VICTIMS AND VILLAINS: SUBJECT POSITIONING IN DISCURSIVE RECONSTRUCTIONS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

by

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Victims and villains: Subject positioning in discursive reconstructions of sexual harassment

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Abstract

This thesis is a feminist informed, discursive research project. Three studies are presented, each designed to explore reconstructions of sexual harassment incidents. The first and second studies were based upon a corpus of interview data, generated specifically for the research project. The author interviewed six women and encouraged detailed discussion about sexual harassment. The third study was conducted utilising media data. The data includes an initial allegation and description of an incident of sexual harassment, in the form of a magazine article, and a collection of published responses written by journalists, academics and members of the public. The data were analysed utilising a 'hybrid' discursive approach that combined the frameworks of conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis to deconstruct both the interactional and ideological components of the discourse.

This thesis makes several distinctive contributions to existing literature. Firstly, whilst hybrid analysis has been advocated by others, it has rarely been applied and therefore this project contributes an example of its application. Secondly, the project offers as its focus a deconstruction of subject positions and the function they serve in the allocation of responsibility and accountability of sexual harassment. This is unique in the field. Thirdly, to feminist action and women's emancipation, the project contributes a knowledge and understanding of women's oppressive and constrained experiences. Through knowledge of oppression women's emancipation can be more easily achieved.

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Acknowledgements

Author's Declaration

This is to certify that I am responsible for the work submitted in this thesis. The original work is my own unless specified in the acknowledgements. At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award. This study was financed with the aid of a studentship from the School of Psychology, University of Plymouth.

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Introducing the thesis

The thesis presented incorporates three definitive characteristics. Firstly, it is a contribution to feminist action, with the aim of enhancing understanding of women's lives. Secondly, it is a discursive project, drawing upon the discursive framework of critical theory and research. Thirdly, it is a reconstruction of women's experiences of sexual harassment perpetrated by men.

The first characteristic is one of theoretical, as well as moralistic consequence. This research project is a feminist project. It seeks to contribute to the existing body of feminist research which aims to provide women with knowledge about oppressive societal processes and create alternative pathways which validate them and their choices. Emancipation requires several levels of revelation and change; firstly, the identification and understanding of oppressive process, secondly, an understanding of how those processes can be counteracted, undermined and resisted, and thirdly, creating robust emancipatory positions that can be occupied and maintained. Feminist research can contribute to all three levels of emancipation, and the current project hopes to do so.

The second characteristic forms the theoretical basis from which the research can evolve. The discursive approach to psychological study has four fundamental assumptions, 1) that discourse is a topic of study in itself, rather than a mere window into the mind, 2) that the individual and the social are unified, embodied, 3) that social life is a process of relative realities, there is no single truth and 4) that discourse

constructs and is constructed by the social environment. These assumptions underpin the theoretical and philosophical foundations for this project of research and produce a complex theory that stands as a contrast to mainstream positivist theories of psychology.

Of particular importance in the discursive approach adopted in this thesis, is the influence of ideology upon our social lives. Ideologies are 'naturalised knowledge', the aspects of our social lives we take for granted and assume, often uncritically, to be true (Billig, 1991). Ideology shapes our lives; our attitudes, our beliefs, and our psychological and subjective experience, all are constructed through ideologies. As such, discursive theory postulates that sexual abuse against women is a product of ideological process.

The third characteristic of this thesis forms the topic of study, women's experiences of sexual harassment. Initially, the topic area was focused upon the more general arena of sexual violence and whilst this is where discussion begins, the subtopic of sexual harassment became the focus of discussion because it arose from exploratory interviews as an area of particular interest. The psychological study of sexual harassment has had a controversial and heavily debated history. For many years it remained on the sidelines of the sexual violence arena, overlooked by mainstream researchers and viewed more as 'boys being boys' than a serious problem within women's lives (Kitzinger & Thomas, 1995).

Whilst certain forms of harassment are still considered to be more serious than others, the growing impact of feminist theory upon research of women has increased awareness of women's sexual victimisation. A political point often made is that 'violence' does not have to be present for women to be victims of sexual violence (Ehrlich, 2001). The continued adoption of 'violence' terminology is present throughout literature, though it may be more helpful to the arena to adopt the term 'abuse' in its place, highlighting the oppressive consequences of this behaviour, but

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without the compulsory presence of violence. Domestic abuse literature has recently engaged in the abuse/violence debate, resulting in the widespread use of 'abuse' terminology, promoting awareness of the wide range of behaviours that are imposed upon women by their abusive partners (Takit, Beringer, Irvine & Garfield, 2004). In sexual violence research the term abuse is much used to represent incestuous behaviours, typically involving children or adolescents, possibly leading to ambiguity of meaning. However, for the purposes of this thesis the term 'abuse' will be adopted to highlight the feminist standpoint promoting awareness that sexual abuse does not need to include physical violence to produce real and traumatic consequences for women.

This chapter is dedicated to providing a foundation of the philosophy, theory and research that has influenced the direction of the thesis. The first section will explore the development of feminism and the diverse theories and topics of study that the field now encompasses. A short discussion of the influence of feminism upon the progression of psychology also follows. This section aims to provide an outline of the feminist framework from which the current thesis has taken shape. The second and third sections focus upon the topic of the research presented, women's experiences of sexual abuse, specifically of sexual harassment. Though it has already been established that the theoretical approach of discursive theory has been adopted, the philosophy, research and practices of mainstream psychology will be presented. The reasons are twofold; mainstream psychology has made important and valuable contributions to the field of sexual abuse, and the methods and philosophy offer a critical contrast and foundation for discussion of discursive theory. Mainstream research is central to the history of psychological approaches to sexual abuse theory and research and therefore discussion must include reference to the work completed. Finally, as noted a conclusion section will summarise the philosophy, theory and research that has provided a foundation for this research project.

1.1   The History of Feminism

The history of feminism spans hundreds of years, showing a process of increasing

awareness, evolving activism and some effective change. This section will outline the

history of feminism by discussing influential publications that have shaped the

theoretical development. Also detailed are two feminist theories, feminist social theory

and standpoint feminism, that emerged in the early part of the second-wave of feminism

and discussion will illustrate how these more general theories have provided a

foundation from which subsequent, often topic focused, theories have evolved. The

numerous areas of study that feminism has prompted are also detailed.

1.1.2   The evolution of feminist theory

Mary Wollstonecraft is heralded as the primary author of eighteenth century feminism

and one of the first women to write about oppression and inequality (Poston, 1988; Yeo,

1997). Her book, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, published in 1792, provoked the

reader to consider the difference between men's and women's standard of living and

availability of opportunity. Wollstonecraft lived in a period of sexual revolution and

witnessed an emergence of women's paradoxical sexual identity of purity and

availability for fulfilling men's needs (Clark, 1987). Women, Wollstonecraft stated,

were "the toy of man, the rattle, and it must jingle in his ears whenever, dismissing

reason, he chooses to be amused." (p32). The framework of femininity was beauty,

jollity, accomplishment and gentleness. Women were expected to embody all of these

qualities. Yet at the same time, women were criticised for their frivolity, their lack of

intellect, their obsession with being beautiful and their weightless personalities.

Wollstonecraft's book was the first documented description of these complexities of

femininity; the paradox of the desired and undesired feminine state.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, women began to reject the inequality of being denied the right to vote politically. At the turn of the new century organised groups of women began to emerge and between 1900 and 1918 women campaigned vigorously for the opportunity to vote. The suffragettes, a name derived from the term suffrage, to vote, burnt down churches, chained themselves to high-profile public buildings and engaged in hunger strikes; one woman was killed after she threw herself in front of the King's Derby horse (Holton, 1986). The campaign was interrupted in 1914 by the outbreak of war, and in 1918, women were granted the right to vote, provided they fulfilled certain criteria (for example, being home owners or married to a home owner). In 1928 women won the right to vote on the same terms as men.

In 1929 another important contribution was made to feminist literature with the publication of *A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf. Woolf introduced her book with a review of its origins; she had wanted, she stated, to write a book about women and femininity. However, when researching that topic, Woolf had found that she was unable to define womanhood without it being a relational object; a wife of a husband or a mother of a child. Moreover, she struggled to find women in history books; each reference to a woman or to womankind was often separated by two hundred years of detailed male achievement. Woolf had inadvertently identified the scope of the continued oppression of women; women were irrelevant and insignificant in patriarchal culture. Unsurprisingly, Woolf closed her book by encouraging women to write volumes describing the female state, promoting the strengths of woman, demonstrating the intelligence and sensibility of woman and simply making female experience historically significant.

In the 1960s women began to do just that and the second wave of feminism was born. Since that time, modern feminists have written extensively about the experiences of women (e.g. Friedan, 1963; Greer, 1970 and 1999). With the expanding field of

feminism there emerged numerous different theoretical positions. Initially feminist theories developed from alignment with existing social or political theories. Perhaps the earliest of these was 'feminist social theory' which arose from Marxist theories of systematic, societal oppression (Jackson, 1998). Feminist social theory sought to understand women's oppression by analysing the social and political processes in a society, working on the premise that the social context in which the oppression exists is the source of that oppression. Jackson (1998) stated that feminist social theorists have debated several possible origins for women's oppression. These have included: patriarchal forces, capitalist forces, sexual reproduction, the control of women's sexuality, and ideology and discourse. The latter emerged from a move away from traditional materialist theories towards postmodernism (the rejection of truth, science and consistency). A second much cited theory was 'feminist standpoint'. This theory of feminism emphasised the importance of focusing upon the 'woman', stating that women should be the subject of all feminist research (Riger, 1992). Standpoint feminism asserted that women were the experts on 'being women', and dictated that research should therefore be participant focused. Consequently, standpoint feminism has drawn upon the qualitative methodologies of interviews and focus groups.

In the last 40 years, feminism has become a diverse field of research and theory (Kemp & Squires, 1997). Women who have asserted their feminist beliefs and demanded political change have become household names. Andrea Dworkin (1979) raised awareness of the influence of pornography in daily sexual relations, campaigning for society to take a tougher stance, legally and morally, to the common use of pornographic material. Dworkin stated that women were experiencing widespread sexual oppression, being encouraged to cater to men's increasingly fetish-motivated sexual needs. Naomi Wolf has written several books, one of which, *The Beauty Myth* (1990), postulated that women's beauty is another paradox in their dilemmatic life

experiences. Wolf argued that women are expected to beautify themselves to ensure they remain attractive to men, but they are simultaneously criticised for being vain, superficial and of low intellect. Germaine Greer (1970; 1999) has offered a more general contribution to feminist literature, providing provocative discussion on a broad range of feminist topics from motherhood to sex.

