), but it's nowhere near as bad as up here. And I think that carries over from just the way lads are brought up in the home by their
mums sort of em well the 'boys will be boys' sort of attitude; they let them get off and run away and do what they want without coming down heavy on them, which carries over into their life when they grow up. Em women are meant to be in the home as far as they’re concerned. They can’t understand a woman wanting to be an equal. And that is carried over into the office, obviously; it’s the way the lads are brought up to think.

{GA2:2/3}

The career/family dilemma is thus exacerbated by the dominant ideology of the area, which is unfavourable to working mothers; GA13 was typical of the sample in also expressing the lack of acceptability of combining a career and a family to her husband and family:

S Em I do think sort of social pressure is being put on me that you know if you have a family you know some people still think if you have a family then you should be at home with the child and I know that’ll be said to me umpteen times. Em my parents I’m not sure how they’ll take to it if I decide I’m going back to work, you know after having a family but that’s definitely what I want to do.

{GA13:16}

S I’ve talked to him (husband) about the fact that I would come back to work if I have a family and for a start he wasn’t too happy about it but he’s got round to the idea.

{GA13:19}

As well as the social pressure participants felt from others, several also endorsed the traditional female role themselves, by citing the notion of the importance of mothers staying at home with their children:

S I don’t know if I really agree with that=that to start with, in= in working mothers =in women coming back, after they’ve had their children.

{GA8:2}

S ... if I did decide to have a family then I would give up work. I You think it’s proper that women stay and look after the children?
S Yes when they’re very young. Maybe once they’re five or five at school age maybe that’s a good time to go back to work, but certainly when they’re very young; I’m a very strong believer in that, yes.

{GA3:8}

The use of biological arguments to bolster the association of women and child-care did not emerge strongly in this sample (probably because all but one of the women are childless), but the 'natural mother' repertoire can be seen in similar samples. For instance, it appears in the following extract, taken from one of the pilot interviews (conducted with an Edinburgh woman
on an engineering conversion course):

S I felt that I wanted to sort of be a mother. When I was pregnant I went through this real earth mother kind of thing (laughs), you know I was very placid and very docile and very easy going and totally involved with the fact that I was pregnant.

{E2:5}

Participants tended to attribute this attitude to their upbringing (perhaps with the function of deflecting any criticism for endorsing an 'old fashioned' viewpoint):

S ... my mother believes in staying at home, which is probably where I've got my feelings (I Hm.) on that.

{GA8:11}

S I actually agree with that = that children should be with their mother. You know, to a certain age, and that their mother shouldn't just go off and work and leave them. And that's probably a statement of social conditioning, but I do actually think that's the case.

{GA6:7}

A significant number also suggested that elements within the company presupposed that women were or would in the future fulfil this traditional role:

S ... it's terrible at the moment because I'm at the sort of age where I've been married for seven years now and people are absolutely waiting for me to get pregnant, you know.

I Yeah.

S And em like my boss I'm very friendly with my boss, and he keeps saying if I come in or he says "how are you?" and I say "Oh I don't feel so good"; "morning sickness is it?"

I Oh. Yeah.

S And er if you're in Mothercare shopping for presents for people they're all going — I remember one of my friends em she put on a bit of weight and her manager came up and congratulated her (laughs) because he thought she was pregnant.

I That's awful.

S And I'm very sensitive about putting on weight = I don't you know, not holding my stomach in or whatever.

{GA18:5/6}

S I think there's always going to be a difference for women because it's just a fact of life that we do tend to leave jobs eventually and go and have families and don't come back. And I'm afraid if I was employing somebody, I think I would take that into account. I mean my husband runs his own business, and I think when he's looking at people I'm afraid I tend to be slightly biased against women as well, cause I feel you know if you take on somebody in their late twenties, they're probably going to get married and they're probably going to leave and have a couple of kids and who's to say they'll come back and they won't
necessarily come back to you. So I'm afraid I probably would discriminate against.

I Mm.
S If I was employing someone I would probably take on a man.

{GA15:5/6}

On one side of the dilemma, thus, is a pressure to enact the traditional female role which operates through society at large, the company, spouses and family. On the other side is, the desire expressed by all but one of the respondents to continue working (GA15 provided the anomaly, which was discussed on page 175/6). As previously noted (p173) the majority of respondents held a positive evaluation of work and a negative appraisal of housework and childcare.

A commonly expressed fear was that their career prospects would suffer if they took maternity leave, either from male misapprehension about the career commitment of women with children:

S I was talking to this person and he was saying that when you had a family em you know there were a lot of bright young people that were er anxious to get on here and that em if you had a family or that you wouldn't be able to have you know the same er you know the same push because you had something else to take care of. And I said "yes but there's lots of other there's lots of men in here that are just coasting along, you know and you know nothing's ever said oh they're not putting their full effort in". They may not get the same promotion as a person that's bright and pushing on, but it isn't kind of held against them; like if I had em a family they'll say "oh she's just gone by the wayside because she's had a family now", you know, but there's men that have got other distractions and things and they don't say "och he's just gone by the wayside because he's taken up golf or whatever".

{GA18:7}

S I think of the female yeah of the female sort of managers that I know, two are married and two are not, and none of them have family. I mean I don't know if that is an indication of you know why they are where they are or not; it's a difficult one to — em I suppose that many people would say you know that women who have families but also have careers wouldn't be not possibly as devoted to their career as say their single counterpart might be, or as a man might be who is expected to be the main earner, his job is important to him, and I suppose in a way as well that there are a lot of people who or a lot of couples who the wife's job is a sort of secondary thing and it doesn't matter all that much if it's a particularly good job or not, so it's it's a difficult one.

{GA11:10/11}

or through loss of skills:
S ... from what I've seen, if you go away and have children then you'll be going back to square one, practically, and starting from working your way up again ... I think I'd like to be at home with my children ... that's five years of my working career. And you've lost all a lot of the skills, especially if ehm, you're doing computing, etcetera. (I Mm.) So you lose a lot of the skills so you're back to the start.

The participants in this study, thus, were caught on the horns of two inter-related dilemmas: their failure to devote themselves to the 'traditional' female role, and their status as female workers in a 'masculine' workplace. They had a variety of discursive 'solutions' with which they addressed the situation, ranging from a faith in the inevitability of progress (social change) to strongly individualistic models of change. In the next section, I would like to discuss these discursive 'solutions', beginning with participants discourse on social change.
5. DISCURSIVE 'SOLUTIONS'

In this final section, I would like to present two discursive 'solutions' with which participants attempt to deal with the dilemmas described above: the social reformist perspective on change and individualistic models of change.

5.1 The Social Reformist Perspective on Social Change

When discussing social change, respondents tended to support a classic social reformist perspective, which concentrates on three elements: equal opportunities and egalitarianism, moderation, and progress through attitude change.

Egalitarianism

To firstly discuss egalitarianism, unsurprisingly, all participants endorsed the notion of equal opportunities, unequivocally stating that all people should be treated equally, regardless of their sex, race etcetera, and should have the same opportunities:

S I don’t think there should be any discrimination; I mean everybody should be equal and just treated as people and and — and so whoever you know is the best should be should get on best really.  
{GA17:11/12}

S I just think everybody should be in a career should be equal and there shouldn’t be discrimination for or against any either sex. Em I’m not a feminist but I just I’d just like to think people were treated equally, for what they can do, for their intelligence, for their capabilities rather than what they look like or what their sex is or whatever.  
{GA13:21}

This repertoire often emerged in the perjorative comments made by the majority of this group about positive discrimination:

S No I don’t think it’s fair to take more women just because just because they are women; I mean that’s as bad as going the other way I think.  
{GA17:12}

S I don’t believe in positive discrimination towards women. I feel that if we want equal opportunities we’ve got to stand our own ground on an equal footing, and I wouldn’t want to see people taking on women for the sake of it. I don’t think that’s right, I think you take on the best person for the job and if it’s
a man well that's fine.
{GA15:15}

S I don’t think it would be fair to take a woman if somebody has more qualifications than them.
{GA12:9}

Moderation

The second component of the social reformist viewpoint is moderation and opposition to extremism. This aspect emerged strongly in discourse about feminism, which all participants condemned for its extremism.

Typically, most respondents made a categorical distinction between liberal (moderate) and radical (extreme) forms of feminism:

S Em — I think — the feminist movement when it actually started out, was a very forward thinking concept and I think it’s done a lot for the position of women today, but a radical feminist view I think is or has a detrimental effect on women and the position of women and how people view women. Em I’m I’m not a radical feminist, I would never profess to be, but I think there are a lot of merits in the feminist movement, em if we’re talking about liberal feminism as opposed to radical feminism.
{GA3:16}

S I think it has, Women’s Movements or whatever, have helped things on their way. They’ve got to have. But I still feel that it is the moderates than the radicals that put things through like that ... I think you can go the wrong way about things of that nature.
{GA5:17}

S ... it depends really what = what you interpret as feminism. There’s so many different views on what feminism really is, I think (pause) from = from the view of the people who are out to get equal opportunities in everything it’s not a bad thing. I think there are some groups of feminists who become a little extreme ... they give (pause) well, I suppose the men the impression that you know they’re all a bit over — the — top and they = they want to take over everything something (I: Mm). I don’t think that necessarily helps anything. But ... I don’t think we’d have got anywhere without them ... we’d probably still be sitting at home cooking, cleaning, looking after X dozen kids.
{GA8:19}

Liberal feminism, thus, gains a guarded seal of approval. However, as Chris Griffin (1989) notes, there is a strong tendency to disclaim a feminist identity whilst espousing feminist ideals:

S Em I’m I’m not a radical feminist, I would never profess to be,
but I think there are a lot of merits in the feminist movement. {GA3:16}

S I'm not a feminist; I agree with some of their points but I feel that some of them take it just a bit too far, em everything in moderation. {GA13:21}

S Ah feminism has just got such a bad name because it's linked with extreme views like everything else. Em feminism if it means equal rights for women and women being treated on equal terms, then that's fine. I don't believe in the in the extreme form of feminism, I don't object to men opening doors for me, I don't object to courtesy, I do object to being patronised, but I don't object to courtesy in that form, and I have no time for just ardent feminists, and I wouldn't ever want to be labelled as one, but I would stick up for my rights until the end of of the day. {GA4:14}

The reason for this reluctance to endorse a feminist identity becomes immediately obvious when one looks at the images of radical feminists which participants hold:

S I mean all this em beating of breasts and all the things Greenham Common and the barbed wire and their camps and things, I mean they have a point to prove, but I don't think that furthers the cause of women in society at all. {GA3:16}

Although this was more commonly represented as an image held by society at large, rather than expressed as a personal opinion:

S ... it's given an attitude the idea that a lot of feminists are butch and non — feminine people if you like, rather than it just being an attitude it's also got to come out in the physical side of them. {GA2:13}

S ... the typical feminist rather than being a successful professional who has achieved through her own merit, instead is is regarded as a lesbian, no bra, extremist viewpoint who you know that's what's associated with feminism (I: Mhm) by the vast majority of people {GA4:14}

S I think it gets a very bad image. It get's a real Greenham Common image, you know dungarees and short hair, and Doc Marten boots, and people screaming against = out against men, you know down — trodden women who have children of their own and no husband. {GA6:21/2}

One respondent encapsulates the connotative element of endorsing a feminist identity:
S I would have always said yes, I'm a feminist, but now it's got so many connotations (I: Mhm) now, and if you say feminist, everyone thinks of you know sort of lesbian or short hair very short hair and going around in scruffy clothes and things like this, em so it's got these sort of really unfortunate connotations when I mean as far as I'm concerned feminism always meant just em women having the opportunity to to be equal with to men in the opportunities they've got in life. And anyway I still think that's what it means to me, but I know that if you say you're feminist (I: Mhm) then there are other connotations, so — .

{GA1:12}

In line with Griffin's respondents, people in my study also used an 'It's all different now' repertoire to claim that feminism was anachronistic:

S I don't have any views on feminism except that I don't feel we're at the stage where we really need to be going out and do too much about it; we're gradually getting there, I don't think we need loads of demonstrations to prove it; it's better to do things in a mature manner (laughs).
{GA15:22/23}

Or condemned it as actively detrimental:

S I think it makes some areas em more against us now because they can see how extreme people can be about things and they don't like that so it makes them more antagonistic against us sometimes, because like in our situation perhaps you know if we stood our ground on something at work, it would be oh we've got a feminist here sort of thing, which isn't really the case.
{GA16:19}

S In some places I think they've (feminists) maybe made it worse actually. I think now you get some men who — become more anti—feminism if that's the right way of putting it, you know; in some cases it's better because maybe bosses or men or whatever they're more aware that they've got to be careful you know, they could be car— there could be cases brought against them but only very rarely does it happen. Em but they seem to I know that you know the likes of my husband if if he thinks somebody's going a bit too far that way he'll deliberately make himself out to be even more, well he's not a male chauvinist pig that way if you know what I mean; he's tend towards that way rather than if he thinks somebody's extra—fem feminine or whatever. If you know what I mean.
{GA13:21/22}
The Inevitability of Progress

The third and final component of the social reformist perspective is a faith in the progress of history; as radicalism does not provide the answers, participants must look for an alternative mechanism for social change.

Participants typically expressed cautious optimism for social change; in response to the interviewer's question "How do you think things have changed in society for women", they typically cited increasing respect for women's contributions:

S I think women's opinions and views are being respected more than they ever were before.
{GA6:23}

Increased tolerance for women who choose not to devote themselves wholly to their families:

S I mean women now do go out to work em well have careers and so on, even even if they don't have to, even if they don't need the money I think women now do that, em after they have children and em I think er – things are I don't know I just think things are freer for women; they can em choose to do what they want more.
(I Mhm.) You know, er rather than be stereotyped into em 'because you have children you stay at home and you do – you know, you don't go out to work'.
{GA17:13}

And more egalitarianism in the employment sphere in general:

S Em – it's more accepted I think that you know women do have careers rather than just very much you know looking after a family, a house or whatever ... I mean things have changed, have improved I would say ... depending on what sort of environment you're in you can see you know perhaps women have never had it so good or I think in my particular line women are more and more accepted as you know part of the sort of the staff and – you know just part part of things generally, and it's not not considered odd that there's you know perhaps fifty per cent of women in the office, whereas perhaps ten years ago it would have been considered a bit strange.
{GA11:18}

S ... there is more opportunities for women these days on an equal basis like moving into management and such like, and more of the larger companies actually attempting I think to have women in senior roles, and more benefits for women as far as thing like em maternity leave and having creches and things like that.
{GA16:1}

GA13 goes so far as to suggest returning to work has become the norm rather
than the exception:

S I think women are changing ... I've got a few friends in who've they've had families but they're all back working well some of them just part time, obviously in different areas from what I am but they are working, and it never crossed their mind not to go back to work and it's I mean some of them it's not financially I mean they don't need to go back to work, they just don't feel that they could em be at home all the time with a family.
{GA13:9}

The dominant opinion voiced here seemed to be that the situation had improved greatly, but still had some way to go:

S I mean just look at the just look around, in any field. Any field. Houses of Parliament, how many women are there? When you look at in the FT there's a business news section and the new jobs section, jobs which have been allocated. You can guarantee that there'll be about one woman to the whole section. You know it does speak for itself.
{GA4:3}

S I think em we have come forward an awful lot even from my own mother's just looking at my own mother's time we have made great steps, but obviously you're never really in completely happy with things there are some things that you would like to change.
{GA7:1}

By and large, participants explained this improvement through a circumspect faith in the inevitability of progress:

S ... everything that's gone on so far has probably laid your your ground rules and given women the opportunity to be in a position where they can now move up further.
{GA1:3}

S Em you will get liberated people who are prepared to go ahead and em you know break new barriers. I think you've got to again it's just the same within the females you've got to wait till the new generation and the new thinking works it's way through at all levels. It's a slow process.
{GA10:16/17}

S It goes back to me believing it's at grass roots level, everything has to change.
{GA7:14}

Respondents often illustrate advance by way of a temporal contrast between their own position and that of their mothers or grandmothers:

S So I think even from that, from the time of my Grandmother, even the role of women in the home and men in the home has
changed dramatically. I mean I fully take the point that there are some women who still have to everything at home, even if they're working. ... But from my own family's experience I see a difference, completely, in the home between men and women ... Because, ehm, my Grandmother even, (if) she comes to visit she'll say 'Is your husband's dinner not ready?'.

{GA7:14/15}

So I mean women do go out to work em well have careers and so on ... rather than be stereotyped into em 'Because you have children you stay at home and you do — you know, you don't go out to work'. Like my mother and her generation ... none of them went out to work at all.

{GA17:13}

These three elements, which occur to differing degrees across the whole range of interviews, combine to form a fairly optimistic discourse. However, social reformism is not necessarily an enabling discourse, as it roots change in societal processes rather than in individual agency; as such, social reformism offers little scope for the respondent to have direct influence on his or her environment. It can be used to justify inaction; what is the point in raging against one's circumstances (as extreme feminists are often depicted as doing) when society will change for the better regardless of how individuals act.
5.2 Individualistic Models of Change.

As discussed earlier, the status of variability in data is one way in which discourse analytic approaches differ from more traditional social psychological research methods; whereas the latter tends to suppress variability in its search for universalistic principles, discourse analysis takes variability as a topic of interest in its own right.

In the previous section, I reproduced the social reformist perspective on social change which was articulated by my respondents. Although this was indeed the dominant version of reform for this group, there were other readings of events which, although overlapping with discourse supporting social reformism, provided a very different interpretation of social change: an individualistic repertoire of social change.

In contrast to the social reformist view of inevitable progress, individualism claims that change will only occur through individual action, and puts the onus for change upon the person him/herself. In this group of interviews, individualism is deployed in a variety of contexts: for instance, in the following extract GA5 uses it to support her claim for the existence of equal opportunities:

S Ehmm, I think, I mean I'd like to see more females, but it's up to the individuals to go for that. Ah, I think there is a, ahm, a re-education going on, and I think that the chances are there, for women to go for, if they want to. If they want to go for them. {GA5:5}

Likewise, the repertoire is also used to bolster claims that the exceptional or especially determined women will succeed, and several utilised it in their condemnation of the feminist movement (claiming that the actions of individuals had been far more influential that the feminist movement in improving the situation of women):

S But ehmm, yeah, if=if people believe in equality and want equality, that's fair enough. What I'm against is=is people pushing it down other people's throats. I think that does a lot of harm as well. I think you can get by and get a lot more done just by being yourself, and believing in what you believe in. {GA7:13}

S Er I think it's (feminism) a waste of time (laughs). Again I think everything should be merit and er fighting as a feminist I really don't see why you either it's very much up to the
individual, and to me the fact that you're male or female shouldn't influence what's going on ... to my mind er I get on because I'm me, and because I am I have proved that I was as good as anyone else.

As discussed earlier, the social reformist repertoire presupposes that change will occur on a societal basis, with individual action having little or no influence. The 'individualism' repertoire, conversely, suggests that it is precisely through individual action that change will occur.

If one compares the two extracts given above to the cautious faith in the inevitability of progress endorsed by the same respondents on p196 (10:16/17; 7:14), one again sees how respondents can variably switch between contradictory repertoires as contextual demands change.
CHAPTER SEVEN: GENDER STEREOTYPING IN DISCOURSE

1. INTRODUCTION

Within the more experimentally minded traditions of social psychology, gender has almost exclusively studied in terms of one theoretical construct. Gender stereotypes have been the main, and sometimes the only, topic of investigation. The reason for this is likely to be the apparent accessibility of stereotypes and their amenability to quantitative research methods.

Studies of stereotypes and the stereotypical process have been the route which social psychologists have studied the representational and ideological aspects of social relations; the work of Sandra Bem (discussed in chapter one) is an obvious example of this.

For this reason, and because of the sheer prominence of the notion of stereotypes, I have chosen to focus an empirical study around this topic, posing the following research questions. What perspective should a discourse analyst take on stereotypes and the stereotyping process? Does 'traditional' research on this topic have anything to contribute to the analysis of conversation, argumentation and dispute? More significantly, what illumination can the study of discourse cast upon this approach to the representational and the ideological?

The empirical study was designed to look at the discourse which emerges when a man and a woman are instructed to discuss statements which concern controversial issues about women's roles. The aim of the study was to produce data which was conversational and argumentative in form, but which also covered the territory marked out by the experimental tradition of work on stereotypes.

With this dual goal in mind, the principal data for this chapter were collected between 4th and 16th May 1989, in Elvyn Richards Hall, Loughborough University, and was derived from eight sessions involving seventeen first year students (eight males, nine females). Two pilots had previously been carried out. All sessions used one male and one female participant; the exception to this was the final one, in which two females and a male participated.
The sessions were conducted along the following format. Participants were given 21 cards with statements concerning controversial issues about women's roles printed upon them (detailed in appendix 7.1). They were told to discuss the statements with a view to coming to a joint decision on them, and they were asked to place their decision on a five point scale (agree strongly, agree slightly, don't know/can't agree, disagree slightly, disagree strongly): the response scale is reproduced in appendix 7.2. This technique – the idea of getting participants to discuss a scale rather than fill it in – was devised by Condor & Abrams (1984). I was not present during the sessions, but available in case of difficulty. Sessions varied from 20 to 90 minutes in duration.

The procedure was designed specifically to elicit categorisations about women and men, and to draw upon cultural stereotypes: to balance this, participants were specifically instructed to draw upon personal experience if they felt it to be appropriate.

In piloting the study, several problems emerged in the selection of items to provoke discussion. Two initial pilot interviews (MF1 and MF2), used to establish whether this topic was a viable research area, took the form of informal discussions and had no predetermined interview schedule or stimulus statements. The first interview of the study proper (MF3), following Condor & Abrams (1984), used items which were culled from the "The Attitudes to Women Scale" (AWS) proposed by Spence & Helmreich (1972). However, it rapidly became apparent that this was too old-fashioned for use with a group of eighteen to nineteen year olds. The final statements thus covered the same areas as the AWS, some items remaining unchanged (e.g. "A woman should be as free as a man to propose marriage"), most reworded (e.g. "Intoxication amongst women is worse than amongst men" became "Drunkenness is worse in women than men") and some dropped altogether (e.g. "Wifely submission is an outworn virtue").

In the next section, I shall review three of the main theories in the social psychology of stereotyping, drawing out one of these theories – social cognition – into a theoretical model against which my discourse study can be compared.
2. STEREOTYPING

2.1 Review of Theories of Stereotyping

Psychology has a great deal to say about stereotyping; to take a definition:

"... stereotyping: the attribution to all or most members of a category various traits, which may be positive, negative or merely neutral."
(Brown, 1988, p231)

Broadly speaking, stereotypes are societally shared beliefs about groups, group members, and the characteristics which are attributed to individuals on the basis of their perceived group membership. Commonly stereotypes have a connotative element; they are not merely neutral evaluations.

The term 'stereotype' was first used in a social scientific context by the journalist Walter Lippman in his book PUBLIC OPINION (1922). This text contained a number of revolutionary ideas which have structured subsequent research on stereotyping.

Firstly, he stressed that individuals respond not to the 'real' environment but to their perception of that environment:

"...the insertion between man and his environment of a psuedo—environment."
(Lippman, 1922, p15)

where a 'representational field' operates as a mental structure which mediates between reality and the impressions the perceiver forms of that reality.

Secondly, Lippman saw stereotypes as a normal (i.e. not pathological) response to an impossibly complex world; stereotypes are thus helpful cognitive structures, simplifying the world to make it more psychologically manageable:

"...the real environment is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance ... we have to reconstruct it on a simpler model before we can manage it."
(Lippman, 1922, p16)

This anticipates the information—processing type of rationale which found popularity in the later socio—cognitive work.

Finally, Lippman recognized the importance of culture in the formation and maintenance of stereotypes; he argued that, through living in a particular culture, normal socialisation processes inevitably lead to one adopting the
'representational field' of that culture. In other words, rather than envisaging the acquisition of stereotypes as proceeding through a long process of assessing the validity of a cognitive categorisation to real life instances, Lippman saw individuals as incorporating their cultural group's way of seeing the world:

"In the great blooming buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture."

(Lippman, 1922, p55)

Lippman, thus, laid down a number of ideas which were taken up to different degrees in different research traditions. In a review of the history of work on stereotyping, Ashmore & Del Boca (1981) divided research on stereotyping into three types: the psychodynamic, socio-cultural and socio-cognitive approaches.

The Socio-Cultural Approach

The socio-cultural approach is perhaps the most dependent upon Lippman's ideas, concentrating as it does upon the role of socialisation in creating stereotypes.

The socio-cultural approach owes a two-fold debt to Lippman, firstly in his ideas that stereotypes reaffirm existing social conditions and, secondly, that many individually held stereotypes originate in society; this assumes relative consistency (both situationally and temporally) of stereotypes within any one society. Ashmore & Del Boca neatly encapsulate this perspective:

"Stereotypes ... are part of a society's nonmaterial culture ... individuals are socialized into a particular culture, and, through social rewards and punishments, led to act in accordance with cultural dictates. Further, by accepting cultural stereotypes, individuals reinforce and thereby help perpetuate the existing cultural pattern."

(Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981, p23)

Adopting the socio-cultural approach leads one to a particular set of emphases: study of the content of stereotypes; developmental sequences in socialisation and the acquisition of the stereotypes and the effect of social change.

To provide an example of a socio-cultural study, David Milner conducted a classic piece of research on children and ethnic stereotypes in 1975. Milner's
study asked 300 five to eight year olds to choose between two dolls (or two pictures), one of which represented the child's own racial group, and the other another racial group with which the child was familiar. The children were asked which of the dolls they thought most resembled them, which they would like to look like, which they liked best, and which they would prefer as friends or neighbours. Milner also tested rudimentary racial stereotypes by asking which doll the children thought was 'good', 'bad', 'ugly' etcetera.

He found a marked preference for white dolls (including, disturbingly, a significant number of black children who mis-identified themselves with the white doll), which affected black British and American children as much as white:

"... black British children are showing essentially the same reaction to racism as their American counterparts, namely a strong preference for the dominant white majority-group and a tendency to devalue their own group."
(Milner, 1975, p121)

This study provides a prime example of the socio-cultural approach to stereotypes in that Milner assumed that children's images of others were acquired through normal socialization processes, hence a product of a societal malaise, rather than individual agency:

"People in this (British) society do not become 'prejudiced' on attaining adulthood; they learn attitudes towards black people from infancy by their socialization within a culture in which these attitudes are widely held. Racism is deeply rooted in British culture."
(Milner, 1975, p250)

The majority of gender stereotype research falls under the socio-cultural heading, e.g. analysis of the media by which socialised sex stereotypes are disseminated (c.f. Friedman, 1977, for a review) or simple experiments where researchers seek consensus about gender characteristics from a number of subjects (e.g. Broverman et al, 1972). Likewise, the entire sex-stereotypes literature has overt socio-cultural roots, as Ashmore & Del Boca point out:

"The recent upswing in sex stereotype research involves an almost total, though generally implicit, commitment to a sociocultural perspective — sex stereotypes are assumed to be part of the same cultural pattern that specifies sex roles and sex role standards."
(Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981, p23)
This has particular relevance to the work discussed in Chapter One; the collapsing of sex stereotypes into sex roles is particularly notable in the early work of Sandra Bem (1974, 1976)

The Psychodynamic Approach

The second of Ashmore & Del Boca's traditions of stereotyping is the psychodynamic approach. This orientation describes uniformity as a product of defence mechanisms which seek to eliminate anxiety caused by inconsistency. Stereotyping is seen as the consequence of this desire for consistency.

Although the notion of cognitive anxiety was not part of Lippman's original conception, this approach also owes something to Lippman; he postulated that stereotypes are related to identity and have a 'defensive' function.

There are two trends which comprise the psychodynamic position, the first of which may be termed 'psychoanalytic reductionism'. This roots stereotyping in the Freudian notion of the unconscious dynamics and instinctual drives of the individual. The second is a 'psychosocial' theory of prejudice (at this time, researchers tended to see prejudice as the focus of their work, and considered stereotyping as a phenomenon of secondary importance), which de-emphasises the part played by instinctual drives; instead, the 'psychosocial' approach thought that specific types of personality were more disposed towards prejudice than others. Adorno et al's 1950 text, THE AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY, is the most famous exponent of this approach.

To take an gender example of the psychodynamic approach, one can look at Johnson's (1984) rather curious Jungian analysis of romantic love. Johnson attempts to explain male fear of women as an defence mechanism invoked by the unconscious mind to maintain control:

"It is this out-of-control quality in romantic love that gives us the deepest clue to its real nature. This overwhelming, ecstatic 'falling in love' with someone is an event, deep in the unconscious psyche, that happens to one. One does not 'do' it, one does not control it, one does not understand it: it just happens to one. This is why the Western male ego has such trouble coping with romantic love: it is by definition 'out of control' ... the male ego must have control over everything within and everything around it."

(Johnson, 1984, p57/8)
Under the psychodynamic heading, one might also discuss the work of Gordon Allport (1954) as, in keeping with the psychodynamic approach, he stresses the psychological function of stereotypes for the individual.

However, Allport's work also stresses the enduring nature of stereotypes and the role of culture (specifically mass media) in perpetuating them, which allies him more to the socio-cultural approach.

Furthermore, there are a number of elements in Allport's work which correspond to Ashmore & Del Boca's third approach, the socio-cognitive, which I have yet to discuss. Allport defined a stereotype as:

"... an exaggerated belief associated with a category."
(Allport, 1954, 187)

This poses the concept of categorisation as a cognitive strategy for dealing with an immensely complex social world. This model of categorisation as functional in terms of information processing is the rationale behind the socio-cognitive approach (Taylor, 1981), which, in recent years, has become the dominant research orientation.

The Socio-Cognitive Approach

The social cognition hypothesis, a distinctively different theory of the genesis and function of stereotypes, states that social perception can be understood in terms of regularities in information processes; due to limitations of memory, for example, there are limits to the amount of information which can be processed, therefore it is beneficial to condense the amount of information to be taken in via categorisation and other organisational processes. Social cognition research has covered a variety of areas: categorisation, memory encoding, schema, salience and heuristics.

There is a long standing tradition within social psychology (e.g. Lippman, 1922; Allport, 1954; Bruner, 1956) of viewing categorisation (division into social groups), and the subsequent encoding of information on the basis of those categorisations as deriving from normal cognitive processes:

"Given a complex social environment, people must develop shortcuts for organizing incoming information, and one reasonable way of doing it might be to use salient social cues to categorize
It is also claimed that this categorisation is, in fact, adaptive: Tajfel (1981, 1982) and Tajfel & Forgas (1981) have argued, for instance, that an individual is better prepared for action if (s) he has less complexity and less superfluous information to deal with.

Utilising a further notion devised by Allport, the social cognition approach states that any salient physical or social cue may be used as a basis for categorizing people and organising information about them (Campbell, 1956; 1967), and that this cue represents the 'kernel of truth' (Fishman, 1976) at the foundation of the stereotype.

Allport's transition from socio-cultural to socio-cognitive is mirrored in gender research; the clearest example of this is Bern's switch from a sex-roles basis in her early work (1974, 1976) to a gender schema approach in later texts (1981).

The increasing significance of the socio-cognitive approach (for stereotype work in general, as well as gender research) makes this the dominant of the three research traditions I have reviewed. With this rationale, I wish to focus the remainder of this review on the socio-cognitive approach. Likewise, my data analysis will be primarily directed at a dialogue between the socio-cognitive orientation and discourse analysis, although the other two traditions I have discussed will be borne in mind.
2.2 The Impact of Categorisation

It has been argued that the major effect of the application of stereotypes is to emphasise ingroup similarity and outgroup dissimilarity (Campbell, 1956). The imposition of categories per se seems sufficient to perceptibly accentuate differences between and similarities within categories — this applies for both object (Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963) and person (Wilder, 1978) perception. Socio-cognitive theory typically understands this in terms of information processing; the existence of discrete categories (against which new instances can be compared) provides for stark all-or-nothing categorisation judgements, which accentuate the differences between and the similarities within categories. As ingroups and outgroups can be seen as social categories, it has been suggested that categorisation leads inevitably to ingroup favouritism and outgroup discrimination (Allen & Wilder, 1975; Billig, 1973; Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Tajfel & Billig, 1974; Tajfel et al, 1971; Wilder & Allen, 1974).

Cognitive biases linked to categorisation are thought to invoke other effects which include biases of interpretation (incidents are more likely to be interpreted in a manner which corresponds to any stereotypic image; Duncan, 1976) and selective information coding (new information which corresponds to an existing stereotypic categorisation is more likely to be encoded, more easily noticed and more easily recalled than disconfirming evidence; Hamilton & Rose, 1980; Cantor & Mischel 1977; Chapman & Chapman, 1969). Saliency of the category (as measured by ease of recall) can also be manipulated by attaching value (e.g. money, status) to the object. A number of studies involving physical objects and categories were conducted in the 1950s and 60s, and consistently showed that participants tended to over-estimate the difference between the sizes of coins of ascending value, for instance as opposed to similarly sized cardboard discs. Tajfel (1981) argues that these findings can be extended from physical objects to social categories. Increasing the saliency of an object will have a similar effect (Langer et al, 1976; McArthur, 1981; Taylor & Fiske, 1978). All of these topics will be discussed in greater detail in later sections.

To summarise, the conclusions of this work are threefold:

i) People apply categories and form groups on that basis;

ii) This cognitive process of categorisation, and the processes associated with
the encoding and decoding of information, leads to certain predictable types of error in social interaction and impression formation;

iii) These distortions seem to be enhanced when value is added or the saliency of the relevant social category is increased.