More recently, the boundaries between the feminist theories have become increasingly obscured with the emergence of numerous theories forged to grapple with the growing number of topics that feminism has drawn out for debate. To pick up a book discussing feminist theories, is to embark upon a journey through 'French feminism', 'lesbian feminism', 'black feminism', 'state feminism' and even 'cyberfeminism' (see Kemp & Squires, 1997, for a review of these and other feminisms). Feminism has been critiqued from every perspective, and in turn feminism critiques every part of social life.

Feminism has made an important contribution to western societies. Its impact is widespread, ranging from influencing political and social policy to improving the quality of women's lives. Issues such as unequal pay, unpaid work, men's contributions to household tasks and childcare, employment opportunities, educational opportunities, and many more, have been brought into public awareness. Change has not always been as fast or as significant as feminist activists might have hoped, but it has happened. One arena where feminism's influence can be seen to have had a positive effect is psychology.

1.1.3 Feminism and psychology

Early feminist psychological theorists worked within the domain of mainstream, traditional psychology (Gavey, 1989). In doing so, feminists provided a critique of mainstream psychology, initially targeting the discipline's focus on the psychology of

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the white, middle class man. Women, it seemed, were almost entirely absent from psychological research, and the human psyche and behaviour was understood through research on the experiences of a limited and privileged group (Riger, 1992). Feminist researchers sought to redress the balance by focusing their work on women. With time, the inclusion of one oppressed group led to the inclusion of many; race, religion, class and other ignored and marginalised issues (and people) were gradually included in psychology research (Oakley, 1998).

Gaining momentum, the feminist critique moved to consider the entire methodology and philosophy of the mainstream approach (Hammersley, 1992). Feminist theorists began to question the suitability of an objective, scientific approach to studying the human subject (Oakley, 1998). Criticisms of the 'maleness' of science, the assumption that rationality, consistency and objectivity lay at the centre of all human existence, soon began to develop in psychology literature (Speer, 2002). From these dialogues there emerged demand for an alternative philosophy and methodology to studying humans. Feminists argued that women's social experiences were inadequately researched and explained by mainstream approaches (Weatherell, Gavey & Potts, 2002). Moreover, mainstream researchers were criticised for a lack of reflexive engagement with their research; few acknowledged their position in a patriarchal society and the influence that might have had upon their findings (Anderson & Doherty, 1996). Mainstream psychological research was viewed by feminists to be hindering political change and women's emancipation, rather than encouraging it (Weatherell et al, 2002), largely because it reconstructed and maintained the patriarchal ideologies that oppressed women (Anderson & Doherty, 1996; Burman, 1998; Jackson, 1987).

Feminists' prioritising of women's experience as a political strategy to ensuring women's voices are heard therefore led to many researchers seeking a new way of studying women. The mainstream approach was aptly labelled 'traditional' and a new

approach sought, that came in the form of 'poststructuralism' (Gavey, 1989).

Poststructuralism postulates that experience does not have an inherent meaning; rather experience draws its meaning from discourse (Gavey, 1989). Thus, the study of discourse forms the basis of the poststructuralist approach to understanding human experience. Discursive psychology has evolved from a poststructuralist framework and as such was quickly adopted by feminist psychologists. (A detailed discussion of discursive psychology is presented in chapter two, along with a critique of its application to feminist research.)

Essentially, feminist discursive researchers began to focus upon the topic of women's oppression and the numerous forms that it takes in patriarchal culture. Discourses of oppression were identified (see the work of Wendy Hollway, Nicola Gavey and Rosalind Gill), and recent work has begun to focus upon the absence of emancipatory discourses for women (e.g. Hollway, 1995). The topic of psychology has expanded to include violence against women, women's sexuality, hetero-/homo-sexuality, and numerous other topics that were previously ignored.

Thus, the influence of feminism upon psychology has been dramatic; it has provoked a shift in the fundamental assumptions that underlie the discipline. The theories of standpoint feminism and feminist social theory have informed the move away from mainstream psychology towards the discursive theories. They have positioned women as the experts on being women and society as the central source of oppression. The current thesis adopts a position informed by and aligned with those feminist theories.

1.2   The sexual abuse (and oppression) of women

Historical and research reviews of sexual abuse are often limited to the discussion of rape, essentially due to the fact that the term 'sexual harassment' was not 'invented' until the latter part of second wave feminism in the 1970s (Clark, 1987). Until feminist

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discourses became widely known, the definition of abuse against women was limited to the violent; harassment experiences were written off as "part of life" (Kitzinger and Thomas, 1995: 32). More recently, high profile cases reported in the media have put sexual harassment on the public agenda (Bing and Lombardo, 1997) and research focusing on the topic has begun to emerge (Robinson, 2000). However, sexual harassment is still often viewed as harmless to women (Stanko, 1996), despite women repeatedly reporting severe emotional and psychological effects (Cairns, 1993), and describing that fear of rape is at the forefront of their minds whenever they experience harassment (Cairns, 1993; Kelly & Radford, 1996). As will be illustrated, the discursive approach to theorising sexual abuse against women has typically sought to generalise the ideological findings for the different types of abuse, therefore harassment is often included under the topic of abuse, and not treated as a topic in its own right. Consequently, before discussing the research basis for sexual harassment, it is necessary to provide a detailed review of the research focusing upon sexual abuse. From that foundation, the topic of sexual harassment can be meaningfully discussed.

Moreover, gaining a full understanding of the current beliefs and attitudes towards women and their sexual victimisation requires a review of the history of those attitudes. Essentially, as with most fields of psychological study, there are two approaches to theory and research on women's sexual abuse. The mainstream approach is based on scientific assumptions of objectivity, truth, reductionism and experimentation; the alternative approach of discursive psychology is based upon relativism, embodiment, social lives and discourse.

As stated above, the discursive framework provides the theoretical basis for the current thesis; ideological influences are considered to be of particular importance. However, the following discussion about the sexual abuse of women will begin with consideration of the contribution of mainstream psychology, offering a short critique of

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this approach. Though discursive theorists have argued that mainstream psychology is inadequate for providing a thorough understanding of women's oppression, positivist research has made some important contributions. Discussion will therefore consider these findings, before moving to focus on the research offered by discursive theorists.

1.2.1 *Mainstream psychological research of sexual abuse*

This section will provide a review of findings offered by mainstream researchers who focus upon the sexual abuse of women by men. The definitions of rape and sexual abuse of women will be considered, followed by a discussion of the broad topic of rape, and concluding with a more focused exploration of mainstream research of sexual harassment. The following review is by no means meant to be exhaustive, but a reflection of the work conducted within the mainstream approach. Therefore, it is offered as a contrast to discursive approaches and a discussion point only, not as a thorough critical review of the field.

There has been considerable controversy amongst mainstream researchers concerning the definitions of rape and sexual abuse of women (Hickman and Muehlenhard, 1999; Kahn, Mathie & Torgler, 1994). A recent survey conducted by the World Health Organisation defined sexual abuse as "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts of traffic, or otherwise, directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work" (Jewkes, Sen & Garcia-Moreno, 2002: 149). Following this definition Jewkes et al highlighted that the term 'sexual abuse' includes psychological abuse or intimidation, and abuse that is initiated when the victim is incapable of refusing (e.g. intoxicated).

Whilst a formal definition of sexual abuse has not been universally adopted amongst mainstream researchers, the research focus has included a broad range of topics and

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therefore is largely representative of the definition outlined above. Certainly, large scale prevalence studies (typically adopting the Sexual Experiences Survey initially constructed by Koss and Oros in 1982) represented a broad range of experiences, from minor incidents of sexual harassment to physically forced sexual intercourse (see Koss, Gidycz and Wisniewski, 1987; Koss & Oros, 1982). The research conducted by Koss and her colleagues in the 1980s revealed that the prevalence of sexual abuse against women was significantly higher than official statistics had shown (Schwartz, 1997). Summarising the findings of these surveys, Koss and Cleveland (1996) reported that approximately two-thirds of women had experienced some form of sexual assault, and approximately a quarter had experienced attempted rape or rape. Of those who had been raped, 80% had been acquainted with their perpetrator.

With prevalence figures such as these it is evident that men's sexual abuse of women remains a prominent social problem. It is therefore vital that a thorough understanding of this field is sought, in order that the number of women who experience sexual harassment, rape and sexual coercion can be reduced. Mainstream psychology has contributed a large volume of research to this end.

1.2.1.1 Researching rape

A primary aim of mainstream researchers working in the field of sexual abuse has been to identify explanations for the continued occurrence of rape and sexual coercion. Specific topics of study have included people's beliefs and attitudes about rape, women's communication of sexual consent, and men's personality and attitudinal characteristics.

One area of research has employed the social-cognitive concept of 'sexual scripts', first discussed by Stevi Jackson in the 1970s. Jackson (1996) summarised the concept as a set of learned social scripts that are acted out in a sexual context; the scripts include

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both behavioural 'rules', and attitudinal beliefs and values regarding heterosexual sex. Check and Malamuth (1983) found that sexual scripts included beliefs such as women should not directly communicate a desire to willingly engage in sex, and men should take control of sexual situations because women exhibit 'token' resistance to sexual advances. Token resistance has received considerable investigation from researchers, including Muehlenhard and her colleagues. For example, Muehlenhard and Hollabaugh (1988; see also Muehlenhard and McCoy, 1991) found that women who engaged in token resistance did so because they did not want to appear rejecting of traditional gender roles and they did not feel comfortable asserting a sexual interest in men. Muehlenhard and Rodgers (1998) explored this further and found that women who had engaged in token resistance reported several reasons for having done so. These included, adding interest to a relationship, a desire to not be taken for granted, testing a partner, and establishing power and control in the relationship. Muehlenhard and Rodgers stated that some answers were indicative of sexual scripts in modern society, but they acknowledged that some women did not comply with sexual scripts at all. Rather, some women discussed initiating sex and showed other forms of control over a sexual encounter.

Researchers who have focused upon 'unacknowledged' rape victims (those women whose experience fits the criteria of rape but who do not acknowledge it as being so) have concluded that sexual scripts influence women's judgements about their own sexual experiences. Kahn, Mathie and Torgler (1994) compared women's use of rape scripts with their level of acknowledgement of rape. They found that women who did not acknowledge they had been raped were more likely to employ rape scripts. Thus, if the rape incident did not fit the cultural scripts regarding perpetrator characteristics, victim behaviour and environmental factors, the women did not label their experience as rape. Similar findings were reported by Frazier and Seales (1997) and Pitts and

Schwartz (1997), who also found that women who did not report rape experienced similar levels of emotional distress and were more likely to blame themselves for the incident.