The socio—cognitive hypothesis, with its mechanistic notion of categorisation as adaptive makes a number of implicit assumptions:

i) Biased categorisation is assumed to be inevitable, as the cognitive process of categorisation is seen as synonymous with stereotyping per se. As Billig (1987) comments:

"Because the cognitive approach assumes that it is necessary to simplify the stimulus world, and because stereotypes are seen as examples of such simplifications, then it becomes a short step to conclude that stereotypes are necessary cognitive processes."
(Billig, 1987, p126)

ii) For individuals with similar cultural backgrounds, a category label has only one set of associated categorical attributes. Multiple sets of attributes for the same label are thus impossible.

iii) The categorical attributes of any one category label are internally consistent; a schema is a:

"...heterogenous network of sex—related associations."
(Bem, 1981, p355, my emphasis)

iii) Schemata are assumed to be temporally and situationally consistent; references to a biological basis for schemata such as:

"In the case of the gender schema in particular, it may also be that sex has evolved to be a basic category of perception for our species and that the gender schema thereby has a biologically based priority over many other schemata."
(Bem, 1981, p362, my emphasis)

imply a fixed structure which is not subject to contextual influences. This implies that mechanisms for change are restricted:

" ...schematic processing produces perceptions that are resistant to change and relatively impervious to new data."

iv) The schema is the mediating influence between 'real life' and the opinions articulated; it is not possible to generate discourse which is not schema
consistent.
2.3 The Claims of the Socio–Cognitive Approach

In the remainder of this section, I would like to examine a number of specific claims which are made by the socio–cognitive approach. I wish to concentrate specifically on the answers provided by the socio–cognitive approach to the following questions: how is information encoded (I shall discuss the prototype hypothesis in answer to this) and what types of information are likely to be encoded (the socio–cognitive answer to this lies in the salience/availability and familiarity hypotheses). In the final part of this section, I will discuss cognitive schema in the light of the points raised.

i) How is Information Encoded?

The socio–cognitive approach uses the prototype hypothesis to explain how information is encoded. This idea was originated by Cantor & Mischel (1977, 1979), who took the standard socio–cognitive approach that stereotypes are a byproduct of normal cognitive processes:

"...the pervasive human tendency to categorize not just objects but also people into groups, types or other slots" (1979, p4)

categorisation being an economical way of dealing with the vast amounts of information they have to process:

"In order to reduce the complexity of the external stimulus world, the layperson may group both objects and people according to similarities" (1979, p4)

Using principles derived from object perception, Cantor & Mischel extended the social cognition hypothesis to examine what kinds of natural categories were formed and how these categorisations originated, drawing upon three major concepts in their analysis: 'fuzzy sets', 'prototypes' and 'taxonomies'.

Rejecting the classical view of categorisation as an all–or–nothing phenomena (with objects either belonging to a category or not) as inappropriate to the study of people, Cantor & Mischel (1979) adopted Wittgenstein's image of categorisations as:

"...a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss–crossing...family resemblances”.

(Wittgenstein, 1953, p66 – 7)

using the term 'fuzzy sets' (1979, p9) to denote the overlapping, ambiguous boundaries of categorisations of people:
"The 'fuzzy sets' approach suggests that a category decision will be probabilistic in nature, with members of a category varying in degree of membership (prototypicality) and with many ambiguous borderline cases resulting in overlapping and fuzzy boundaries between categories". (Cantor & Mischel, 1979, p10)

This notion of prototypicality is central to Cantor & Mischel's hypothesis. The prototype approach suggests that category decisions are problematic due to the large range of personality (cf Mischel, 1976) and social (e.g. gender, race, occupation) categories to which any individual may be assigned. Rosch (1975) theorised that, at the 'core' of any category, lies a 'prototypical' example which incorporates all the critical elements of that group. All other individuals are thence judged (on a continuum of good to bad category members) according to their correspondence to the prototype (Rosch et al, 1976; Smith et al, 1974). It has been argued that, linguistically, the concept of a continuum of category membership may be represented by a "linguistic hedge" (Lakoff, 1972): X may be a 'real' (i.e. prototypical) extravert, whereas Y may 'show some extravert traits' (an individual towards the outer boundary of the category). To provide an example from my data, the following extract:

F: I think the modern career woman if she's if she's got it I think she's very secure. {MF5:14/15, my emphasis}
suggests that there are degrees of category membership. An individual may be a borderline member of the category 'career woman' without having that undefinable 'it', but they are not real (i.e. prototypical) 'career women' category member without it.

The final concept Cantor & Mischel advanced was that of a 'taxonomy' of various levels of categorisation, which is supposedly drawn upon by "naive observers" (Cantor & Mischel, 1979, p16). The levels of categorisation in a taxonomy (illustrated in figure 7.1) vary in their inclusiveness (from the most general to very specific) and their category size (very large to very small). According to Cantor & Mischel, an individual may be categorised on the most abstract 'superordinate trait level' (eg emotionally unstable person), or according to the less inclusive, more specific person categories of the 'middle' (e.g. phobic) or 'subordinate' (eg agoraphobia) levels.
Figure 7.1: Examples of taxonomies
(Source: Cantor & Mischel, 1979, p16/17)
After Rosch et al (1976), Cantor & Mischel suggested that the "basic level" for person perception was the social role/persona level, as participants scored highest for differentiation between categories and description and number of categorical attributes generated by participants for this level.

So what implications does this suggest for gender research? Unfortunately, Cantor & Mischel fail to really address the practical applications of the prototype hypothesis for the perception of men and women, therefore the first step must be to make some surmises on this topic.

Broadly speaking, the prototype hypothesis suggests that memory is organised in such a way as to make stereotypic judgements about men and women more likely, and conventional behaviour more likely.

One classic study which may be cited to substantiate this was conducted by Snyder & Uranowitz (1978). After Bartlett (1932), they took the approach that memory is a constructive process (rather than envisaging it as straightforward recall), using this to inform an information processing model of stereotypes:

"...stereotypes can and do influence information processing such that new evidence that confirms these stereotypes is more easily noticed and more easily stored in memory than is nonconfirming evidence."
(Snyder & Uranowitz, 1978, p942)

Using this rationale, they sought to gauge the effects of currently held stereotypical beliefs about sexuality on recall of factual events, and surmised about the role of such selective information processing in bolstering stereotypes:

"...to the extent that individuals selectively retrieve information that bolsters current stereotypic interpretations about another person, reconstructive processes may serve to perpetuate acceptance of widely held but essentially inaccurate social stereotypes."
(Snyder & Uranowitz, 1978, p942)

Snyder & Uranowitz gave 212 male and female undergraduates a detailed case history of 'Betty K.', the protagonist of which was assigned a lesbian, heterosexual or no label. This labelling was supplied either after participants had read the case history or a week later (although Snyder & Uranowitz do report that the timing did not affect the result). One week after reading the
history, the participants were tested for their recall of the factual events of the story.

Snyder & Uranowitz found that not only did the sexuality labelling influence participants' answers to factual questions about the case history, but also found evidence to suggest that participants were more able to recall events which corresponded to (as opposed to contradicted) stereotypical beliefs about sexuality.

Snyder & Uranowitz proposed that there was an interaction between stereotypes about sexuality and genuine memory of factual events. Applying this finding more broadly to gender, it implies that memory is organised in a way which makes stereotypical judgements about gender categories more likely, and behaviour which conforms to the stereotype more readily recalled. This concurs with the implications of prototype theory for gender research which I discussed at the beginning of this section.
ii) What Information is Encoded?

In the previous section, I looked at the structure in which the socio-cognitive approach proposes mental images and categories are encoded: the prototype hypothesis. In the next section, I wish to move a stage closer towards the concrete applications suggested by the socio-cognitive argument; from asking how things are encoded, I wish to proceed to what things are likely to be encoded. Researchers within the socio-cognitive tradition have proposed two factors which will determine what is encoded: the salience/availability and the familiarity and distinctiveness hypotheses.

Salience/Availability

It has been argued (by Taylor & Fiske, 1978) that information is coded in the brain in terms of "availability"; the ease with which particular classes of events and information can be brought to mind. More available events tend to be regarded as more frequent events, as frequent events are generally easier to recall than infrequent ones.

However, it appears that repetition may not be the only factor which is influential in recall: Taylor & Fiske propose that saliency is also influential. Anything (be it the inherent qualities of the information or a consequence of the perceiver's own cognitive biases: Taylor & Fiske, 1978, p281) which marks that information or event as distinctive will make it more available in memory (Chapman, 1967):

"...causal perception is substantially determined by where one's attention is directed within the environment and that attention itself is a function of what information is salient."
(Taylor & Fiske, 1978, p253)

This holds true in both object and social perception:

"Observers will perceive situations as more causally important to the extent that situations are made salient; observers will perceive dispositions of actors as more important to the extent that actors are salient."
(Taylor & Fiske, 1978, p253)

Taylor & Fiske's explanation of this is that people commonly give little thought to the causal attributions they make, thus are inordinately influenced by factors such as saliency and value:
Availability of salient events may be manipulated in two ways: firstly, a greater proportion of information about salient events is likely to be retained as compared to information about non-salient ones; secondly, salient information may be encoded differently, for instance both semantically and iconically, or in a more accessible form (e.g. in a visually salient form).

Bias may be a result of the high cognitive availability of an unusual salient event being misinterpreted as a consequence of frequency rather than distinctiveness; it thus follows that there is a tendency to over-estimate the frequency of infrequent, salient events (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974).

The association of infrequent, salient events with frequency can lead to the formation of what Hamilton (1981) called an illusory correlation between a group and the vivid event, particularly if that group itself is distinctive (e.g. an outgroup, a minority group); socio-cognitive theory sees this as a mechanism whereby intergroup differences may be created and maintained (Hamilton & Gifford, 1976).

**Familiarity**

The second determinant of what is encoded is familiarity, as proposed by Taylor (1981):

"A second factor that may influence the propensity to stereotype according to a particular attribute is the extent to which the perceiver has a well-developed concept for that attribute."
(Taylor, 1981, p86)

Deriving her ideas from Campbell's (1956) definition of stereotypes as a response to incomplete learning about a group, Taylor (1981) argued that the more familiar the perceiver is with a category, the more likely they are to make divisions and discriminations within that category, to have highly refined stereotypes with subtypes:

"...the ability to make within-category discriminations should also be influenced by one's familiarity with a group".
(Taylor, 1981, p86)
Taking this hypothesis to its logical conclusion, one would assume that membership of a category is the ultimate in familiarity with that category. Applying this to gender, one would expect individuals to produce highly refined stereotypes with subtypes for their own gender, and more superficial stereotypes for the opposite sex; as Taylor states:

"...assuming membership in a category to be the epitome of familiarity with that category, we might expect females to be better at making discriminations within a group of females, and males within a group of males".
(Taylor, 1981, p86)

Although Taylor's results are somewhat ambivalent (she found no familiarity effects, and attributed this to the fact that her participants had attained sufficient familiarity with the racial and gender groups presented to make familiarity no longer important as a factor involved in categorisation), familiarity is worthy of note, at least on a theoretical level.

Distinctiveness

Taylor also suggested that a second factor may also exert an influence on what is encoded: distinctiveness. She argued that the categorisation (and hence the stereotyping) of an object or individual is dependent upon the number of members of that category in the environment:

"... individuals will be relatively distinctive as a function of the number of members of their category in the environment."
(Taylor, 1981, p88/89)

She cites the example that a black man is more readily categorised as black when in a predominantly white group, and as a man when in a largely female environment. She called this phenomenon "relative distinctiveness" (Taylor, 1981).

Her study (Taylor et al, 1975) of distinctiveness has much relevance to the position of the young professional women discussed in the previous chapter: a female manager in a male dominated environment is obviously physically salient, and gender is readily available as an explanation for that person's actions:

"... because it is a solo's sex or race that is the basis for his or her distinctiveness, that attribute will be highly available as an explanation for the solo's behaviour."
In consequence, sex stereotyped interpretations of the female worker's behaviour are very likely; for instance, solo males in a female group were represented as father figures, macho types or cynics, solo females in an all male group as motherly types, secretary types or bitches. These types of sex stereotypes are widespread, similar categorisations being made in studies by Kanter (1977) and Wolman & Frank (1975). As Taylor concludes:

"The results indicated that a stereotypical role was more likely to be imputed to a group member, the fewer the numbers of other members of his or her sex present."

(Taylor, 1981, p96)

Schema

I would now like to extend the socio—cognitive hypothesis to cover schema, using Bem's gender schema theory (1981) as an exemplar of the cognitive schema model. The concept of a cognitive schema is widely invoked to describe the hypothetical mental structure comprising the categorisation and the information collated about it. Cognitive schema models, although essentially similar to categorisation theories, tend to be more abstract and complex than the latter (Casson, 1983, considers schemata in more detail). Bem, for instance, defines a cognitive schema as:

"...a cognitive structure, a network of associations that organizes and guides an individual's perception."

(Bem, 1981, p355)

The implicature is that perception becomes a "constructive process" whereby incoming information is mediated and transformed by the pre—existing schemata (Neisser, 1976).

Bem's theory fulfils the basic criteria of a schema theory; she argues that individuals have:

"...a generalized readiness to process information on the basis of the sex—linked associations that constitute the gender schema."

(Bem, 1981, p355)

that is, through socialization processes, individuals acquire a network of associations around the concepts of masculinity and femininity. Having acquired such a schema, individuals are thence predisposed to process information in terms of gender rather than on the basis of any other available categorisation (race, hair colour, age, dress sense etc.); gender acquires greater
salience, therefore is more likely to be used as a feature on which categorisations are made. Individuals will begin to assess themselves in terms of their correspondence to the schema:

"...the self-concept itself gets assimilated into the gender schema".
(Bem, 1981, p355)

Summary

In the preceding pages, I have outlined some significant components of the socio-cognitive approach, delineating the general expectations of gender talk and representations generated by the socio-cognitive approach.

At this point, it is useful to try to envisage how a socio-cognitive theorist, who had no alternative common-sense knowledge of social interaction, would conceptualise gender discourse.

Primarily, a socio-cognitive theorist would expect gender discourse to be dominated by categorical judgements, especially in discussions of the opposite sex (Taylor's 'familiarity' hypothesis suggests that, as participants are more familiar with their own gender, they are more likely to have highly refined stereotypes with sub-types for their own sex). Socio-cognitive theory also allows little scope for particularisation (the selection of a unique feature to set an individual or object apart from others), and for this reason too, would anticipate a predominance of categorical judgements.

Likewise, a socio-cognitive researcher would assume that categories and the categorical attributes which are associated with them are relatively consistent, both temporally and situationally: according to the assumptions of socio-cognitive work, one would expect a working class London man in the 1950s to be as likely to endorse a stereotypical view of the sexes as a middle class professional woman in the 1990s.

Working from the prototype hypothesis, the socio-cognitive approach predicts that individuals will have a single set of internally consistent categorical attributes for each category label; no internal variability or inconsistency seems unlikely.
In the next section, I shall look at these assumptions and examine how they fare in comparison with actual examples of gender discourse.
3. SOCIAL COGNITION AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The fundamental problems with the socio-cognitive hypothesis become obvious immediately one tries to apply the theory outside the laboratory (Condor & Abrams, 1984; Billig, 1987). Although one can devise numerous laboratory-based experiments to test the nature and frequency of stereotype/categorisation use, the true acid test of a theory is the pattern of categorisation usage in natural language. I now wish to turn to my empirical study, using the discussions provided by the participants described in the introduction; the corpus of data, thus, is composed of the transcripts of eight 'sessions' in which a male and a female student (or, in the case of MF10, a male and two females) debated a number of controversial statements on gender and gender issues. It is this data which I shall use as a 'litmus test' of socio-cognitive theories.

Before proceeding with this task, however, there is a problem of interpretation which must be commented upon; to put social cognition theory in dialogue with discourse involves far more than the simple reading of the discourse and the comparison between it and elements of socio-cognitive theory. As socio-cognitive theory significantly omits to engage with real social interaction in any meaningful way, one has to firstly engage in an exercise of creative interpretation to translate the wholly theoretical notions of socio-cognitive theory into the 'real life' objects found in discourse. One has to decide what counts as the use of a prototype in natural discourse, for example.

Given the problems of having to do both a reading of the discourse and a reading of socio-cognitive theory before one can even attempt to put the two in dialogue, the empirical work presented here should be regarded as the basis for further research, rather than a fully worked out solution to the exercise.
3.1 Categorisation and particularisation

The central expectation of socio-cognitive theory is that everyday information processing necessitates categorisation. From my data, the fact that people do use categorisations in everyday discourse seems indisputable; to provide a few examples:

F ...men are more impulsive men are sort of do things on the spot where I think women think things through better or not better but more than men do.
{MF4:1}

M I reckon women are more sort of romantic natured.
{MF6:5}

M Women are more bitchy than men.
F ...yes bitchier with women.
{MF7:11}

F ...the bloke’s always the dominant one in the relationship, the one sort of like well this is what I think protective and that.
{MF9:12}

Individuals frequently do work with categories (in this case, male and female) in their arguments, debates and discussions, and assign attributes to those categories (in the extracts shown above, the category 'male' numbers amongst its attributes impulsiveness and dominance; to the 'female' category is attributed romance and bitchiness). I shall look at the content of these gender categories in more detail later, but the point I wish to make here is that categorisation is a highly prevalent aspect of natural discourse.

However, whilst not rejecting that categorisation is a basic unit of discursive presentation, Billig postulates that it might not be the only mode. Using Protagoras' maxim that it is always possible to mount an opposing case, Billig argues that:

"...each form of thought can be contrasted by an opposing form of thought. Categorisation...can be contrasted by the opposing cognitive process of particularization".
(Billig, 1987, p6)

That is, if categorisation is the placing of a particular stimulus in a general category, the reverse process — particularisation, adjudging a stimulus on its unique features rather than its equivalence to other stimuli — is also possible. In Billig’s terminology:
"...the two processes are deeply, so much so that the ability to categorize presupposes the ability to particularize".
(Billig, 1987, p133)

In other words, any stimulus may be categorized under a variety of categorisations, therefore the selection of one categorisation as uniquely appropriate involves the particularization of one category above all others. Thus, particularization is necessary before categorisation can take place.

The most common form of particularization in discourse is probably an anti-generalising disclaimer tagged on to a categorisation statement, which serves to recognize the possibility of exceptions whilst not diminishing the validity of the categorisation as a general principle.

M ...can you see a woman pounding a bloody eight pound lump hammer into a wall all day, 'cause I couldn't, unless she's Fatima Whitbread or something =
F =One or two that I've known could.
M Well one or two yeah there are exceptions to the rule. I I I agree with that, but in an overall sort of if you take Mr Average and Miss Average, Mr Average will be able to do sort of perhaps heavier sort of type of work than Miss Average would, on a sort of take the whole spectrum of people and you look at the middle one. So there are exceptions, yeah.
{MF3:7}

A specific form of particularisation, invoking an account of individual differences, is commonly used discursively to raise doubts about the 'real life' validity of certain categorical attributes:

M But I wouldn't say men are primarily interested in sex.
F Yeah 'cause not all men are the same.
{MF6:5}

F It depends on the individual as well. Some men are really romantic and some men aren't at all; it just depends.
{MF7:6}

Particularization, like categorisation, proves to be a versatile resource which can be used to argue for or against a point:

F1 I don't agree with "Men are chauvinists at heart".
F2 No it's not fair to band them all together like that... Some are some aren't; you can't generalise like that...
M I think most men are; most men probably are to a slight degree.
{MF10:20}

Particularisation is often backed up in reference to specific individuals:
F "Girls are not really suited to jobs in engineering". I'd disagree with that; you've seen Nicky. I think they're just as bright, just as innovative.
{MF8:7}

M I know but there's a stronger link between the child and the mother.
F1 Not necessarily; I'm closer to my father.
{MF10:3}

As can be seen from the final extract, not only do both categorisation and particularization appear in discourse, but there is an argumentative interaction between them, with one providing a counter to the other; this idea will be explored later in the chapter.
3.2 The Content of Categorisations

Having established for the moment that the deployment of gender images in discourse involves not only categorisation but also particularisation, I would like to look in more detail at the content of gender categorisation.

The central premise of all stereotype research (but which is most evident in the social cognitive approach) is that there are collective, shared, short-hand images of social groups; both the categorisations and the attributes which are associated with them are fairly consistent and enduring across society. This provides an 'armory' of categorisations, categorical attributes and images which are held mentally until they are required. A socio-cognitive researcher here would expect gender discourse to draw upon the 'traditional' categorical attributes for gender; females are emotional, men are aggressive etcetera.

A considerable amount of work has now amassed in the area of gender stereotypes (to name but a few, Komarovsky, 1950; Gough & Heilbrun, 1965; Rosenkrantz et al, 1968; Williams & Bennett, 1975), the results of which demonstrate considerable consistency; dimensions seen as differentiating the sexes typically fall according to Parson & Bales' (1955) expressive (female) – instrumental (male) dichotomy.

The study I would like to take as my exemplar of gender stereotype work is Bem's (1974) study; this is marked as important by the vast amount of work it stimulated. As can be seen in table 6.1, the traits which Bem attributed to males and females again centre on the expressive–instrumental dichotomy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEMININE</th>
<th>MASCULINE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affectionate</td>
<td>Acts as a leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheerful</td>
<td>Aggressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childlike</td>
<td>Ambitious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate</td>
<td>Analytical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not use harsh language</td>
<td>Assertive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eager to soothe hurt feelings</td>
<td>Athletic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flatterable</td>
<td>Defends own beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentle</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gullible</td>
<td>Forceful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loves children</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyal</td>
<td>Individualistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive to others’ needs</td>
<td>Leadership abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shy</td>
<td>Makes decisions easily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Soft-spoken	Masculine
Sympathetic	Self-reliant
Tender	Self-sufficient
Understanding	Strong personality
Warm	Willing to take stands
Yielding	Willing to take risks

Table 7.1: Bem's Masculine and Feminine Traits
(Source: Archer & Lloyd, 1982, p45)

What I would now like to do is look for evidence in the data which corroborates this view; ostensibly, the case for categorisation on the basis of the expressive—instrumental distinction looks promising. The stimulus statements (the controversial statements about gender and gender issues reproduced in appendix 7.1) were designed to tap into 'common-sense' notions of masculinity and femininity: the widely accepted categorical attributes for these labels in the British culture.

Given the limited scope of the study, it is unlikely that all of the traits listed in Bem's study will appear, but it readily becomes apparent that, where appropriate statements are provided, a considerable number do, e.g.

"loves children" (female)

F2 Hm. Somebody's gotta stay home and look after the children.
F1 Yeah.
F2 And it often is mothers because they like want to stay at home and look after them...
M Yeah the mother feels more like doing it doesn't she for a start.
{MF10:4/5}

M Well I'd prefer a mum to look after me if I had a choice, because she's sort of I think mums are closer to you aren't they in a way.
{MF8:5}

M But the woman is better sort of when the at the younger age of the child to look after them, otherwise it involves — looking after dolls so you're more trained for it aren't you. The girls sort of know better than the fathers what it involves, especially when they're younger.
{MF6:9}

"sensitive to other's needs" (female)

M A woman is sort of a lot more of a sort of sympathetic ear to go and talk to. I wouldn't think anything of going to discuss something with a girl friend more than one of my mates in the bloke, because they'd take the piss and wouldn't listen, 'cause
"compassionate" (female)

F Yeah I think women nurture...Yeah it's in their nature to nurture; you see even if a woman goes out to work —
M She'll still come back and worry about the house...  
F Yeah. She'll always be like that and at weekends she'll want to spend time with the children or in general most women do =
{MF7:16}

M ...I mean the woman's maternal she's used to babies and naturally she's sort of —
F No I think I would agree with that, but not because of being more maternal. I think it's because they're more compassionate...I don't wish to damn the male sex but...I mean I find it easier to cry than you would.
{MF8:16/17}

"dominant" (male)

F I don't think I'd ask somebody to marry me. I think it's nice for the bloke to do it; the bloke's always the dominant one in the relationship.
{MF9:12}

One might also add elements from the 'traditional' image of the sexes which were articulated in Spence & Helmreich's (1972) AWS (which generated the stimulus items for this study): this covers areas such as physical strength and romance.

Physical Strength

M ...women are always women are smaller, they are dare I say weaker.
F Hm.
{MF3:34}

F ...men are str — physically stronger than women.
M Mhm.
F Em it comes across in like men are can run faster, jump higher.
{MF4:15/16}

Romance

M I reckon women are more sort of romantic natured.
F Oh yeah they definitely are.
{MF6:5}

F Most women do dream about being carried off, by a hunk.
M The knight in shining armour.
The above data seems to correspond very closely to Bern's list of 'feminine' traits; it suggests that there is a widely accepted stereotype of women which participants will draw upon in argument. However, if one looks more closely at the data, one realises that this is only half the story: participants may, at times, refer to stereotypical attributes when the argumentative context makes this a favourable discursive gambit. However, they are equally capable of arguing against the validity of the prevailing stereotype:

M I think men can be equally caring and understanding. {MF9:12}

F2 It's difficult 'cause kids have gotta be looked after by somebody, but it's not important that it's mothers, it should be anybody =
F1 =Yeah why should it be the mother, why can't it be father. {MF10:2}

arguing on the grounds of particularizing rather than categorizing:

F And also I don't know that I'd find it I don't know how easy it is to talk to a chap, to actually talk to them.
M I find it very easy; I mean loads of women talk to me. So many secrets I've got 'cause they just find it so easy to talk to me but —
F Yeah that's true.
M So I suppose I'm caring, I'm caring, but I think generally — {MF8:16/17}

M Outdoor rugged types blokes — wise have a conventional isn't it; you get blokes doing the outdoor rugged stuff; you don't get many women trek up to the North Pole do you.
F Except Nicky.
M Em yeah. Like you say some professions though are more suited —
F I can imagine Nicky hiking up to the North Pole. {MF8:29}

or pointing out that the 'accepted' view of feminine and masculine attributes is either 'traditional' (i.e. not necessarily the case in modern times):

F But I mean if if you propose to somebody some cert — some men might take that as being insulting as like the woman's taking the leading role in in the relationship, whereas like it's traditionally been the man.
M That's just gone on tradition hasn't it; why not break away. {MF4:7/8}

or 'stereotypical':

M Women are seen as being more caring.
M: The image of the mother but —  
F: I wouldn’t have said they’re better at it at all.  
{MF4:9, my emphasis}

or a social construct (contrast this to MF7:16 and MF8:16/17, on page 229, where a "natural" repertoire supports the "compassionate" categorisation), as in the following passage, where the participants use a social construct repertoire to undermine stereotypical categorisations (note the use of Bem’s ‘compassionate’ and ‘understanding’ feminine attributes):

M: Em probably a lot of them (women) are more patient than that of men.  
F: Yeah.  
M: Bit more understanding. Er —  
F: You do get more women in the caring professions don’t you.  
M: Yeah. Well that’s what it is; it’s just not you’re not used to sort of hearing you can’t imaging people men as social workers and whatever; you get a lot of it’s mostly women isn’t it.  
F: Yeah ‘cause they’re more tolerant.  
M: Yeah they’ve got the patience. Yeah well — don’t know whether that’s necessarily better though is it; it’s just sort of —  
F: No; it just means they go more in for it because it’s more expected.  
{MF6:7/8}

F: I mean that’s always been like the man protecting the woman.  
Em —  
M: That’s right.  
F: Oh yeah ‘cause it’s I mean that’s how society that’s how society depicts it to be.  
{MF4:6/7}

There is evidence that participants are using this stereotypical set of categorical attributes as an imaginary reference point, against which real life instances are assessed. For instance, MF3’s subscription to the traditional attribute of females being weaker than males:

M: ...jobs requiring physical strength more than brains, I mean men have obviously got to be at an advantage. I mean you can see a woman pounding a bloody eight pound lump hammer into a wall all day, 'cause I couldn’t...  
{MF3:7}

becomes modified when attacked:

F: One or two that I’ve known I could.  
M: Well one or two yeah there are exceptions to the rule. I I I agree with that, but in an overall sort of if you take Mr Average and Miss Average, Mr Average will be able to do sort of perhaps heavier sort of type work than Miss Average would, on a sort of take the whole spectrum of people and you look at the middle one. So there are exceptions, yeah.  
{MF3:7}

That is, the traditional stereotype is recognized as an average, a generalisation,
That is, the traditional stereotype is recognized as an average, a generalisation, a standard against which 'real life' instances are assessed (in this, they provide a similar function to that claimed for Cantor & Mischel's prototypes); many 'traditional' categorisations are qualified by the proviso that they are stereotypes:

M Women are seen as being more caring.
F That's like their mothering instinct.
M The image of the mother but —
F I wouldn't have said they're better at it at all.

It may be argued that this data simply illustrates individual differences; respondents may be using particularising repertoires to represent non-conformist, androgynous individuals, and would use 'traditional' categorisations of males and females to describe sex-typed individuals. There is, of course, also the possibility that respondents themselves may differ; some participants who are 'androgynous' according to Bem's scale may use more contradictory stereotypes, whereas some sex-typed individuals may be more consistent. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this study to relate sex-typing to particular types of discursive patterning; further research is necessary in this area before the individual differences issue can be resolved.

However, individual differences cannot fully explain why the participants above (MF6:7/8, MF4:6/7) felt it necessary to explain particularisations away by use of a 'social construct' repertoire. Furthermore, the internal variability of accounts (discussed in detail later) makes any kind of consistent categorisation of an individual unlikely: a participant may well draw upon an 'androgynous' image of a friend on one occasion, then proffer a sex-typed description of the same individual in a different rhetorical context (one would, however, require more data that I have at my disposal to substantiate this surmise).

To summarise this section, one may say that psychology's work on stereotyping is useful in explicating the use of categorisation in discourse; however, this accounts for only selected areas of the data. To gain a more complete picture, one must also look at particularization; the discursive strategy whereby individuals select specific instances which fall outwith the general category. This is particularly important in the area of gender categories, where academic work on stereotypes has, often selectively, served to reproduce the stereotypical content of gender-based categories (Wetherell, 1986, Eichler, 1980).
3.3 Problems With Prototype Theory

I would now like to look at the predictions made by the specific models within socio-cognitive theory, using the prototype hypothesis as the exemplar.

An initial scan through our participants’ discourse seems to lend some support to the notions of prototypicality: individuals seem to have little difficulty in envisaging prototypical category members, and as Cantor & Mischel (1977) predict, there is a considerable commonality in their attribution of characteristics to these prototypes. To take an example, the following definitions of 'feminist' were offered:

M: A lot of bla—bla—you know bra—burning feminists say they hate men and say they dislike them and don’t need them. {MF9:22}

F1: I’m not a feminist, I’m not someone that goes around proclaiming women’s rights and all this but that’s what a feminist is. {MF10:8}

M: What does a feminist do: she er stands up for her rights she wants to = F: =Well I suppose burns their bras and sit around at Greenham Common. {MF8:9}

Using these extracts, which are here presented out of context, a case can readily be made for the allocation of individuals to category membership on the basis proposed by the prototype hypothesis:

"... a configuration of critical 'signs' which suggest that a fair portion of the person's behavior can be explained by using a particular category label."
(Cantor & Mischel, 1979, p11).

That is, in the case of the category 'feminist', these "signs" are active proclamation of women's rights, "bra—burning", peace campaigning and a dislike of men.

A similar pattern occurs when examining use of other categorical labels: for instance, categorical attributes of the label 'career woman' could be seen as coalescing around four inter-related elements:

i) Independent

F: Yeah, and that like she she is completely independent; she lives on her own, everything's done off her own back. {MF4:17/18}
ii) **Not family oriented**

M: (Career women) means they go for the job and not a bloke, they don't want to get married 'til they don't wanna get married in other words because of the career.

{MF8:6}

iii) **Self — confident/secure**

F: I think for a girl to go into engineering anyway she's got to have a certain — "sod you men I'm going to do it" sort of attitude. I mean she's got to think — she's got to think within herself that she she is better at her job than men are, and I mean she's continually having to prove it anyway, that she is better than men, because doing just the same isn't good enough; you've got to be better than them.

{MF5:21}

iv) **Strong minded/determined/single minded**

M: Some (career women) might get a bit sort of 'cause they're being with men you have to be a lot stronger in arguments to run a business and that.

F: Yeah.

M: That probably gets a bit you know strong character or strong minded.

{MF6:2}

F: I think they're probably strong; you've got to be tough; tough at the top. You've got to be as hard as nails I think to succeed and get there ... You've got to go for it ... I don't think you can have any qualms about doing things before you succeed.

{MF9:25/6}

However, if one looks at this discourse in context, two points can be made to the detriment of the prototype hypothesis: firstly, participants recognize the limited validity of prototypes in describing 'real life' instances (i.e. they have a further ironising discourse which subverts the prototype assumptions) and, secondly, the existence of multiple, contradictory prototypes compromises the utility of the prototype hypothesis.

i) **Limited 'real life' validity of prototypes**

To consider the first point, participants clearly recognize that "prototypical images" are stereotypes:

M The view stereotyped view of the career woman is that she hasn't got any kids...

F Yeah, and that like she she is completely independent; she lives on her own, everything's done off her own back.

{MF4:17}
and question its validity in the 'real' world:

M: What does a feminist do: she er stands up for her rights she wants to =
F: =Well I suppose burns their bras and sit around at Greenham Common.
M: Oh that drastic?
F: No I mean that's the idealised feminist.
{MF8:9}

M: They're (feminists) not fundamentally man—haters are they.
F: No not the majority of them.
M: No.
F: I mean some do but —
M: The stereotyped image would be.
F: Oh yeah definitely.
M: And my image as well.
F: Yeah I mean initially that statement's "Oh yeah that's right", but er —
M: You've got to think about it.
{MF4:5/6}

In Billig's terminology, they recognize that "the essence of the matter is not to be equated with the dominant image of the prototype" (1987, p154). In the above extract, it can be seen that people use prototypes as discursive tools in an argumentative struggle. The result is a flexibility of application at odds with the image of the individual as a routinized information processor. Such flexibility also questions the functional role of simplification attributed to the cognitive processes in stereotyping. If one looks again at the first extract in this section:

M: A lot of bla — bla — you know bra—burning feminists say they hate men and say they dislike them and don't need them.
{MF9:22}

one can see how the use of a modified categorisation ("feminists say they hate men") rather than the strict categorisation ("feminists hate men") suggests that the participant has some doubt about the validity of the categorical attribute; although it is not possible to substantiate this point using this isolated instance, it is possible to imagine how this subtle use of a prototype may actually work to denigrate feminists ("they might say x but really ... "), bringing off a complex denunciation.