Mainstream research has also focused on consensual unwanted sex and sexual coercion (Craig, 1990). Muehlenhard and Falcon (1990) explored the degree to which men's heterosocial skill (the ease with which they were able to socialise with women) and attitudes to women predicted the likelihood that they would use verbal and physical coercion (rape) during sexual encounters. The study's findings suggested that men with high heterosocial skill levels were more likely to engage in verbal coercion than those with low skill levels, but they were no more likely to use physical coercion. Conversely, men who held traditional attitudes towards gender roles were more likely to employ both verbal and physical coercion than their non-traditional counterparts. Employing developmental theories to explain why some women engage in unwanted consensual sex whilst others do not, Impett and Peplau (2002) found that attachment style affected the likelihood of women doing so. They found that women who were anxiously attached engaged in unwanted sex because they were afraid their partner would lose interest in them if they did not; conversely, women who were avoidantly attached were not willing to engage in unwanted sex and stated that they felt less committed to the relationship than their partner and therefore did not feel the need to engage in unwanted sexual activity.

Some studies have attempted to compare the experiences of men and women and have shown that whilst both report engaging in consensual unwanted sex, twice as many women report doing so, as men (Impett and Peplau, 2002). Moreover, O'Sullivan, Byers and Finkelman (1998) explored similarities and differences between the incidents of sexual coercion reported by men and women. They found that whilst there was a high degree of similarity between the experiences of both sexes, the emotional impact

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(for example, chronic fear, anxiety, and decreased social and work based activity) was substantially greater for women than it was for men.

In a review of sexual coercion, Muehlenhard (1988) reported that ambiguity in the communication of sexual intent between men and women makes unwanted sexual relations more likely (see also Lim and Roloff, 1999). She stated that the ambiguity is a product of discrepancy between men's and women's interpretations of sexual advances (men are more likely to interpret a behaviour as sexual than women), the sexual double standard (token resistance; expected fidelity from women but not men), and differing gender roles (women should not want sex, men should always want sex).

Thus, within the specific field of rape and sexual coercion, mainstream psychology has made a significant contribution. It has identified some of the behavioural and attitudinal antecedents of men's sexual abuse of women, as well as exploring the consequences that these experiences have upon victims. Research has also focused upon the social processes that constrain women's responses to sexual coercion, and that reframe it as normal and acceptable male behaviour.

1.2.1.2 Researching sexual harassment

Mainstream research has published numerous studies that focus upon the topic of sexual harassment. One area that mainstream psychological study has attempted to develop is the identification of typologies of men who sexually harass women. Lucero, Middleton, Finch and Valentine (2003) attempted to classify sexual harassers, using characteristics that separate them from non-harassers. In their attempt to develop a 'typology of harasser', Lucero et al (2003) sought to reveal the ways in which harassers showed 'abnormal' personality or social characteristics. For example, they identified two types of harasser divided by their approach to harassment. The first is the "exploitative harasser" (p1478) who is highly adaptive and engages in harassment behaviours that are

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contextually and goal driven, this harassment is sexually motivated. The second is the "persistent marauder" (p1478) who is typically aggressive and competitive in his approach, this harasser is violence driven.

Within this brief introduction to the typologies Lucero et al have developed, the emerging picture is the pathologisation of sexual harassers. In the discussion earlier of rape myths, Doherty and Anderson (1998) were reported as identifying the mythical basis of the belief that men who rape women are psychopaths. Feminist theory has advocated, as a fundamental principle, the *normality* of men who abuse women, a principle supported by statistics. One in four women will be a victim of sexual violence in their lifetime (World Health Organisation, 2002), and whilst the perpetrators are likely to have more than one sexual partner, the statistics infer that sexual violence can not be reduced to the one or two percent of the general population who are classed as having severe mental health issues (Mental Health Foundation, 2003). Thus, mainstream psychology research that seeks to identify how harassers can be defined as 'abnormal' is deeply flawed, being little more than a reproduction of the rape myth itself.

Some authors have therefore chosen to focus their work on the victims of sexual harassment, exploring gender differences, victim characteristics, and the emotional and psychological consequences of victimisation. Goldstein, Malanchuk, Davis-Kean and Eccles (2007) studied sexual harassment amongst adolescents and found that young women reported higher levels of victimisation than young men. Interestingly, their study also revealed that female victims were often members of peer groups associated with anti-social or problem behaviour, in addition to experiencing relatively early onset of puberty. The latter finding is perhaps less surprising than the former.

The inequality in frequency of victimisation is also a somewhat unsurprising outcome. Research has consistently found that women experience sexual harassment

more frequently than men, and more recently researchers have sought to explore whether there is any difference between men and women regarding the impact and consequences of sexual harassment. For example, Timmerman (2005) found that young women experienced considerably more unwanted sexual attention than young men, and that the consequences of harassment were more severe. Women described experiencing emotional, mental and physical problems as a result of victimisation. Similar findings were reported by Willness, Steel and Lee (2007) who conducted a meta-analysis of 41 studies (involving 70,000 participants) of sexual harassment in the workplace. They found that women reported decreased job satisfaction, lower commitment to their organisation, having to leave their employment, and ill physical and mental health, as well as symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Studies such as these have challenged society's dismissal of sexual harassment as little more than a nuisance that women should learn to ignore, and shown that it is a serious problem with wide-ranging consequences.

Other mainstream studies have focused upon more complex analyses of situational and personal factors, incorporating interpretations of power dynamics and other patriarchal forces (Mitchell, Hirschman, Angelone & Lilly, 2004; for a review see Sagrastino, 1992). These studies are less concerned with identifying abnormality in the perpetrator, looking instead for patterns of behaviour (for example, Welsh, 2000), or motivations and situational factors (for a review see Willness, Steel & Lee, 2007). For example, Lucero, Allen and Middleton (2006) found that a man's propensity for general aggression, his situational environment, and his past harassment behaviours (type, severity and frequency), determined how, when and why he would sexually harass a woman. Other studies have shown that perpetrators of sexual harassment tend to engage in anti-social and exploitative behaviours (Kosson, Kelly & White, 1997). Moreover, Mitchell et al (2004) found a relationship between sexual harassment and

men's attitudes towards women, specifically their adversarial sexual beliefs. When men were measured as demonstrating a tendency to treat women as though they are the enemy, the men also scored highly on scales of likelihood to commit sexual harassment. This study does not claim that these men are abnormal, indeed it draws upon patriarchal processes to explain how men's behaviour leads to harassment.

The influence that these (and other) patriarchal attitudes and beliefs have upon judgements of sexual harassment has also been studied. Pesta (2007) showed that people's perception of the severity of sexual harassment was influenced by the degree to which they subscribed to gender stereotypes. Unsurprisingly, it was found that individuals who produced lower severity ratings also exhibited stronger stereotype alignment. Similarly, Osman (2007) drew upon the concept of 'token resistance', or the belief that women 'falsely' decline men's sexual advances, to study people's perceptions of sexual harassment. Using vignettes, Osman showed that individuals who believed that women employ token resistance were unlikely to label an incident as sexual harassment. Only when women showed both verbal and physical resistance did these individuals acknowledge that sexual harassment had taken place. In contrast, those who rejected the notion of token resistance judged a scenario to be sexual harassment if the woman showed any form of resistance (verbal or physical).

Much like the topic rape, sexual harassment has been widely explored by mainstream researchers; this review represents only a small sample of the research available in the field. Whilst the studies are largely limited to workplace sexual harassment and laboratory research with undergraduate participants, some have successfully expanded sampling to include adolescents and at times, the general public. Moreover, the research topics have been broad and varied, and useful findings concerning attitudes, beliefs and the characteristics of both victims and perpetrators have emerged.

This summary of mainstream psychology's contribution to the topic of sexual abuse against women illustrates that many interesting insights have been offered. The studies discussed above show how cultural beliefs and attitudes have been found to influence the sexual interactions that take place between men and women, often with a negative impact upon women. Moreover, the work of Mary Koss and her colleagues was instrumental in providing evidence for the underreporting of rape and in starting a new arena of research that focused upon the reasons for women's silence (Schwartz, 1997).

However, in addition to the usual (often internal) critique of mainstream methodologies (overuse of student participants, small samples, questionnaire based data generation, lack of ecological validity), discursive theorists highlight the limitation of studying women's social experiences in such a reductionist and objective manner (Oakley, 1998). The subjectivity, embodiment, richness and complexity of those experiences is argued as being of importance in enhancing understanding of women's oppression (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine, 1984). Moreover, feminist authors have argued that the uncritical perspective of mainstream research, particularly when it is applied to the sexual abuse of women by men, results in findings that are little more than a reproduction of the rape myths and other oppressive ideologies active within Western culture (Anderson & Doherty, 2008).

Discursive psychology offers an approach that attempts to overcome these limitations.

1.2.2. The discursive approach to women's sexual abuse

The discursive approach to sexual abuse has typically concentrated upon a wider, all inclusive category, rather than upon the elements of abuse, like sexual harassment. For this reason, sexual harassment has not been the focus of much discursive research. Moreover, as stated above, it has been assumed that the discourses that oppress women

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have a universal effect, and therefore those that are explored within the field of sexual abuse are generalised to the arena of sexual harassment. Therefore, this section will explore the discursive literature that has developed within the field of sexual abuse, and will discuss a selection of studies focusing upon harassment to illustrate the similarity in findings.

Discursive theorists, particularly those informed by feminist literature, have sought to deconstruct modern ideologies of women's sexual victimisation. Several important papers have emerged in the last ten years that have promoted further research and theoretical development. One such study, which aimed to explore all forms of sexual abuse but differentiate between the different types, was conducted by Liz Kelly. Kelly (1988) investigated the potential value and credibility of applying a continuum concept to sexual abuse. By interviewing sixty women about their experiences of sexual abuse, Kelly identified several repeated types of abuse, including sexual harassment, incestuous abuse, rape and coercive sexual intercourse. Kelly positioned the types of abuse along the continuum according to frequency, rejecting severity on the basis that one woman's trauma could be another woman's fact of life. In fact, the frequency of sexual abuse follows a similar pattern to severity when applied to a continuum concept. The continuum spread across a wide range of experiences with incestuous sexual abuse at one end, being the least frequent form of abuse (7% of women had experienced it), and sexual harassment at the other end, being the most frequent form of abuse (97% of women had experienced it).

Kelly's continuum was widely supported (Thomas, 2000), and her feminist approach allowed women to define their own experiences, overcoming the fraught issues of definition. However, the study had several limitations. Firstly, whilst Kelly acknowledged that variation existed, she did not account for it in her continuum, rather the concept sought to position women's experiences along a linear, one dimensional line

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of abuse. Although this study is based upon interview data and sought to provide a qualitative perspective it has embraced the positivist trend of looking for consistency rather than exploring the full data set. A second limitation is the lack of critical engagement. Kelly allowed women to define their own experiences, but did not critique those definitions for ideological influence. Gavey (1993; see also Gavey, 2005) showed how patriarchal ideologies encourage women to avoid labelling their experiences as abusive, through a rejection of the victim identity that is associated with abuse and through the discourses that encourage women to satisfy men's needs.

A second influential contribution to the discursive literature has been research and discussion papers concerning 'rape myths'. Originally proposed by Burt (1980), rape myths were defined as "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists" (Burt, 1980: 217). Rape myths were subsequently discussed and developed by numerous mainstream researchers (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Owing to the ideological richness of these myths, discursive researchers have also adopted the concept. For example, Doherty and Anderson (1998) discussed rape myths as ideologies concerning women and men and their respective roles in sexual abuse against women. Doherty and Anderson described how the myths are constructed in the discourses of everyday talk, serving to minimise the consequences and seriousness of rape and justify and excuse its occurrence. These arguments are intertwined with discourses of rape intolerance, producing a culture that appears to condemn rape and those who perpetrate it, yet at the same time allows it to occur. They describe five myths including "rape...is only sex" (p584), "Women precipitate rape by their behaviour or appearance" (p583) and "Real rapists are psychopathic individuals" (p584). Through the rape myths the credible victim and perpetrator are constructed and rape is consequently excused or justified.

Furthermore, Doherty and Anderson also discussed past research on 'secondary victimisation', the process in which women who are raped face a second victimisation at the hands of society and the legal process. Women who allege rape are subjected to a degrading and humiliating examination to ensure intercourse has occurred, followed by questioning by legal representatives about their dress, their history, their conduct and other information apparently related to the rape. The rape myths provoke this type of examination, encouraging the law to seek out the credibility of the victim formed through reports of her moral conduct, her class and her attempts to resist the man.

Other researchers have focused upon deconstructing the discourses that support and maintain rape. Researching the influences of the patriarchal ideologies that pervade culture on a more general level, Hollway (1984) revealed a set of discourses that pre-empt rape myths, occupying everyday talk of 'normal' sexual interaction. These discourses take three forms, the male sexual drive discourse, the have/hold discourse and the permissive discourse. The male sexual drive discourse promotes sex as a 'biological drive' that men have, a need routed within reproduction. This discourse functions to permit men to have as much sex as they feel necessary, it is a form of male entitlement. The have/hold discourse promotes sex as being both a sexual act seeking gratification, but also as an intimate action, signifying love and commitment. For men both types of sex are equally acceptable, but it is more complex for women. Due to the male drive discourse women are the source of men's sexual gratification, however, women are also forbidden to have sex by religious discourses of purity and chastity. Thus, women find themselves in a paradoxical position, facing chastisement whichever path they choose – if they provide they are 'sluts', if they do not they are 'frigid'. The third, permissive, discourse is heavily intertwined with the first and second and serves to support the practice of sex outside of marriage. This discourse has arisen from anti-religious rhetoric, functioning to justify the importance and necessity of sex by

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emphasising biological drives and promoting sex as something 'modern' people do, whether married or not. Cairns (1993) reported that women in relationships described feeling unable to refuse sex with their partner because of a perceived duty to co-operate, to prioritise his needs above their own, and not be inconsistent with social expectations of intimate relationships. Moreover, Gilfoyle, Wilson and Brown (1993) extended the discourses identified by Hollway to include the 'pseudo-reciprocal gift discourse' which constructs men as needing to satisfy sexual urges and women as the passive receptacles through which that need is met.

Further work specifically on sexual abuse has revealed that these everyday sexual discourses underlie the excuses and justifications that promote a rape supportive culture (see Gavey, 1993 and 2005). By drawing upon discourses of men's sexual needs and women's sexual purity, women (and men) are able to justify women's sexual victimisation (Gavey, 1993). Coates and Wade (2004) analysed the discourse of judges sentencing men accused of sexual abuse. Their findings showed that in justifying their subsequent judgement, judges employed various discourses to obscure perpetrator responsibility. These included: perpetrator alcohol and drug abuse; biological sexual drive; psychopathology; dysfunctional family of origin; stress and trauma; character or personality trait; emotional state; loss of control. The function of these discourses was concluded to be fourfold: to conceal violence; to mitigate perpetrators' responsibility; to conceal victims' resistance; to blame or pathologise victims. In all cases, the function serves to move responsibility from the perpetrator onto the victim. Similar findings have been reported by several other authors (for example, Ehrlich, 1998; Lea & Auburn, 2001; Lea, in press).

Other studies have revealed alternative discourses that function to obscure perpetrator responsibility for rape. For example, Potts (2001) analysed the discourses of men and women discussing male and female sexuality and media excerpts relating to

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the same topic. Potts found that both men and women employed a discourse of a hegemonic, irrational 'penis self', in which the penis becomes the conscious brain and forces the men to perform acts. Moreover, the dissociation and distinction between the men and their penis' enabled them to discuss the penis' behaviour with criticism and contempt. Potts concluded that the function of this discourse, used by both men and women, is to exonerate men of responsibility for rape and other forms of sexual abuse against women; they are able to imply that 'the penis did it'.

Similarly, Frith and Kitzinger (1997) explored the discourses of miscommunication. Discussed above were the studies performed by mainstream researchers who concluded that some cases of rape and sexual coercion were a product of ambiguous communication between men and women (see Muehlenhard, 1998). Frith and Kitzinger challenged the existence of miscommunication and stated that it was simply another discourse functioning to protect men from being held responsible for their abusive actions. In a later study, Kitzinger and Frith (1999) explored women's discourses of sexual refusal and concluded that further ambiguity is represented in this domain. Women's discourses revealed that sexual refusal must be a clear and unambiguous communication, otherwise they are judged as consenting to sex. The authors discuss, from a conversation analysis perspective, the difficult position in which this leaves women. Women have available few discursive tools to refuse sex, therefore the expectation of explicit refusal effectively renders women vulnerable to sexual abuse and men exonerated of responsibility (because she did not say no).

All of the ideologies described above serve to reduce the responsibility of the male perpetrator of sexual abuse against women and relocate blame onto the female victim. In doing so, the ideologies maintain women's silence (Kelly and Radford, 1996) and therefore maintain men's dominance and uphold patriarchal values and beliefs.

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The ideological influences revealed through discursive research pervade all of culture, providing a framework for meaning, through which social humans construct their interactive lives (Billig, 1991). These ideologies have evolved over centuries and serve to oppress women in favour of male dominance and a male agenda (Brownmiller, 1975). Clark (1987) proposed that the formation of the modern ideologies that oppress women's sexual activity can be seen to evolve slowly over the last eight hundred years. She described the emergence of sexual oppression in the religion dominated middle ages, with strict moral codes of conduct forbidding any form of extra-marital sexual relations. This sexual oppression aided women; in 1285 a law was passed which rendered a man punishable by death if he raped a woman (D'Cruze, 1993). However, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as a consequence of Henry VIII and his successors, a liberal attitude to sexual relationships between men and women emerged; the act of sexual intercourse became an ordinary part of pre-marital courting. The birth of the middle classes in the eighteenth century produced a critique of sex, which had empowered the working classes (they had become financially and social independent and self-sufficient), and a motivation to reinstate working class oppression and middle class domination. This was achieved through a discourse of moralistic degradation. The result was a contradictory set of discourses; those which encouraged sexual freedom as a demonstration of rebellion against class oppression, and those which oppressed sexual freedom as an act of immorality (D'Cruze, 1993). These emerging contradictory discourses undermined the effectiveness of the law that had protected women from rape, and rendered women powerless to stop their victimisation (D'Cruze, 1993). With the addition of the moral ideologies, women's sexual victimisation developed into a moral issue rather than a legal one (Clark, 1987).

The same meanings that were ascribed to sexual behaviours in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be seen within modern society. Eight-hundred years of

complex integration of discourses, of discursive practise and of ideologies that have

adapted to widespread industrial and social change, has developed robust discourses

that construct men's and women's sexual conduct. Critical research methods are

necessary to reveal the ideologies in practise and to maintain researcher vigilance in

order that they themselves do not fall victim to their influence. Research interpretation

becomes one of circular analysis between the research findings and the function that

they serve within culture to provoke specific meanings.

Thus, within the field of sexual abuse, the pervading discourses are those that

maintain patriarchy and men's power, and oppress and disempower women. Both are

achieved through minimisation and justification of men's sexually abusive behaviours.

Discursive psychology postulates that these discourses also pervade men's sexual

harassment of women. Harassment behaviours are minimised to 'boys being boys'

(Kitzinger & Thomas, 1995), and justified with men's need to display their sexuality (as

dictated by the sexual drive discourse). Some research has been conducted that has

focused upon the topic of sexual harassment.

Unlike mainstream approaches to sexual harassment, which have sought to define it

by categorising and quantifying experience, discursive theorists have attempted to

locate the definition of sexual harassment in the discourses of people. Kitzinger and

Thomas (1995) explored the definition of sexual harassment by interviewing both men

and women and analysing how harassment was constructed in their talk. Their findings

showed that difficulty arose from extracting a clear definition because women's

reconstructions of their experiences is imbued with discourses of self-blame, of

minimising perpetrator responsibility, of justifying perpetrator behaviour, and of

minimising the frequency and severity of sexual harassment. Kitzinger and Thomas

argued that women sought to avoid orienting to a position of 'victim' and they did so by

creating an account in which they were empowered participants rather than submissive objects; if the harassment did not happen, then they were not a victim.

The research by Kitzinger and Thomas highlights that the difficulty in defining sexual harassment is, at present, supporting men's sexual exploitation of women. The discourses that men and women draw upon to justify and describe sexual harassment maintain men's entitlement to engage in sexually oppressive behaviours. Thus, the lack of definition is itself a product and a producer of patriarchal discourses.