The notion of stereotypes with their associated prototypical images is often invoked as an argumentative resource, as used by F in the following extract to counter a generalisation, leading to M's agreement with her point:

F: Works both ways: there are some professions more suited to women than men.
M: Some are yeah like typing ... I dunno why but it seems as if they are =
F: = No because that is because of stereotyping!
M: What typing with both hands at once (laughs).
F: No but it is; you get you get male typists but then the boss
can't have an affair with them =
M: = 'Cause it's conventional =
{MF8:28}

As can be seen above, prototypical images may be utilised when talking in
general terms about men and women's roles (as encouraged by the statements
in this study) and recognized as such. Take, for instance, the following
response to the statement "Men are primarily interested in sex, women in
romance":

M: Maybe I just think it's a bit — a sweeping category to say —
F: Yeah.
M: A sweeping category to put people under.
F: That's true actually; it is pretty sweeping.
M: Hm.
F: Yeah because I mean you get women that send flowers.
M: You know you can't judge men and women on that basis;
maybe there's a trend but —
{MF9:4}

In other words, social psychology itself (and its study of prototypes and
stereotypes) has entered common sense. Social science is not immune to
everyday influence; these extracts show how prototypes and categories are
topics for conversation. It remains an open question as to whether the
cognitive mechanisms described above are, in fact, influential in structuring and
determining the shape of that conversation; in these extracts, it might be more
appropriate to see the participant not as an information processor, but as
resembling Cantor and Mischel's own activities as social psychologists
investigating the process of categorisation, and subtly reflecting on the process.

When talking about specific individuals, prototypes tend to be modified and
'hedged' even further, e.g. MF3's generalisation:

M: You feminist activists, you want to change the world
overnight.
{MF3:8}

becomes modified when discussing one particular individual:

F: Would you call me a feminist?
M: No. Not an activist, just slightly slightly feminist yeah.
{MF3:22}

This appears to be a classic example of Lakoff's "linguistic hedge": the first
extract makes a categorical allocation and defines the attributes which are the
grounds for that categorisation (a real feminist is an activist), whereas the
second recognizes a continuum of category membership. However, I would argue that the substrate of this feature is not the cognitive or mental application of "fuzzy" category boundaries and perception of varying degrees of category membership, but rather lies in argumentation. Absolute categories, especially when discussing 'real life' instances, are too easily argued against. Interlocutors change their perception with a startling readiness, utilising a degree of cognitive agility which seems totally inexplicable if viewed from Cantor & Mischel's perspective. We can see how argument and social interaction, rather than perception and cognitive categorisation, seem to drive the varying representation of social groups.

The two extracts detailed above (MF3:8 and MF3:22) could alternatively be interpreted as supportive of Taylor's "familiarity" hypothesis (MF3's interview partner is more familiar to him than a member of the abstract category 'feminist', therefore he is more likely to produce an elaborated image of the former).

Again, however, it may be more useful to analyse the construction of 'familiarity' as an argumentative strategy: the strategy of inside or 'special' knowledge. This is commonly used to discredit another's viewpoint; that is, 'I am knowledgeable about x because I am an x; as you are a y, you are not as knowledgeable as I am'. To provide an example, the following is a response to the question "Girls are not really suited to jobs in engineering":

F2 (laughs) I'm afraid we have to disagree strongly to that. I would disagree strongly.
M I would agree strongly.
F1 (F2 laughs) Seeing as we are both engineers. No I think I'm better at the subject than most of the boys on our course ... 
M Alright but that's an individual isn't it.
F1 Yeah.
M It's an individual case: guys are better generally. You can't argue with that.
F2 Yeah but that's not what it says; it says "Girls are not really suited to jobs in engineering". I think I am; I would have to agree that I am suited to a job in engineering ... Girls are suited to jobs in engineering if they want them. A lot of girls are brought up to think all they can do is be a hairdresser or a nurse. I think girls are perfectly adequately suited to jobs in engineering.
{MF10:5/6}

This strategy commonly utilises immediate family or people known only to one participant as an exemplar in the argument: the advantage of this to the
speaker is that their version of events is privileged; the other speaker is not in a position to argue. For example:

M I know but there's a stronger link between the child and the mother.
F1 Not necessarily; I'm closer to my father.
M Yeah but that's because that's the way you've come to know him, not for —
F1 My mother was the one that gave up work to look after me.
F2 Mine did and my mum had to work because we had no money 'cause my dad was out of a job.
F1 So —
{MF10:3}

M's attempt to explicate and contest F1's personal experience fails (F2 sides with F1) because inside, superior knowledge cannot really be contested.

One can also envisage another form of this 'familiarity' argumentative strategy; it is possible to use it as a disclaimer, saying that one is too close to a situation to see it objectively. The fact that there are no instances of this in the data may be due to its greater suitability as a conciliatory move, rather than as a successful argumentative strategy. However, one would need considerably more data to confirm this hypothesis, as a different context may well make an alternative function for the 'familiarity' strategy appropriate.

Multiple Prototypes

Secondly, the prototype model fails to recognize that prototypes themselves may be controversial. According to the 'fuzzy set' hypothesis, any area of dispute will concern outer edges of the category, not the centre, where the prototype operates. Based on ideas from object—perception work, where the prototype is in little dispute, socio—cognitive theory assumes that categories are assigned almost automatically (cf Rosch's "Basic" level for categorisation, 1976). Although this may be the case for the natural objects which object perception uses as stimuli, in the more abstract worlds of politics, ethics and social issues about which many arguments revolve, this seems more improbable.

For argumentative reasons, multiple prototypes (or multiple representations) are useful, as each implies criticism of the others. Billig quotes the Rhetorica Ad Herennium:

"The meaning of the term is first explained briefly, and adapted to the advantage of our cause".
To give an example from the participant's discourse, the category 'feminist' can have variable connotations. The actual prototypical instance can be the subject of substantial negotiation, as in the following three extracts. Participants can be seen as orienting to a feminist prototype characterised by the hatred of men and a belief in female superiority. However, they define this prototype only to dispute it, whilst simultaneously endorsing a second representation in which independence and egalitarianism are the categorical attributes. The discursive impact of this contrast is the firm endorsement of the 'egalitarian' feminist prototype.

F2: I'm a bit of a feminist I mean I like to stand on my own feet and like mending my own things...a lot of women just wanna stand up for themselves; 'cause they get so beaten around by men like pushing them around, they get so beaten around by that, that they don't hate men they just like wanna be able to stand up for themselves.

M: A feminist means she wants to be on an equal footing, not that she wants to be superior.

M: I don't think they don't hate men do they, they just wanna =
F: =They hate the =
M: =They just want more rights for themselves, more equal rights, don't they.

Likewise, the prototypical image of the career woman as a determined go-getter fighting for her place in a man's world is undermined by the co-existence of a contradictory image, whereby the categorical attributes of the label 'career woman' are insecurity and vulnerability:

M: Irrespective of whether they're a career woman or what.
F: Yeah.
M: They still need love and care and affection and protection...Career women are the worst...Career women are the most quite a few of them are the most insecure people.

F Perhaps she's (the modern career woman) insecure so she has to succeed. Succeed in her career.

This is not simply different levels in a taxonomy as both definitions of 'career woman' clearly belong to the middle, social role/persona level; although it is possible to envisage 'insecure career woman' and 'confident career woman'
categories on the superordinate trait level, the categories cannot encompass the almost limitless variability in categorical attributes which participants generate. The taxonomy concept fails to explain the variability at the heart of the categories.

This clash of representations produces competing prototypical attributes of the career woman. The above extracts are particularly interesting in terms of the lay discourse of personality which they draw upon; it seems to be a variant of Adler's notion of the 'inferiority' complex, which states that ostensibly confident people are using this exterior as a 'mask' to conceal a 'real' character which is beset by insecurities and inferiority complexes.

Again relating these contradictory representations back to the argumentative context, if one looks at the discursive context in which the 'insecure' image occurs, one can see how it functions as an argumentative counter to the 'strong, secure' image. In the following extract, F's subscription to the latter is countered by M's use of the 'insecure, vulnerable' resource:

F I don't think she (the career woman) is (insecure). I think the modern career woman if she's got it I think she's very secure and she's very sort of she becomes very self—confident and —
M : Yeah the there — there could be could be the case where there's some who — like need that need something to hold onto, need something to go for 'cause they can't like control their lives say and they need that something to to give them a bit of security so they've got a nice job every day and they know where they're going.
{MF5:14/15}

Assuming the stance that prototypes are derived from "everyday behavior and social interaction" (Cantor & Mischel, 1979, p4), the co—existence of contradictory prototypes is something prototype theory neither recognizes nor explains; indeed, assuming kinship with cognitive dissonance theory, one would imagine the existence of multiple prototypes to be a cause of considerable mental anxiety and that it would be avoided at all costs. Setting this discourse within an interpretative framework of variable representations and argumentative strategies is perhaps more illuminating. Looking at one extract in its entirety, it is possible to see how the use of an image of a feminist constructed within the extremist 'stereotypical' discourse (used by F1 in this context) is countered by F2 and M's use of a more liberal discourse for feminism. One may go further and suggest that the prevalence of the "fuzzy sets" phenomena observed by Cantor & Mischel (1979) is not because of
borderline cases, but because strict categorisations presented in everyday discourse are more readily attacked than modified ones (as M finds in the extract from MF10 detailed on page 237); although one may claim exceptions to a strict categorisation, it is far more difficult to argue against a general trend (an example of this is MF9:4, reproduced on p 236).

As an alternative to "fuzzy sets", I would thus argue that modified categorisations tend to be more prevalent in naturalistic discourse as they represent a more useful argumentative resource.

On the basis of this evidence, it seems apparent that individuals do draw upon a limited set of images for the description and categorisation of women, but the fact that they use multiple prototypes in the description of the same object indicates the limitation of social cognitive analyses.

Applicability to Schema Theory

In the final pages of this section, I would like to briefly compare the expectations of schema theory to those of discourse analysis. The two problems described with regard to the prototype hypothesis apply equally to schema theory, but there are several additional points, pertaining specifically to schema theory, which should be made.

Schema theory assumes an inflexible mental structure which directly generates schema consistent discourse; it thus has difficulty explaining two further features of naturally occurring language. Firstly, what is the status of viewpoints which are tagged linguistically as not one's own, e.g.

M I could argue you could argue from the male chauvinistic point of view yeah the woman's place is in the home. I'm not saying I'm a male chauvinist, but that's the point of view you can argue from, without a doubt. {MF3:40}

F I mean for the benefit for the I mean I could sustain quite a consistent belief and you know play a role. Sustain quite a consistent belief that women are inferior to men, and women should be submissive to men. You know you can fake these kind of things quite easily. {MF3:29}

Is this being generated by their own schema, or have participants a knowledge
Is this being generated by their own schema, or have participants a knowledge of other possible schemata? There is no recourse within schemata theory for explaining this: schema theory predicts only one 'true' opinion. Within a functional language framework, however, such disclaimers serve an obvious purpose: through recognition of other viewpoints, participants both demonstrate their open-mindedness (other viewpoints are possible) and dissociate themselves from it.

Secondly, there is no explanation for the status of cynical, ironic or sarcastic comments, e.g. how can the following be generated by schema:

M "The intellectual leadership of a community should be largely in the hands of men". Why?
F Because men are so much better at logical thought and –
M Don't patronise me! No, why are you trying to argue from the –?
F Men are so much better at these things; women don't understand politics.
M Yeah, look who's been prime minister for ten years.
F That proves it, doesn't it; look at the mess the country's in ...
Okay; we disagree with that.
{MF3:32}

Again, in terms of the functional view of language, this is explicable (F is using sarcasm to undermine the question), but cannot be explained within the limitations of schema theory.
Summary

In conclusion, in the proceeding chapter I have attempted to compare the predictions of social cognitive psychology with real life instances of discourse, notwithstanding the proviso about the difficulties of this application indicated in the introduction. Although ostensibly there appears to be a broad correspondence between the expectations of the socio—cognitive approach and the discursive examples, if one examines the data more closely, a large number of discordant examples can readily be produced.

One cannot rule out the possibility that cognitive processes organise representations; it seems reasonable to suggest that the limits and structuring of the human mind must constrain interaction and representation in some way. However, I have demonstrated that the social cognition analysis of representations does not do justice to the complexity and nature of the interactional/representational phenomena.

Having problematised the socio—cognitive approach, it is now incumbent upon me to advance an alternative hypothesis: argumentation.
4. Alternative Hypothesis: Argumentation

After having problematised the socio-cognitive approach with regard to discourse, it is now necessary to surmise on how a discourse analyst would make sense of the same phenomena. Whilst not rejecting that the notions of prototypes, schema etc. have a useful descriptive function, I would argue that these are examples of a wider phenomenon: argumentative strategies.

So how would a discourse analyst view these issues? The first stage of analysis would be to place these conversations within the give and take of ideology, where what is displayed is not only a set of repertoires or representations which reflect ideological solutions to problems of gender relations, but also the conversational frame in which discussions largely take place.

The concept of ideology, as described in chapter five, can usefully handle the content of the representations (the approach which is usually subsumed under the socio-cultural analysis of stereotyping), but in this chapter I have also been pursuing the dynamic of the discourse and its functional aspects, following the interest in the process of stereotyping generated by social cognition researchers. For some discourse alternative to the cognitive account, we can turn to ethnomethodology, conversation analysis and discourse analysis.

According to this perspective, categorisation is no longer an inevitable consequence of the need to reduce the amount of incoming information the brain must process:

"Instead of seeing categorisation as a natural phenomena — something which just happens automatically — it is regarded as a complex and subtle social accomplishment." (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p116, their emphasis)

i.e. categories are constructed in language, utilised as a linguistic and argumentative resource for describing, explaining and discussing the world inhabited by the participant. The taxonomic organisation of categories is replaced by nested groupings:

"Categories are not nested in a clear-cut, natural way like Russian dolls, for example, one inside another, but are grouped into collections by the use of potentially complex and contradictory sets of interpretative procedures." (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p128)
That is, the organisation of categories does not have some kind of enduring external validity, but is once more a product of linguistic construction:

"... people draw upon knowledge of the organisation of categories as a resource for producing economical and intelligible conversation."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p127)

This process of categorisation is elaborated through attribution of characteristics to these categories; quoting the work of the founder of conversation analysis, Harvey Sacks (1972, 1974), Potter & Wetherell (1987) indicate that:

"Sacks notes that people also draw on conventional knowledge about the activities of members of categories ... In fact, as Watson (1978) and Jayyusi (1984) have noted, it is not just activities which are conventionally bound to categories; a whole cluster of features may be expected of categories: the traits and preferences of the incumbents, where they live, what they look like, what they wear and so on."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p129)

This process has a clear discursive function:

"The fact that membership categories can be conventionally tied to, or associated with, specific activities and other features, provides people with a powerful resource for making sense of their social worlds. In particular, it allows them to make inferences or discursive connections to the category membership of the actors. And, conversely, given that they know only a person's category membership, they can make a good guess as to the kind of things that person is likely to be doing."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p129)

The conversation/discourse approach to categorisation (as an alternative to regarding stereotyping as an inevitable consequence of categorisation) sees:

"... categories used not so much for their 'boundary work', grouping and separating individuals, but for the category-based inferences available."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p132)

Variability, a major problem for existing theories of stereotyping, is explicable if one takes a discourse-oriented approach:

"... the cluster of category-based attributes is not viewed as a kind of mental picture influencing perception but as a potentially inconsistent cluster of expectations and associations drawn on in an occasioned manner ... these expectations are selectively managed, in the context of passages of talk and writing, to present certain effects (Drew, 1978; Jayyusi, 1984). Thus some features may be made focal, others ignored and yet others reconstructed."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p133, their emphasis)
The fundamental problem with the socio-cognitive approach, I would argue, is its acontextuality: equating thinking with isolated, asocial problem solving, which dissociates the individual from any argumentative/rhetorical context:

"...our basic cognitive processes (do not) merely function to provide psychological stability and order. They also provide the seeds of argumentation and deliberation."
(Billig, 1987, p134)

If one instead adopts Billig's alternative which states that thinking is a conflict between categorisation and particularization:

"Categorisation does not provide the basis of thinking in a simple sense. The automatic application of categories is the negation of thinking, in that it is an essentially thoughtless process. Thinking starts when we argue or deliberate about with categorisation to particularize, or how to categorise a particularization".
(Billig, 1987, p140)

and views categorisation and particularization as opposing argumentative strategies, one can begin to look at how they function in the context of a debate.

Language, which is what sets humans apart from other animals, provides unlimited ways of talking about the world (i.e. makes different categories available), makes negation possible (i.e. makes it possible to argue for the merits of one categorisation or particularization against another). It provides a medium whereby novel categorisations may be generated: with its emphasis of rule-following and routine processes, the socio-cognitive approach underestimates what Billig calls "the dynamism of human thought" (1987, p130); wit, flair, ingenuity. For example, the following extract contains a wholly novel categorisation:

F I don't like the generalisation "You'll never find a good female labourer on a building site".
M But you wouldn't would you.
F From the point of view of physical strength no because physically women are weaker.
M I think conventionally they're still typecast.
F But they've got more stamina so they'd be able to blooming shift more stuff because they could keep going longer.
M Have you? More stamina?
F More stamina, yeah.
M Oh didn't know that one.
F That's why they live longer.
MF8:28/9

Here, the stereotypical notion of women as physically weak and lacking in stamina is juxtaposed against F's image of women as having greater stamina.
Here, the stereotypical notion of women as physically weak and lacking in stamina is juxtaposed against F's image of women as having greater stamina than men. Again, this serves a function for F within the argumentative context and demonstrates the flexibility of linguistic resources and the capacity of discursive participants for innovation; what Billig (1987) calls 'witcraft'. As Billig comments:

"The inventive rhetorician would be the one who could create devastating arguments, as opposed to delivering or packaging them with style ... The thinker of rhetorical theory is much more active, selecting and adapting thoughts, mutating and creating them, in the continual struggle for argumentative victory against rival thinkers"

(Billig, 1987, p82)

In the next section, I will attempt to apply this approach to a section of real life language data.
5. 'WITCRAFT' AT WORK

In contrast to the socio-cognitive approach, I will argue that use of stereotypes (or claims against) is simply one of many linguistic resources available to participants. One would perhaps expect them to appear more frequently in this context, given that the statements present fairly stereotypical images of gender, and the male–female pairings/triumvirate perhaps sensitize participants to polarities on gender issues. In actuality, my data suggests that stereotypes tend to be little used, other argumentative strategies such as particularisation, principle/practice contrasts, weight of example, and argument by familiar example, are more commonplace.

Given the potential vastness of the area (limited, as it is, only by human ingenuity), it is a pointless exercise to attempt a definitive list of argumentative strategies. Instead, the exercise is akin to that conducted by a botanist systematically collecting specimens (an allusion made by Heritage, 1988); in the face of all but limitless variation, one may not be able to classify every element, but one can begin to build up a taxonomy of the elements one does encounter.

Although I can only begin to illustrate it here, this section will show that a more 'inductive' approach to the study of the presentation and operation of representations is not only productive; it is a fundamentally necessary stage of the study of representations which has been left out of social cognition research.

In this final section, I would like to take the discourse analytic rubric outlined in the previous pages and apply it to an extended passage of discourse. The extract I shall be looking at derives from the only session which was conducted using three participants (MF10), as the triumvirate proved to be the best source of dispute and discussion.

The analytic strategy which I shall adopt here is to search for patterns, both in content and in form and for recurring argumentative strategies. Adopting a tactic similar to that found in conversation analysis, what I wish to do is to make a very rudimentary attempt at evolving some sort of taxonomy of argumentative strategies; I make no claims for the exhaustiveness of this list.
The analysis in this section will consider the following extract:

F1 "There are no fundamental differences between men and women".
F2 I disagree.
F1 Why?
F2 Because there obviously are (laughs) fundamental differences between men and women!
Like physical differences.
F1 There are physical differences but what about mental differences.
F2 There shouldn't be any but there are but it's not due to like it's the way people are brought up, not they're they're born physically different but they aren't born mentally different.
F1 Yeah.
F2 Hang on we're supposed to agree on this together.
M Em —
F1 I agree that it's physical differences but I don't agree that there should be mental differences but I suppose there are because like what you said Jo about the way people are brought up.
M There's emotional ones too aren't there I mean like —
F2 That's only because like =
M Like male mentality and female mentality.
F2 Yeah but that's because like girls are brought up to believe that crying's alright and boys are brought up to believe that no no boys don't cry, if you get hit in the mouth you don't cry, but girls it's okay; if they fall down they're allowed to cry.
F1 Hm. I think I disagree =
F2 Girls are encouraged to play with teddy bears.
F1 I slightly disagree. (interruption) How about you?
M I agree strongly.
F1 You agree strongly. What about you?
F2 I disagree.
F1 You agree strongly that there are no fundamental differences?
M No fund — oh that I agree that there are.
Right, I disagree strongly.
F2 I disagree strongly.
F1 Oh well I disagree slightly so we'll put it under disagree strongly. Right. "It is important that mothers should stay at home and look at — "; oh I disagree strongly!
F2 It's difficult 'cause kids have gotta be looked after by somebody, but it's not important that it's mothers, it should be anybody =
F1 = Yeah why should it be mother, why can't it be
father.

F2 The person who earns the least money should stay home and look after the kids, until the kids go to school. Disagree.

M But that means I dunno if that means parents or just mothers, does it mean —

F2 It just says mothers —

M =It just says mothers; it doesn’t mean nurses or anything =

F1 =It just says mothers; it differentiates between the sex. I disagree strongly with that one.

F2 I disagree strongly.

M I don’t (F2 laughs). I’m in the middle; I think that mothers are mothers are built for it aren’t they.

F2 Why? (M laughs) No they’re not.

F1 The last thing I want is is children.

F2 Same here; why should we have to have them.

F1 Why should we have to have them when we don’t want them.

M I don’t one else could have them.

F2 If we do have them, why do we have to stay at home and look after them; why couldn’t you stay at home and look after them?

M Because —

F2 Because what?

M Why aren’t there two blokes here and one girl?

F2 (laughs) Probably because there have been in the past.

F1 But —

M Because the woman’s she gave birth to the child for a start so there’s a stronger link =

F2 =You do have a little thing to do with it as well!

M I know but there’s a stronger link between the child and the mother.

F1 Not necessarily; I’m closer to my father.

M Yeah but that’s because that’s the way you’ve come to know him, not for —

F1 My mother was the one that gave up work to look after me.

F2 Mine did and my mum had to work because we had no money ’cause my dad was out of a job.

F1 So —

M Yeah but if you hadn’t you’ve changed right, from a three year old’s or a five year old’s point of view then there’s a stronger link with your mother.

F1 That’s because mum mothers in the past have stayed at home to look after their kids. If say my dad stayed at home and looked after me at about three I’d have a stronger link with him wouldn’t I.

M But it wouldn’t be as strong as you would have with your mother.

F1 Why? Just ’cause of that physical link with you in the first place?
251

The above extract involves discourse around two of the stimulus statements. In response to the first, "There are no fundamental differences between men and women", F2 advances an opinion, which is picked up and modified by F1. F2 then uses a social argument to counter M's comments. Discussion of the first statement is terminated by F1's suggestion of a compromise.

The second question, "It is important that mothers should stay at home and look after their children", finds F1 and F2 in concordance. M stalls by reinterpreting the question then overtly expresses his disagreement. F1 and F2 restate their position against M, F2 directly challenging. M has difficulty answering, and diverts attention away from the question by changing the subject. For the remainder of the extract, M advances his argument again, with F1 and F2 in disagreement.

Within this sketchy characterisation of the dynamics of the extract, I would like to focus on the rhetorical combination of content and form; what types of argument do people use and, more crucially, how do people attempt to make
them persuasive. My intention, in the areas of both content and form, is to draw out several clear strategies which people use to organise their discourse and their representations of gender.
The first stage in my analysis is to look at what speakers say. To this end, I have extracted four dimensions around which the discussion revolves: the spheres of the natural, social, practical and moral.

i) Natural

One commonly invoked dimension in the discussion of gender, as noted in Chapter Six, is that of the naturalness of gender and gender roles. Natural arguments typically claim that gender roles are the inevitable product of biological differences. In this case, M uses it to bolster his claim for the expediency of female mothering:

85 M Because the woman's she gave birth to the child
86 for a start so there's a stronger link =
87 F2 = You do have a little thing to do with it as
88 well!
89 M I know but there's a stronger link between the
90 child and the mother.

and doggedly sticks to this argument throughout the interview:

67 M I don't (F2 laughs). I'm in the middle; I
68 think that mothers are mothers are built for it
69 aren't they.

He reinforces the natural repertoire by invoking a comparison with the animal kingdom:

114 M Well why would you why with the animals then is
115 it always the mother?
116 F1 Because the mother always feed them.
117 M But why is why is – the mother always looks
118 after the young doesn't it.
119 F1 Because it's the mother but it's the mother
120 like Jo says that feeds them; the only way they
121 can be feed fed is by em by the mother. The
122 father can't feed them.

Although M's initial attempt to push this repertoire is diffused by F1 in line 116, he returns to it, 'recompleting' (i.e. the conversation analysis terminology for rephrasing a statement to the same end), beginning line 117 with a question, strengthening it into a statement, adding a tag question at the end of line 118.
ii) Social

As well as arguing for the 'natural' division of gender, participants may equally suggest that gender roles are a social construction. For instance, in the following extract F1 and F2 argue (in the underlined sections) for the social origins of gender roles:

5    F2 Because there obviously are (laughs)
6    fundamental differences between men and women!
7    Like physical differences.
8    F1 There are physical differences but what about
9    mental differences.
10 F2 There shouldn't be any but there are but it's
11 not due to like it's the way people are brought
12 up, not they're they're born physically different
13 but they aren't born mentally different.
14 F1 Yeah.
15 F2 Hang on we're supposed to agree on this
16 together.
17 M Em —
18 F1 I agree that it's physical differences but I
19 don't agree that there should be mental
20 differences but I suppose there are because like
21 what you said Jo about the way people are brought
22 up.
23 M There's emotional ones too aren't there I mean
24 like —
25 F2 That's only because like =
26 M Like male mentality and female mentality.
27 F2 Yeah but that's because like girls are brought
28 up to believe that crying's alright and boys are
29 brought up to believe that no no boys don't cry,
30 if you get hit in the mouth you don't cry, but
31 girls it's okay; if they fall down they're allowed
32 to cry.
33 F1 Hm. I think I disagree =
34 F2 Girls are encouraged to play
35 with teddy bears.
iii) Practical

A third domain in which participants may root their discourse is the practical. This commonly claims that existing gender relations are the only workable, practical arrangement, as in the following extract:

```
50  F2 It's difficult 'cause kids have gotta be looked
51  after by somebody, but it's not important that
52  it's mothers, it should be anybody=
53  F1 =Yeah why should it be mother, why can't it be
54  father.
55  F2 The person who earns the least money should
56  stay home and look after the kids, until the kids
57  go to school. Disagree.
```

iv) Moral

Participants also use the strategy of moral assertion in their discussion of gender. One particular aspect of this which appears in this extract is an anti-compulsion account; anything which compromises freedom of choice is automatically assumed to be wrong.

To provide an example:

```
71  F1 The last thing I want is is children.
72  F2 Same here; why should we have to have them.
73  F1 Why should we have to have them when we don't
74  want them.
75  M No one else could have them.
76  F2 If we do have them, why do we have to stay at
77  home and look after them; why couldn't you stay at
78  home and look after them?
```

In the above extract, F1 and F2 use moral assertions in the underlined passages to counter M's natural argument (line 75), F2 concluding by pointing out an omission in M's thinking (lines 77A – 78).

Likewise, if something differentiates between the sexes, it contradicts egalitarian principles, hence is also unquestioningly assumed to be wrong:

```
60  F2 It just says mothers=
61  M =It just says mothers; it doesn't mean nurses
62  or anything=
63  F1 =It just says mothers; it differentiates
64  between the sex. I I disagree strongly with that
65  one.
66  F2 I disagree strongly.
```
5.2 FORM

The dimensions discussed in the previous section – natural, social, practical and moral – form the 'building blocks' with which individuals discuss gender. The next stage in the analysis is to look at the form in which these elements are presented; from describing what is said, I now wish to turn my attention to how things are said; what argumentative strategies do participants use in their debates about gender. In this section, I would like to discuss a variety of strategies which appear throughout the corpus of data: argument by familiar example/personal experience, statement of factual assertion, practice/principle contrasts and categorisation/particularisation.

i) Categorisation/Particularisation

Typically, transcripts of discussion show an interaction between categorisation and particularisation, one used to counter the other. This interaction can be seen in the following extract, where the topic of discussion is female mothering:

126 F2 Hm. Somebody's gotta stay home and look after
127 the children.
128 F1 Yeah.
129 F2 And it often is mothers because they like
130 want to stay at home and look after them, but I
131 don't think they should have to.
132 F1 I don't think it's important that it is the
133 mother.
134 F2 No.
135 M Yeah the mother feels more like doing it
136 doesn't she for a start, okay that's half the
137 question.
138 F2 She might, she might not. I wouldn't.
139 M The majority of women do.
140 F2 I don't even want babies; I think they're
141 horrible, smelly, dirty little things (laughs).

One can see how, in lines 135 – 137, M picks up the 'natural' argument which had earlier been put forward by F2 (lines 129 – 131). F2 responds to this by refusing to generalise (line 138), emphasising this by reference to personal experience ("I wouldn't", line 138A). M's attempt to counter this (line 139) by categorisation is again countered by F2's statement of personal belief (lines 140 141).

Categorisation, at least as far as this group are concerned, does not seem to
Categorisation, at least as far as this group are concerned, does not seem to be a particularly successful argumentative strategy. Categorisations do, on occasions produce agreement, e.g.

F "There are no fundamental differences between men and women".
M They're not the same.
F No they think differently. They go about things differently.
{MF5:1}

However, this seems to be the exception. All-or-nothing categorisations are too easy to argue against, as M (using generalisations on turns 1 and 3) finds out in the following extract (in response to the stimulus statement "Mothers should stay at home with their children");

M You need your dad being more authoritative, your mum's =
F2 =Well why couldn't you have the dad being more caring to balance the mum being more authoritative.
M Because that's not how blokes are, is it; that's not how men are. They're not the gentle gentle sex.
F2 They're not; my father =
F1 =It does it is like that though in real life it is like that; the woman is the one who's more nurturing and the fella's the one that goes and earns money, but I don't think it should be =
{MF10:18/19}

F2 firstly counters by exposing an omission in M's argument (turn 2), following this (turn 4) with a curtailed argument by personal example. F1 concludes by offering a compromise (turn 5) set up through a practice (natural rule) - principle (a "should" clause incorporating elements of equality and anti-compulsion) contrast. Both personal example and principle arguments are difficult to counter; the former utilises "inside knowledge" which cannot be disputed, whereas the air of reasonableness articulated by the latter also makes disagreement difficult.

Categorisations often invoke natural, biological or evolutionary repertoires (particularly useful for backing up categorisations, as they are indicate universal, unalterable principles), e.g.

F But it's always happened hasn't it; that's always been the roles.
M I think traditional roles still have a big part to play; men and women in relationships.
F Women were the ones who had the babies so it was pretty natural that they raised them.
M Yeah.
F And men had to prove how macho they are.
M Yeah. I think sex roles stem from there.
F And because of a the different strengths in the women and men; men are the stronger so they're likely to go out.
F Do better hunting. 
{MF9:5}

and in response to "Mothers should stay at home and look after their children":

M But it's natural for many higher animals to be with their mother (F: Yeah). And I think that humans shouldn't be any different. 
{MF9:14}

ii) Practice/Principle Contrasts

As indicated in the previous section, 'principle' arguments are sometimes difficult to counter. Principles typically relate to moral issues such as egalitarianism and anti-compulsion (discussed in the earlier section on the moral dimension in gender debate). To this list may be added accountability for action, as in the following extract, where F2 holds M responsible for the actions of his entire sex:

85 M Because the woman's she gave birth to the child
86 for a start so there's a stronger link=
87 F2 = You do have a little thing to do with it as
88 well!
89 M I know but there's a stronger link between the
90 child and the mother.

Principles often appear in argumentation coupled with practical provisos, the latter tending to tap strongly into natural and social arguments. To take the following extracts:

F2 I'm a bit of a feminist I mean I like to stand on my own feet and like mending my own things, but I can't because like I've never been taught to do it.  
{MF10:7}

F2 = A lot of girls are brought up to think all they can do is be a hairdresser or a nurse. I think girls are perfectly adequately suited to jobs in engineering. 
{MF10:6}

These articulate social differences in upbringing as a practical constraint ("I've never been taught to do it", "A lot of girls are brought up to think ..."), contrasting this to statements which endorse the principle of egalitarianism ("I like to stand on my own feet", "I think girls are perfectly adequately suited to jobs in engineering").
Likewise, returning to the text reproduced at the beginning of this section, the following extract takes up this socially derived practical constraint, and pairs it with an anti-compulsion principle:

10 F2 There shouldn't be any but there are but it's
11 not due to like it's the way people are brought
12 up, not they're they're born physically different
13 but they aren't born mentally different.

As the next few lines show, this is a successful strategy in this case; in lines 18 – 22, F1's argument is picked up and endorsed by F2:

14 F1 Yeah.
15 F2 Hang on we're supposed to agree on this
16 together.
17 M Em –
18 F1 I agree that it's physical differences but I
19 don't agree that there should be mental
20 differences but I suppose there are because like
21 what you said Jo about the way people are brought
22 up.
23 M There's emotional ones too aren't there I mean
24 like –

To provide a final example, the practical component of such a contrast may utilise natural as well as social arguments:

126 F2 Hm. Somebody's gotta stay home and look after
127 the children.
128 F1 Yeah.
129 F2 And it often is mothers because they like
130 want to stay at home and look after them, but I
131 don't think they should have to.

In this case, a natural practice (underlined) is used to explicate a factual assertion (lines 126 – 127), but is qualified by an anti-compulsion principle (lines 130A – 131).