One element of sexual harassment explored by discursive theorists has been power relations between the female victim and her male perpetrator. This was exemplified in a study conducted by Robinson (2000). Utilising a discourse analytical approach, Robinson deconstructed the discourses of female teachers discussing their experiences of sexual harassment perpetrated by their male students. She stated that this form of sexual harassment challenges the traditional definitions of harassment, because it involves complex power differentials: the teacher should hold more authority than the student and the adult more power than the child. Despite occupying other positions of power, the female teacher's authority is undermined simply because masculinity is more powerful than femininity. Robinson offers an ideological critique of the masculine framework of authority and the expectation that women must uphold men's standards at all times, or be seen to have failed. Female teachers discussed how their gender produced less authority in the classroom, thereby increasing the likelihood of problematic behaviour from students, but similarly, the female teachers inability to admit the problem because it was a public admission that they had not reached the male standard. Robinson argues that these discourses produce another context in which women are unable to discuss and reveal their oppression and abuse and are forced into silent acceptance. Moreover, she further revealed discourses of diminished responsibility and relocation of blame. The female teachers cited difficulties in family

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of origin, boys who were psychologically different and childish play as possible reasons for the boys abusive behaviours.

Another selection of work has utilised the conversation analytic approach and explored how conversational sequences constrain women's responses to verbal sexual harassment (see Frith and Kitzinger, 1997; Kitzinger & Frith, 1999). For example, Tainio (2003) analysed a telephone conversation between a Finnish male member of parliament and a 15-year-old Finnish girl. The man had been accused of sexually harassing the girl and the tape of the telephone conversation had been produced as evidence. Tainio reported that the man used a number of discursive techniques to encourage the girl to agree to meet with him. These included recurrent invitations, displays of personal information, an orientation to confidentiality of their interactions, and threats, both implicit and explicit. Tainio argued that by drawing upon these techniques the man was attempting to direct conversation to elicit an invitation agreement from the girl. This study's findings show that, on an interactional level, in conversation with women men are able to employ techniques to encourage submission to their desires. Tainio did not offer any deconstruction of power or ideology (this is not the focus of conversation analytic work), but the likely impact of such processes upon the girl's ability to maintain a position of rejection of the man's requests (given his authority as a figurehead, as well as a man) is clear.

These studies illustrate the similarity between the discourses of sexual abuse and those specifically relating to harassment. However, it is also clear from this work that whilst the foundation of the discourses can be located in the general sexual oppression of women, the construction of justification and minimisation and the relocation of responsibility from perpetrator to victim is likely to be different. Therefore, it is necessary to study sexual harassment as a topic in its own right if the discourses that

maintain it are to be deconstructed, critiqued and alternative, emancipatory discourses provided.

1.3   Conclusions

This chapter has briefly discussed the history and development of feminist theory and provided an overview of mainstream and discursive theory and research on the sexual abuse and sexual harassment of women. Social feminist theory and feminist standpoint theory together assert that women's oppression is constructed and maintained through social processes, and that to further understanding of women's experiences the focus of study and centre of expertise should be women themselves. These assumptions represent the feminist informed position of the current thesis.

The critical commentary of the contributions and limitations of mainstream psychology to the field of women's sexual abuse illustrates that the positivist reductionism advocated by mainstream psychology is not compatible with the feminist position outlined. Critical researchers have highlighted how mainstream psychological research has become a victim of uncritical approaches that reproduce ideology, resulting in findings that say more about which ideologies exist than they do about the topics they profess to be researching. For example, the work on 'sexual scripts' appears to be an uncritical, unreflexive reconstruction of the rape myths and sexual drive discourses identified by Doherty and Anderson (1998) and Hollway (1984). Similarly, the sexual coercion research provides interesting insights into who commits sexual abuse and what behaviours they engage in, but little about why. Moreover, the reason why sexual abuse is so abundant in modern culture and why men are repeatedly exonerated (even at a punitive level) of their behaviours, is not explained by the mainstream studies. The answers to these questions require a detailed, rich and complex data source, not to be found in the statistics and experiments of mainstream methodologies.

The review of discursive theory's contributions to the sexual abuse and harassment literature illustrates the rich and embodied data that emerges within the research. The findings discussed were often from two different perspectives, the conversation analytic and the critical approach (see chapter two for a comparison of the two); the former contributes to the understanding of harassment on an interactional level, the latter to understanding the cultural and ideological influences upon women's lives. Both approaches provide important insights into women's experiences and chapter two will discuss how the two can be integrated.

With the two fundamental frameworks of feminism and discursive theory shaping the current thesis, several of the researchers and their findings discussed in this chapter will be drawn upon to provide the knowledge base upon which this thesis will develop. The ideological theory of Billig (1991; 1996; 2001) and the critical ideological analyses of Hollway, Gavey and Doherty and Anderson will inform the interpretation of data and findings of the studies performed. The previous findings regarding women's sexual abuse and sexual harassment will also contribute to the development of the research and data analysis. All of the authors discussed in the above sections have provided a knowledge base from which the empirical element of this thesis will draw.

Thus, the thesis that follows is an exploration of women's lived experiences of sexual abuse. This project forms part of the first level of feminist action and positive change, the identification and understanding of the processes that oppress women.

2

Studying the social subject

Chapter one introduced the three tenets upon which the current thesis is built. In summary these were: the importance of studying women's experiences of sexual harassment; the importance of feminist theory when studying women's experiences; the suitability of the discursive approach for a feminist informed study of women's experiences. The importance of studying sexual harassment and the suitability of adopting feminist theory were discussed in some depth in the previous chapter. The third tenet, the suitability of the discursive approach, was not discussed in detail in the last chapter, owing to the complexities of philosophical and theoretical debate that imbue the approach, as well as the analytical issues that the debate raises. Thus, this chapter is dedicated to exploring discursive psychology. The chapter will discuss the approaches that fall within the framework and engage in the debates that characterise the field. Through the process of this discussion a theoretical position will be negotiated that will provide the platform upon which the current research thesis will be built.

As discussed, this thesis seeks to explore women's experiences of sexual harassment, with feminist theory informing the research process. Consequently, the type of analysis drawn upon to extract and interpret findings from the data collected must support and enhance feminist theory. Analysis must allow oppressive processes to be explored and explained by deconstructing the social context in which they gain their meaning.

Existing excuses and justifications for women's inequality, subordination and objectification should be critiqued to reveal their role in the maintenance of women's oppression. For these reasons, this thesis will adopt a discursive framework for analysis, within which lie the tools and analytical sensitivity and focus to draw out such knowledge.

The application of discursive principles to the study of the human subject is a relatively recent development; the approach therefore continues to evolve and grow (Edwards, 1995). Initially discursive theory was adopted because of an emerging awareness that the mainstream psychological assumptions of truth, objectivity and consistency of the human subject were misplaced (Shotter, 1993). Increasingly, mainstream findings were struggling to successfully explain the complexities of human experience, with researchers repeatedly attempting to place the subjective human within objective boundaries (Henriques et al, 1984). The scientific assumptions that had shaped psychology had begun to constrain its focus of study and strip the psychological subject of its individuality and subjectivity (Stam, Lubek & Radke, 1998).

Psychology researchers, particularly those working within the feminist framework, started to search outside mainstream theories for a framework that could encapsulate the human 'social subject'. In 1984 Henriques and his colleagues wrote a groundbreaking book in which they implored their fellow researchers to revisit the underlying principles of their research and to reengage with the 'subject' of psychology. Humans, they argued, are not objective, logical, information processors, they are primarily social beings, thus any study should be founded upon the assumptions that humans are complex, subjective and continuously connected to their social environment. Henriques et al were not the first to raise these points (George Herbert Mead had written a similar argument in 1934). However, their book was published at a time when a crisis was beginning to emerge in social psychology and a heightened awareness of the limitations

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of the mainstream approach had already begun to develop (Bayer, 2002). With the contribution of their politically informed, critical argument that firmly advocated a theory based upon discursive principles, a philosophical shift, that had been slowly gathering momentum, began to move with more vigour.

Discursive psychology offered the contrasting theoretical position that researchers were seeking. The philosophy encouraged critique of existing knowledge and the embodiment of the human subject; it promoted subjectivity, social processes, complexity and variation. But more than that, it sought to embrace social issues; exploring the foundations of prejudice and oppression and seeking alternatives, allowing nothing to be taken for granted. Upon this philosophical and theoretical foundation a new area of social psychology began to take shape.

As discussed in chapter one, the approach to discursive psychology that is upheld in this research thesis has four fundamental assumptions – discourse as topic; embodiment; relativism; meaningful life as discursive life. From these assumptions many different approaches to discursive psychology have developed (Hepburn and Wiggins, 2005), often heavily contrasting (for example, conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis). Whilst all share these four principle assumptions, interpretation differs between approaches. This produces a field of study that outwardly appears contradictory and conflictual, yet when the debates are embraced and engaged with, the result is often an invigorating research critique that encourages development of an appropriate and 'tailored' analytical framework.

The present chapter therefore represents a discussion of the many threads that encompass the discursive approach with the aim of encouraging the development of a research framework that is philosophically and analytically supportive of the research aims. The field is vast and continually expanding and therefore it is important for a research project to clearly define its research position in order that findings can be

understood in the context of the research position. Thus, whilst this chapter is constructed as a discussion of the discursive approach, it also negotiates a theoretical and analytical position for the current research project to adopt.

2.1   The turn to talk: discourse as topic and as social life

Mainstream psychology views language as an impartial medium through which people project the products of their mental processing (Potter & Edwards, 1990). Discursive psychologists reject this view and state that language is performative and meaningful (Abell & Stokoe, 1999). Moreover, they reject the mainstream terminology. Replacing the restrictive term of 'language' with the wider and inclusive term of 'discourse', discursive psychology states that discourse is everything symbolic – gesture, facial features, clothing, posture, as well as the spoken/written word (Goffman, 1959). Therefore, the term 'discourse' represents *all* actions that perform communicative tasks (Edwards, 2005), as opposed to mainstream 'language' which refers to verbal and occasionally non-verbal communication.

Within this wider discursive definition, discourse also has spatial and temporal features. Oerton and Phoenix (2001) illustrated the meaning of space by studying the topic of gynaecology. In gynaecology practise, actions are performed that hold medical meaning, yet in alternative contexts they could be construed as having a sexual meaning. The context of the action has inferred a particular meaning. Similarly, an absence of discourse is also meaningful and therefore a communicative action (Mathews-Lovering, 1999). Silence during talk, as well as absence of narrative, has been explored as a discursive technique to communicate meaning or delay response (Knapp, 2000), as well as signifying oppressive processes (e.g. Gavey, 1993). Thus, the term discourse not only includes the symbolic actions that occur in interaction, but also meaning that is inferred through contextual and situational features.

With this definition, discursive psychology becomes the study of meaningful social life (Shotter, 1993). Discourse is treated, not as a window into the mind, but as a product and producer of social life (Edwards & Potter, 1992). The passivity of mainstream 'language', a product of the mind, becomes the 'action of discourse' – "discourse performs actions or practises of various kinds" (Potter and Edwards, 2001: 105). That is not to say that discourse is treated as a window into social life, rather the constructive and action-oriented aspects of discourse are studied. Discourse *is* the social.