It appears that principle/practice contrasts may serve a variety of functions in relation to the context; for instance, one may surmise that, in the last extract, F2's purpose in articulating the 'anti-compulsion' principle could have been to negate any imputation of compulsion arising from her use of a 'natural' argument. Equally, practice/principle contrasts may prove a useful method of assembling one's ideas coherently. One must carefully attend to the context to determine the function of these extracts.
iii) Argument by Familiar Example/Personal Experience

Arguments by personal experience or familiar example are very common in this extract, e.g.

71  F1 The last thing I want is is children.
140 F2 I don't even want babies; I think they're horrible, smelly, dirty little things (laughs).

As can be seen in the following extract, this is a particularly effective argumentative strategy:

89  M I know but there's a stronger link between the child and the mother.
90  F1 Not necessarily; I'm closer to my father.
92  M Yeah but that's because that's the way you've come to know him, not for —
94  F1 My mother was the one that gave up work to look after me.
96  F2 Mine did and my mum had to work because we had no money 'cause my dad was out of a job.
98  F1 So —
99  M Yeah but if you hadn't you've changed right, from a three year old's or a five year old's point of view then there's a stronger link with your mother.
100 F1 That's because mum mothers in the past have stayed at home to look after their kids. If say my dad stayed at home and looked after me at about three I'd have a stronger link with him wouldn't I.

Although M tries repeatedly to explicate and contest F1's use of personal experience (underlined), he fails because of the difficulty of contesting 'inside' superior knowledge.

The next extract, taken from a different interview, shows a similar use of argument by personal experience:

F ... just thinking of my mum I think it's important for somebody to be there because my mum went back to work when I was about two.
M Hm.
F And so I was left ... with a nanny.
M Were you?
F I mean she was a very lovely nanny but —
M But not your mum.
F Well she wouldn't there were certain things she wouldn't let me do because she didn't because she was employed by my mum and also we were abroad and she was black and there was all the racist thing, not that our family is but she was terrified of being sacked, so I was you know I was very restricted ... so I mean I resented the fact that when I
was six or seven I would come home to an empty house.

If one looks at this in context, F's rhetorical strategy functions to add weight to previous statement, which argues for a rewording of the question from 'It is important that mothers should stay at home with their children' to 'It is important that a parent stays with the children'):

F: I would say yes it's important for a parent to stay with their child. I don't like kids that're dumped on nannies.

And arguing against M's earlier remark:

"It's be mothers though wouldn't it for the first few years".

To look at one further example, in the next extract F uses argument by familiar example to support a particularising repertoire:

F: No it depends on the individual again; you can't generalise like this, because ... a lot of the men that I know that I've come across in my life are better are more tolerant than the women, 'cause my mum and me and my gran and my friends are less tolerant of people than like my dad or my brothers or my grandad or whatever.

iv) Statement of Factual Assertion/Obviousness

Statements of factual assertion and appeals to obviousness are very powerful in argumentation, as they are an unequivocal statement of an individual's opinion, e.g.

1  F1 "There are no fundamental differences between men and women".
2  F2 I disagree.
3  F1 Why?
4  F2 Because there obviously are (laughs)
5  fundamental differences between men and women!
6  Like physical differences.

However, they are also particularly risky to speakers, as they have little scope for modification or 'linguistic hedging', should others disagree with the assertion.
Summary

So what conclusions can be drawn from this exercise? The difficulties are obvious: a complex mesh of argumentative strategies is difficult to dissect into discrete units. Billig's comment is appropriate:

"...as these arguments develop, we might expect arguments about arguments about arguments. And so on. It might be possible to construct an analytic framework for these, but intellectual vertigo must strike at some point".

(Billig, 1987, p155)

However, from this extract and the data in general, one can draw out a number of recurrent argumentative strategies; this is a rudimentary attempt at building a taxonomy of some of the available argumentative strategies. To provide a comprehensive analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis, and, indeed, may be impossible (argumentative strategies, one may presume, are virtually infinite in number, limited only by the 'witcraft' capacities of the discursive participants), but it is a starting point upon which further research may care to build.
CHAPTER EIGHT

WOMEN'S SELF—NARRATIVES

1. INTRODUCTION

Accounts of selves and self concepts form a central part of social psychology, as Potter & Wetherell (1987) note:

"... the language of the self and 'subject' ... is a crucial area for social psychology given that the discipline usually takes the individual as its main unit of analysis and defining the shape and nature of this individual is seen as involving some model or theory of the self."

(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p95)

Discussion of the self and subjectivity are equally central to research on the psychology of women. In both the psychoanalytic and the experimental social psychological traditions, women's distinctive self—concepts are placed at the core of explanations of gender difference.

However, as I have argued in earlier chapters, these approaches have a number of shortcomings. Most problematic of these is the model of self which they adopt or assume. Traditional work has largely assumed that the self is akin to a physical entity in that it has discoverable fixed characteristics which are situationally and temporally consistent. Although these characteristics may — at times — be obscured from view, diligent research will reveal them. Thus Bem, for example, produced a theory which purported that the self could be 'discovered' by a subject's assessment of his/herself on a range of personality traits as discussed in Chapter One.

This 'fundamentalist' perspective has been extensively criticised in recent years by discourse analysts (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), post—structuralists (Weedon, 1987) and social constructionists (Gergen, 1988). The effect of this criticism has been to move the focus of interest from the self as a discrete feature which can be objectively characterised towards how the self is constructed in discourse.

There are a number of advantages to this shift in emphasis: the contradictions and variability which are an inevitable feature of discourses of identity can be explained in terms of the concept of the 'fragmented' self. Potentially, a speaker has a range of subject positions available to him/her, and may draw
upon these variably, according to their suitability for performing the function required by the linguistic context at any one time. One might thus say that, in contrast to the unitary self of traditional social psychology, these approaches suggest a multiplicity of selves:

"There is not 'one' self waiting to be discovered or uncovered but a multitude of selves found in the different kinds of linguistic practices articulated now, in the past and cross-culturally."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p102)

This leads us to the second advantage to the change in emphasis: whereas traditional social psychology has tended to see the self as an independent unit, adrift from cultural and historical influences, this approach can be used to examine precisely how these cultural and historical influences act upon and constrain the representations of self which are available to a speaker:

"... psychological models of the self are inevitably culturally and historically contingent, dependent on certain kinds of social practices."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p102)

This switch in focus is particularly pertinent to the topic of study here, as earlier work has demonstrated (Coward, 1984; Garvey, 1984; Kitzinger, 1987; Parker, 1989; Stiven, Wetherell & Potter, 1985) that different discourses and narratives societally position those who articulate them; there may be enabling or disabling ways of telling the same history, with different ideological impact for the speaker:

"The methods of conceptualising the self involved in different linguistic practices have vital consequences for the positioning of people in society; they are not neutral or without impact, they produce senses of the self which may be negative, destructive, oppressive, as well as senses which might change and liberate."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p104)

Furthermore, the articulation of certain discourses about the self may be critical to the reproduction of certain kinds of society; the link between power relations and discourses of the self in gender constructions has been analysed by Coward (1984) and Hollway (1984). Coward, for instance, examines how discursive representations of the female self present particular objects of desire (e.g. fashionable body images, ideal homes etcetera) as 'appropriate' sources of pleasure for women. This has the function of positioning women as consumers of these 'pleasurable' objects, but also implies its opposite; it is a restriction, as certain objects are discursively represented as inappropriate for women (as
an example, one only has to look at the way in which women are systematically ignored or patronised by car sales staff; cars – except those in a certain category, as recent Ford and Volkswagen advertisements have suggested – are not a suitable object of female desire). Coward also argues that, as the consumption of pleasurable objects is likely to be a central component of the feminine subjectivity, manipulation in this area is likely to constrain and direct the range of female selves available:

"I see the representations of female pleasure and desire as producing and sustaining feminine positions. These positions are neither distant roles imposed upon us from outside which it would be easy to kick off, nor are they the essential attributes of femininity. Feminine positions are produced as responses to the pleasures offered to us; our subjectivity and identity are formed in the definitions of desire which encircle us."
(Coward, 1984, p16, her emphasis)

To summarise, the features of the alternative approach are as follows: it can examine the self-concept in terms of a multi-faceted, often contradictory range of selves rather than as an objective, unitary phenomenon; it can sit this fragmented self historically and culturally and, finally, it can examine the power dimension in the use of certain constructions of the self.

Given the enormous interest accorded to the self in the psychology of women literature, I wanted to devote some time to investigating and exploring, with interview material, the way in which a discourse approach would access the self-accounts of women.

This chapter reports the analysis of interviews I conducted with three women, and looks at some aspects of the life histories they gave in the course of these interviews. I wanted to look at the varying ways in which they represented themselves and their experiences and the ideological implications of those representations. As will become clear, analysis led me into difficult ethical territory and into considering the impact of the narrative and rhetorical form of their story-telling.
2. ANALYTIC APPROACH

Before proceeding to the interview content and the ethical problems, I will briefly describe the analytic approach which I adopted to deal with this kind of material, and the literature I drew upon to make sense of the transcripts.

In general, the interview situation was envisaged as posing an accounting dilemma for the participants: there are certain material facts of a life, certain cultural constraints and resources for making sense of a life history, and certain accepted ways of telling stories in contemporary Western society. Given these framing factors, how do you tell your life story? That is, how does a participant select and frame events, and how are they sequenced and contextualised?

Analysis was concerned with patterns at two intertwined levels of content (the description of the discursive content) and form (the rhetorical level). That is, crudely, analysis should focus on the way in which the material aspects of one’s life are presented and narrated, as well as identify the theory, the discourses of the self and experience which the participant is drawing upon in constructing her account.
2.1 Interpretative Resources

In terms of discursive content and methods of study appropriate to it, the notion of interpretative repertoires — as developed elsewhere in the thesis — proved most useful. There are several other precedents to this work, the most significant of which is Wendy Hollway's (1989) use of material generated in consciousness raising groups. Although Hollway works from within a broader post-structuralist and psychoanalytic framework, she is equally interested in the explication and study of interpretative resources.

Hollway's work is discussed in greater detail in chapter four, but, to recap, the valuable aspects of her research, from my perspective, are as follows:

i) A deconstructionist approach to accounts;

ii) An interest in the representation of subjectivity and social meaning within accounts;

iii) The idea that certain forms of accounting may be more enabling (in terms of power and social positioning) than others.
2.2 Narrative and Rhetorical Form

Content (interpretative repertoires, discourses) represents only half of the picture: as well as examining the content of the story, it is equally valuable to study its rhetorical aspects. There are certain, accepted ways of telling stories, and particularly life histories, in contemporary Western culture, which both give meaning to and constrain the narratives which can be produced:

"... traditions of story telling, dramatic performance, literature and the like have generated a range of culturally shared forms of enplotment, or narrative forms."

(Gergen, 1988, p96)

In this analysis, I wanted to investigate rhetorical form in this sense of narrative and story formats. To aid me in this task, I drew extensively on the work of Gergen & Gergen (1987). The Gergens offer some answers to questions such as what are some of the cultural constraints on narrative composition and what constitutes a 'proper' story.

Gergen & Gergen (1987) have proposed that an 'ideal' narrative has five components:

"These five components appear to be critical to the well-formed narrative in contemporary Western culture. This is not to say that all components are employed on all occasions ... performances may vary considerably in the degree to which they approximate the ideal form."

(Gergen & Gergen, 1987, p272)

These components are as follows:

i) Establishment of a Goal State
   An acceptable story must have an endpoint, or at least an event to be explained.

ii) Selection of Events Relevant to the Goal State
    Once a goal is established, it dictates what kind of events can be used to account for it. Relevant events are those which bring the 'goal' closer (be it a positive or negative end state).

iii) Arrangement of Events in a Linear Order
    For coherence, events in narratives are generally arranged in a linear, temporal sequence, whether or not the events actually happened in that order.

iv) Establishment of Causal Linkages
    Discursive causal linkage of events in the 'ideal' narrative aids coherence, although, again, events may have not been linked in 'real life'.
v) Demarcation Signs
Most narratives have signals to indicate the beginning (e.g. "Let me tell you why I'm so upset") and the end (e.g. "So now you know the true story") of a story.

Gergen & Gergen (1987) go on to suggest that narratives in contemporary Western culture might have "two primitive plots" (p273): progressive and regressive narratives. In the former, a selection of related events are described as moving increasingly towards a positive end point (a valued goal state). In the regressive narrative, the end point is negative, and events are described as proceeding inexorably towards a negative consequence. Gergen & Gergen's diagrammatic illustration of this is shown in figure 8.1.

![Diagram of progressive, regressive, and stability narratives](from Gergen & Gergen, 1987, p273)

Mary Gergen (1988) has also postulated another narrative form, the 'stability' narrative (p99), also illustrated in figure 8.1. Here, the evaluation of events (as positive or negative) does not change: this, she theorises, is less common as it has little dramatic impact.

Within this "basic vocabulary" (Gergen, 1988, p100) of stability, progression and regression, Gergen & Gergen argue that it is possible to place other commonly occurring types of narrative:

"Given these rudimentary narrative forms one can expand the scope to consider other commonly encountered prototypes."
(Gergen & Gergen, 1987, p273)

As an example, Gergen & Gergen (1987) traced tragedy, Aristotelian comedy, the epic saga, the happily-ever-after-tale and the dialectic progression on the scale depicted in figure 8.1. These are illustrated in figure 8.2.
My analytic aim, therefore, was to look at the way in which participants in my study use these forms to structure and explicate their experience; specifically, what the narrative frame consists of and what function it achieves for the speaker. This is not as dilettante an exercise as it may at first appear; as Heilman (1968) states:

"Men (sic) not only write tragedy and melodrama, but also, in quite nonliterary contexts, view human experience tragically or melodramatically."

(Heilman, 1968, p89)

That is, these concepts have been proposed as the basic currency of human life.

Murray described the narrative forms of 'romance', 'tragedy', 'irony' and 'comedy' as the fundamental:

"... narrative structures that govern much of the telling of stories in the Western tradition."

(Murray, 1989, p181)

Assuming that these formats will be crucial in life histories, I should like to attempt some definitions of 'romance' etcetera; Murray (1989) offers the
following:

i) Comedy
The victory of youth and desire over age and death. Conflict in comedy is usually the repression of desire in a society, released in the course of an adventure or festivity, by which a healthier social unit is restored.

ii) Romance
A goal state is achieved after a struggle — typically including a crucial test — between a hero and forces of evil. Conflict is resolved by a battle (rather than by sociality, as in comedy). This is what Campbell (1956) has described as the 'monomyth'; the most basic story for humanity.

iii) Tragedy
Elements of the self are discovered, but are not allowed realisation in the 'real' world. An individual fails to conquer evil and is excluded from the social unit. 'Noble' failure is the keynote.

iv) Irony
Irony is not a narrative form is the same respect as the others; it deals with the discovery that tragedy, comedy and romance give unrealistic, unattainable expectations.

It goes without saying that this list is not inexhaustible (other forms, e.g. epic, melodrama, are equally plausible) nor are the forms exclusive: one would anticipate considerable switching between these forms, negotiated perhaps by linguistic 'demarcations'. Murray (1989, p199) proposed 'switching devices' (e.g. "Things began to turn sour when ... "); "I had almost given up hope when ... "). One might even go so far as to say that a well-formed narrative must have a balance, for instance, between comedy and tragedy. The forms listed above exist in their 'pure' form only in Ancient Greek literature: even Shakespeare recognized that tragedy had to be tempered with comedy. His early 'pure' form works (such as 'Titus Andronicus') are not well thought of in contrast to the complex interplay between tragic and comic elements found, for instance, in 'Hamlet' (where the light relief provided by the gravediggers serves only to exemplify the tragedy surrounding it, thus heightening dramatic tension). In analysing an account, one is thus looking for a variety of narrative forms, and for the function they serve within the particular context of production.

Clearly, a functional perspective on narratives will be an essential part of any discourse analysis: different forms have different effects, some kinds of dilemmas and accounting problems occur in some narratives and not others.

The range of narrative forms described in the preceding section suggests that people will have a range of narratives at their disposal:
"... the narrative form which a person uses for telling a story is selected for specific occasions or functions. Multiple narrative forms characterise an individual's story telling repertoire."
(Gergen, 1988, p107)

and particular 'tellings' serve different functions:

"For many scholars narratives are seen as providing a sense of coherence and directionality in one's life ... life events are made intelligible by locating them in a sequence or 'unfolding process' ... Narratives are often shaped so that culturally valued activities are highlighted for self and others."
(Gergen, 1988, p95)

"... narrative accounts can serve a wide variety of pragmatic functions. They may be used to create various kinds of explanations, to challenge, to gain sympathy, to create a sense of union, and so on."
(Gergen & Gergen, 1987, p285)

Attempts have also been made to specifically relate functionality to the narrative forms discussed in the previous section; in the following extract, Gergen surmises about the likely function of certain narrative forms:

"... a narrative that is shaped as a romance, with the narrator overcoming obstacles to achieve a goal, is an attempt to present the narrator as a hero who lives in a world of treachery or danger. The listeners are expected to be enthralled and admiring of such a protagonist. The tragedy may be designed to elicit sympathy, and the comedy a companionate spirit of solidarity and harmony."
(Gergen, 1988, p107)

It goes without saying that this functionality will vary according to context; participants have a number of narrative forms at their disposal, several of which may 'fit' the events (s)he is describing. The choice of narrative form thus depends on its appropriateness for achieving a particular feature for the speaker. As the Gergens comment:

"Pragmatic requisites may also shift rapidly with time and circumstance. A relational narrative that was serviceable in one condition may not be in another."
(Gergen & Gergen, 1987, p285)

"Individuals will typically possess a variety of narrative potentials, which may variously be deployed as occasions permit or invite."
(Gergen, 1988, p97)

As selection of narrative form is critically dependent upon functionality, and this functionality is likely to vary according to context, one would therefore anticipate considerable inconsistency in accounts, and wish to relate this
inconsistency to functionality:

"... the data one gathers when collecting self-narratives are viewed not as kernels of truth about a person's life, but as temporary constructions of what seems most appropriate from the perspective of the narrator at that time."

(Gergen, 1988, p102)
2.3 Narrative and Character

Narrative and character were particularly important areas in my analysis, as it is an intertwining of the two topics of rhetorical form and discursive content. For instance, to tell something in the form of a tragedy, one must assume particular discourses of character (typically the 'honest soul' with a tragic flaw), whereas irony requires a 'divided self' type, and 'romance' is best served by the humanistic discourse of self.

What discourses of character and self might participants be able to draw upon in constructing their narratives? Three specific cultural representations of self come to mind: trait, role and humanistic discourses of the self. It must be emphasised that I am not presenting these as competing models, but as available linguistic resources. In discourse analysis:

"... trait theory, role theory and humanistic character types ... become, not competing models, but different possible methods of making sense that someone might draw upon to describe themselves."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p102)

Given the capacity of the human mind to produce limitless variants on a theme, it is curious that both literary theory and social psychology have suggested that there may be only three major forms of characterisation which are available in contemporary Western culture. In both disciplines, three types of self discourse tend to predominate: 'honest souls'/trait theory, the role player and the divided self. I should like to offer a brief description of each, reviewing the argument of Potter, Stringer & Wetherell (1984).

i) 'Honest Soul'/Trait Theory

In literature, the term 'honest soul' was coined by Trilling (1975) to describe the traditional and simple type of character who is expressed in one or two personality traits and whose behaviour derives naturally and inevitably from these traits; the novels of Charles Dickens are populated by such characters. The traits are consistent and enduring, both temporally and situationally. Society is an external, non-contagious influence on such characters.

In psychology, the 'honest soul' reappears in trait theory: trait theorists such as Cattell (1966) and Eysenck (1953) assume that people are constituted from a
cluster of measurable personality traits (introverted, dominant, friendly etcetera) and that their behaviour is determined by the specific configuration of traits they possess; it thus follows that these traits alone are sufficient motive and explanation for behaviour.

There are obvious limitations to this conceptualisation:

i) 'Honest souls' have only one identity, therefore there is no possibility of self—conflict; individuals are their identity and have no capacity to distance themselves from and reflect upon that identity.

ii) Trait theory is highly asocial: it cannot explain the high levels of inconsistency in human behaviour (Mischel, 1968)

iii) Individuals are not simply clusters of personality traits; they are social actors, exhibiting different traits according to the social role which is dominant at any one time: career woman, mother, wife, hostess etcetera.

ii) The Role Player

This brings me to the second major conceptualisation of the self which has been proposed. Role theory (of which Goffman, 1959, and Dahrendorf, 1973, are major exponents) sees a contradiction between individual self—expression and societal constraints, the reconciliation of which is to play a social role; roles are defined as:

"... sets of activities, qualities and styles of behaviour that are associated with social positions."
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p98)

Role players are required to 'act out' the part assigned for them (a variety of punishment and reward systems enforce this in society) by exhibiting appropriate behaviours.

The role player differs from the 'honest soul', thus, in two senses: firstly, the role player is seen as putting on a facade, which implies that his/her actions are not necessarily indicative of personality. This is in contrast to the 'honest soul', who is incapable of such 'social insincerity' (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p98). Secondly, the role player's different roles can require different selves, therefore there is the possibility of multiple selves and self—conflict.
iii) The Divided Self

A third theory of the self derives its roots from James and Laing in psychology, and Musil, Woolf and Joyce in literature. The theory of the 'divided self' adopts role theory's 'social selves', but instead of seeing an individual as composed simply of an array of such 'social selves', the theory of the 'divided self' proposes an additional "background real self" (Potter, Stringer & Wetherell, 1984, p149) which oversees the activities of the 'social selves'. To provide a theoretical example of this, William James (1968) used a stream of consciousness metaphor to characterise the 'me' (the thoughts and feelings of an individual, the individual's social roles and their contents). Outwith this 'stream of consciousness' (the 'banks' of the stream) is the T; the knower, the thinker, the 'real' self overseeing the activities of the social selves.

The conception of a 'real' self beyond and alienated from the social roles has lead to the search for this "authentic true self" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p100). Regaining this self, it is implied, will result in romantic self-fulfilment and self actualisation.

A variety of methods for regaining or reaching this 'authentic' self have been proposed: the humanistic tradition in psychology, as practiced by Janov (1973), Laing (1967, 1973), Perls (1971), Maslow (1968) and Rogers (1961) amongst others, has proposed therapy as a way of (re)establishing one's 'authentic' self. Literature also suggests a variety of approaches for attaining romantic self-fulfilment: one may consider, for instance, Lawrence's return to nature (e.g. ST MAWR), or Conrad's journey through the psyche to the authentic bestial self of Kurtz in HEART OF DARKNESS. In literature, trauma is typically the precursor of romantic self-fulfilment: only through enduring hardship can one discover one's 'true' self. This has obvious kinship with the 'romance' narrative form described earlier.

In conclusion, the general analytic approach of this chapter is to examine interpretative resources. However, I wish to do this by looking at how they are developed through narrative formats.
2.4 THE INTERVIEWS

In this study, I wished to work with a group of older women, who had a perhaps broader background than the other two samples in the thesis. Mature women are a rarely studied group, and would provide a contrast to the student and young professionals groups (in both occupational and personal terms, as they had substantially different backgrounds from the other two groups). Furthermore, during vacation work as a receptionist, I had access to a number of mature women who held clerical positions in the caring professions in the Leicestershire area, who indicated their willingness to participate in a study of life histories.

The interviewing took place in two stages, over several months, and produced a sample with the characteristics described in table 8.3.

**TABLE 8.3: PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Married?</th>
<th>Kids?</th>
<th>birth</th>
<th>Year of School Leaving</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Age Exams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1947</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First jobs

- Office Junior: S1, S2, S4, S7
- Secretary: S3
- Librarian: S5
- Clerk: S6

The empirical research for this study, thus, consisted of transcripts of interviews conducted with the above participants (S1, S2, S3 and S4 are reproduced in appendix 8A). However, on examining the transcripts closely, I realised that the interviews did, in fact, fall into two distinct categories. The
first three had been conducted with women whom I knew well, and whom I had worked alongside, whereas the final four were with women who I had not met prior to the interview. The differing relationship between the interviewer and interviewee in the two categories produced two very different types of interview. This was exacerbated by the way in which the participants were initially contacted: the first three respondents were friends, and the interview had been framed more as a continuation of informal workplace gossip than as part of a research project. The other four, however, were contacted by letter and invited to participate in a research project.

The conclusion of this was that this research contained two potentially different studies: the first set involved the informal construction of selves in an intimate situation, whereas the second considered the formal construction of life stories from a distant, surveying stance.

Close examination of the interviews revealed differences between the two categories of interview in several areas: the role of the interviewer and the framing of the questions; the level of disclosure, intimacy and the topics covered; specificity; length of interview. I would like to discuss each of these in turn, to justify this decision to focus on one sub-set of interviews only.

i) The Role of the Interviewer and the Framing of Questions

The role of the interviewer in S1, S2 and S3 was different from that conventionally used in research interviews: rather than use any fixed interview schedule, I used my prior knowledge of the women’s lives to select a prompt from a number of very general life history questions. These brief questions tended to elicit a monologue, broken only by the interviewer’s occasional requests for clarification or elaboration, e.g.:

S I don’t know why I’ve always become — I’ve always liked people, been interested in what makes people tick, em — I Thus the psychology course?
S Yeah, oh yes. Oh I’ve done so many things, Liz, to er yes find out about people. But I don’t what to go back to nursing again.
{S3:19}

This is in contrast to the interviewer’s role in the 'second stage' interviews, which is far more directive in setting the agenda for topics:

I Your father was a gardener?
S Yes he was, yes.
I Did your mother ever work?
S Em as a girl yes I think she did several jobs. I know she did some machine work at one time dressmaking, and I think she worked in a hotel as well at one time. Em but her family had a grocer's shop.
I So she worked in the shop, yes.
S Yes, yes.
I Did she ever work when you were young, can you remember?
S Only doing the bed and breakfast.

Questions are framed in a noticeably less formal way in the 'first stage' interviews, e.g.:

3 I ... em you're married
4 with kids – how many kids?
5 S Two. Seems like more but two.

This is in sharp contrast to the formal discourse of S5:

I Do you have any children? You said you had a son.
S Yes two; a son and a daughter.
I How old are they?
S Twenty five and twenty three.
I The son's twenty five?
S Yes my son's twenty five and my daughter's twenty three.

ii) The Level of Disclosure, Intimacy and the Topics Covered

The two types of interview differ considerably in their level of disclosure. In the 'first stage' interviews, all aspects of life touched upon by the interview are described in considerable detail, but 'second stage' interviewees tend to gloss over formative, but personal, events; the following extract is an example from a 'second stage' interview:

S ... unfortunately we were married for seventeen years and then we split up and we got divorced in I think it was 1981, came down about 1977 something like that. I was married at seventeen and er I'm now fifty two and I've been married for a
year (slight laugh). I met my present husband he was climbing in the Lake District and I like walking and we met in the Lakes and got married last March.

This, as contrast to the 'first stage' appendix examples shows, is in sharp opposition to the amount and detail of personal information provided by 'first stage' participants: for instance S3's narrative is almost wholly devoted to her separation from her husband, a topic which is only alluded to by S4.

From the characteristics of this discourse, one can make deductions about the discursive situation: the significantly lower level of disclosure suggests that the discursive situation in the 'first stage' interviews is that of a gossip between friends, where the material provided by the speaker is already common knowledge. In contrast, low levels of intimacy in the 'second stage' interviews suggests that participants saw themselves as subjects in a formal research situation (the letter which had invited them to be interviewed had given this impression), and hence were far less inclined to divulge personal information to a 'researcher' than 'first stage' participants would be to a friend.

There is also a difference in the topics covered in the two sets of interviews. Although all interviews covered relationships, children, hobbies and careers, more controversial topics (infidelities, problems and conflicts with children, feminism) appear only in the texts of the intimate 'first stage' interviews.

iii) Specificity

The two types of interview differ in the nature of the answers as well as the way in which the questions are 'framed'. 'Second stage' interviewees tend to tailor their responses specifically to the questions, and draw upon simple models of personality, e.g. in the following 'second stage' answer to 'Do you think you have any personal qualities which particularly suit you to the job of medical receptionist?' is tailored specifically to the question and is based largely on personality traits:

S I don't know. I tend to think I'm quite a good listener, which probably comes from being quite shy earlier on: somebody said to me well listen to people if you don't have anything to say. It often wasn't that I hadn't anything to say; I probably just didn't have the guts to put it over. I sort of found that listening to people you do learn an awful lot. I don't know whether I have any particular qualities; I suppose I must have had them or I wouldn't have stayed that long (slight laugh).
This is in contrast to the more broad ranging responses of 'second stage' interviewees, where questions seem to be interpreted as prompts rather than directives, and answers consequently tend to be less specific to the question. 'First stage' interviewees tend to illustrate their answers with historical detail, as in the following:

S Interesting. I don't know, you think of all the things I've done, I've been a Samaritan, a nurse, I've worked with junkies, alcoholics, worked with old people, which I hated. Em I don't know. That's A_ said, you know when we broke up, 'You spend all you time thinking about everybody else, never yourself', which is true ... I think the romantic image and also helping people to get better, making them comfortable ... I've always become involved with people with problems. Invariably. My closest friend, we went through the death of their child with them, and now they've got a handicapped child and we've gone through that together.

iv) Length of Interview

Length is the final significant difference between the two types of interview: 'first stage' interviews vary from 26 to 45 pages, 'second stage' from 13 to 17 pages.

The conclusion of this was that the research contained two potentially different studies: the first set involved the informal construction of selves in an intimate situation, whereas the second considered the formal construction of life stories from a distant, surveying stance. After deliberation, I decided to choose the former as the basis for my detailed analysis, considering them to contain richer and more unusual data.
2.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A study of this nature raises particular ethical problems. The women in this study were aware that their life stories were being tape-recorded and gave their permission both for this, and for the transcript to be analysed and written about in a Ph.D. thesis. The material, however, is highly personal and confidential in nature. For this reason, all details which might identify the women have been changed and only a broad description of their occupation etcetera is provided.

However, a more general issue also exists: one of the strengths and aims of discourse analysis is the attention paid to the representational and constructed nature of talk and conversation. Whereas other social psychological approaches are concerned primarily with questions of veracity — e.g. is this statement a true indicator of an underlying belief or attitude — discourse analysts are interested in the texture of the talk itself and the implications of different versions. Discourse analysis claims that talk should not be judged on its truth or falsity:

"... people are not capable of revealing their 'true selves' or their actual life stories because such things do not exist. People are only able to construe their lives within the confines of linguistic and social conventions."
(Gergen, 1988, p102)

Instead, discourse should be seen as a 'telling' of events:

"... the idea of accounts as stories — not random sequences of action and reaction, but coherent unfolding narratives of human conduct."
(Gergen, 1988, p84, her emphasis)

This emphasis is very different from lay everyday interaction, which is based on the assumptions which guide traditional social psychology with the same interest in establishing or discrediting the basis of an account. The ethos which applies in everyday interaction is that people's accounts should usually be taken at face value, and to question the account as a version or constructed representation of reality is to call into question the integrity of the account giver.

It is important to stress that this questioning is not the case in discourse analysis. In taking these accounts as provisional and examining their construction, we are not in any sense opposing these accounts with some other
truthful version. All talk, including our own, should be treated in this way for the purpose of analysis. One way of seeing it is as two kinds of social practice. The practice of everyday social interaction, with its own particular criteria of reality, truthfulness and falsity is different to the social practice of discourse analysis, which — as detailed in Chapter Five — involves a very different model of representation and reality, the person, and accounts.

This leads immediately to another issue. How can this second social practice of discourse analysis be justified in the face of this kind of autobiographical material. What purpose could it serve? That purpose, of course, determines the analyst's reasons and justifications for their work and legitimates the ethics of working with this material.

It was felt that it was still crucial to study the material because of findings in feminist psychotherapy — taking up the feminist call that 'politics is personal' — which suggest that the way in which a story is told may be oppressive. To give an example, a battered wife may tell the fatalistic story of 'well that's the natural way of things between the sexes', which is disabling by virtue of its unchangeability and its negation of any female agency or internal locus of control. An enabling narrative, conversely, may tell the same story within a framework of oppressive patriarchy which can and should be combated: the onus, and thus the locus of control, is shifted on to the battered women to fight against the situation.

Another factor which must be considered here is that women may not be choosing between enabling and disabling discourses; the cultural resources themselves may be inadequate to tell a non-oppressive story, and it may be necessary to create new, enabling discourses:

"The methods of conceptualizing the self involved in different linguistic practices have vital consequences for the positioning of people in society; they are not neutral or without impact, they produce senses of the self which may be negative, destructive, oppressive, as well as senses which might change and liberate."

(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p104)

This is an issue which I shall attempt to explore.
3. ANALYSING THE NARRATIVE

What I should like to do in this final section is to apply some of the work on narrative form and content which I have discussed to the transcripts. I am not going to attempt to analyse all the interviews, but will concentrate upon particular sequences from S1, S2 and S3 (the richer and more interesting 'first stage' interviews) in relation to the following issues:

i) Narrative form and self-construction;
ii) Narrative form and construction of other people;
iii) Relationships and events;
iv) The role of the interviewer/conversational context in occasioning narrative and other accounts.

The system of numbering extracts which I shall adopt in this chapter is subject; page number in original transcript; line number. S1:20:50, thus, is the fiftieth line on page 20 of the original text of S1's interview. The terminology which will be applied throughout this chapter is 'transcript' or 'account' for the text of the entire interview, 'extract' for short sections within that transcript, and 'narrative' to indicate patterns within the discourse. The specific literary forms (e.g. romance, negative stability) described earlier will be referred to as 'narrative forms'.
3.1 S1: FLEXIBILITY OF SELF—REPRESENTATIONS

The occupational life events which constitute the raw material of S1’s account are giving up a sales job (which is represented as high—powered) for a "plodding" job as a medical receptionist; significant personal events include her relationship with her husband and children, and the impact of an extramarital affair. She has two children (G__, a girl of seventeen and H__, a boy of fourteen) and, at the time of interview, had been married for twenty years to J__.

Early Narratives

S1’s account is interesting in that, in the space of five pages, she develops three distinct combinations of narrative form and self—representation: what Gergen (1988) might describe as a negative stability narrative form with a passive self—representation; a tragic narrative using a more positive self—representation; and a positive narrative with a stable self—representation. The first five pages set up many of the themes, narratives, tensions and self—constructions which dominate the middle part of the interview, therefore in this section I would like to look at these five pages in detail, relating these features to discursive context.

S1’s account begins in the following fashion:

(page one)
1 I Okay, the first thing I need is like a few
2 biographical details. Em, your occupation's fairly
3 obvious (medical receptionist), em you're married
4 with kids – how many kids?
5 S Two. Seems like more but two.
6 I Boys?
7 S One of each. G__’s seventeen and H__
8 fourteen.
9 I They're still living at home I take it.
10 S Oh yes.
11 I Em, your date of birth?
12 S My date of birth?
13 I Yeah.
14 S Tenth of the first, forty six.
15 I I won't do any maths on it honest.
16 S That's alright; I shall be forty three next
17 birthday.
18 I Same age as my mum.
19 S Oh great! (I laughs) Makes me feel really good
20 that does.
I No, no, she must be a bit older than forty three
now; she must be about forty six I suppose.

S Oh ancient.

I Forty three she was born so she must be about
forty six. I hope she doesn't hear this tape or
she'll clonk me for —

S That's alright, she won't.

I What age were you when you left school?

S Sixteen.

I Em did you do any did you get any qualifications?

S 'O' Levels: I got four: English Language, English
Literature, Art and French.

I What did you do immediately after you left school?

S Well what I wanted to do and what I had to do were
quite different things. What I wanted to do was
stay on and do 'A' Levels and become a teacher, but
my mother wouldn't allow it, so I left school and
became an 'Office Junior', in an office, em
in er Loughborough.

I That was the done thing in those days.

S That was that was the thing to do, yes. Nobody
ever — I say nobody — the general run of the mill
person em went into an office as an office junior
and then sort of ploughed their way along; it was
deadly boring.

I And was it something; that you just did until
you got married?

S No.

I It was that kind of set up.

S No, em — I stayed there for six months but before
before I'd actually left school I applied to join a
building firm again as an office junior er out of
the blue I had a letter asking me to join them, so I
was only an office junior at the original firm for
six months, and in those days there were a lot of
jobs around, so consequently if you fancied a change
you could just have a change. So I did change, and
went into the building firm that I had originally
chosen, and stayed with them five years, as a
telephone receptionist. It was quite interesting.

I So why did you leave that?

S (long pause) Why did I leave that? Mainly because
by which time I worked in Loughborough but J was
towards Leicester, so I then joined a firm of em
right in the middle of Leicester, of handicrafts:
Dryad Handicrafts, and started as a telephonist
receptionist there, but also did some illustration
work, for the leaflets that they did, and still do.

I Mhm.

S Em, then I discovered, when we got married, 'cause
we got married during that time, that I couldn't get
in to town from the village in time to get the
switchboard opened, so — I have to be at a place if
I'm going to be at a place on time I've got to be,
know you I can't be late, so I then went to another
building firm: Ontocar, who make tennis courts, and
stayed there until I had G, in 1971. Sum total
of my career which it was in the end — (laughs).
I Well I mean it's a career. So you altered your
plans to fit in with — your your husband's in the
army, is that right?
S No, he's he's an engineer, a civil engineer.
I Where did I get the idea he was in the army?
S Well he's he's now in part time.
I Ah, I see.
S You know. But he'd been in the army before he
came to the firm that I was working at, working
under him.
I So so you met him —
S At work.
I At work.
S Yes, yeah.
I Em, you did alter your plans, your career
prospects to fit in with his, I take it, when you
left to join the handicraft firm.
S Yes, but it wasn't I mean it wasn't a career as
such, it wasn't it wasn't a s — er a got a head for
the er dizzy heights sort of career, it was em it
was a job.
I Mm.
S I don't think you'd call it a career at all; it
was just a job. So it didn't matter; it was a
throwaway type of job not a career; I didn't feel
that I was missing out or giving up something em to
have babies and things. I've not really achieved
anything.
I So you left work when you had G__.
S Hm.
I And how long how long were you out of work for?
S I stayed at home em until H__ was five, which
(page three)
is quite a long time. He was almost five, and then
I did some part time work.
I As a receptionist again.
S As a receptionist telephonist, yes. Mainly to to
buy bits of the uniform, both of them being at
private school so it was a bit expensive.
I Hm.
S And em so the uniform was expensive so I I
purposely went out to work thinking that I would go
to work solely for the uniform and then give up
again.
I But it didn't happen that way.
S No, it didn't, no em it was I was I think I was
very lucky that was that was when I was lucky really
because a friend of my daughter's her mother worked
for er Barratt Developments, the housing people as a
part time — person, and it it was really just
weekends and the odd day in the week that sort of
situation er and she was leaving she needed a more
permanent job and she just happened to mention that
they were looking for someone so I joined them. I
didn't waste the time in between though, the the
time that I was at home, I spent four years at
County Hall doing my little thing, which was em Home
Economics.

I Mhm.

S Judges' course, demonstration, that sort of thing, so I didn't waste it and I enjoyed it. Because I felt that I was stagnating, I felt that the whole thing revolved around babies and toddlers and home and you know, I'm not really like that. So I em I quite enjoyed that, I did achieve something there and I was proud of it.

I Was that er like a diploma course or something? 
S Yes it was. We had to write three books, we took exams and then we were allowed out to go and judge people's culinary expertise, er and I did that for many many years, and one day I'll probably go back to it when I'm old and grey. Older and greyer (laughter). But that was only the little bit in between, and then it sort of started the er the part time job at em, selling houses, catapulted into a full time job and so I did that for nearly ten years. 

I Yeah; the way you talk about that that does seem to be your main job.

S It was. I couldn't envisage ever not doing it. 
Em if this time last year somebody had said how do you see yourself in a year's time I would have said selling houses because I knew everything there was to know, and I had got a good reputation, and I was pleased with the reputation that I'd got over the brief time I'd been doing it so em I couldn't imagine doing anything else at all; I loved it. Em but circumstances forced a change so —

\{S1:1/2/3\}

i) Negative Stability Narrative/Passive Self—Representation

This first narrative is prompted by the interviewer's biographical questions ("What did you do immediately after leaving school?", "Was it something you did?", "Why did you leave that?"), which demand a chronological account of life. The discursive context set up by this type of question occasions what Gergen and Gergen would term a negative stability narrative form (as described earlier in this chapter, p270): one event after another is described in sequence, with little change in evaluation. Characteristics of this narrative are an external locus of control and use of a passive definition of self. It is noticeable that S1 presents herself passively: things happen \textit{to} her, rather than occur as a consequence of her own choice or agency.

S ... I applied to join a building firm again as an office junior er out of the blue I had a letter asking me to join them, so I was only an office junior at the original firm for
S1 firmly locates the locus of control externally; change is attributed to circumstances:

I So why did you leave that?
S (long pause) Why did I leave that? Mainly because by which time I worked in Loughborough but J__ was right in the middle of Leicester, so I then joined a firm of em
I towards Leicester, so I then joined a firm Trem
S Dryad Handicrafts, and started as a telephonist receptionist there, but also did some illustration work, for the leaflets that they did, and still do.
I Mhm.
S Em, then I discovered, when we got married, 'cause we got married during that time, that I couldn't get in to town from the village in time to get the switchboard opened, so — I have to be at a place if I'm going to be at a place on time I've got to be, you know I can't be late, so I then went to another building firm.

To luck:

I But it didn't happen that way.
S No, it didn't, no em it was I was I think I was very lucky that was that was when I was lucky really because a friend of my daughter's her mother worked for er Barratt Developments, the housing people as a part time — person, and it it was really just weekends and the odd day in the week that sort of situation er and she was leaving she needed a more permanent job and she just happened to mention that they were looking for someone so I joined them.

To the appearance of external opportunities:

S ... in those days there were a lot of jobs around, so consequently if you fancied a change you could just have a change. So I did change, and went into the building firm.

Or to the attitudes and intervention of significant other figures:

I What did you do immediately after you left school?
S Well what I wanted to do and what I had to do were quite different things. What I wanted to do was stay on and do 'A' Levels and become a teacher, but my mother wouldn't allow it, so I left school and became an 'Office Junior'.

From a traditional socio-psychological perspective, this passive image of herself could be seen as corresponding; to the rather negative picture of women found in some social psychological experimental work, i.e. women tend to attribute success and life events to chance or other external factors (e.g. Deaux et al, 1975).

There are two points in this first extract where I, as the interviewer, make a different kind of intervention:

I That was the done thing in those days.
S That was that was the thing to do, yes. Nobody ever — I say nobody — the general run of the mill person em went into an office as an office junior and then sort of ploughed their way along; it was deadly boring.

In the above extract, S1 agrees with the interviewer's assessment (by partially repeating the interviewer's phrase) and extends it. In presenting herself as following the "general run of the mill" course of action, she establishes herself as unexceptional, her environment acting upon her (external locus of control) rather than any active choice being made: negative stability.

The second point at which divergence from the chronological type of question/answer sequence occurs is when the interviewer raises the topic of S1 fitting her career around her husband:

I Well I mean it's a career. So you altered your plans to fit in with — your your husband's in the army, is that right?
S No, he's he's an engineer, a civil engineer.
I Where did I get the idea he was in the army?
S Well he's he's now in part time.
I Ah, I see.
S You know. But he'd been in the army before he came to the firm that I was working at, working under him.
I So so you met him —
S At work.
I At work.
S Yes, yeah.
I Em, you did alter your plans, your career prospects to fit in with his, I take it, when you left to join the handicraft firm.
S Yes, but it wasn't I mean it wasn't a career as such, it wasn't it wasn't a s— er a got a head for the er dizzy heights sort of career, it was em it
was a job.
I Mm.
S I don't think you'd call it a career at all; it was just a job. So it didn't matter; it was a throwaway type of job not a career; I didn't feel that I was missing out or giving up something em to have babies and things. I've not really achieved anything.

S1 seems to take the interviewer's question (lines 24/25/26) as one which requires justification or — at minimum — accounting for. The way in which she does this is to appeal to the common sense repertoire (which has already been discussed in chapter six) about real work: men's careers are real, serious work, whereas women's part time jobs are somehow less important, less valid, less befitting of the title 'work'. This explains her action of changing her job to fit in with her husband's career plans, and also reinforces the negative stability passivity narrative: again, she presents change as prompted by external factors rather than by her own agency.

It may be coincidental that both of these different types of intervention serve only to reinforce the negative stability narrative, but it seems more plausible that the interviewer is concurring with the initially negative conceptualisation put forward by the participant; the negative evaluation is discursively achieved by representing office work as something forced upon her:

Well what I wanted to do and what I had to do were quite different things.

and as an undesirable job:

... the general run of the mill person em went into an office as an office junior and then sort of ploughed their way along; it was deadly boring.

As indicated by the word 'just', the interviewer seems to pick up and subtly promote this negative evaluation:

And was it something; that you you just did until you got married?

The interviewer's provision of a negative evaluation will be discussed later in this chapter.
ii) Tragic Narrative/Towards A More Positive Self–Representation

Chronological questioning (e.g. "And how long were you out of work for?") is resumed from page 2, line 54 to page 3, line 44. This, however, is broken by the interviewer, who throws in a different type of response \{S1:3:45/46\}, which seems to refer to prior knowledge or to a previous conversation:

41 S ... it sort of started the er the part
42 time job at em, selling houses, catapulted into a
43 full time job and so I did that for nearly ten
44 years.
45 I Yeah; the way you talk about that that does seem
46 to be your main job.
\{S1:3\}

S1 goes on to accept the interviewer's assessment, extending the argument and explaining why the selling job was her "main" job:

45 I Yeah; the way you talk about that that does seem
46 to be your main job.
47 S It was. I couldn't envisage ever not doing it.
48 Em if this time last year somebody had said how do
49 you see yourself in a year's time I would have said
50 selling houses because I knew everything there was
51 to know, and I had got a good reputation, and I was
52 pleased with the reputation that I'd got over the
53 brief time I'd been doing it so em I couldn't
54 imagine doing anything else at all; I loved it.
\{S1:3\}

This is an important transition because, to bring this assessment off persuasively, within this short sequence she has to develop another self–construction and a different narrative. In lines 50 to 54, she produces a positive self–image of an active person with high self–esteem, pleased with herself and her abilities.

This is obviously at odds with the negative stability narrative and passive self–representation which emerge in the first narrative: this gives rise to two important points. Firstly, self–accounting is flexible and, secondly, flexibility is tied to conversational context. The negative stability narrative and the impression of passivity found in the first extract are related to the immediate interview context, and they are not the only resource available to this woman.
The next extract I would like to discuss extends from this positive self-representation:

50   S ... I knew everything there was
51 to know, and I had got a good reputation, and I was
52 pleased with the reputation that I'd got over the
53 brief time I'd been doing it so em I couldn't
54 imagine doing anything else at all; I loved it. Em
55 but circumstances forced a change so –

The transcript moves through a very positive phase when presenting a self-representation in connection with her old job, then sees this 'rising tide' curtailed 'tragically' due to an illness which forces a change of circumstances:

54   S ... I loved it. Em
55 but circumstances forced a change so –

In Gergen–esque terms, the evaluative component of the account up until this point could be illustrated as follows:
This section continues to develop the positive self-representation which first appeared on page 3, line 47: the active, competent individual 'tragically' cut short by "circumstances": presented in this way, it does not conflict with the image being rendered of an active, dynamic individual in charge of her life.

This being said, this extract concludes with a return to negative stability. S1 initially presents the medical receptionist's job in quite a positive light, as a turning point after mental illness:

2 S Em no, it was the nervous breakdown that did it,
3 and em — what the — surgery don’t know is of course
4 that I wasn’t working for six months. Although I
5 was paid. So that was the turning point, and
6 really — em I just happened to see a job in the
7 paper and applied for it.
8 I And that was the present one was it?
9 S That was the present one, yeah.
{S1:4}

However, at this point (as also occurred on page 1, lines 46/7), the interviewer's response (again apparently referring to prior knowledge) provides a negative evaluation of the medical receptionist's job:

17 I You do find a problem with that job in that you
18 don’t achieve anything though.
{S1:4}

This sets a trend for negative stability, which is taken up and extended by S1 in the next line:
I You do find a problem with that job in that you don’t achieve anything though.

S Hm. Hm. The first fortnight was awful; it was just awful ’cause I spent the whole time doing what you were doing, which was filing, and as far as I could see all you do is you get lots and lot of notes out and you put them in a place, and then you put lots and lots of notes back again. And I I didn’t quite see the point in that, until — em — J said to me well what is it you’re trying to achieve?, and I said well I don’t know, but I’ve always been an achiever. I want to achieve something. And I couldn’t achieve anything there, and I never will. And if something cropped up where I could where I felt that I would achieve something more then I would take it, but it suits me at the moment ’cause I don’t want a lot of hassle and worry and I don’t want responsibility to be honest.

I Yeah, you don’t want anything too stressful.

S Not really, no.

I No.

S I mean its its there is no stress in that whatsoever, you know I mean you can just plod along and get paid for plodding (I laughs). The only problem is that I earn so little cash now —

I Mm.

S Compared with what I used to earn, but I think you’ve got to I think you’ve got to weigh the balance you know, which is more important. And — not having yet got over the cause of the change of job then er I’ll just wait and see ’til I’m pronounced sane again and then er go from there and see what happens. I’m quite happy; it’s not a — I don’t know whether I want to achieve anything=in the first fortnight I would have gladly gone home and said right, that’s it I don’t want it any more, but em — now I I just plod, same as we all do. It’s just a —

I Yes, I think you need periods in your life when you can just plod.

S Yes, yes, probably so. To me it’s a rest, you know people have sort of said well it’s chaotic, which it can be chaotic, but it’s not the sort of chaos that I’m used to; I’m not being squeezed by two lots of people, ie. the the customer on one side and the building department on the other and I’ve got a target to achieve. I haven’t got anything to achieve, as long as I make sure that doctor x, y and z have got the notes that they want, then — there’s nothing to it really. I could do it with my eyes closed.

I (laughs) Yes. Yeah, I know what you mean; I mean I feel as if it’s a bit of a rest for me as well.

S It is it’s a rest, yes; if if you’re used to achieving something and you go home exhausted; I used to go home exhausted — mentally; now I go home
with my feet aching, that's all.
{S1:4/5}

At this point in the transcript, in Gergen-esque terminology, the evaluative component of the interview could probably be represented as follows:

Figure 8.4: Evaluative Component of S1's Narrative

Although this reverts to a negative stability narrative, the extract establishes a very different self-representation from the passive individual with an external locus of control found in the first negative stability narrative. Here, that narrative form is used in conjunction with a self-representation of a person with positive, strong achievement traits, who is held back by circumstances which necessitate an unstressful lifestyle:

30 S ... And if something cropped up where
31 I could where I felt that I would achieve something
32 more then I would take it, but it suits me at the
33 moment 'cause I don't want a lot of hassle and worry
34 and I don't want responsibility to be honest.
35 I Yeah, you don't want anything too stressful.
36 S Not really, no.
37 I No.
{S1:4}

It is notable how, even here, the passive orientation recurs: "J__ said to me ..." (line 3:26) attributes the onus for change externally, to someone else. This phrase is also used as a prompt in the account to create a different discursive situation.
In order to achieve the positive self-representation, she has to distance herself from the negative stability form which she has used to represent her life; she has to present this non-achieving phase as temporary and untypical:

S I mean its there is no stress in that whatsoever, you know I mean you can just plod along and get paid for plodding (I laughs). The only problem is that I earn so little cash now — 

S Compared with what I used to earn, but I think you've got to I think you've got to weigh the balance you know, which is more important. And — not having yet got over the cause of the change of job then er I'll just wait and see 'til I'm pronounced sane again and then er go from there and see what happens.

i.e. implying that she is capable of achieving far more:

S = I've always wanted to do well; I've always wanted to if I'm going to do something then I'll do it, to the best, better than the best. It's got to be near on perfect. This this last few months of this job em — you can't be perfect at it because its its not a perfectionist's job.

I Hm.

S Em but it's — it's okay, yes I've always wanted to do better than the best.

At this point, the negative stability narrative takes on tragic overtones: a fine, noble individual has been prevented from realising her full potential through circumstances:

S ... I've got limitations and I know the limitations so I'll stick within the limitations.

S ... but other things the things I'm that I consider I'm good at I like to thing I'm very good at. None of which I can use at the moment.

iii) Positive Stability Narrative/Stable Self-Representation

Running concurrently with the negative stability and tragic narrative forms
(with their passive and positive self-representations) described above, is a positive stability narrative. This emphasises the advantages of an unstressful lifestyle:

11 S ... I could do it with my eyes closed.
12 I (laughs) Yes. Yeah, I know what you mean; I mean
13 I feel as if it's a bit of a rest for me as well.
14 S It is it's a rest, yes; if if you're used to
15 achieving something and you go home exhausted; I
16 used to go home exhausted — mentally; now I go home
17 with my feet aching, that's all.
{S1:5}

To accomplish this, she has to produce another self-representation; an easy-going individual who is content to under-achieve:

49 S ... I'm quite happy; it's not a — I
don't know whether I want to achieve anything = in
the first fortnight I would have gladly gone home
and said right, that's it I don't want it any more,
but em — now I I just plod, same as we all do.
{S1:4}

In essence, what S1 seems to be trying to do is resist the tragic turn the account has taken; this is aided by the interviewer's endorsement of S1's positive evaluation of events {S1:5:13/14}. However, this positive stability narrative also appear in the following extract:

45 S Yeah but but other things the things I'm that I
consider I'm good at I like to thing I'm very good
at. None of which I can use at the moment (laughs).
46 I I'm sure the time will come.
47 S I'm bothered I'm not bothered, you know I sort of
get pleasure out of other things now; can't think of
any off hand but I I get pleasure out of of other
52 things.
{S1:5}

Here, this self-representation is a reaction against the interviewer's negative evaluation {S1:5:48}; S1 has set up an image of herself as an active, competent achieving individual, and resists the negative implication of "I'm sure the time will come" by retreating back to positive stability {S1:5:49—52}.

The main point to be drawn from this analysis is that this interview may be seen as a tension between two kinds of narrative: a tragic/negative stability and a positive stability narrative. As described above, the interviewer seems to
have fixed upon the negative stability narrative; her interventions consistently stress the "plodding" ("Yes I think you need periods in your life when you can just plod"; S1:4:55 – 5:1), the lack of achievement ("You do find a problem with that job in that you don't achieve anything though", S1:4:17/18), and emphasises the difference between the present (non-achieving) and the past (high-powered) jobs.

S1 generally accepts and extends this negative evaluation, particularly when (as follows the two interventions cited in the previous paragraph) it results in the positive self-evaluation of an achiever hindered by negative circumstances. However, as the final extract reproduced above demonstrates, she is also capable of retreating from and resisting the interviewer's evaluation (primarily when she perceives that evaluation to be uncomplimentary): in this case, she replaces the interviewer's definition with a positive stability narrative and an alternative self-construction.

It thus becomes apparent that narratives are negotiated: a respondent does not produce a narrative form in a vacuum, but rather it is negotiated between the interviewer and the respondent. There may also be tension in that negotiation, as it is not the case that the participant can be guided into saying anything by interviewer: the respondent may resist the interviewer's definition, the interviewer may be pursuing a definition which mismatches that of the respondent. I shall return to this point in the general discussion.

To provide a further example of this process of building up a negotiated reality, consider the following extract:

48 S I resemble my father. Er I look like my father;
49 I've got the temperament of my father, with er a bit
50 of my mother in I've got the temper of my mother, so
51 I am rather like my father.
52 Generally anything for a
53 quiet life (laughs).
54 I Yes.
55 S I don't ruffle any feathers, you know. I I used
(page eleven)
1 to be more so like that and tended to get trodden on
2 but em I suppose as you get older you take using a
3 bit more; if I'm cornered these days I fight, but
4 generally I prefer a quiet life; not as quiet as it
5 is at the moment (laughs) but you know.
6 I Yes=
7 S =Yes a generally sort of peaceful life; I hate
8 change, as well; I like things to be the same.
9 I Yeah, you strike me as — not so much conservative
S1 begins with a self-description which depicts her as an easy-going individual who dislikes confrontation (S1:10:51 – S1:10:53, S1:10:55 – S1:11:5, S1:10:7/8). The interviewer defines this rather negatively as conservatism/conformity:

9 I Yeah, you strike me as – not so much conservative
10 – conformist.
{S1:11}

S1 initially accepts this definition (S1:10:11) but immediately begins to modify it (lines 11A, 13):

11 S Oh I’m very. (11A) To a degree to a degree.
12 I Apart from the green stockings.
13 S That’s right. But in my –
14 I Individual.
{S1:11}

The interviewer, detecting her resistance to the definition offered in lines 9 and 10, offers a more positive characterisation (S1 as individual and confrontative) which is taken up by S1:

14 I Individual.
15 S Certainly an individual, yes. Em – it took me until I was thirty-five to realise I was quite nice really (I laughs). You know, I’d always been told I was awful, and so I was thirty-five and I thought oh I’m not that bad really. Fairly reasonable type of person. So it was that that changed everything.
16 And er I became more me, and now the attitude is well if people don’t like me, they can sod off because I’m not prepared to change.
17 I Hm.
18 S If they don’t like me as I am then –
19 I That’s their problem.
20 S That’s their problem, not mine, ’cause I ain’t changing. Not now.
{S1:10/11}
well if people don't like me, they can sod off because I'm not prepared to change. {S1:11}

One can see, thus, another example of negotiation (posing of definitions, acceptance or refusal of those definitions) between the interviewer and participant which results in a contrasting self-construction.

To summarise, in the analysis of the first five pages of S1's account, I have illustrated that the transcript is composed from a range of narrative forms and self-representations. The flexible deployment of these forms and representations is the result of a complex interaction between interviewer, participant and conversational context. Available discursive and cultural norms (e.g. level of disclosure) and resources (e.g. available constructions of self) also influence the nature of the transcript.
Later Narratives

I would like to continue my analysis by examining some extracts (utilising similar themes, narratives, self-constructions and tensions to those already discussed) which appear in the middle section of the interview, with a view to drawing out some significant analytic points.

i) Local Accounts

As can be seen from the following extract, it is possible to distinguish small, local narratives within the body of the text, which run for only one or two conversational turns:

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i) Local Accounts

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The interviewer’s question (S1:7:45—47) could readily have been answered by further self—narration, as typifies the remainder of the interview, but instead S1 decides to strongly voice her opinions (S1:7:52—8:10). The participant switches the conversational context to the expression of attitudes and beliefs for one conversational turn, then reverts to self—narrative from line 8:13 onwards.

As well as the qualification of Gergen’s theory noted earlier (multiple narrative forms), it appears that a second qualification must be made: accounts are not simply constituted from narrative forms, but also contain deviations and side—lines which do not fall into any Gergen—type narrative mode.

ii) ‘Family History’ Account

The second of these short extracts may be described as a 'family history' narrative:

53 S ... I've no wish to (study) at the moment, em, I
54 revel in the em in the glory of little brother who
55 got the em — common sense I suppose to rebel
   (page nine)
1 slightly because nobody rebels in our family at all
2 but em S_ did and he was the one that achieved,
3 er I think—he's done er very well because he had no
4 encouragement either and er he put himself back
   through college Loughborough University Sheffield
6 University and so on and he did very well and er I
7 think what he did with no encouragement apart from
8 having a sharp prod from big sister (I laughs); I
9 think he did very well 'cause there was nothing
10 going for him at all; my parents weren't interested,
11 nobody was interested, and now he's the headmaster
12 of an assessment centre, and em doing very well.
13 I So your parents weren't academically minded.
14 S Not at all; my father I think was and I remember
15 my gran saying he took the eleven plus at nine and
16 passed, but of course in those days you had to pay.
17 I Mhm.
18 S To go to grammar school.
19 I Yes.
20 S And they simply couldn't afford to do it, which is
21 a shame because he's — now he's retired now but he's
22 got such an enquiring mind, he still has, and —
23 marvellous artist; I mean he was totally wasted, but
24 they were in that generation catapulted straight
25 into the Forces so he went into the Air Force, and
26 em came out and trotted along in grandfather's
27 footsteps in a a hosiery factory; they didn't really
think any further than that.
I Mhm.
S I suppose with war raging all around.
I You live for the day=
S = You lived for the day.
I Hm.
S Instead of projecting any sort of futuristic
ideal. But I think he was wasted certainly. Mother
would never have achieved anything, quite honestly
(laughs). As you can tell I'm not particularly
enamoured of my mother (laughs).
I Yes.
S She's not the nicest person in the world.
I You think it would have been different if they'd
said well you know it's a good idea to –
S Oh yeah, yeah. If I'd been a stronger character
then em – maybe I would have over-ridden this em –
you know no – better – than – you – should – be attitude, er
luckily S__ did, but if only they'd said I mean my
headmaster which was the school that was attached to
this place, Loughborough College School, which is
now some comprehensive thing, em he begged mum to
let me stay on, and she said no; once she'd said no
that was it she wouldn't go back, even if she'd
thought about it, even if she really in the back of
her mind thought yeah I think –
I Mm; she wouldn't admit that she was wrong=
S = No never ever. I've never known her admit she
was wrong ever. So yes I in a way I sort of blame –
I suppose I I've got to blame myself because I
suppose I should have stood up to her and said
something and done something about it but I never
did, em –
I It's difficult.
S It's very difficult.
I To go against your parents.
S Yes it is difficult, but S__ did it and I often
thought well why didn't I do it, it was a shame; I
feel as if I've wasted great chunks of it now.
I It would be a lot easier for a bloke as well to go
against the –
S It is easier. It is easier. And also if I think
if we'd been reversed, I think if S__ had been the
eldest one or the oldest one and I'd I'd been the
second one, I think S__ being the character he's
very similar to mother, I think that if he'd been
the first and said well damn it I'm going to do it
and that's it, then he he would have done it and I'd
have said well I'm going to do the same thing as
S__.
I Yeah. Yeah.
S I think the reversal would have worked. Well.
I But you had no model to follow, I suppose.
S Nothing whatsoever.
I Yeah.
S Nobody nobody in our family at all ever did
Anything ever achieved anything, at all, except S__.
This account contains two distinct narrative forms: her brother's success is described as a romantic quest, whereas she uses a tragic narrative form for herself.

The romantic quest form, to recap, involves the protagonist (her brother) in a heroic struggle against adversity (in this case, disinterest, lack of support):

2 S ... he was the one that achieved,
3 er I think he's done er very well because he had no
4 encouragement either and er he put himself back
5 through college Loughborough University Sheffield
6 University and so on and he did very well and er I
7 think what he did with no encouragement apart from
8 having a sharp prod from big sister (I laughs); I
9 think he did very well 'cause there was nothing
10 going for him at all; my parents weren't interested,
11 nobody was interested.

Success in this struggle is attributed to special personality characteristics:

1 S ... nobody rebels in our family at all
2 but em S— did and he was the one that achieved.

The culmination of the romantic struggle is triumph:

11 S ... now he's the headmaster
12 of an assessment centre, and em doing very well.

This romantic quest form also sets up two themes which S1 uses to support her own, tragic narrative form: lack of parental support for education and the consequent need to rebel against parental norms to achieve. S1 presents herself in the standard tragic form of a fine individual struggling and failing against evil people and circumstances:

49 S ... he (headmaster) begged mum to
50 let me stay on, and she said no; once she'd said no
51 that was it she wouldn't go back, even if she'd
52 thought about it, even if she really in the back of
53 her mind thought yeah I think —
54 I Mm; she wouldn't admit that she was wrong.

Bolstered by the romantic form's intimation of the difficulty of succeeding without parental support, S1 attributes blame for her academic non-
achievement to parental obstinacy, developing a thoroughly unsympathetic picture of her mother throughout the interview:

I What did you do immediately after you left school?
S Well what I wanted to do and what I had to do were quite different things. What I wanted to do was stay on and do 'A' Levels and become a teacher, but my mother wouldn't allow it, so I left school and became an 'Office Junior'.

S ... Mother would never have achieved anything, quite honestly (laughs). As you can tell I'm not particularly enamoured of my mother (laughs).
I Yes.
S She's not the nicest person in the world.

However, she also develops a second blame attribution directed against herself: again using a standard tragic form, she attributes failure to a fatal flaw in her character which is not shared by her brother. Setting up rebellion as a pre-requisite for achievement in the romantic narrative, her lack of rebelliousness can be read as the tragic flaw in her character:

I suppose I've got to blame myself because I suppose I should have stood up to her and said something and done something about it but I never did, em —

S ... If I'd been a stronger character then em — maybe I would have over-ridden this em — you know no — better — than — you — should — be attitude.

Lack of fulfilment is the consequence:

S ... S__ did it and I often thought well why didn't I do it, it was a shame; I feel as if I've wasted great chunks of it now.

This thus appears to be a mixed narrative with blame attributed in two directions. However, one other point can be made. This piece of family history is related as a psychological drama: character traits, desires, struggles, thwarted plans. However, one can imagine that, using the same raw material, it would be possible to tell it in sociological terms: social class, gender roles, institutions. The latter approach, however, is not adopted, even though the
interviewer proffers gender roles as a possible explanation:

12 I It would be a lot easier for a bloke as well to go against the —

S1 seems to pick up this explanation in the next line:

14 S It is easier. It is easier.

But reverts to an explanation based on character traits in the next phrase:

14 S It is easier. It is easier. And also if I think
15 if we'd been reversed, I think if S had been the
16 eldest one or the oldest one and I'd been the
17 second one, I think S being the character he's
18 very similar to mother, I think that if he'd been
19 the first and said well damn it I'm going to do it
20 and that's it, then he he would have done it and I'd
21 have said well I'm going to do the same thing as
22 S.

There are perhaps two reasons why the former approach is adopted. Firstly, such sociological concepts may not be available to this participant, although this seems unlikely: like the other women in this group, she appears to have a lay comprehension of such issues, as the following extract suggests:

12 S ... I think the opportunities now for women
13 equally is a lot better, much much better, and maybe
14 they're breeding stronger minded females, I don't know.

A second, perhaps more plausible, reason is that a sociological study would be boring, undramatic and unpersonalised. As Gergen points out, there are certain conventions for narration in contemporary Western culture: one tells a story novelistically, with a plot, individualising human experience and omitting society. The same point has often been made about the bourgeois novel form (a form intimately associated with the rise of liberalism as a political ideology, Defoe, Swift, Voltaire, Fielding and James being examples of authors writing in this tradition); as Cauldwell indicates:

"... the bourgeois ... search for a closed world of a story, reflecting society and yet completely self-determined."
(Cauldwell, 1970, p57)

This paradox of the subject appearing detached from societal influences, yet
still determined by those influences, is central to the bourgeois novel form. This paradox is also seen in these interviews, allowing only certain kinds of stories (e.g. asocial ones) to be told.

### iii) Representation of the past

In the next two extracts, Sl’s presentation of her past takes the form of a romantic/comic narrative of lost innocence:

7 S So em my hippy days I remember with – an awful lot of
8 fondness because we spent hours great gangs of us spent
9 hours talking, which is one of the things that I quite
10 like doing best! (laughs)
11 I Yeah, I’m the same.
12 S Yeah. But it couldn’t have worked, couldn’t have
13 worked. Some of the things I wish had carried on; it
14 did seem more peaceful in those days.
15 I Hm. It was a very innocent time I suppose.
16 S Very. Yes.
17 I You’d got – yeah.
18 S Very innocent. Em the kids of today seem to think
19 that it was em everybody leaping into bed with
20 everybody else and smoking pot most of the time all
21 drugs and thing, but er – it it wasn’t actually like
22 that at all. Although I think the moral standards of
23 today are probably better.
24 I Yeah?
25 S I think so.
26 I I don’t know.
27 S I think they are, ’cause of the fear that they’ve got
28 of different things; I think the AIDS question crops up
29 every time, and I think really em – the well the
30 majority of sensible people consider it before they do
31 sort of plunge about doing what they thought they might
32 do. I think it’s in their mind.
33 I I suppose yeah; I take the point that you’re making
34 that the morality is different these days but –
35 S It is different.
36 I There was a whole different – ideology behind it in
37 the hippy days; it wasn’t a kind of I don’t know it
38 seems almost materialistic it’s almost commercial the
39 way that sex is treated these days, whereas you know
40 there was a different framework –
41 S Yes. Yes.
42 I Put on it in those days.
43 S Yes, there probably was. I mean it was as you say it
44 was all very innocent, I suppose.
{S1:12}

2 S It’s a shame; it’s a shame. I still think that we
3 were happier in those days em – and we our minds were a
4 lot wider maybe than the same age group today.
I Mhm.
S Because the opportunity for all sorts of things was there, which was em jobs I mean the jobs were you could have a different job every day if you wanted one er and each time you tried to better yourself without realising it I think and there was money to spend and things to buy, which of course you'd not had before because right through the Fifties of course —
I It was rationed =
S =It was rationed, very much so. So it was the em I think it was the pot of gold you see, everybody dived in and helped themselves em I'm glad I was around then. I wouldn't like to grow up now. I wouldn't like to be a seventeen year old now.