In the analysis of discourse, all forms of discursive communication form the corpus of data; texts, interviews, books, conversations, graffiti, television programs, anything that involves meaningful communication. They are all part of social life, embedded within human existence. Meaning communicated within discourse allows researchers to engage with the social processes that construct social life, whether they are the social order revealed in a conversation or ideologies of oppression revealed in men's magazines. Through increased understanding the knowledge that structures social life can be revealed, critiqued and counter-acted if necessary.

One criticism arising from the focus on discourse refers to the inference 'talk is all there is', taken from the work of the early theorists such as Foucault and Derrida, and translated by mainstream psychologists as meaning 'nothing exists outside talk' (Edley, 2001). Those familiar with the early works argue that the statement, in context, should be translated as 'talk is all there is when considering meaningful life' (Edley, 2001), which represents a very different philosophical standpoint. As Edley stated, critics who draw upon this thread of argument are making an ontological statement; they are attempting to describe a reality. Of course, discursive psychology is making an epistemological statement and therefore is asserting nothing more than the centrality of talk for understanding meaningful social life.

The turn to discourse, whilst an important and fundamental assumption of discursive psychology, is only the beginning of the theory that has subsequently developed, and continues to develop (Edwards, 2005). Other important concepts that discursive psychology draws upon are the rejection of realism and adoption of relativism, the embodiment of the individual, the process of interaction and the subsequent importance of subjectivity, and the importance of meaning in social life. A complete introduction to discursive theory must therefore include discussion of these assumptions.

2.1.1   Relativism: What is truth?

For Descartes, the search for truth was the fundamental task of philosophers (Descartes, 1997) and this assumption has formed the realist foundation of mainstream psychology (Shotter, 1993). As such, the mainstream approach seeks to find this 'truth', whilst assuming it exists to be sought, and furthermore, that it can be measured and recorded accurately. The aim of researchers within this field is to be objective and to design experiments that are reliable and valid.

A critique of the mainstream experimental approach arises from the opposing framework of relativism. The term relativism refers to the assertion that rather than one objective reality, where human experience is concerned there are many possible realities, differing across and within individual discourse constructions. Where realism seeks a reality that is consistent and fixed, relativism seeks to explore the variability and fluidity of life, along with the many different versions of 'truth' that co-exist meaningfully with differential impact.

Relativism has been adopted by discursive theorists as a fundamental philosophical assumption (Billig, 1996). The relativist framework aids researchers to critique constructions of truth and reality, revealing how they are maintained in talk and therefore enable resistance and change to become part of everyday dialogue. Indeed,

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Billig (2000) argues that this critique of truth has become so rehearsed that it is itself a 'naturalised' discourse, particularly within the sections of society that routinely engage in intellectual debate. Discourses of cultural, political and ideological critique are increasingly employed in conversation.

The adoption of relativism has attracted criticism from realist theorists (Edwards, 2001). The central argument employed revolves around two separate threads. Firstly, that some experiences are so awful (torture, starvation) they are undoubtedly real and to treat them otherwise is morally void, and secondly, that objects obviously exist, we can touch them. Edwards, Ashmore and Potter (1995) described this as the 'Death and Furniture Argument'. They state that these arguments are themselves a form of 'realist discourse', contributing to the 'argument' for reality rather than proving its existence. The first argument draws upon robust moral discourses to position relativism as morally void, a position that is not desirable, and the second argument draws upon discourses of science that directly promote the existence of reality (Potter, 2003). However, relativism does not claim that no reality exists; the existence of the table is not refuted and economic constraints are not presented as purely discursive. Rather it is the 'objective reality' as presented within a narrative of talk that is under debate. A table is only a table in talk, as an object it is a group of meaningless, if solid, shapes.

Relativism breaks down the robust and 'safe' boundaries of realism and pushes life into a realm of multiple realities. Some critics have argued that relativism would lead to chaos; nothing is real therefore anything goes, everyone is right and wrong (Shotter, 1993). However, as Shotter (1993) argues, the response of chaos illustrates misunderstanding; discourse itself constrains social life. Discourse constructs boundaries within which social life must function for it to be meaningful. Furthermore, within discourse, processes such as power, control, fear, adulation, acceptance, needs and so on operate, thus through discourse the social lives of participants are largely

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determined. Of course, choice exists, but only within the availability of appropriate potential discourses; social life is a negotiation between individual aims and the discourses available to achieve those aims (Gergen, 2000).

Although feminist researchers have increasingly employed discursive theory (Clarke, Kitzinger and Potter, 2004), some have argued that relativism's advocation of multiple realities is unsuitable for feminist objectives. When realities co-exist, truth becomes problematic and versions of reality potentially undermine each other. Feminists aim to change women's lives by first understanding what their experiences are and then providing the tools with which women can implement change (Gill, 1995). If research reveals a finding that it subsequently qualifies as being one version of truth, another version of which could be entirely opposite, the basis of change becomes unstable. Why should the woman who labels her experience as rape be telling a more valid version of the event than the man who labels it sex?

Validating multiple accounts may not be problematic, if relativism could allow distinction between versions. In its purest form, of course, relativism can not provide distinctions; but as Hepburn (2000) argues, activists or policy makers can and should simply choose whichever version they need to support their argument for making positive political changes.

The tension between feminism and relativism has been discussed in depth. Gill (1995) states that within a culture that practises robust patriarchal processes, promoting the emancipation of women is exceedingly difficult even on a realist level. When the discourse of relativism is introduced, patriarchy is strengthened by yet more ammunition, gaining the tools needed to accuse feminism of being a 'rhetorical device' and feminist argument of being one version of many other realities. Rather than being listened to as a valid version, the feminist argument is deconstructed and its validity extinguished. Gill therefore argues for 'political' relativism. She proposes that feminist

researchers position themselves at the centre of political debate, immersing themselves in detailed, dynamic argument. By ensuring that this process is reflexive, with each making explicit their political position, researchers can deconstruct their own work and that of their colleagues, and it is through this discursive wrangling that political change should emerge.

Authors such as Gergen (2000) have argued that relativism's critique of truth and knowledge has been invaluable for unravelling the robust ideologies of racism and sexism. In sympathy with the need for position taking, Gergen has also advocated valuing one discourse over another. Conceding that everyone is embodied in the social, Gergen continues that everyday we assert our positions as social analysts and we should carry on, we should allow ourselves to take judgement, knowing we are doing so. To remain neutral is to become disconnected, to detach ourselves from the social processes in which we partake. Prejudice and oppression do not apologise for themselves, why should emancipation?

Therefore, whilst the philosophical assumptions of relativism reject the notion of truth and in their purest form reject the advocation of one particular political view over another, the present thesis will assert that a position must be occupied. Moreover, as Gergen has argued, discursive psychology postulates that position taking is part of social life, all speakers orient themselves to one position or another when they engage in any form of communication. Therefore, by rejecting position taking the research community is effectively disconnecting itself from social life and from the theory that it has adopted.

2.1.2   Embodiment and interaction

Mainstream social psychology studies the social individual as an entity that shares a two way process of interaction between itself, an individual and thinking entity, and the

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social environment in which it exists (Shotter, 1999). Rejecting this dualism requires an approach where the two are more heavily integrated. By drawing upon the work of Bourdieu, discursive theorists began to discuss the concept of embodiment (Sampson, 1998). Bourdieu proposed that the individual is not just *part* of his or her social context, they are actually *embodied within* it. As such, the social individual and the culture in which they are interacting are inseparable, they are one, deeply intertwined. Bourdieu further proposed that discourse, as an important part of culture, is also deeply embedded, to the extent that its meanings and its influence upon us appear to be 'natural'.

Following Bourdieu discursive theorists have adopted embodiment as a fundamental assumption. As Shotter (1993) argues embodiment is an "undeniable empirical fact" (p29), the social subject is constructed and defined within the context in which they exist. Developing this further, Shotter (1993) states that humans experience and demonstrate a "living, expressive, embodied, spontaneous responsiveness" (p3). This rather flamboyant representation illustrates the embodiment of the individual, whereby they become part of the social, expressing the social and responding within the social. The individual and the social are so interconnected, that some argue for a rejection of the concept 'individual', stating that discursive psychology should study the social as produced by the discursive (Potter, 2003).

As embodied within the social context, the interaction that takes place between subjects is a fundamental aspect of meaningful social life (Gergen, 2000). As such, for discursive psychology, interaction is of utmost importance. Within interaction the process of the discursive occurs (Shotter, 1993), individuals construct their argument, convey their meaning, produce conversation. Interaction is reflexive; discourse develops through input from all involved, evolving constantly to produce a conversation of verbal, environmental and bodily meaning. To each interaction participants bring

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their prior discursive experience, experience that is constantly added to by new interaction.

This theoretical framing, with embodiment and interaction as central, is particularly pertinent in the context of feminist theory and research. Processes such as oppression and patriarchy need to be studied as products of both social influence and interaction between individuals; oppression would not exist if either component were absent. Thus, by studying the embodied, interactive subject, the processes that oppress and disempower can be more fully deconstructed.

Taking embodiment and interaction as central theoretical components, Mikhail Bakhtin (1986) proposes 'the dialogical approach'. Bakhtin draws heavily from Wittgenstein's discussion of the 'other', where a speaker's position and the social environment are continually built around interaction; they are connected by conversational utterances and social discourses (Gustafson, Hodgson & Tickner, 2004). Later and independently, Michael Billig developed rhetorical psychology, which shared many of the assumptions and theoretical elements of the dialogical approach. Essentially the two complement each other, though the more recent rhetorical approach required some modification to include the ideas of Bakhtin following its initial absence (Billig, 1996).

Bakhtin's primary concern was upon the interactive process of dialogue production. He claimed that within dialogue individuals must anticipate the coming utterances, though they can take many different forms. In anticipating the response, a speaker will construct their talk in such a way as to produce a convincing argument for the listener. Billig's (1996) rhetorical approach highlights the argumentative nature of dialogue, adding another layer to the relativist assumption that for every reality there is a counter-reality by stating that for every discourse there is a counter-discourse. As such, rhetorical psychology extends the discursive approach to render the constructive

element of discourse not just necessary for communicating meaning, but necessary as a tool to undermine alternative versions and safeguard the current position. Every argument is produced to reduce the likelihood of a counter-argument being viable (Potter and Edwards, 2001). In doing so, argument becomes a product of the momentary interaction developing around the anticipated response from listeners.

2.1.3   Meaningful existence

Mead (1934) stated that discourse constructs meaningful existence. He further proposed that meaning exists before it is understood or received, i.e. the discursive mechanisms that communicate meaning exist within the discourse construction before the meaning itself exists. For discursive theorists, meaning is central to all social life, and its emergence through language illustrates how social life is built within language construction. Shotter (2005) further argues that through momentary interaction people are expressive and spontaneous, both with each other and with the wider social context. As such talk creates the words themselves, the meaning they convey between the individuals, the meaning within the culture they are interacting in, as well as expressing meaning about other things not being discussed (if a person talks about the problems of being black in a white dominated culture, the description of black subjective experience infers meaning about white subjective experience). Thus, meaning is an inevitable product of discursive interaction (Shotter, 2005).

Discursive theory draws upon theories of ideology to explore meaningful existence. The theory of ideology largely stems from Marxist critiques of knowledge to reveal oppression (Gergen, 2000), but has more recently been adopted by Michael Billig, a repeated contributor to the development of discursive psychology. Billig (2001) defines ideology as 'the common sense of society' (217). As such, ideology is naturalised knowledge, the things people just seem to 'know'. Ideology is therefore a 'knowledge

bank' that people can draw upon to develop the content of their discourse. When discourse is communicated to others, ideology enables the content to become meaningful.

A strong component of ideological theory is the critique of such knowledge. Ideologies contribute heavily to immaterial processes like power, dominance, racism, sexism and other forms of oppression and constraint, therefore the aim of much research is to reveal the ideologies that underpin oppressive argument. By exploring their construction and function, the influence they have upon social life can be understood and change can be promoted (Billig, 1999). This emphasis is a strength utilised by feminist researchers.

The theorist Pecheux (1982) stated that ideology does not just exist in the immaterial, it can also occur in material forms, for example economic circumstances can limit the available discourses a person is able to take up (Fairclough, 1992). Fairclough (1992) argues that material ideology, like the immaterial, is a process to which we are not passive. People are able to resist the discourses that are made available to them, discourses that oppress. The work of Foucault focused largely upon ideological process proposing that to avoid an oppressive ideology, people should simply resist them. However, Foucaultian theory lacks detail concerning how resistance should occur (Sarup, 1996). Furthermore, feminist critique states that resistance is not enough, rather oppression requires the development of new, non-oppressive discourses that can replace or at least provide alternatives to oppression (Gill, 1995). As such, much of feminist research aims to create new discourses, as well as critique those that already exist.

A further arena of discussion that emerged through the integration of ideological theory was 'subjectivity'. For mainstream psychology, the subjective experience is a product of mind, a mental state that results from socialisation, cognition, learning and the current experiential context. For discursive theory, subjectivity represents the

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experiential quality of discursive life (Henriques et al, 1984). Through the embodied subject and the meaningful life experience as constructed through discourse, subjective experience becomes a product of social life. Thus, the influence of ideology is thought to shape the subjective experience through the meanings inferred. However, the topic of subjectivity has become heavily debated in discursive psychology and therefore is discussed in detail as part of subject positioning in chapter three.

2.1.4   Overview

This section has explored the fundamental set of assumptions advocated and upheld by discursive psychology. The impact of such assumptions dramatically effects the type of knowledge sought by researchers and the definition of the subject of psychology. Where mainstream psychology has sought to find an objective truth, discursive seeks a detailed version of experience, and where mainstream psychology defined the subject of psychology as a product of cognition and biology interacting with the social context, discursive has embodied the subject in the social and rejected the notion of mind and cognition. In terms of a theory that is motivated by the impact of social processes upon lived experience, feminist researchers have largely embraced discursive theory and promoted the strengths of analysis that explores the detail and complexity of women's experiences, whilst critiquing the knowledge base through which it draws. Oppression is a product of power, prejudice and constraint, all of which exist in the discursive realm, not the cognitive.

2.2   Approaches to discursive psychology

The previous section outlined the basic assumptions upon which the foundations of discursive psychology are built, exploring the consequences such assumptions have upon the study of the subject of psychology. Argument was put forward to support the

turn to discursive theory, highlighting its strengths for explaining and understanding the social subject and positioning common threads of critique as misunderstanding of the philosophical foundation.

This section will expand discussion by further developing the theoretical and research implications of adopting discursive philosophy. Two contrasting approaches to discursive theory will be examined and compared to reveal the differing ways in which the philosophy has been adopted, these approaches are 'conversation analysis' and 'critical discourse analysis'. Through discussion of these approaches, their strengths and weaknesses will be explored, enabling a research and analytical position to be developed that draws upon and utilises strengths, and minimises weakness. It is of importance to note that whilst the two approaches can be presented as opposites on a continuum of philosophical framework, they share the common foundation of discursive philosophy and as such are not irreconcilable. It is, however, of benefit in the context of a theoretical critique to present the two approaches as dichotomous, before illustrating how the differences in approach can be a basis for integration. As such, it can be demonstrated that a hybrid approach provides a method of analysis that is more inclusive, detailed and developed than the approaches can offer individually.

Also integrated within this section is the suitability of discursive psychology for studying feminist issues. The introductory chapter positioned the current thesis as feminist, desiring both the revelation of oppressive discourses and the creation of emancipatory discourses. Discursive philosophy is largely considered to be conducive with feminist aims, due to its ability to increase understanding of complex, and often immaterial, social processes (Mathews-Lovering, 1995). Thus, the final section of this chapter will include a feminist critique of discursive theory, followed by a summary of the analytical position that will subsequently be adopted.

2.2.1 Methods for analysing discourse

The field of discursive psychology encompasses several approaches, most of which share the fundamental philosophical assumptions outlined above but differ on other central theoretical points. Research practise often draws upon more than one approach simultaneously, producing a theoretical and analytical position focused towards the aims of a study. This diversity has provoked criticism that the area is becoming overwhelmed, to the extent that the term 'discourse analysis' now covers such a wide range of approaches it is becoming meaningless (Mathews-Lovering, 1995). However, as Mathews-Lovering (1995) argues, the discursive approach is strengthened by this diversity; each research project can utilise an analytical technique that is tailored to the research aims. Researchers are able to draw upon the strengths of each approach as determined by the specific topics they are exploring, thus the process of discursive research involves reflexive consideration of the approaches available.

2.2.2 Critical discourse analysis and conversation analysis

All discursive approaches, regardless of their position in the field, share the fundamental assumptions outlined above (relativism, embodiment, interaction and meaningful existence). However, the way in which these principles are drawn upon and utilised differs, at times significantly. This section will utilise conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis to discuss the ways in which each contradicts the other and the implications this therefore has for research aims.

Whilst at times the positions of the conversational and critical approaches are presented as highly incongruent with one another and entirely separate, theoretically they are not entirely dissimilar. The façade of difference is a product of a wider debate amongst discursive theorists concerning the production of discourse – do we, as speakers, produce discourse, or does discourse, as a social construction, produce us? As

Edley and Wetherell (1997) state, the answer is both. Conversational/critical hybrid approaches will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. This section will focus upon the differences between the two approaches and the theoretical standpoints that underpin them.

Discussion will begin by exploring critical discourse analysis and the important principles that underpin this approach. Firstly, researchers share a commitment to social issues, embracing topics such as racism, sexism and other forms of oppression, advocating widespread social change (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997); research is a form of social action (Potter & Edwards, 2001). This occasionally results in a dilemma where the researcher must negotiate a position between the desire to claim and promote a version of reality to be more valid than another, whilst adopting the relativist stance; the aim is to create solutions for oppression, thus research seeks answers rather than a version of reality that can not be considered true. This dilemmatic position will be explored later in the chapter. Secondly, critical theorists commit themselves to critiquing knowledge; challenging the 'norms' of social life and revealing 'myths'. This work often involves the integration of ideological analysis, interpreting data to identify ideological construction in discourse. Thirdly, the critical approach views discourse as constructing all meaningful life, therefore immerses the subject of research within the social, cultural and political contexts. The subject becomes a product of the ideologies that imbue their environment, though simultaneously maintaining and producing the ideologies in their talk.

A founder of the critical discourse approach is Michael Billig, whose work has already been drawn upon to discuss the foundation of discursive psychology. Billig (2000) strongly advocates the critical stance towards studying the social subject – critical of mainstream findings and assumptions, as well as critical of the work that is produced within the discursive field. Through critique, Billig argues, discursive work

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can position itself within the social arena, acknowledging its own existence as a product of discursive construction, but also revealing the processes of society and of social life. This reflexive approach allows for the researcher's discourse position to be made explicit and the ongoing critique of theory produces a continuously evolving position. Critique, therefore, becomes an essential part of the research process, being the revelation of bias and the re-positioning of researcher within the research process.

As discussed, Billig (1991) has been instrumental in integrating ideological theory into the analysis of discourse, as well as advocating its importance for exploring oppressive processes. The emphasis is upon critiquing naturalised knowledge constructed in discourse, thereby revealing how ideologies are maintained. Through ideological analyses, the processes of oppression can be revealed, understood and change can be promoted and effectively implemented. Therefore, the analysis of discourse from a critical perspective involves the researcher drawing upon their knowledge of ideology to identify where it is constructing talk. This is a difficult task for a researcher embedded within social life and therefore themselves part of the ideological process. However, the literature on ideology and the critical perspective adopted by discursive psychology provides tools with which the researcher can identify and deconstruct ideological influence.

Ideologies are complex processes that represent social life in many different ways; often they produce opposing sides of an argument, presenting a dilemma for the social being who has both available to them. This has been termed an 'ideological dilemma' (Billig et al, 1988) and represents the negotiation produced within an argument seeking to take up a position that incorporates opposing ideologies. According to Billig and colleagues, the process of dilemma is common within discourse. Due to the vast array of contrasting and contradictory discourses that exist speakers will repeatedly find themselves in a position of ideological negotiation. Interestingly, such dilemmas reveal

to the analyst the complexity of ideology, but furthermore they reveal the boundaries and constraints within which speakers must participate. Analysing the careful negotiation of acceptability allows exploration of the unacceptable, and for women's oppression the unacceptable is often empowerment. Thus, by studying such discourse feminists are able to identify areas where emancipatory discourses could be constructed.

An example of this research is women's negotiation of sexual relations. The findings of feminist discursive researchers such as Hollway (1984), Ehrlich (1998) and, in particular, Gavey (1993) have shown that women must negotiate several contradictory discourses to position themselves positively in the context of sexual relations with men. It seems that a woman must be sexually available, but not sexually active; she must not refuse sexual intercourse with a man, but she must not have sex with too many men. Thus, when a woman discusses sexual relationships she must position herself positively amongst these opposing discourses and within her discourse there are likely to be ideological dilemmas at work.