S1 has already depicted her 'past' self (i.e. the hippy) in a comic light:

S ... when I sort of talk to the kids and they're they I I was in the Sixties and the Sixties is you know everybody looks back and dinosaurs didn't roam the earth then (I laughs) you know they'd long gone but em they think it's hilarious that that I was er a hippy for instance, and didn't wash and em didn't wash my hair and slobbed around and you know with flowers and peace man and all that stuff. They can't believe that I was like that now, because I'm sort of mum.

However, there is a tension between this comic representation (which she does somewhat distance herself from by attributing it to her children) and a nostalgic view of the past as offering limitless potential for development:

S Because the opportunity for all sorts of things was there, which was em jobs I mean the jobs were you could have a different job every day if you wanted one er and each time you tried to better yourself without realising it I think and there was money to spend and things to buy ...
... it was the em I think it was the pot of gold you see, everybody dived in and helped themselves.

And as producing better and happier individuals:

S It's a shame; it's a shame. I still think that we were happier in those days em — and we our minds were a lot wider maybe than the same age group today.

The words 'peaceful' (S1:12:14) and 'innocent' (S1:12:15, S1:12:18, S1:12:44)
present an idealistic image of the past, 'innocent' suggesting a state of little knowledge and few constraints (as does the phrase "our minds were a lot wider maybe than the same age group today"; S1:13:3/4). It is obvious this self (re)construction of an immature 'self' sets up a developmental account through contrast with the experienced, mature narrator who ironically deprecates her rosy view of the past. She achieves this through evolving a sophisticated model of the constructed and selective nature of memory in the following two extracts:

45 S It's nice to look back it's nice to em it's nostalgic really, it's a soppy nostalgia but you've got to go on.
46 You you can't sort of turn round and go back; if you do it's laughable.
47 I You wonder whether you're looking at it through rose coloured spectacles as well.
48 S You do. That's true. It's like everything else, you know it's em em if you stop and look back at a relationship for instance you only generally pick out the best bits.
49 I Hm.
51 {S1:13/14}
52 S It's it's right; you don't what the you you've got enough things on around you that you don't want anything that's unpleasant.
53 I Mm.
54 S So you take on the pleasant things and your your memories take on the pleasant things. I think it's mostly with relationships or situations that you you pick out the pleasant bits and hang onto those. You don't want to admit to yourself that there was something wrong there.
55 I Yeah.
{S1:14}

This developmental account contains the basic components of a romantic narrative: the progress from an immature, idealistic self to an experienced one, although in this context the events which brought about this progression are omitted. In another conversational context (e.g. if the interviewer had pursued this particular narrative with a question such as "What events disillusioned you with the hippy ideology?" a fully fledged romantic narrative may have emerged.
Comedy, in this extract, is provided in the reflection upon the limitations (of which the 'past' self was unaware) of her previous self when viewed from the perspective of the present.

iv) **Lost Identity**

I would like to consider the self—representation which S1 develops towards the end of the transcript in some detail, as it does not occur in any other interview. The self—representation of the totally flexible character evident at this stage of the interview is in contrast with the achieving and non—achieving selves described earlier. As this self—representation emerges over a number of pages, I shall adopt the approach of presenting short extracts in support of specific points, rather than presenting the entire unit of text.

This self—image appears when S1 is talking about her family. Earlier in the interview, S1 postulates that her family commitments have been a major cause of her educational non—achievement:

51 S ... But there aren't many times  
52 there's not enough hours in the day to do it.  
53 I Hm.  
54 S And to be able to sit just for an hour thinking it's  
55 almost impossible. You used to do it when the kids  
(page fifteen)  
1 were little and they were babies because em they would  
2 go to sleep or be quiet or = and then you had time to  
3 think. I don't have time to shuffle the old files in  
4 the brain any more.  
5 I Mm.  
6 S And see what's there, which is a pity.  
{S1:14/15}

In the latter stages of the interview these also become a cause for her perceived flexibility of character and concomitant loss of identity.

She represents marriage as being constituted of responsibilities and restrictions, and presents her identity as having been subsumed by the need to fulfil other people's (specifically her family's) expectations of her:

26 S I've got no firm opinion about myself, really, I  
27 don't think I'm whatever I can be whatever anybody  
28 wants me to be, at any given time. Em maybe I've lost  
29 what I am underneath it all. But I can be anything.  
{S1:24}

32 S ... I tend
to watch people a lot and em not watch stare watch (I
laughs) but just watch them and get the feel of them,
get the feel for them.
S Em, and how I would react to you would be different
to how I'd react to the other receptionists and react
to whoever. I react differently to everybody. Em
mainly because maybe that's just my role in life I
don't know. I do it without even thinking about it
to be honest. It's an automatic reaction; I think it's
a sort of a — a like one of these er what d'they call
them these unit things, not units. What d'you call
them, things on computers?
S Yeah it's like little circuits, like little circuits
and I think this it must be sort of an automatic button
that presses somewhere and I trot out whatever someone—
I You slip into a mode, yeah.
S Expects me to be em regardless. Em I maybe I've lost
myself somewhere along the line.

The narrative at this point is probably best characterised by a romantic quest
form. S1 develops a strong, humanistic approach to the self which divides
social roles from a real, quintessential self which is just out of reach beyond
the social facades. As such, this aspect of S1’s account is a typical example of
the romantic quest form: struggle, conflict, culminating in triumph over
adversity; triumph is represented in terms of a rediscovery of one’s 'authentic'
self behind the social facade. This is illustrated in the following extract:

S Yes. Yes. You can be anything to anybody.
I Yes.
S And you can. It's amazing, I surprise myself at
times. You know if a situation crops us I can I can
change immediately to suit the situation. Er which I
don't know whether it's a good thing, really. I've
never determined whether it's a good thing or not.
I Hm. I suppose it makes life a lot easier, but you do
seem to think that you've lost some of your self—
S =Well yes=
I =Some of your identity=
S =Yes. I quite like being as I am. Although I would
sometimes like to be more me, just for me. God knows
what I'd do with it (I laughs). If somebody gave me=
I =It's the possibilities, isn't it.
S Yes but I'd get there's no burning idea that I I've
got you see. I think that's was swamped under piles of
nappies and stuff, er and the general day to day
running of things, but em there will be something,
there is something, there is something out there
somewhere that I should grasp and shake, and er
surprise a few people myself included, I think.
I Give me a shout when you're about to do it=
S =I will. I will. Yes, something earthshattering.
Hardly. But er if something something does show up I have these feelings, I get these feelings, and there is something not so far away. Don't know what it's going to be yet.

S Nine months, so the Tarot said.

S Possibly yes, yeah. Nine months, yes. Almost a pregnancy. Oh God (I laughs). Time goes so quickly these days; it wizzes by.

I Hm. I know the feeling.

S And you I used to dread being thirty. When I was thirty it didn't matter, and then I dreaded being thirty five and it didn't matter. Then I was forty and that didn't matter. And now really nothing matters;

I'm not I don't dread anything because I don't feel any different. I still feel eighteen, and look ninety (laughs). No it's funny because you don't feel any different now to how you felt ten years ago.

I I do actually.

S You feel different?

I Yeah.

S No but you're em —

I The same mental processes are still going on=

S =That's right, yeah. Yes.

I There's still a a 'me' somewhere.

S That's right, yes.

S Here.

S In there.

I That's the same.

S It's a pity that you can't get the me out, stick it on there and say ah! that's what I am.

I Mm.

S Because then you you could take it in, objectively.

Here one sees the 'lost identity' discourse described above:

S Yes. Yes. You can be anything to anybody.

I Yes.

S And you can. It's amazing, I surprise myself at times. You know if a situation crops up I can I can change immediately to suit the situation. Er which I don't know whether it's a good thing, really. I've never determined whether it's a good thing or not.

I Hm. I suppose it makes life a lot easier, but you do seem to think that you've lost some of your self=

S =Well yes=

I =Some of your identity=

S =Yes. I quite like being as I am. Although I would sometimes like to be more me, just for me.

She describes a 'true' self for which she is searching:

S ... No it's funny because you don't feel any
different now to how you felt ten years ago.
I I do actually.
S You feel different?
I Yeah.
S No but you're em —
I The same mental processes are still going on =
S =That's right, yeah. Yes.
I There's still a a 'me' somewhere.
S That's right, yes.
I Here.
S In there.
I That's the same.
S It's a pity that you can't get the me out, stick it on there and say ah! that's what I am.
I Mm.
S Because then you you could take it in, objectively.
{S1:25/26}

It is the lack of this quintessential self for which she is searching and which she seems to regard as the cause of her dissatisfaction:

S =I think this is awful, it's arrogant and conceited, but I think I deserve something better, and that is an awful statement.
I Oh no, no.
S But I do think that I personally just as in me, selfish me, deserve something better than what I've got. Not that I can grumble about what I've got, but — I don't feel expanded at all into something, not knowing what it is. I'm hoping that it will turn up, it will show itself and the opportunity, as the children have grown, the opportunities that I had haven't reintroduced themselves, so I haven't got them.
{S1:21}

Although age has brought her closer to this ideal of romantic self—fulfilment:

S ... I'd always been told I was awful, and so I was thirty—five and I thought oh I'm not that bad really. Fairly reasonable type of person. So it was that that changed everything.
And er I became more me.
{S1:10, my emphasis}

She still wants to become 'more me', still feels that there is an abstract 'something else' towards she must strive:

S =Yes. I quite like being as I am. Although I would sometimes like to be more me, just for me. God knows what I'd do with it (I laughs). If somebody gave me =
I =It's the possibilities, isn't it.
S Yes but I'd get there's no burning idea that I I've
got you see. I think that’s was swamped under piles of
nappies and stuff, er and the general day to day
running of things, but em there will be something,
there is something, there is something out there
somewhere that I should grasp and shake, and er
surprise a few people myself included, I think.
\{S1:28\}

An upturn in the evaluative dimension at the very end of the interview leans
the account towards a romance form, suggesting that self—fulfilment is not too
far away:

\{S1:28\}

As a codicil, very soon after the interview took place, the narrator was offered
her old sales job back, and has now presumably found the ‘something else’ she
sought in the satisfaction of doing a demanding job well.

Summary

In the course of the interview, the respondent presented three types of selves
tied to three narratives. A negative stability narrative form is linked to a
passive self—representation, a tragic narrative utilises a more positive self—
representation, a positive narrative is linked to a stable self—representation.
One might also add to this the use of a romantic quest form to describe her
brother’s success and the ‘lost identity’ account and a comic/romantic form
with regard to her hippy past.

In this section, several important analytic points emerged about self discourse.
Self—accounting is flexible, this flexibility being linked to discursive context.
Narratives are not produced in a vacuum; rather they are negotiated between
interviewer and interviewee and, as such, are potentially sites of conflict.
3.2 S2: THE 'SURVIVOR' REPERTOIRE

S2's transcript is a comprehensive account of the participant's life from sixteen onwards, comprehensive both in detail and in length (nearly two hours of interview yielded 22000 words of text). The material facts around which she is constructing her account are as follows: she is a woman (K__) is her mid fifties, married initially at sixteen to a man who was killed in the Army. From this marriage she had a son (D__) who was killed in a fire at the age of twenty one. Her second marriage, to a man ten years older than herself (E__), ended in divorce; from this marriage she had two daughters (F__ and G__) and a son (H__). Her third marriage, to a man eight years younger than herself (J__) was made eight years prior to the time of narration, although this relationship had only just emerged from a period of separation. These are the 'raw materials' from which S2's account is fashioned.

The first stage in analysis is to examine the narrative form used by S2, to see what it reveals about the structure and the implicature of this account. I would wish to argue that there are features of this account which correspond to the narrative form of melodrama. However, before progressing to my analysis, it is first necessary — particularly as this is a form which Gergen & Gergen do not consider — to define the term 'melodrama'.

Melodrama is commonly used as a perjorative term:

"Melodrama certainly connotes a rather frivolous art form that makes the most obvious kind of appeal to an uncritical populace."
(Heilman, 1968, p76)

Although it is actually a standard literary form with a number of basic features:

"Melodrama, in sum, includes the whole realm of conflicts undergone by characters who are presented as undivided."
(Heilman, 1968, p86)

Primarily, melodrama is distinguished by its reliance upon 'honest souls'; undivided characters epitomised by one or two traits or abilities:

"... (in melodrama) man's (sic) loyalties and his directions are neither uncertain nor conflicting. He is not troubled by motives that would distract him from the outer struggle in which he is engaged ... In tragedy the conflict is within man; in melodrama, it is between men, or between men and things."
(Heilman, 1968, p79)
Typically, heroes and villains are clearly delineated and stereotypically portrayed:

"... the intimate core of the form is the conflict of villains and heroes — the standard brand of villains and heroes."
(Heilman, 1968, p78)

Without complex characters, the capacity for internal conflict is removed, thus plot structures tend to have simple, 'good against evil' formulae:

"... a man is pitted against a force outside of himself — a specific enemy, a hostile group, a social force, a natural event, an accident or coincidence."
(Heilman, 1968, p79)

To summarise, melodramas are populated by simple, stereotypical characters and have straightforward good versus evil plots. This serves to very firmly locate the source of 'evil' externally.

It is difficult to pick out a single plot, given the extensive nature of this transcript. However, I would like to select a number of extracts to explicate the points about melodrama made above.

The basic 'plot' of S2's account is that she has suffered a lifetime of abuse at the hands of her ex-husband, but could not leave because of her children: she attributes her survival through this period solely to her strength of character. She has now triumphed: her ex-husband desperately wants her back, she is happily married to a kind and generous man younger than herself, she has kept her looks and her figure, and she has successfully brought up three children. I would like, thus, to look at extracts which relate to these three stages of the transcript (abuse, survival and triumph), seeing how it corresponds to a melodramatic narrative form in each context.

i) Abuse

To recap, Heilman's description of characterisation in melodrama suggests that simple, 'honest soul' characters and clearly defined heroes and villains constitute the substance of melodrama. How does this correspond to S2's transcript?

An examination of the people who populate S2's account suggests they have
melodramatic features: they do tend to behave like 'honest souls', in that they exhibit a limited number of personality traits, and these traits alone are presented as sufficient explanation for actions.

I would like to look at three characters who have key roles in S2's narrative: her son (H_), her ex-husband (E_) and her present husband (J_).

Within the main account (which concentrates on her ex-husband), S2 evolves a self-contained narrative which tells the tale of an upset in her present marriage.

1  S ... We did have a bad patch last year though.
2  You see my son H_, very possessive.
3  I Hm.
4  S His mam er — is the woman of his life and he can't find there's no man good enough for his mam, that's the way H_ thinks. He doesn't think H_'s he doesn't even think his own father isn't good enough for me, er I think he's got me set on a pedestal.
5  I Hm.
6  S And there's no man'll ever be good enough in H_'s eyes for me. Why I don't know. Maybe it's because of his age, and he's seen and heard what I've gone through when I lived with his dad, you know I mean the hidings and he remembers all that kind of thing. And for me to turn out on top sort of thing and not let it get me down and struggle through and then make a good home and a good life for them and give them everything they've ever needed. I mean I've never spoilt them don't get me wrong I've never spoilt them, I've just given them the things that I thought they needed, and the pleasures at Christmas, but they and they're very well brought up, very well mannered and things like that, you know what you do for your kids, em and em and I've very very proud of them, but H_ he's seen, you see, and he thinks, no there's nobody good enough for my mum, so of course he is very jealous of J_.
7  I Yeah.
8  S And J_ is very jealous of him.
9  I Yeah.
10   S And of course H_ couldn't accept another man coming in this house; he was he was the man of the house you see, 'cause H_ I think was about sixteen.
11     I Mm.
12   S He was about he was about sixteen when we came here, so of course H_ I mean he packed all his he was doing his em O Levels and A Levels up north his tests and he would I said to him look H_, finish them and then come down to me; he said no mam, you're going to need all the help you can get, and he em he packed his er scholarship things in just to come down here with me, and of course he thought oh I'm the man of the house, so when J_ came along he didn't like it at all.
So they clashed and they didn’t get on but again J was so kind, helped him to get this house helped him to buy his first car, this is H my son, helped H, he helped him to just helped him all the time, and more or less trying to buy H’s friendship if you like to put it in a better way but em H accepted it, but he just couldn’t accept J as the one for me if you know what I mean. Anyway em — H bought this cottage in R and he’s he’s got it fantastic, it’s beautiful, I’m really proud, and he but he started coming here regular, you see J thought oh right that’s H settled, now G’s courting and all this that and the other you see, but H started abusing me. What he’d do is come every night for his tea, and then I’d do all his washing, and his ironing ’cause he didn’t have a washing machine, and it got J down, saying well god he’s got his own house, he’s he’s took his own responsibilities on, yet he still comes here like the as if he still lived here. And he used to come here and say oh I’m nipping up for a bath, go and have a bath, so he never all he did was own a house.

This story depends upon melodramatic characters: the villain is S2’s son, H, and jealousy is the ‘honest soul’ trait which epitomises him:

You see my son H, very possessive.
I Hm.
S His mam er — is the woman of his life and he can’t find there’s no man good enough for his mam, that’s the way H thinks. He doesn’t think H’s he doesn’t even think his own father isn’t good enough for me, er I think he’s got me set on a pedestal.

which is presented as a consequence of features of his upbringing:

And em there’s no man’ll ever be good enough in H’s eyes for me. Why I don’t know. Maybe it’s because of his age, and he’s seen and heard what I’ve gone through when I lived with his dad, you know I mean the hidings and he remembers all that kind of thing.

His actions are seen as inevitably derived (as the phrase ‘of course’ — S2:7:35 — implies) from this one personality trait and the experience which engendered it:

very very proud of them, but H he’s seen, you see, and he thinks, no there’s nobody good enough for my mum, so of course he is very jealous of J.
I Yeah.
S And J is very jealous of him.
I Yeah.
30 S And of course H couldn't accept another man coming
31 in this house; he was the man of the house you
32 see, 'cause H I think was about sixteen.
{S2:7}

Her description of how H took advantage of her generosity clearly
establishes him as the villain of the piece:

55 H started abusing me. What he'd do is come every
(page eight)
1 night for his tea, and then I'd do all his washing, and
2 his ironing 'cause he didn't have a washing machine,
3 and it got J down, saying well god he's got his own
4 house, he's he's took his own responsibilities on, yet
5 he still comes here like the as if he still lived here.
{S2:7/8}

There is a possibility that line 7:28 ("And J is very jealous of him.") may
give the listener the idea that J is equally responsible for the dispute;
however, S2 quickly eliminates this possibility:

42 S ... when J came along he didn't like it at all.
43 So they clashed and they didn't get on but again J
44 was so kind, helped him to get this house helped him to
45 buy his first car, this is H my son, helped H, he
46 helped him to just helped him all the time, and more or
47 less trying to buy H's friendship if you like to put
48 it in a better way but em H accepted it, but he just
49 couldn't accept J as the one for me if you know what
50 I mean.
{S2:7}

As the son is unequivocally presented as the villain in this extract, so J
emerges as the hero: gentleness and kindliness are the personality traits with
which he is imbued:

3 S ... he's very very intelligent,
4 he's er he's a nice natured bloke but he's so soft, you
5 know anybody can use him and he'll just let them. I
6 won't let them. If somebody came on the phone and he
7 was sitting after he'd had a hard day's work and they
8 said J I've got a leak on my radiator and its a
9 council property say I mean all they have to do is ring
10 the council they'll fix it free, that's all he has to
11 say well look ring the council but he will put his coat
12 on, shattered though he is and go and fix it. And he
13 would walk away with not a penny in his pocket for
14 doing it er sometimes oh thanks very much and not even
15 an offer. I've stopped all that: you say no you've had
16 a hard day's work and you're not going to do
17 it, but he'll let anybody put on to him, you know so I
18 sort of pull the strings and say no J, you're not
19 going to do that I'm not going to let anybody walk over
The kind of character types, thus, that S2 uses are suitable for a melodrama: simple 'honest souls', the actions of whom are determined by the one or two personality traits they possess.

The final key figure whom I would like to discuss is S2’s ex—husband. She pays scant attention to the characterisation of this figure; the most extensive description she provides is as follows:

S ... He was a drinking man; not a very good worker he was a excellent he never had time off work or never lost a job, but he just liked money such a lot that he kept most of it to himself.

However, apart from this, little descriptive work is done. A successful melodrama requires little in the way of characterisation; it is sufficient for people to be delineated as heroes or villains, as the cultural resource itself will provide a particular personality type as a consequence of this labelling. Such categorisation also fulfils another criteria for a good story: use of a familiar character type supplies sufficient predictability of narrative form, narrative events and behaviour of protagonists to make the account comprehensible to a listener.

The following extract is one of several which describes an incident of abuse in her previous marriage:

S And every time he used to beat me mark me I’d go to the hospital and I’d make excuses, oh the prop fell out of the line and I’d have a split you know well black eyes. One day he threw me from one end of the room to the other and I had a a leather suite, well mock leather 'cause the kids were little and I hit my face on there there you know, caught my chin on that part there and it took the bottom lip — (phone rings). Excuse me (pause). Oh yes I used to go to the hospital and say all them kinds of things and this day er he this particular day up north he — it was unbelievable. If you think of a woman getting beaten up you think there’s a reason. There’s not always a reason; in nine out of ten times I got a hiding there was no reason for it. This particular one like I say I always used to tell the hospitals oh I was walking through the market and a student was swinging their bags
and having as bit of fun and it hit me in the face; I was always making stupid excuses up. They’re not daft at the hospitals but then again they’re not going to say you’re a liar. But this particular day em H went along say from here to the roundabout, em to his friends and it was absolutely pouring from the heavens, it was absolutely slinging it down. So I said to E I says look I’ll nip out and I’ll nip along in the car and I’ll bring H at nine o’clock it was bedtime you see. This was about ten to nine and I nipped along and he was watching something on BBC1 and it didn’t finish to nine o’clock, and I, the mother of the children he was friendly with says oh let him see the end of this K, and then fair enough. Anyway D her husband says where’s the car K. I says oh it’s just in the corner, he says well I’ll bring it in the drive ’cause you’re gonna get soaked. He came back and he said where did you say the car was, I said oh it’s just beside the cul-de-sac there. he said it isn’t. I said oh my god I left the keys in, someone’s stolen the car you see. Anyway all of a sudden I thought no, so I says I can’t use your phone, she says yeah, so I rang the next door neighbour to where I lived and I said can you tell me if my car is outside and she says yeah, it’s in the drive. He’d come along, took the car and drove it back home. When I came in he was lying in front of the fire, I remember it as if it was yesterday. He was lying in front of the fire, playing records. So I walked in, she loaned us an umbrella and I walked H back, I says what did you do that for! He jumped up, grabbed H and he said bed! H ran up the stairs and he gave me the hiding of my life. And I says and I was like this you know and he had me on a chair and he was punching me and beating me and then I happened to look up and as I walked as I looked through to the kitchen my oldest son which was about sixteen was coming and he had a knife in his hand. Right. And I was saying no D__ get in go to bed D go to bed, and he was saying but mam, but mam, and I was saying go to bed. If he’d turned round and saw him with that knife in his hand he probably would have killed him. I Yeah.
S Anyway he went upstairs and em E literally got me and slugg me out in the chucking rain, it was pouring with rain. Anyway H’s bedroom was right above the and D’s bedroom was right above the front door, so they’re looking out of the window and I says look, ask your dad can I come in, I’m soaked her, so he says dad says no, ’cause they went and came back. I says well ask if I can have a coat, at least can I have a coat to put on, anyway he came down and he opened the door, and when he opened the door I went in and that that was stupid really. He just started beating me and beating me and beating me. And he was hitting me in the face and all I could say was oh don’t knock my teeth out, don’t knock my teeth out. Anyway he stopped hitting me
and he went and sat down, and then I went into the kitchen and this is no word of a lie I looked in the mirror and I could see my face just going just swelling up.

There are a number of significant features to this extract. The figure of the ex-husband unambiguously function as the villain, inflicting harm upon a blameless heroine without provocation:

If you think of a woman getting beaten up you think there's a reason. There's not always a reason; in nine out of ten times I got a hiding there was no reason for it.

There is no attempt to relate the husband's actions to circumstantial factors or personality traits: at this stage in the account, he functions simply as a force of evil and oppression.

At this point, it is worthwhile to consider the implications of S2's presentation of events. In melodrama, as characters are incapable of internal conflict, events must generate the dramatic tension. Evil is externally located, which serves to divert blame away from the central character. Typical of the 'honest soul' character type is the presentation of events as 'facts of life' which have no lasting effect upon the narrator; this concentration on external events rather than inner feelings is typical of a melodrama. Extracts — such as that given above — which describe beatings and rape are recounted with a remarkable lack of anger, and only in two instances in the entire interview does the narrator indicate any enduring negative effect from her experiences:

S ... I would kill myself rather than be tied to him again. I would give up because I would never I could never trust him again; he he pois — he poisoned in face J__ it took J__ I would say it took J__ four to five years to get me to respond to him. I explained everything to J__, he was very tolerant and very patient, but it took me about four to five years of our married life before I responded to J__. I used to lie there and pretend.

S ... So I thought I could have been a heck of a lot w- I could have had a lot of scars, well I have got scars, I've got them on my mind and my brain and em my memories and that, but I've also got body scars; I've got a terrible scar here, that was my husband he burnt me.
Later in the transcript, S2 does begin to provide reasons for her ex-husband’s actions:

27 S ... he used to come in with dirty books and say
28 look at them! and things like that. All that. And he
29 used to say get undressed! and stand there; I want to
30 see you undressed. And I used to say on your bike sort
31 of thing and try and make a joke of it and he was
32 serious. Oh I had all that kind of thing to live with.
33 I mean the hidings and that stemmed from not doing what
34 he wanted me to do, or event so when I’m telling you I
35 used to go through this and that there’s reasons for
36 it.
37 I Hm.
38 S He didn’t just come in from having a drink and start
39 hitting me.
40 I Yeah.
41 S There’s always a reason and the reason was I’d stick
42 up to him, and then because I wouldn’t I wouldn’t do
43 what he wanted me to do, he’d beat me up. Those was
44 the reasons, like I say there was no reason for me to
45 get the hidings I got, in his eyes the reason was I
46 wouldn’t do what he wanted, but in my eyes I was
47 getting a hiding for nothing. I didn’t have a reason
48 I didn’t think he was right to beat me ’cause I didn’t
49 give him a reason to do it. Not a good reason if you
50 know what I mean. If I said no, I didn’t want to er
51 lie on the bed naked and then take my photograph I
52 didn’t think that was a reason to get a hiding. But he
53 obviously thought it was, things like that.

These incidents tend to embellish the horror of the story rather than provide any real characterisation. One can envisage an alternative method of accounting which, using the same material, gave it a feminist (male oppression, patriarchy etcetera) or a mental health (focusing on, for instance, the consequences of abuse for the woman) narrative framework; the implicature of such accounting would be radically different. However, S2 chooses to tell this as a simple story of the triumph, through personal endeavour, of good over evil: to this end, complex characterisations and constructions of society and time are unnecessary, and would actually be detrimental to the dramatic impact of the story she chooses to tell. As it stands, although this cannot really be seen as a feminist narrative, it is still an enabling narrative form. The enabling nature of her accounting is exemplified when one looks at the reasons she gives for overcoming the trauma of her bad marriage.
ii) Survival

A second theme of S2’s transcript concerns the reasons for her survival of her abusive marriage. On a number of occasions, she presents herself as having undergone experiences which would have destroyed other women:

S Mhm. Some wives and mothers have terrible lives. I mean I’ve had a bad life but I’m sorry I’m better off now; I wish I had had it years ago.

I Mm.

S ’Cause I mean I could have had more fun.

I Yeah.

S And I could have had all the joys that a young wife and a young mother could have; but I’ve never had that so I want that for my kids really, for F and G, and I know they will have that. But em – I mean these women that just put up with it all; alright so it’s not easy it’s some women aren’t survivors though are they.

I No.

S There’s more and more are now, but there’s a heck of a lot aren’t.

I Hm.

S You know they think they just take the beatings and the abuse just because they need the man in their life; some women like need more than one man at one time don’t they (laughs).

{S2:18}

I think when you’ve – when you’ve had it rough shall we say, there’s a lot of people had it a heck of a lot rougher than me, but I think I’ve had it rough for the kind of person I am. And I don’t think I deserved half of what I’ve gone through to be honest with you, and em – I think of other people well if they’re going through that I feel awful for them but a lot of people are even going through worse, you know and they don’t always come out on top. Well I don’t think so, I would say in a lot of cases. They just give up some women do. I don’t think they should but people are not strong. I didn’t think I would be; I think it’s determination

{S2:23/24}
Note how this second extract also serves to set S2 up as a blameless victim ("And I don't think I deserved half of what I've gone through to be honest with you", lines 47/48).

These extracts have a number of similarities: using metaphors of agency and determination, she stresses the importance of personal qualities in overcoming tribulation, presenting herself as a strong, proud, determined character through the comparison to "other people" and "some women".

She attributes this strength of character to her experience (although, conversely, in the previous extracts this argument is reversed: it is her strong personality which allowed her to cope with the experiences). In the next extract, she utilises the same element as in the three given above: the differentiation from "other women" (lines 21-23) and the 'survivor' character traits (lines 2-3), the latter encouraged by the interviewer and eagerly taken up by the narrator (conversational analysis indicates that overlap — such as that between the interviewer's evaluation in lines 4-5 and the narrator's affirmation of this evaluation in line 6 — is likely to indicate unequivocal agreement; Levinson,
1983). In this case, however, these elements are linked with an 'experience' model of personality and (in the underlined section) are given a clearer 'romantic struggle' narrative form; she claims that the struggles she has endured have made her a better person:

S I had it bad enough but at least I survived. I survived.
I It seems to be through your own determination rather than the life you've had=
S Oh absolutely. No I haven't; all I've done as I say is worked, I've just worked all my life and -- if I had my life to live again I'd like it different, I'd like
I'd like to be happy and not have the experiences I've had, but then again I wouldn't I wouldn't be the person I am now if I hadn't because I'd probably've been just an ordinary little housewife whose quite happy to be a grandma right now but I keep thinking don't bring kids into the world yet; take your time, enjoy yourself, have a good life together, holidays and that before you settle down to kids 'cause once you have children your life is planned in a sense to bring them up and to bring them up properly, not just send them out to play when you go to bingo and that.
I Yeah.
S Which is what a lot of women do isn't it.
I Yeah.
S But not me.
{S2:10}

In a further extract, as S2 returns once more to the strength of character motif (lines 1–9) when talking about her ex–husband, the interviewer tries to tease out the link between strength of character and experience (lines 10–11):

S He's had a few women and he's had a few affairs in the last ten years, but he blows most of nothing serious.
I They don't compare?
S That's it. I suppose he realises how strong I am.
I Hm.
S And how independent I am. I suppose I've got him to thank for it in a sense. In some ways if you stop to think of it in that way I suppose I could turn round and say well if I hadn't had the life I'd had, I wouldn't be the person I am now. But then again I don't know. Probably still would have been determined and independent.
I You think that's something in your that's just in your personality, the experiences have just brought it out?
S Yes. I was going to say it's there.
I Mhm.
S But it probably wouldn't have come out without the experiences. The experiences have made it more
prominent. There's nothing I wouldn't try and do.
There's nothing that I wouldn't have a go at. If I
didn't succeed at least I would try.
I Mhm.
{S2:25/6}

In this extract, thus, she interweaves experiental and innate models of
personality. Use of the experiental model, in conjunction with the 'survivor' character trait, serves to advance the idea that without the traumas she has undergone, she would not be the same person: a typical romance form.

Although this seems to take us away from melodrama, this is not the case. Melodrama is not a narrative form in the same way as romance or tragedy; it can contain the same themes as a romance (crisis—struggle—fulfilment) or a tragedy (crisis—struggle—downfall). Outwith this thematic similarity, however, there are several ways in which melodrama differs from romances and tragedies. Specifically, romances and tragedies can use more complex character types (e.g. divided selves) and thus have internal sources of conflict, whereas melodramas are typified by 'honest souls' and external sources of conflict. An examination of the self-concept which S2 presents as the end-point of her 'romantic' narrative reveals it to be unidimensional: she presents herself as an 'honest soul' whose characteristics are independence, pride and determination.

iii) Triumph

As previously indicated, a self-contained account (dealing with an upset in S2's third marriage) exists within the main transcript. The first part of this narrative is reproduced on pages 319 and 320 (S2:7/8), and the text continues in the following fashion:

And he used to come here and say oh I'm nipping up for
a bath, go and have a bath, so he never all he did was
own a house.
I Yeah.
S And it was posh and you know all mod cons and ex-
extremely, he gutted it and did it himself and it's
really an excellent little cottage, and of course J_
just couldn't take any more. Em — he what he did was
he came in one day and he told me he says er I've been
out with another woman. You see so we always said I
always said to him look you're eight years younger than
me, you ever find anybody else, married or not married,
you're free to meet move on any time you want. You
know I wouldn't hold him to it if he wasn't happy with
me =
I = Mm.
I'd hate a man to stay with me if he wasn't happy. Anyway he said he'd been out with someone, he said oh nothing's happened; he'd only been out with her that particular night, and em—and I asked him questions about her he's so gullible he told me everything, where she lived what her name was, and I says oh she's a lot younger than me and he said well actually she's older. I couldn't believe it and I didn't believe it. So anyway the next day when he went to work I fel— I looked it up in the phone book, her num—her name, 'cause I knew where she lived, not the address, but I knew she lived in this particular place and I knew her name, so I rang— I went over to see her didn't I. Got myself all ready, went over to see her, knocked on the door, well I went into the drive where she lived and there was this greasy haired long haired leather jacket lad, I thought hell who's that, and it was he had told me she had a twenty year old son and I says excuse me does such—and—such live her and he said oh yes. So I went in, he took me in and I says hello, and she says hello, and I says I'm I'm K--J's wife, and she nearly had a heart attack, she almost and she was older than me. But you see I'd I'd told him to leave, I said well leave and we're good friends, off you go, and he was quite happy to do that 'cause he'd had enough of H—, and em I mean I was very very upset but I thought well life goes on there's not much I can do about it and if that's what he wants I don't want a man who doesn't want me. But he kept ringing me at work and asking me how I was and he used to his mother lives not just over the road from the s—where I work you know just round the corner towards Leicester, and he used to pass in the car all the time and look in, and he'd pass in the morning when he knew I was going to work, ring me up and ask me if I wanted to go for a drink and that, and em over the whole we were separated a year, well almost about ten months, but in that whole ten months we went out with each other six, you know but there's no way I'd have him back here 'cause I wasn't sure about him.

In two ways, the above extract establishes the narrator as a woman of great strength of character: firstly, she describes her visit to the woman having an affair with her husband in a causal, even nonchalant, way:
In the above extract, no attempt is made to explicate how she felt at the time; the incident is described entirely in retrospect, in terms of its material effect rather than its psychological impact on the narrator; this, too, is a characteristic of melodrama.

The elimination of personal feelings from this part of the account serves to give the impression of an extremely courageous woman, who is unaffected by such situations.

Secondly, the 'survivor' repertoire reappears to establish S2 as strong enough to cope with the separation:

This extract serves the purpose of presenting the narrator as magnanimous in defeat. This can also be seen in the divergence she makes from straightforward narration of events at line 15A:

From lines 15A to 22, she develops a sequence detailing what may be called the 'terms' of the marriage; the sequence ends at line 23 (where the word "Anyway" indicates a return to narration of events). This removes any possibility of the listener attributing the reconciliation to any conciliation on her part; she presents herself as too proud to have compromised. Apparently
willing to let her husband go, it is he who pursues a reconciliation:

49 S ... I don't want a man who
50 doesn't want me. But he kept ringing me at work and
51 asking me how I was and he used to his mother lives not
52 just over the road from the s— where I work you know
53 just round the corner towards Leicester, and he used to
54 pass in the car all the time and look in, and he'd pass
55 in the morning when he knew I was going to work, ring

(page nine)
1 me up and ask me if I wanted to go for a drink and
2 that.
{S2:8/9}

and her decision to take him back; she thus establishes herself as the partner who has control of the relationship:

3 S ... in that whole ten
4 months we went out with each other six, you know but
5 there's no way I'd have him back here 'cause I wasn't
6 sure about him.
{S2:9}

From a very negative event, thus, she draws a very positive self-portrayal: strong, brave, magnanimous, agentic. On the rare occasions where she does admit to being personally affected by events, the depiction of emotions as something to be overcome also serves to establish her strength of character; she is in control of her own emotions as well as external events:

25 S ... You think you don't care about a person you
26 know until something like that happens. You take them
27 for granted.
28 I Yeah.
29 S And you think oh so if he leaves he leaves, and when
30 it actually happens then by god it hits you, you know
31 you won't I mean I was strong, I went to work and I
32 stuck it in and I took him to court and I went to the
33 solicitors' and everything, I sorted it out, I got the
34 house back in my name because it was mine and it's
35 still mine now; he signed it all over to me as proof
36 that er you know when I took him back; he said I__,
37 I'll sign the house over to you completely. Because of
38 course being husband and wife I could have I would've
39 had to sell it to give him half.
40 I Yeah.
41 S But he signed it all over to me; so he's back but
42 it's still every bit of this property is mine, through
43 his signature. So that's his his way of proving that
44 you know I will never hurt you no more.
{S2:10}

Her 'success' is described in material terms; not only has she got her husband back, but she has done it on her own terms: the financial agreement. She is
the one who could survive on her own, therefore she is the one who does not need to make concessions.

It must be noted, however, that this positive self-representation is developed for this specific narrative: when she refers to the same event later in the interview, the narrator depicts herself as severely affected by this incident. This is advanced firstly through the mouthpiece of her son, which presents it as not necessarily the viewpoint of the narrator:

14  S ... Well I suppose
15  I've never ever been on my own; that's what my H_
16  says to me he says this last year when I was so poorly
17  em he says because you're never used to being on your
18  own all those years.
19  I Mm.
20  S You were married at sixteen, you've had someone in
21  your life ever since, and to be on your own all of a
22  sudden you can't take it. Which I could, but I
23  didn't think it was right for the reasons that I was on
24  my own.
{S2:17}

Then is admitted herself:

1  S That's right. That's right. It's tried it's
2  like when J and I fell out. I was I one day I was
3  particularly down in the dumps and em H__ I went to
4  bed about two o'clock in the afternoon, Saturday, I
5  says oh I'm just going to bed, I'm not staying here,
6  and er H__ came G and F__ couldn't do
7  nothing with me and F__ I just says "oh get out of
8  the room and leave me alone", and they couldn't do
9  anything. I was in a bad way, and they sent for H__,
10  they rang him up and he came over. And I must have
11  dozed off the next thing I knew he was sitting on the
12  bed and er he says "are you alright mam", and I says
13  "oh yeah" and I was trying to be "yeah of course I'm
14  alright!", you know and em we talked and talked.
{S2:42}

It again appears that self-representations are variable and context specific; contradictory representations are developed to deal with different discursive situations. This is in opposition to the expectations given by the melodrama form, where one would anticipate consistent, simple self-representations.
Limitations

The melodrama form seems to describe S2's account fairly well; however, this again represents a selective reading. In this final section, with the purpose of demonstrating the limitations of applying the label of a single narrative form to an account, I would like to look at S2's presentation of relationships; she evolves a far more complex and contradictory presentation of character than is appropriate for a melodrama.

As Rorty (1976) points out, it is difficult to envisage an 'honest soul' having an identity crisis. Neither would one expect 'honest souls' to have complex or ambivalent interpersonal relationships: 'good' characters should regard other 'good' characters with love and respect, 'evil' ones with fear, hate etcetera.

However, when one looks at S2's account, one detects an ambivalence in her talk about relationships which is at odds with the simplicity one would expect from an 'honest soul'. For example, her discussion of her relations with her children contains two contradictory elements: the importance of children and the precedence of lovers over children.

The 'importance of children' discourse articulated by S1 reappears in S2's account:

47  S ... The best thing that ever happened to me in my
48  life was my kids.
49  I Mm.
50  S That's the best days of my life is having my
51  children. And that's that's the best thing in my whole
52  life really.
{S2:31}

However, S2 uses this discourse far more innovatively than S1: firstly, S2 uses it to present herself as a good mother who has brought up her children successfully, despite the odds:

33  S ... I mean I'm not sorry I had
34  children, sometimes when I think of the little bits
35  I've gone through I think well if I had been single I
36  could have just upped and went, and done my thing and
37  done what I wanted to do with my life, but I made a
38  choice and I had children so I brought them up the best
39  way I could, and I've got no regrets 'cause they're
40  super, they're really excellent, in my eyes anyway. I
41  mean I've got real lovely kids and I've got really well
42  behaved and very good mannered and very respectable
children. I've got I've got no qualms about that, I
don't say bloody hell I wish I wish they'd turned out
like this lot I wish they were like them next door. I
don't I've got individual children and my children are
my children and they're the way I brought them up and
I'm proud of them.

Secondly, 'importance of children' is used to explain why she remained in an
oppressive relationship:

S ... But em I wouldn't say to anybody
oh don't get married just live with the person, I mean
if they think that the time's right to marry all well
and good, but I would say don't have children out of
wedlock; it's not fair on the kids. I mean I love my
kids. I would have said a year ago that they were my
life, now I won't because J's my life, you know what
I mean.
S Mm.
S But em, that's why my children and I are very close
because they they can remember what happened and what's
(page thirteen)
gone off and who was their mam and dad and that you
know; I was mum and dad all the time and they can't
forget that you see so that brings us closer. So I've
been rewarded in a sense for what happened, and I mean
I would never have walked out on them it's even though
I had every right to because of the situations, but I
stuck it out until they were old enough to say right,
pack your bags, you're going with me, sort of thing you
know. And that's what I did.

This is reinforced by deployment of 'sacrifice' imagery:

S ... I love my kids more than
well they were just my life; I never regretted having
them or anything like that and I er just I had a very
poor life really, I had a very miserable marriage, but
I thought well I've made my bed I'll lie on it and I'll
bring up my kids the best I can and I did I made a good
job of it; I always swore that my kids would always
have what I never had, and that was everything, and I
made sure they did; they've never wanted for anything,
therefore the working all the time =
I = Mm =
S = To make sure they got what they needed and of course
with me being I was mother and father to them because
my husband just didn't want to know, he just didn't
want to know.

However, like S1, S2 constructs another discourse which lies in opposition to
the 'importance of children' repertoire: the precedence of lovers over children.
This can be seen in the extract reproduced above:

49 S ... I mean I love my kids. I would have said a year ago that they were my life, now I won't because J__'s my life, you know what I mean.

{S2:12}

as well as in the following extracts:

24 S ... The reasons I was on my own was wrong, the reasons I was on my own was because of my son; my marriage was breaking up because of my son's attitude, and I had to stop that, I had to think right, I've gotta I've got to do something about it. And I did and I've never I'm not sorry.

30 I And H__'s accepted it now?

31 S He's alright now, he's accepting it now, but he won't have anything to do with J__. He doesn't em he doesn't come when J__'s here, and but I mean he was at the wedding and he acknowledged him, and I says to him call a truce. They don't argue; I I mean to J__ H__ is negative, but to H__ J__ is a bug.

38 I Yeah.

39 S You know, J__ is more grown up by saying well H__ doesn't mean anything to me, he'll get on with his life and I'll get on with mine, but it annoys H__ to know that J__'s in my life. But that's a choice I've made and a choice I'll keep. You know it's I won't lose my son because of it – I thought well I was prepared to, but I know I won't.

{S2:17}

8 If I’d only stopped to think of what I was doing and how I was treating J__ and the my children 'cause it was a case of I was a mother first and a wife second, and you shouldn’t be that: you should be a wife and a mother second, 'cause that’s the way it is isn’t it. You’re married first so you’re a wife, and then you’re a mother.

15 I Yeah.

16 S So therefore I wasn’t when I married J__ you see; I was a wife second and a mother first.

{S2:20}

This is justified in terms of a relationship that will remain after children have gone:

38 S ... I realised well I've got I've got to cut the apron strings myself. I've got to make a choice, and I mean I'm fifty years old, and I can't afford to wait until my kids are ready to say right mam I'm ready to make my own life, I'll see you again I'll visit you sometime, I've got to have my life now.

44 I Yeah.
And it's time I did. And I'm happier now than I was all the years I was married to J__. I mean eight years nine years gone June eight years gone June and then we've been together ten eleven in October, November sorry, been together eleven years in on November the November the sixteenth. And all them years we were together was happy, but this few months that we've been back together it's like the first year, it's like a new beginning do you know what I mean?

Yeah.

Because I've made a decision and I've stuck to it.

It hurts when I know the children especially H when he's not er happy about the situation, inside I think well oh dear but then again I think no I'm sorry, one day you'll settle and might move oh miles away, and you might think oh we'll visit my mam once a year, so what have I got.

Mm.

As with S1, there are shades of a 'living for oneself' argument in this (lines 43 – 45), which also appears in the following extract:

And then em H__ found out I was going out with him (J__) and he he wouldn't speak to me. He said oh you're a fool and all this that and the other and I thought well it's my life you know and I've got to do what I want.

The existence of two contradictory elements in S2's relational discourse raises questions about the applicability of the melodramatic form: the quintessential component of a melodrama is its unidimensional 'honest soul' characters. Although, as I have discussed, S2's transcript demonstrates many of the accepted features of melodrama, the type of ambivalence shown by S2 is wholly inconsistent with the melodramatic form.

I would instead like to relate this variability to discursive function. For the greater part of the interview, the melodramatic form is functionally appropriate: the respondent has a vast tract of material to cover (the following is a typical comment: "That's nothing actually. It's just the edges of it": S2:29:8), hence, given the time constraints, to describe events in a detailed manner is impossible. Her presentation of herself as a survivor, ill-done—to by oppressive figures, is most effectively served by a melodrama: complex characterisations (by providing explanations or excuses for the oppressor's behaviour) might divert sympathy away from the narrator and would certainly lessen the impact of the 'blameless heroine' role she adopts.
However, when she shifts from the straightforward 'good mother' repertoire to a description of the conflict between her husband and her son and the consequent choice she has to make between them, the 'honest soul' self-representation and the melodramatic form become inappropriate. One cannot envisage an 'honest soul' being sufficiently ambivalent about his/her relationships to have difficulty in making such a choice. According to the 'rules' of melodrama, as she delineates the husband as the hero and the son as the villain, one would anticipate the narrator's choice in favour of the husband to be inevitable; in actuality, the narrator represents the decision as having caused her some anguish:

55  S Because I've made a decision and I've stuck to it.  
(page twenty two)  
1  It hurts when I know the children especially H__ when  
2  he's not er happy about the situation, inside I think  
3  well oh dear  
{S2:21/22}

To deal with this issue of choice, she must thus evolve a more complex self-representation; this switching between forms of self-representation raises further doubts about the validity of applying Gergen's theory (a single narrative form to describe an entire text) ad lib to discourse.
Summary

There are several features of S2's account which correspond to the narrative form of melodrama: undivided 'honest soul' type characters; as character are incapable of internal conflict, drama in melodrama is provided by externally located conflict.

S2's data adds evidence to the point deduced in my analysis of S1's transcript: self-representations are variable, this variability being influenced by discursive context. This exemplifies one of the limitations of Gergen's hypothesis: to describe an account solely in terms of narrative form is to distort it.
3.3 S3: ROMANCE OR TRAGEDY?

At the time of interview, like the other participants in this study, S3 held a job in the caring professions. She is married (to A___), from whom she has recently separated, and has three children (B__, C__ and D__). S3’s account concentrates almost exclusively on the events leading up to her separation from her husband: issues which form part of the core of the other two women’s interviews (e.g. children) are referred to only tangentially, insofar as they impinge upon the separation. She has held a variety of jobs, including secretarial work and nursing, and has been involved as a marriage guidance councillor.

S3’s account contains two main narrative forms: a tragic form which she uses to tell the story of the breakdown of her marriage and the events leading up to it, and a romance narrative which describes her progression from the nadir of separation to regained mental health and self—fulfilment. These two forms are interwoven throughout the transcript, with the tragedy predominating at the beginning of the interview, the romance at the end.

Ostensibly, S3’s account resembles that of S1:

1 I Okay, the first thing I need is like a few
2 biographical details.
3 S Mhm.
4 I You’re working as a medical receptionist.
5 S Mhm, yes.
6 I Er do you have any children?
7 S Yes, three.
8 I Boys? Girls?
9 S I’ve got a girl of nearly eighteen, a boy of fifteen
10 and a half, and a girl of nine.
11 I And they all they all live at home at the moment?
12 S Yes, yes they all live at home.
13 I Er what age were you when you left school?
14 S Sixteen.
15 I And your date of birth? If you don’t mind.
16 S Two two twelve forty seven. No I don’t mind.
17 I And do you have any political affiliations.
18 S No.
19 I Er what did you do immediately after you left school.
20 S Immediately I left school I went to secretarial
21 college, for — a year, and then worked — for two years,
22 as a secretary, and then trained as a nurse, and did my
23 state registration. I qualified as a nurse in 1970.
24 I And then then you went into nursing?
25 S Yes. I went into nursing, em got married, in my
26 training and em got pregnant, just when I qualified, so
27 I only worked for — about six or nine months before I
left, to have a baby. Didn't work for a long time.

I So you didn't go back to work after you had the child?

S Not full time. I've always done bits and pieces of work part time, but no, I didn't go back to work. I didn't take maternity leave, is that what you mean?

I Yeah.

S No, no. I gave up work, when I had my first child.

I Why did you switch from secretarial to nursing?

S I always wanted to be a nurse. Always, from being a little girl, but I didn't do very well at school, in fact I did abysmally, so I hadn't got enough 'O' levels, so I then went to secretarial college and got those qualifications, and when I was a little bit older, 'cause you couldn't start until you were eighteen anyway, and I was nineteen, decided that I would just approach the hospital where I lived and say I felt sure I could do it, give me the opportunity to sit the entrance exam. Which I did, em went to night school and got maths 'O' level, so I had maths and English, and em started I still wanted to train as a nurse, so I became a nurse then, and qualified.

Chronological questioning {S3:1—20} produces responses in the passive tense which, as with S1, suggest an external locus of control, e.g.

I Er what did you do immediately after you left school.
S Immediately I left school I went to secretarial college, for — a year, and then worked — for two years, as a secretary, and then trained as a nurse, and did my state registration. I qualified as a nurse in 1970.

However, providing further evidence that adoption of this passive role is linked to the style of questioning, once the interviewer adjusts the mode of questioning:

I Why did you switch from secretarial to nursing?

the passive voice is immediately replaced by a competence narrative which stresses agency:

S I always wanted to be a nurse. Always, from being a little girl, but I didn't do very well at school, in fact I did abysmally, so I hadn't got enough 'O' levels, so I then went to secretarial college and got those qualifications, and when I was a little bit older, 'cause you couldn't start until you were eighteen anyway, and I was nineteen, decided that I would just approach the hospital where I lived and say I felt sure I could do it, give me the opportunity to sit the entrance exam. Which I did, em went to night
school and got maths 'O' level, so I had maths and
English, and em started I still wanted to train as a
nurse, so I became a nurse then, and qualified.
{S3:1}

This extract stresses determination and commitment:

S I always wanted to be a nurse. Always, from being a
little girl.
{S3:1}

and faith in her own abilities:

S ... I
would just approach the hospital where I lived and say
I felt sure I could do it, give me the opportunity to
sit the entrance exam.
{S3:1}

is in opposition to the passive image the chronological questioning has given rise to.

The image which S3 evolves of the medical receptionist's job, likewise, is far more positive than that of S1; for S3, the job is a source of self-esteem, a critical component of a positive self-image:

S ... having been both a
secretary and a nurse, I thought that that would stand
me in quite good stead for receptionist's work. And I
love it. It's like it's all these years and I've
really found something that I very much enjoy. And
it's a sense of responsibility, I like feeling important
again, it's good.
{S3:1}

Yeah. As you say it'll be a boost to your
confidence.
S Oh tremendous. And I decided that - I decided I had
to work again, not not for financial reasons, I didn't
have to really, but em for my sanity really. I think I
would have gone round the bend. I think I probably
would. It's no good, you know sitting and thinking of
yourself and feeling sorry for yourself, you've got to
get up and do something. So I have done. And I'm
enjoying - actually, I'm beginning to enjoy life again.
{S3:2}

However, these are marginal issues in relation to this narrative: there are two main themes which I wish to illustrate by reference to S3's account. Firstly, I wish to look at relationship narratives: what narrative forms are drawn upon, what contrasts exist between them, how do they position the narrator and other participants; I would like to use the tragic form to illustrate points about relationship narratives. Secondly, using the romance narrative as my example, I wish to make a more detailed examination of the rhetoric of narrative: what
components are necessary to make a good story.

The Relational Narrative: The Tragedy

The first part of S3's account is concerned with a brief description of events leading to her current position:

S ... I mean I knew something was wrong, not for very long; when you look back in retrospect you can see. I can see. And I suppose for about — well I did know something was wrong for about eight weeks. Suspected that A was having an affair, actually. But he wasn't, and he isn't. But that's the only thing I could think of. For the — not a dramatic change, he didn't distance himself from me at all, but something was different and I couldn't put my finger on it.

I When you know somebody that well.

S I knew something was wrong =

I =The slightest =

S =And I pressed I pushed him and he went the first time, and came back after a couple of hours saying that you know he was so screwed up about life generally, and he just felt that he didn't love me, but actually he changed his mind on that and said it wasn't that at all, it was just his life he felt in a mess. So he came back then, for six months we tried, got some help, got some counselling, then it got too much for him, he couldn't he started to have to look at himself, and that actually that triggered off his not being able to cope. Or his not being having feelings for me which he wanted to have which he said he hadn't got anymore, which was a bit of a blow.

I Yeah, definitely, after what, twenty years?

S We'd been married nineteen years but twenty years we'd known each other, yes. Very young when we got married.

I Do you think that's part of the problem? That you grow away — it seems to have happened so suddenly.

S I don't =I think it's a lot of things. There's a lot more to it, do you want me to tell you? I mean or?

1 I It's up to you; if you want to tell me.

3 S There's a lot more to it than just that, em we got married when I was twenty one. A was — twenty three. We met, got engaged in three weeks; I fell head over heels, having had loads of boyfriends and having had a really good time, which he hadn't had.

8 I Mm.

9 S He hadn't had any of that. He’d had one girlfriend, for two years and she’d been two timing him. So anyway we got married, deliriously happy. Very different sorts of people; I was the sort of extrovert, and A was the introvert, quiet and but we made a good team,
and gradually we sort of changed and we grew together if you like. And then we had C, and then when B was at school went to school, A was travelling he's always travelled all over the world, I had an affair with somebody, much younger than me. Eleven years younger than me (slight laugh), deliberately had an affair, set out to have one, and it didn't have the desired effect. I had I did it deliberately, em because I was I felt neglected. I felt that I was married to somebody who was incredibly ambitious, and I was being left behind.

\{S3:4/5\}

The interviewer's role in this is similar to that adopted in S2: as the material is of a sensitive and a personal nature, there seems to be a taboo against disagreeing with the narrator's version of events. This is akin to the process found in the masculinity/femininity study, whereby argument by familiar example ("My father's not like that", etcetera) is not generally questioned. As with S2, apart from this 'supportive' role, the account largely takes the form of a monologue, and the interviewer's intercession is minimal. This is in contrast to S1, where the version of events produced is clearly a product of interviewer/interviewee negotiation, the interviewer offering definitions and making interpretations.

The dialogue changes character at line 38: from offering a straightforward definition of events, S3 begins to surmise on the reasons underlying those events. The interviewer picks up on this change \{S3:4:41–42\} and (after an insertion sequence in which S3 seeks \{S3:4:44\} and receives \{S3:4:46\} approval for this change of topic), she continues with the new type of narrative. This begins with an initially positive starting point:

\[S\ldots\] we got married when I was twenty one. A was twenty three. We met, got engaged in three weeks; I fell head over heels, having had loads of boyfriends and having had a really good time, which he hadn't had. I Mm.

\[S\] He hadn't had any of that. He'd had one girlfriend, for two years and she'd been two timing him. So anyway we got married, deliriously happy. Very different sorts of people; I was the sort of extrovert, and A was the introvert, quiet and but we made a good team, and gradually we sort of changed and we grew together if you like.

\{S3:4\}

This creates a puzzle which needs to be solved (given an idyllically happy marriage, how did the separation arise?): a standard rhetorical device.
So what narrative forms does this extract contain? The basic premise of the account is a tragic one, but it is not presented in a linear form, due to the switch of topic from line 38 onwards. Prior to this, the account takes a fairly consistent regressive form: she describes events with increasingly negative evaluations. Her account proceeds through increasing levels of emotional distance, beginning with an initial feeling of unease:

10 S Yes. I mean I knew something was wrong. I mean I
11 knew something was wrong, not for very long; when
12 you look back in retrospect you can see. I can see.
13 And I suppose for about — well I did know something
14 was wrong for about eight weeks. Suspected that A_
15 was having an affair, actually. But he wasn't, and
16 he isn't. But that's the only thing I could think
17 of. For the — not a dramatic change, he didn't
18 distance himself from me at all, but something was
19 different and I couldn't put my finger on it.
{S3:4}
This escalates towards a recognition of the problem, as she begins to evolve a picture of her husband as a complex character, incomprehensible even to himself:

23 S =And I pressed I pushed him and he went the first
24 time, and came back after a couple of hours saying
25 that you know he was so screwed up about life
26 generally, and he just felt that he didn't love me,
27 but actually he changed his mind on that and said it
28 wasn't that at all, it was just his life he felt in
29 a mess.
{S3:4}

A brief period of stability leads eventually to a final separation:

29A S ... So he came back then, for six months we
30 tried, got some help, got some counselling, then it
31 got too much for him, he couldn't he started to have
32 to look at himself, and that actually that triggered
33 off his not being able to cope.
{S3:4}

This regressive narrative, contrasted with the positive conceptualisation of the beginning of the marriage {S3:4:47–59}, gives the account its tragic form.

From page 4, line 43, the text adopts a different form. Over the next three pages, as S3 proffers reason after reason for the separation, the narrative loses its clearly regressive nature. Consistent with Gergen's components for a story,
S3 evolves a causally linked set of events to account for the separation in the following two extracts:

S ... So the affair ended we
never talked about it. A and I never ever he —
I That's a bad sign.
S Until em — we actually had B as a result of
the affair; not it wasn't his child it was A’s
child but we had B and it was never discussed,
ever ever talked about. Until, in June this year,
which is all those years ago, I knew that something
was wrong, so — I pushed and A left and came back,
and we sat down in the bedroom and it was time to be
honest. So I asked him — had he ever been
unfaithful, to me. And it was like a bolt out of
the blue. Yes, lots of times (slight laugh). And I
said oh. And apparently in response to me having an
affair, for two years after that he felt so instead
of us going through it all, he felt so bad about
himself, for two years he started messing around on
his trips abroad. One affair lasted two years, with
the wife of somebody who worked for him would you
believe. All foreign, they're all foreign these
people (slight laugh). But I only knew that
recently. My response to that — I didn't know what
I it was so long ago that I only knew the truth I
only knew now that it was as if it had just
happened. A’s reaction to my behaviour was well
it happened so long ago that I only knew the truth I
shouldn’t feel like that = but I did.
I Yeah; these things always —
S So then we went for counselling, and she confront
she asked me to tell him how I felt about what he’d
done, and he couldn’t handle it. He didn’t like
what he’d done. Em then he left. So then I was
left with the feelings of what I’d done, what he had
done, but I hadn’t got anybody to work through it
with, because he’d gone and he
(page six)
I wouldn’t let me he wouldn’t let me any more. He felt
then I went to America, and em had one lots of phone
calls but one very bad one from him, lots of tears
saying that real husbands don’t leave their wives
and travel all over the world and don’t screw around
with other women. And that was right at the
beginning of all this, three months ago he said
that. And I’ve never forgotten that and I think
that was one of the reasons. One of the reasons he
left; he couldn’t he couldn’t live with how he’d
behaved.
I You were a constant reminder of what he’d done.
S Absolutely. Mm.
I It sounds like it.
S But he never gave me the opportunity to em — you
know get get it out of my system if you like. He
did all the things that I’d done before we got
married, within the marriage. Now that to me — I could have learned to live with. Didn’t like it. Equally I didn’t like the way I’d behaved, but it’s not it doesn’t have to be the end of a marriage but A that was together with all the other things that he felt was part of why he couldn’t live with me any more. So he decided that he’d go. I That’s the coward’s way out really, isn’t it. S Well I think so. I don’t think it’s just that he doesn’t love me, whatever that is. I think it’s he doesn’t actually think much about himself. I think his feelings about himself are pretty awful. Em — quite complicated, isn’t it. I Hm. But I can understand it. S It’s easy to run away. I Yeah. S Because if he’s with me I’m a constant reminder. I It’s easier to run away. S I’m not sure it is, though, because in the long run — you see I think that he’s actually splitting himself. I remember at the beginning I said, "you must hate yourself for doing what you’ve done", ‘cause he his children and me were everything to him really, and he’s given up all that. Hasn’t he. I Yeah, definitely. I don’t know whether you should feel sorry for him — S I did at the beginning, but I don’t now. I I feel — I thought I felt nothing until Saturday and he came round to pick up C__ to play squash, and he annoyed me intensely. And after he’d gone I was upset so I went to a friend’s for coffee, and — it’s funny because I thought he’d been I thought I felt nothing for him, now I’m so confused about what i do feel it actually is annoying me intensely. His behaviour is slightly bizarre. He’s not the same person at all. This is perhaps him, I don’t know. Perhaps he has been acting. I You wouldn’t imagine he could act for twenty years. S He came round on Sunday and he was so like he’d had a shot of heroin, he was as high as a kite! Flitting from one thing to another and and — that’s how he is. That’s how he had been, recently, of recent months, more than he had been previously, swinging from — I One mood to another.

(page seven)
S Yes, never — Never — he never used to argue or — he didn’t used to argue; I mean that’s the different backgrounds that we came from; I was used to you know constructive arguing. He saw that as totally destructive. As far as he was concerned arguing is destructive. What’s said in an argument is said, now that — since we broke up, that’s all come out; he’s actually said a lot of things to me that I’m sure he didn’t mean to say.
S Now he was never there. That's not true; he was.

He was abroad a lot, so I learnt to become very
independent. He needed me to be independent, so
that he could do his job properly and not worry
about me. Now the more independent I became, the
more he the more he disliked me.

I The more he perceived you as not needing him, I
suppose.

S Yes.

{S3:7}

In these extracts, she relates her husband's travelling (in connection with his
work) to the narrator's sense of neglect (which in turn leads to an affair):

S ... A__ was travelling he's always travelled all
over
the world, I had an affair with somebody, much
younger than me. Eleven years younger than me
(slight laugh), deliberately had an affair, set out
to have one, and it didn't have the desired effect.
I had I did it deliberately, em because I was I felt
neglected. I felt that I was married to somebody
who was incredibly ambitious, and I was being left
behind.

{S3:4/5}

Leaving the extract given on page 343/4 {S3:4/5}, she describes her husband's
travelling as necessitating a concomitant increase in her independence, which
results in the marginalisation of her husband:

S He was abroad a lot, so I learnt to become very
independent. He needed me to be independent, so
that he could do his job properly and not worry
about me. Now the more independent I became, the
more he the more he disliked me.

I The more he perceived you as not needing him, I
suppose.

S Yes.

{S3:7}

She establishes a causal link between her husband's infidelity and her own
affair:

S ... So I asked him — had he ever been
unfaithful, to me. And it was like a bolt out of
the blue. Yes, lots of times (slight laugh). And I
said oh. And apparently in response to me having an
affair, for two years after that he felt so instead
of us going through it all, he felt so bad about
himself, for two years he started messing around on
his trips abroad.

In the following extract, likewise, she causally links her husband's infidelity to his guilt:

S So then we went for counselling, and she confront
she asked me to tell him how I felt about what he'd
done, and he couldn't handle it. He didn't like
what he'd done. Em then he left. So then I was
left with the feelings of what I'd done, what he had
done, but I hadn't got anybody to work through it
with, because he'd gone and he

wouldn't let me he wouldn't let me any more. He felt
then I went to America, and em had one lots of phone
calls but one very bad one from him, lots of tears
saying that real husbands don't leave their wives
and travel all over the world and don't screw around
with other women. And that was right at the
beginning of all this, three months ago he said
that. And I've never forgotten that and I think
that was one of the reasons. One of the reasons he
left; he couldn't he couldn't live with how he'd
behaved.

I You were a constant reminder of what he'd done.
S Absolutely. Mm.

I It sounds like it.
S But he never gave me the opportunity to em - you
know get get it out of my system if you like. He
did all the things that I'd done before we got
married, within the marriage. Now that to me - I
could have learned to live with. Didn't like it.
Equally I didn't like the way I'd behaved, but it's
not it doesn't have to be the end of a marriage but
A that was together with all the other things that
he felt was part of why he couldn't live with me any
more. So he decided that he'd go.

I That's the coward's way out really, isn't it.
S Well I think so. I don't think it's just that he
doesn't love me, whatever that is. I think it's he
doesn't actually think much about himself. I think
his feelings about himself are pretty awful. Em -
quite complicated, isn't it.

I Hm. But I can understand it.
S It's easy to run away.
S Yeah.
S Because if he's with me I'm a constant reminder.

Note also the minimal and supportive role of the interviewer in these extracts

{S3:6:28/30, S3:7:47 - 48}. 
So what function does presenting these 'explanations' for separation in this sequential form serve? One could relate it back to the narrator's 'talk as therapy' ideology, which derives from her time as a marriage guidance councillor:

12 S ... I had a
desperate need when it first happened to talk about
why it went wrong.
{S3:8}

However, one can also look at how she constructs a causal account which switches blame. In order to do this, one must look at the 'reasons' which she gives for the separation: as well as her husband's guilt (discussed earlier), she refers firstly to her husband's inexperience:

49 S ... I fell
head over heels, having had loads of boyfriends and
having had a really good time, which he hadn't had.
52 I Mm.
53 S He hadn't had any of that. He'd had one
54 girlfriend, for two years and she'd been two timing
55 him.
{S3:4}

16 S ... He
did all the things that I'd done before we got
married, within the marriage.
{S3:6}

The second reason she gives is her husband's lack of communication:

29 S ... So the affair ended we
never talked about it. A__ and I never ever he —
That's a bad sign.
32 S Until em — we actually had B__ as a result of
the affair; not it wasn't his child it was A__'s
child but we had B__ and it was never discussed,
never ever talked about.
{S3:5}

which, as she takes pains to point out, is not shared by herself:

1 S Yes, never — Never — he never used to argue or —
he didn't used to argue; I mean that's the different
backgrounds that we came from; I was used to you
know constructive arguing. He saw that as totally
destructive. As far as he was concerned arguing is
destructive. What's said in an argument is said,
now that — since we broke up, that’s all come out; he’s actually said a lot of things to me that I’m sure he didn’t mean to say.

She also evolves an illness theory:

S ... His behaviour is slightly bizarre. He’s not the same person at all. This is perhaps him, I don’t know. Perhaps he has been acting. You wouldn’t imagine he could act for twenty years.

S He came round on Sunday and he was so like he’d had a shot of heroin, he was as high as a kite! Flitting from one thing to another and and — that’s how he is. That’s how he had been, recently, of recent months, more than he had been previously, swinging from — I One mood to another.

Outwith the initial accounting for the separation (pages 5, 6 and 7), in an interesting variant on the usual convention of men aging better than women, she refers to the male menopause in explanation for the break-up:

S But I I’ve seen it so often, men around this time in their life I believe have a bigger struggle than we do. Mm.

With their identity. It’s like everything’s beginning for me, and you know perhaps A has nearly reached his potential. Maybe, in a few year’s time, and whereas I will be taking off, you know what I mean.

All of these extracts attribute blame to the characteristics of the husband. By using this method of presentation which causally links events, those influential factors which do derive from the narrator (such as her affair) are explained away as responses to her husband’s behaviour (e.g. S3:5:1–8). This kind of presentation, coupled with the tragic narrative form, thus establishes the narrator as a virtually blameless heroine, victimised by an evil oppressor. However, unlike the 'honest souls' of S2’s account, the characterisation of the 'oppressor' drawn by S3 to support the tragic narrative form is not simplistic, although initial observations might suggest this. Her first representation of her husband’s character uses a basic trait model of personality to depict her
marriage as the attraction of opposites; different but complimentary:

Very different sorts of people; I was the sort of extrovert, and A was the introvert, quiet and but we made a good team, and gradually we sort of changed and we grew together if you like.

As previously noted, this difference in personality types is used as a reason for the separation. She also uses a 'role—playing' model of the self to frame a further explanation: a tragic sub—plot describes the husband's occupational role (which requires him to be hard—hearted and ruthless) as suppressing his realisation of his good, self—actualising features (care, compassion):

The ridiculous part is A is running a big company, I think he's got a battle inside his head. He actually is caring, very caring, but he has to make lots of people redundant. I It affects him. S Desperately. I Hm. S I mean I can remember last year the year before he had to get rid of somebody who he'd actually employed who's daughter was dying of a brain tumour. And he just wouldn't talk about it. He would say 'well, he's no good, that's it'. But it hurt him, I mean he actually mentioned it. You know he had to he's actually in a job where — you do care about what's happening around you, but actually you've got to be quite ruthless, haven't you. Now I think he was struggling about that. But I mean I can't do anything about him, can I?

The lack of fulfilment and conflict which results from this mismatch of personality traits and occupational demands is proposed as a further reason for separation; again, she diverts blame away from herself.

The straightforward role and trait models described above are, however, rare in S3's account; her characters tend to be complex, difficult to understand and capable of displaying inconsistency both in behaviour and demonstrable character traits. Whereas S2's characters are simple to understand, as she presents actions as the inevitable product of one or two immutable personality traits, S3 has no such key to understanding. S3 lives in a world which she presents as enigmatic, where effects are not necessarily linked to causes. This uncertainty about events is mirrored by uncertainty about her husband's
personality and motivation; the dominant feelings conveyed by her account are bewilderment and incomprehension:

38  S ... I think now god what a strange man he is. You
39  know, did I ever know who he was? I don't think I
40  did, you know in all those years.
{S3:9}

44  S ... I feel
45  — I thought I felt nothing until Saturday and he
46  came round to pick up C— to play squash, and he
47  annoyed me intensely.
{S3:6}

This leads on to the illness discourse described on page ?. The husband is depicted as at the mercy of contradictory desires:

28  S ... I think
29  his feelings about himself are pretty awful. Em —
30  quite complicated, isn't it.
31  I Hm. But I can understand it.
32  S It's easy to run away.
33  I Yeah.
34  S Because if he's with me I'm a constant reminder.
35  I It's easier to run away.
36  S I'm not sure it is, though, because in the long
37  run — you see I think that he's actually splitting
38  himself. I remember at the beginning I said, "you
39  must hate yourself for doing what you've done",
40  'cause he his children and me were everything to him
41  really, and he's given up all that.
{S3:6}

S3's presentation of her husband as incomprehensible and illogical removes any possibility of blame being attributed to the narrator: his irrational — if not psychotic (as the use of the mental illness discourse implies) — behaviour is put forward as sufficient explanation for the separation; any action she may have taken is either in response to his behaviour or — in comparison to his contribution to the separation — not influential on events.

Before proceeding to look at the romantic narrative, I would like to consider the idea that, for women, narratives serve the purpose of reaffirming relationships. This derives from the semiotic perspective that relationships have an intangible, thus tenuous, existence, and hence have to be substantiated and confirmed in discourse. As the Gergens comment:

"Person description ceases to operate as a mirror of reality. Rather it becomes a linguistic device for carrying out relationships."
This, they argue, is particularly salient in women, given that, historically, they are typically subservient to men, and enjoy considerably less security in relationships:

"This perennially precarious position of the female, it may be proposed, invited the development of an elaborate language of relations. In particular, for the female there was a need for a specialized language that could enhance the power of the female ... bond the male more securely, and thereby enhance the sense of security."

(Gergen & Gergen, 1987, p178)

The consequence of this, the Gergens claim, is that there is a particular 'women's discourse', concerned with emotion and relationships:

"... women employ emotional discourse ... for purposes of securing and retaining the commitment of the male. They will become adept at emotional performances as a means of challenging the male's inclination towards independence."

(Gergen & Gergen, 1987, p279)

In contrast to 'male' discourse:

"... males will typically find emotional talk ... alien if not bizarre ... and so develop a linguistic arsenal that will combat its effects (typically the language of the individual, with its emphasis on rationality and objectivity)."

(Gergen & Gergen, 1987, p280)

This has an obvious correlation to Gilligan's "different voice", and similar criticisms (a priori assumption of gender categories, homogenisation, reification of stereotypes) pertain.

When one looks at S3's interview there is, in fact, some evidence that she is using relational discourse in this way. In the following passage, memories are seen as tangible, exerting an influence on the present:

45 S I think when I think back to all that I could I
46 couldn't have done my nursing qualification without
47 the tremendous support that A gave me to cover
48 everything so I could study. Things like that are
49 never going to be repeated are they? And those
50 things - I think are the things that will always
51 bind you together as a couple because you've got
52 those memories. So I don't think that when a couple
53 split up - they can ever actually forget all that
54 they've gone through, together, can they?
55 I No. It does shape you; it's bound to.
However, I would argue that S3 does not use relational discourse because she is female, but because it is expedient in the context; a man describing a similar situation may well use a similar discourse. In a different context, it follows that a woman may question this relational discourse, as S3 in fact does:

I would argue, from my perspective, that relational discourse is not something which is specific to women, but another linguistic resource which may be drawn upon or not as situational factors demand.
ii) The Rhetoric of Narrative: The Romance

As I demonstrated in the previous section, the tragic form utilises a regressive narrative and a complex characterisation to achieve a blame attribution. Surrounding this tragic form is a romantic narrative, which progresses from the end point of the tragedy (separation) to mental health and self—actualisation.

Rather than risk repetition by evaluating the romantic narrative in terms of relational discourse (as I did with the tragedy), I would like to use it to illustrate some points on the rhetoric of narrative: that is, what is involved in the telling of a good story?

There are two aspects to the story—telling element: a clear narrative form and the polarisation of key events and key individuals to promote dramatic tension.

Narrative Form

To firstly consider narrative form, S3's account contains a clear romantic narrative which moves from negative evaluation (separation) to positive (mental health, self—fulfilment).

It must however be noted that, over the whole transcript, the 'romance' form is not wholly successful: one is left with the conviction that this is a tragedy which the narrator is attempting to fashion into a romance. The predominance of regressive over progressive narrative, and the lack of conviction in the 'self—fulfilment'/mental health' end point suggest to me that, for this narrator, a true 'romance' would be to regain her husband. However, constrained as she is by the unalterable material facts of her life, she must create an alternative — if less convincing — positive end point: mental health/self—fulfilment.

The romantic narrative is not temporally linear: events are described more or less in reverse of their chronological occurrence, beginning with the relatively optimistic 'end—point' situated in the present. The second stage of the romantic narrative involves a description of progressive events or states in the past, and the final stage, a description of the negative 'starting point' of the romance (which is also the end point of the tragic narrative), is found towards the middle of the interview.
After the brief period of chronological questioning, the romance 'begins' with S3's description of a fairly high end point of relative stability (some self-esteem, some enjoyment of life):

20 S ... It's like it's all these
21 years and I've really found something that I very
22 much enjoy. And it's a sense of responsibility, I
23 like feeling important again, it's good.
24 I Yeah. As you say it'll be a boost to your
25 confidence.
26 S Oh tremendous. And I decided that - I decided I
27 had to work again, not not for financial reasons, I
28 didn't have to really, but em for my sanity really.
29 I think I would have gone round the bend. I think I
30 probably would. It's no good, you know sitting and
31 thinking of yourself and feeling sorry for yourself,
32 you've got to get up and do something. So I have
33 done. And I'm enjoying - actually, I'm beginning to
34 enjoy life again.
{S3:2}

The second stage of the 'romance' narrative is the progressive element, which is introduced immediately after the above extract:

34A S ... It's quite
35 soon, it's only three months, but it's not bad.
36 being on my own again after all these years; it's
37 quite it's like being able to breathe again. It's a
38 really odd feeling.
39 I Yeah. You're starting to see the advantages of it
40 I suppose now.
41 S I am. I am. And I think I'm - my positive
42 thoughts now are more than the negative ones. I
43 still get down, don't get me wrong, I still have bad
44 times, but but I can always life myself out of them
45 now. A few weeks ago I couldn't do that. I can get
46 out of it now. If I feel down, I don't stay down.
47 I Mhm.
48 S 'Cause I've got to go to work every day. So i do
49 feel totally different, I mean if you'd have talked
50 to me three months ago I think you would have
51 thought I would have put a gun to my head I think
52 (slight laugh), but not now: I feel quite different.
53 That's good.
{S3:2}

Past–present contrasts create the impression of progression; references to the past are unequivocally negative:

45 S A few weeks ago I couldn't do that.
{S3:2}
S if you’d have talked to me three months ago I think you would have thought I would have put a gun to my head.

whereas discourse concerning the present is more positive:

S I am. And I think I’m — my positive thoughts now are more than the negative ones. I still get down, don’t get me wrong, I still have bad times, but I can always life myself out of them now. A few weeks ago I couldn’t do that.

S If I feel down, I don’t stay down.

The romance concludes by embellishing the nadir (set up in the previous two stages) from which the narrator has risen: the mental health discourse reappears, this time functioning to portray the separation as precipitating a major psychological crisis:

S ... I mean you go through some really crazy behaviour. Crazy thoughts and I mean I’m not out of it yet, but I’m more stable now. I mean I — I did think that I was bordering on — you know — becoming insane, I think, because my brain every moment of the day when I was awake or if I’d wake in the night, the confusion was horrendous, you know.

I know exactly what you mean.

S Terrible. That’s gone. It’s not as bad. If I wake in the night now it doesn’t matter. The thoughts of how I felt then I think that that I will never subject myself to that again. It’s a very fine line, isn’t it, between between being — sane and actually cracking up.

In keeping with the romance form, both of these extracts describe crises in retrospect — the present viewed more positively — once undergone — make the narrator a 'better', more fulfilled person than
before the crisis. The following extract provides an example of this; the separation (exacerbated by S3 leaving the country) leads to self—actualisation (increased self—confidence):

Em — I think — by going within a week, by leaving the country, I lost my support system entirely, apart from the children. It was a big thing to do, and I think I think it made things worse for me initially, because I didn't have a support system, which I needed. Just like he walked out and left me and then I cleared off out of the country. But looking back at that now I gained a lot from it as well because — I did it! And if I can do it in that frame you know as — I At that stage. S Then I can do anything. I I believe that now. I'm thinking of going on holiday on my own, next year; and I think god I'd never have thought of doing that! Why not? You know. I'm thinking things that are that I am questioning now. You know I don't know — I don't silly thing to say become over confident I don't think I ever will, but I want to feel okay because if this is my life and I am on my own, I want to have — I Yeah. You seem to be using it to realise your potential. S Mm. I think — I think when you've had children Liz, and you've you've actually devoted your life to bringing them up, you struggle a lot to know who the bloody hell you are. You know. I don't want to be just a mother. You fall into that though, you know. And I enjoyed that, I enjoyed doing that, and I gave the kids you know I was there when they needed me. Em — but I think I've become selfish, which I don't feel guilty about. I'm going to do things for me. I I don't think that's a bad thing. S It's taken me all these years to do that.

Using the 'just a mother' and 'lost identity' repertoires found in S1, she implies that 'finding herself' was also a consequence of the crisis {S3:13:17—28}.

Her account explicitly describes this 'crisis to fulfilment' repertoire through the advice and experience of a friend:

S I've talked this through with the guy next door but one who's on his own, he's a A__. His wife walked out and left him four years ago, and actually I plonked myself on him right early on; the day I
came back from America, 'cause I thought I was going
to go mad, 'cause it hit me 'cause all A__'s stuff
had gone. I was there to four in the morning with
A__, getting very drunk, and he was really good
for me. He said you're not crazy, you've got all
the behaviours to do with feelings. Em — and he
said what he'd done, how he'd behaved, and what he'd
gone through, and he's you know one of the most
together people there is, now. Em — and he said
that he believes you've got to go through those all
those bits of behaviour to get through it. And you
come out of it better. He says he feels he's a
better person. He didn't used to talk before, very
much like A__ really, wouldn't open up, but he's
learnt to now. And em — but em — it isn't it isn't
as bad as that after a bit.
{S3:14}

S3's account, thus, contains the elements of a romance narrative (crisis,
struggle, fulfilment), albeit in reverse order.
Dramatic Tension

This brings me to the second aspect of the rhetoric of narrative which I would like to discuss: the creation of dramatic tension. One way of doing this is to underline certain events as crises, as catalytic. Fateful events are presented as making their way from the past into the present.

This can be seen in the following extract, which is part of S3’s explanation for her marriage break-up:

29 S ... So the affair ended we
30 **never** talked about it. A__ and I never ever he —
31 I That’s a bad sign.
32 S Until em — we actually had B__ as a result of
33 the affair; not it wasn’t his child it was A__’s
34 child but we had B__ and it was **never** discussed,
35 never ever talked about. Until, in June this year,
36 which is all those years ago, I knew that something
37 was wrong, so — I pushed and A__ left and came back,
38 and we sat down in the bedroom and it was time to be
39 honest. So I asked him — had he ever been
40 unfaithful, to me. And it was like a bolt out of
41 the blue. Yes, lots of times (slight laugh). And I
42 said oh. And apparently in response to me having an
43 affair, for two years after that he felt so instead
44 of us going through it all, he felt so bad about
45 himself, for two years he started messing around on
46 his trips abroad. One affair lasted two years, with
47 the wife of somebody who worked for him would you
48 believe. All foreign, they’re all foreign these
49 people (slight laugh). But I only knew that
50 recently. My response to that — I didn’t know what
51 I it was so long ago that I only knew the truth I
52 only knew now that it was as if it had just
53 happened. A__’s reaction to my behaviour was well
54 it happened so long ago that I only knew the truth I
55 shouldn’t feel like that= but I did.
56 I Yeah; these things always —
57 S So then we went for counselling, and she confront
58 she asked me to tell him how I felt about what he’d
59 done, and he couldn’t handle it. He didn’t like
60 what he’d done. Em then he left.

{S3:5}

The bedroom discussion is framed as an incident of devastating significance for the narrator {S3:5:37–55}, as events from the past send repercussions into the present. S3 describes this discussion as leading the couple to seek counselling, which itself is presented as the catalytic event which precipitates the final separation:
The change from the idyllic image of the marriage presented in \{S3:4:47 – 59\} to regressive narrative is thus managed through reference to these two key events.

In a similar fashion, S3's obtainance of employment as a medical receptionist is discursively represented as a turning point from the regressive to the progressive narrative; the underlined sections in the following extract indicate discourse which represents the job as pivotal:

She uses a combination of fate and agency motifs to explain how this turning point arose:
attitude towards life. I decided that I would go for the job and then sort out my children, not make excuses. So I did it, and it's dead easy to do it isn't it.

{S3:3}

As well as fateful events, a good narrative also requires pivotal figures. The most important of these is obviously the husband, but S3's romantic narrative links her 'recovery' to the help and support of several key figures. The most influential of these is probably "the guy next door but one":

S I've talked this through with the guy next door but one who's on his own, he's a A__. His wife walked out and left him four years ago, and actually I plonked myself on him right early on; the day I came back from America, 'cause I thought I was going to go mad, 'cause it hit me 'cause all A__'s stuff had gone. I was there to four in the morning with A__, getting very drunk, and he was really good for me. He said you're not crazy, you've got all the behaviours to do with feelings. Em — and he said what he'd done, how he'd behaved, and what he'd gone through, and he's you know one of the most together people there is, now. Em — and he said that he believes you've got to go through those all those bits of behaviour to get through it. And you come out of it better. He says he feels he's a better person. He didn't used to talk before, very much like A__ really, wouldn't open up, but he's learnt to now. And em — but em — it isn't it isn't as bad as that after a bit.

{S3:14}

The crisis—fulfilment discourse which she uses as the basis of her romantic narrative is attributed to him. Likewise, the partial restoration of her faith in herself (sexual attractiveness) is attributed to another key figure:

S ... it feels comfortable with them. Em although they're a couple, it's okay to be with them. It's okay to sleep in their house. Do you know what I mean?

I Yes.

S I don't feel awful inside when I'm with them. It's probably because S__ makes an awful fuss of me, he always has done, and he flirts and we have a little laugh and joke and I feel safe. And then I've got another couple of friends who it's alright to be with them, as a couple. But not other people.

{S3:23}

He also provides advice on sexuality:

S But the thought of I was saying to S__, the
thought of going somewhere and groping my way along again, and he's killing himself laughing. He said
"I'll tell you something that you'll find" he said, "nudity won't be a problem", he said, "That I mean all the adolescent embarrassment about that, you won't feel any of that; what will be difficult" he said "is the familiarity, because when you've been married for a long time, you feel like going off to the loo and things. There's no embarrassment it's just part of your life. When you meet somebody again you've got to get over that again".
I Yeah.
S "But the rest of it" he said, "I promise you won't be any problem". But he said "for god's sake don't jump into bed with the first man that comes along", and I laughed, he said "no, honestly", he said "because I hurt myself — doing that, I just used people. There's this big — . And I I was talking about it and he said "there is this need that you have but you end up getting hurt".
I It's an ego boost again, isn't it. It's just to prove —
S To prove that you're actually okay.
I Yeah.
S Em and so he said "just be aware of that", because he said "I actually for six months went potty, and I just ended up hurting myself, and being rejected again, and em — . But he said "I don't think anything will touch you as much as this hurt.
Nothing will hurt you as much ever again".
{S3:24}
The importance of this conversation is delineated by its presentation in direct speech, which gives it far greater impact in the interview.
Summary

In the preceding section, I used S3’s transcript to look at relational discourse. S3’s account offers a tragic narrative form utilising a complex characterisation to bring off a causal account and a blame attribution.

Running parallel to this tragic form is a romance, from which I drew several points about the rhetoric of narrative, notably the need for a clear narrative form and the creation of dramatic tension through the polarisation of catalytic events and key individuals.
**FINAL CONCLUSION**

The central aim of this thesis was to look at traditional and feminist methods of studying gender, with a view to developing a new approach to the topic, based on discourse analysis.

I felt that a potentially illuminating approach to the study of gender might be to look at the way in which ordinary people talk about gender. I thus wished to use discourse analysis to examine representations of gender and gender roles in a variety of discursive situations.

The thesis addressed two tasks: a critique of existing social psychological gender research, and the evolution of a new approach to the study of gender. In the first five chapters, I provided a critique of several of the existing methods which have been applied to the study of gender. This critique was informed by discourse analysis, and led me to outline a new approach to gender.

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, existing approaches to gender within mainstream social psychology have a number of shortcomings, not least of which is essentialism (the a priori assumption of two discrete gender categories), which has the effect of emphasizing the differences between the genders, hence strengthening gender division. An essentialist approach to gender tends also to emphasize the similarities within gender categories: homogenization. The consequence of this is to exclude a number of potentially important factors (e.g., depending on circumstances, race or class differences may exert more influence than gender). Furthermore, as research by Tajfel et al (1970) suggested, homogenization makes stereotyping more likely.

When one adds the impact of the gender power dynamic, essentialism and homogenization are serious problems which traditional social psychology has significantly failed to address.

In Chapter One of the thesis, I presented a critique of two mainstream social psychological approaches to gender (broadly, the sex differences and the sex stereotypes literature), exemplifying the points I have noted above. This
criticism suggested that a move away from quantitative methodologies towards a contextually and socially sensitive approach to gender might prove useful.

In the search for such an approach, subsequent theoretical chapters explored gender work outside mainstream social psychology; approaches informed by feminism, by psychoanalysis, by novel applications of social identity theory and post-structuralism.

Feminist theory was an obvious place to look for an approach with an awareness of power issues and a non-stereotypical representation of gender. However, as discussed in Chapter Two with reference to the work of Carol Gilligan, instead of rebuking stereotypes, the 'cultural' feminism of the 1980's has tended to positively re-evaluate them. Chapter Three and the beginning of Chapter Four make the same point in respect of work in the psychoanalytic tradition.

There is little doubt that this re-evaluation of 'established' gender characteristics (i.e. those generally applied to the sexes) was a necessary stage in the move away from the male-oriented traditional approach. However, it is not without its own set of shortcomings: like its mainstream predecessor, 'cultural' feminism is also essentialist. Individual differences are suppressed and little potential for social change exists; it offers a panacea to women, but little prospect of real improvement.

Finding no solution within 'cultural' feminism, in Chapter Four I turned my attention towards new developments in feminist social psychology. A feminist reworking of Social Identity Theory seemed to offer a potentially useful approach to gender which is worthy of further exploration. However, as this work was not available when I began my research, the most useful of the new developments in social psychology was post-structuralism; the examination of a topic (such as gender) as a social construction, rather than as a given fact. This approach allows one to deconstruct the power relations and the ideology underpinning the concept of gender, and is not subject to the problems of homogenization and essentialism described above.

My final task in Chapters Four and Five was to outline a new approach to the study of gender, based on post-structuralism. I felt that combining a deconstructionist approach to gender with a methodology which would allow
for the systematic analysis of language data (discourse analysis) would prove an interesting way of studying gender.

In the second section of the thesis, I applied the methodology of discourse analysis to some empirical data. This data concerned two main topics which were delineated as important by the review chapters: gender stereotypes (Bem) and the female self-concept (the psychoanalytic work). To this I wished to add social change (a recurrent theme in the pilot studies and the topic of much feminist research).

I had several intentions in examining these areas: I wished to assess the utility of discourse analysis for studying gender, and also wished to develop a contrast between discourse analysis and the more traditional research perspectives which I had outlined in the first three empirical chapters.

The first empirical study, discussed in Chapter Six, looked at the conceptualisations of gender and work issues offered by a group of young, professional women. Despite the problems deriving from my lack of experience as an interviewer, and the constraints of a structured interview format, this chapter confirmed that discourse analysis was an illuminating methodology with which to study gender; discernible 'repertoires' of gender and self, variably deployed according to context and function, were discernible in the data.

This chapter also attempted to describe the dominant ideology about gender and work, and discussed how this create a dilemma for professional women. The remainder of the chapter illustrated how participants represented this dilemma in discourse, and described some of the 'coping strategies' offered by the women. In retrospect, this chapter perhaps suffers from a lack of analysis; the data would benefit from rather more explication.

The second study, analysed in Chapter Seven, uses discourse analysis to critique traditional ideas about stereotyping; specifically, the socio-cognitive approach to categorisation.

The problems with this study were numerous, the main ones being as follows: how does one move away from a structured interview format without losing
control of the topics discussed; use of a particularly atypical group of participants; the need to creatively interpret how the concepts of socio-cognitive theory would look in language, before the process of analysis could begin. Due to these problems, this chapter ends almost where it should have begun: there is considerable scope for a taxonomy of argumentative strategies which, due to time constraints, I could only hint at in this thesis. However, the comparison between language data and the predictions made by socio-cognitive theory raises interesting questions about the utility of the latter in a practical context, and may itself merit further investigation.

The final chapter, which examines how the self is constructed in language, proved potentially the most interesting, but also the most elusive. In my analysis, I have drawn broad conclusions about the flexibility and the functionality of the deployment of representations of the self, and about the negotiated nature of narratives. Invoking a variety of concepts from literary theory, it was possible to impose a dominant form on the narratives; however, in this process, much interesting material was necessarily omitted.

Possibly the most serious unresolved problem in the thesis is the lack of integration between the chapters. The new approach to gender which I have outlined in Chapter Five is comprised of three important elements: ideology, subjectivity and the functional nature of language. Unfortunately, given the time constraints of the Ph.D., it was not possible to examine all of the empirical topics in terms of all of these elements. Instead, I chose to highlight one of these elements in each chapter; hence, Chapter Six's examination of women's conceptions of social change was informed by a traditional view of ideology, whereas the examination of gender stereotypes in Chapter Seven was explicated by the study of rhetoric and argumentation. Chapter Eight, in contrast, drew upon a post-structuralist theory of subjectivity to illuminate the female self-concept.

I found such a theoretical pluralism as useful, given that I was working in an area where little research has been done. It is clear, however, that there is considerable scope for a study which incorporates all of the elements I delineated as important to a new approach to gender and applies them to topics such as gender stereotypes in an integrated manner.
Like any other Ph.D., this thesis represents a learning process and, as such, is subject to problems and unresolved issues. However, it does succeed in problematising the several of the existing approaches to gender, and in establishing discourse analysis as a plausible alternative. Further research might usefully build upon some aspects of the thesis, particularly upon the idea of a taxonomy of argumentative strategies. More importantly, however, there is considerable scope for research on gender which fully integrates the three elements of ideology, subjectivity and the functional nature of language.
### Appendix 6.1

#### Subject Characteristics

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**Notes:**
- *switched from private practice
- *1 taught for two years
- IS - Information Services
Appendix 6.2

Interview Schedule

1. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**
   Do you feel happy with things as they stand?
   Do you feel equal opportunities exist already?
   Do you think they're a good thing?
   How could the situation be improved?
   - legislation, education, progression?

2. **'DIVERSION'**
   Do you have any heroes/heroines? What do you admire about them? Are those qualities you think you have yourself?
   If you could be anyone for a day, who would it be? Why?
   How do you see yourself in twenty years’ time? Ideally?
   Ambitions? How important is your work to you?

3. **MALE ENVIRONMENT**
   Do you feel as if you're working in a male environment?
   A male dominated environment?
   Do you think it would be any different to work for a female boss?
   Does it alter the way you present yourself?
   - dress, demeanour?
   What does the way you dress say about you? In work? Out of work?
   Do you feel as if you've got to be seen to be better than your male colleagues?
   Do you feel you're different out of work?

4. **CAREERS AND CHILDREN**
   Were you brought up to think a career was important?
   What did your mother do?
   Do you foresee any problems in combining careers and children?
Probe: (So you think that) it's important for women to take time out to look after their kids?

Practicalities: How would you cope with kids and a job? Would your partner help?

Role reversal: Can you imagine the father staying at home to look after the children?

5. DISCRIMINATION

I'd like to know what you think about positive discrimination (you know where a woman is preferred over a man just because she's female): do you think it's a good thing?

Do you think assertiveness training for women is a good idea?

Do you think it would help you personally?

Do you think you're less assertive than your male colleagues?

Have you ever been in a situation where you think assertiveness training might have been useful?

Have you any experience of sexual discrimination? Sexual harassment?

6. SOCIAL CHANGE

What's your opinion of feminism?

How do you think things have changed for women in society in recent years?

What do you think is the most effective way of changing things (legislation, attitudes, education)?

What's your opinion of Margaret Thatcher?
APPENDIX 7.1

Stimulus Statements

1. There are no fundamental differences between men and women.

2. It is important that mothers should stay at home and look after their children.

3. The trouble with career women is that they have lost their femininity.

4. Girls are not really suited to jobs in engineering.

5. Men are primarily interested in sex, women in romance.

   Feminists are fundamentally man–haters.

7. At heart, women want the kind of protection and support that men have traditionally given them.

8. Women should be as free to propose marriage as men.

9. It's more important for women to pay attention to how they look than it is for men.

10. Women are better at jobs in the caring professions.

11. Courtesies such as men opening doors and giving up seats for women are outdated.

12. It is the woman's role in the family to be nurturing, and the man's to be productive.

13. Most men are chauvanists at heart.

14. A lot of the differences between the sexes today stem from primitive societies, where men hunted and women raised the children.

15. The ideal woman for many men is the "dumb blonde".
16. Some professions are more suited to men than women: you'll never find a good female labourer on a building site.

17. What every woman secretly wants is to meet a tall, dark, handsome stranger.

18. The modern career woman is basically insecure.

19. Drunkenness is worse in a woman than in a man.

20. Women earning as much as their dates should pay their share of expenses on a date.

21. Things are better for women than they have been in the past.
APPENDIX 7.2

Response Scale

(NB — figures refer only to MF4 — MF10, as these were the only interviews using the stimulus statements detailed in appendix 6A; MF1 — MF3 were pilot studies using different formats. Question 21 was included only for MF7 — MF10)

1  —  Disagree Strongly
2  —  Disagree Slightly
3  —  Don't know/Can't agree
4  —  Agree Slightly
5  —  Agree Strongly

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APPENDIX 8.1

Interview Schedule

A. Biographical Details
1. Marital Status? (married, single, separated, divorced, widowed, co-habiting)
2. Age of leaving school?
3. Date of birth?
4. Spouse's date of birth? (if applicable)
5. Spouse's occupation? (if applicable)
6. Age/sex of children? (if applicable)
7. How many of the children live at home? (if applicable)
8. Political affiliations? (if any)

B. Miscellaneous
1. Can you describe yourself briefly?
2. Would you call yourself a feminist?
3. What is your opinion of feminism? Of the Greenham Common women?
4. Which women's magazines (if any) do you regularly buy? What do you think about the magazines which are aimed at men? And women's magazines?
5. What kind of television programmes do you like to watch?
6. What kind of books do you read (fiction, autobiography, non-fiction, other). If fiction, who are your favorite authors?
7. What do you do in your spare time?

C. Life History
1. How old were you when you got married?
2. How old were you when you had your first child?
3. Did you intent to start a family at this time? If yes, why choose that time? If no, how did you feel when you realised you were pregnant?
4. Did you see pregnancy as the end of your working career or did you foresee returning to work? If latter, how soon?
D. Occupational History

1. What kind of jobs have you held?

2. Were these part or full time? Have you ever done any paid work at home?

3. Why did these jobs appeal to you? Abilities? Availability?

4. Why did you leave (for each job)?

5. At any time, did you have a job when your children were:
   i) Pre-school age?
   ii) Of school age?

   If yes, what kind of job?

   Did you want to work at this time?

   What were your reasons for taking the job? (financial, mental stimulation, social function, other?)

   How did you cope during crises like children's illnesses etcetera? During school holidays? (Relatives, friends, neighbours, childminders, "double day", other?) Did you make these arrangements? Did your husband have anything to do with them?

6. What was your husband's attitude to his wife working? What is his attitude now? What reasons does he give? (Yeandle: husbands acquiesce for financial reasons or because they realise that a contented wife makes for a happier/better run home). If your husband opposed your working, what would you do?

7. Did you feel any guilt about working? Did you feel as if the housework would be neglected or the children would suffer?

8. Have you ever had to change your own plans for working to fit in with your husband's job/career?

   If yes, how do you feel about it? Would you be prepared to do it again?

9. Some people say that there are some jobs which are unsuitable for women, and some that are unsuitable for men. Do you think this is right?

10. Do you think the Equal Opportunities Act (1976) and the Equal Pay Act (1970) have helped women? (equal pay for equal work) Despite this, the difference between the average wages for men and women has steadily widened again since 1973; what do you think about this? (Conservative government, restatement of patriarchy?) The Conservatives introduced the Employment Act in 1980, which effectively made it more difficult for women
to return to work after they had taken maternity leave; do you think this is right?

D. Education

1. Did you get any qualifications at school?
   If yes, details?

2. What did you do when you first left school? (job, college, unemployed, marriage, other?)

3. Was any kind of career’s counselling given to girls in your school?

4. Was it generally accepted that you’d stop work when you got married?

E. Influence of Parents

1. What was your father’s occupation?

2. Did your mother ever have a job, to your knowledge?
   If yes, what kind of work did she do?
   Did she ever go out to work when you were a child?
   Did her working ever cause any problems in the household?
   Any idea what your father’s attitude to her working was?

3. Was the housework seen as wholly your mother’s responsibility?

F. POWER STRUCTURE WITHIN THE FAMILY

1. What is your attitude to housework? Do you think of it as a woman’s job or a shared responsibility? Why do you do it? (satisfying job, necessity because no one else will do it, Beck’s idea of achieving a sense of female identity through housework, other?) Are there tasks which you feel are unsuitable for a man to do/which are your duty to do as a wife?

2. What is your husband’s attitude to i) housework? Does he see these as your jobs or a shared responsibility? Do you ever discuss the issue?
   ii) childcare?

3. How much does he actually contribute to the housework and the childcare? Can you give me some examples of things that he does at home? How much do the children do? Do you find this arrangement satisfactory?

4. Do you think the traditional idea of women doing all the work in the house if fair?
If not, how did it come about?

5. Do you have any labour saving devices in the home? (food processor, dishwasher, automatic washing machine, freezer)

6. Do you and your husband decide jointly on what items should be bought for the house?
   If husband decides, even with items which only you will use? (e.g. labour saving devices described above)

7. Who deals with the bills?

G. SOCIAL CHANGE

1. What expectations do you have for your son(s)? Daughter(s)?
   If different, why?

2. Would you like your daughter to have a similar life to you?
   If no, what would you change for her?

3. How do you think your attitudes and lifestyle differ from that of your mother?

4. If you had your life to live over again, perhaps with different opportunities, do you think you would make the same decisions about career, family, marriage?
   If no, what would you change?
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