Where critical discourse analysis draws upon ideology and the social context to interpret and explore the discourses found within the data, conversation analysis draws more specifically upon the data itself to interpret the discourses contained within. Conversation analysis seeks to reveal the detail of talk that structures social order (Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997). Analysis involves the selection of passages of ordinary conversation and attempts to identify how meaning is communicated through the sequence of talk. The analyst learns, from the text, how discursive action is performed in the momentary interaction of conversational talk (Wooffitt, 2001), uncovering the properties of talk to reveal the tools that create a sequence of conversation (Zimmerman, 1998).

Emphasis is placed upon the importance of studying talk in its natural environment, as it occurs spontaneously (Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997), therefore the source of data is

often the mundane activities accomplished within everyday talk (Wilkinson &

Kitzinger, 2003). Conversation is the most obvious form of spontaneously occurring

mundane talk, but certainly not the only one, and whilst conversation analysis draws

upon the term within its name, analysts are quick to emphasise that other forms of data

are drawn upon (Schegloff, 1999).

Conversation analysis holds a strong connection between the talk and the speaker,

claiming that analysts should only consider and include in their findings that which the

participant speaker has made relevant. Schegloff (1997), an advocate of speaker driven

analysis, called this studying the subject 'in its own terms' (171). Emphasising the

importance of producing analysis that is not biased by the aims of the researcher,

Schegloff (1997) claims that by drawing upon the data to explore the participant

experience, the analyst centres analysis around the subject. Findings therefore tell the

tale of the participant, rather than the demonstrating the researcher's knowledge of the

theory they support.

'Orderliness' of conversation is another central assumption of the CA approach. The

inclusion of this ethnomethodological assumption stems largely from the work of

Garfinkel (Hammersley, 2003), in which he asserted that conversational activity follows

certain rules. These rules can, and should, be revealed through the analysis of

conversation. This order comes in two types, sequence and consistency, both of which

relate to the structure of talk. Sequence refers to the order of utterances within a

conversation. The sequence influences the meaning conveyed with each utterance

shaping the next. As such, the sequence of speakers is also influential to conversation

order, with the previous speaker's utterance influencing the potential responses of the

next.

The consistency within talk refers to the repeated use of particular conversational

tools, tools that produce meaning in talk, as well as influencing the type of utterances

that follow. A much cited example of analytical findings is the use of 'extreme case formulations' (Pomerantz, 1986). Extreme case formulations are words that represent an extreme position, such as 'nothing', 'never', 'always' and 'everything'. Through studying how they function within conversation Pomerantz (1986) found that they have three outcomes – producing a strong case when doubt is the likely response, proposing a cause for an event and speaking of the rightness of action. Through the employment of an extreme case formulation speakers are able to influence the flow of conversation, rendering their talk less open to challenge or communicating cause, whichever they implement.

Due to the focus upon the finer details of interactional talk, the wider social context is not thought to be relevant to conversation analysis. The sequence and content of conversation is formed through the momentary interaction and the immediate social environment. Goffman (1983) termed this 'loose coupling', representing the interaction to be 'loosely' related to the wider social context within which the individuals are functioning. As a result, analysis does not usually include any form of cultural, social, political or historical influence, unless made relevant to the conversation through participant orientation.

2.2.3 Top-down or bottom-up

Edley and Wetherell (1997) outline a principle upon which conversation analysis and discourse analysis illustrate their contrasting position, the focus of analysis – theory driven versus data driven. The discussion above illustrates that critical theories highlight the importance of ideology, power and social process, therefore are described by Edley and Wetherell as having a "top-down" (p205) approach (theory down to data). Conversation analysts have been shown to draw their analysis out of their data,

therefore Edley and Wetherell describe them as having a "bottom-up" (p205) approach to analysis.

Top-down, theory driven analysis allows the researcher's knowledge of social theories to imbue the research findings. As such, the researcher is viewed as knowing things that perhaps others do not, they are experts in social theory. The 'theory' that is drawn upon refers to the continuously developing philosophical and theoretical position of critical theory, therefore includes ideological analyses and the philosophies of relativism, embodiment and critique. Thus, the researcher uses their knowledge of the theories to draw out and interpret findings. In contrast, the bottom-up approach adopted by conversation analysis presents the researcher as having something to learn from the participant. They are the naïve onlooker, who draws upon the data, upon the speakers experience to interpret social life. Of course, critical analysts assert that it is neither possible nor useful for the researcher to disconnect themselves from the data in this way. The researcher is a social being, influenced by their wider social environment and as such will interpret the data with their own perspective; this, critical analysts argue, should be acknowledged rather than ignored.

Conversation analysis rejects the theory driven approach claiming that the application of theory to data imposes bias upon research findings, with research 'fitted' into the researcher's framework of ideology (Schegloff, 1999). However, Billig (1999) has argued fervently that the terminology and discursive tools employed by conversation analysis is also restrictive because it imposes consistency and meaning upon data. In addition, the participants themselves do not develop the terms employed by conversation analysts to explain the meaning of the participant's talk. Far from analysing 'in participant's own terms' the analysts are actually doing it in *their* own terms (Shotter, 2005).

Moreover, as a theory driven approach that holds critique as an important factor in research and theory development, the critical approach is continuously evolving and reviewing its own practises. By developing theory and philosophy alongside analytical practise, the approach gains a fundamental strength, reflexivity. Through reflexivity critical theorists allow their work to be constantly re-positioned. Critical discourse analysis does impose theory upon data, but it does so reflexively, making researchers constantly aware of their own position in the wider social context and its influence upon their work. The impact of applying theory to data is therefore minimised. Furthermore, critical analysts often draw upon discursive tools to deconstruct the discourses they are analysing. Tools such as extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986), metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and category employment (Edwards, 1991; 1998) are often employed by critical analysts (see, for example, Lynn and Lea, 2003; Lea and Auburn, 2001). By deconstructing the discursive tools utilised by a speaker, analysts attend to the immediate interactional qualities of the discourse construction in addition to the wider ideological influences.

2.2.4   The individual versus the social

A consequence of assuming a data driven or a theory driven approach has been the topic of study. For conversation analysis the focus is often upon the individual within the interaction (Hammersley, 2003), whereas critical analysis holds the social context as the central influence upon discourse (Billig, 1999). Hammersley (2003) states that critical theory is limited by the insufficient role it gives to the person talking. Whilst the social context is given emphasis and, thus, discussion, the individual constructing the social context is largely ignored. Recent movements in constructionism have acknowledged this and attempted to incorporate a psychoanalytic stance to account for the motivation and personal investment a speaker demonstrates by choosing a particular argument (see

Henriques et al, 1984). However, Gavey (2002) highlights the difficulty of integrating the realism of psychoanalysis with the relativism of discourse analysis, suggesting that instead of seeking realist answers theorists should draw upon constructionism and discuss the construction of subjectivity rather than the motivation of investment.

Potter (2003a), in a direct reply to Hammersley's (2003 and 2003a) original claims, stated that rejecting the role of the individual was the *aim* of discourse analysis and the criticism itself illustrates a mainstream approach to how discourse should be studied. The embodiment of the individual within the wider social context is a primary assumption of the critical approach, thus to study the 'individual' contradicts the very foundation which critical analysts have sought to establish. Furthermore, the limitations of a person centred approach have been highlighted by Wetherell (1995), who argues that a complete analysis is not possible within the confines of participant orientation. Wetherell states that the complex processes of ideology do not influence in an 'on or off' style, they are intricately woven into the discursive fabric of social life. As Frith (1998) states, conversation analysts can not be sure that "all dimensions will be interactionally displayed" (p535). Thus, the assumption that everything relevant to the speaker will be oriented to in talk may render the analysis incomplete (Wetherell, 1998).

Billig (1999) argues that the most important part of discursive research is the end goal, social change. The micro context of conversation analysis cannot offer what is needed to invoke change, as the narrow focus of the analysis does not capture the complexity of social constructs (Stokoe & Weatherell, 2002). Wetherell (1998) states that to be suitable for the political sphere conversation analysis would need to include some form of ideological awareness or sensitivity in its analysis or interpretation of findings. Thus, it seems that neither approach affords a thorough explanation of human experience, and therefore a combination of the two, which draws upon the strengths of each to overcome the weakness of the other, must offer the strongest framework. The

next step towards negotiating an analytical position is to explore how the two approaches can be integrated to produce analysis that is complementary to feminist aims.

As stated above, research from the discursive perspective has revealed how oppression is maintained and indeed functions through discourse (Gergen, 2000; Gill, 1995) and some debate has arisen concerning which approach is best suited to fully reveal these processes, the critical approach or the conversation analytic. Stokoe (2000) exhibits the core features of this debate in her discussion about gender. Whilst acknowledging the limitations of an analytical approach that ignores the wider social context, especially when embracing feminist aims, Stokoe also states that CA has not neglected social issues. Her article cites several studies that have revealed the conversational mechanisms that men use to assert dominance over women. Indeed, such research is useful for aiding women to produce conversational mechanisms that can disarm or counteract such dominance. Further, Shotter (1999) asserts that emancipation must occur within the momentary interaction between participants because ultimately that is where power and oppression take effect, therefore supporting research that reveals such mechanisms. Thus, just as CA reveals *how* conversation is practised, it too can reveal *how* oppression is practised (Stokoe, 2000).

However, women's oppression is not just limited to conversations between men and women. When two women discuss how they must have sex with their husbands to keep them happy, they are constructing their own sexual oppression and their collaboration in the conversation is maintaining the oppression because the shared experience confirms and validates the position. Wetherell, Stiven and Potter (1987) showed how equal opportunities discourses overtly challenged oppression but are implicitly maintained simply through their reproduction. Whilst, participants' arguments appeared to be largely supportive of equal opportunities, analysis revealed the employment of counter-

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argument alongside supportive comments that effectively undermined the positive support and legitimised a final position of equal opportunities as problematic. Oppression was effectively given credibility through the practise of its indirect, immaterial form.

These studies highlight that a thorough understanding of the process of oppression requires that it be studied from both an interactional micro-context level and a social macro-context level. Therefore, the need for a fully informed and developed ideological analysis to adequately understand oppression, as highlighted by both Billig (1999) and Gergen (2000), remains a central factor in the decision of which approach to adopt as the primary analysis. But, as Stokoe (2000) states, oppression must also be explored at the interactional level, and therefore the construction of talk is an essential part of the analysis.

2.3   A hybrid approach to analysis[1]

Schegloff (1997, 1999), amongst others (see Van Dijk, 1997; 1999; 1999a), has repeatedly argued that the critical and conversation approaches do not oppose one another, rather they merely study different aspects of talk. As such, each can be used alongside the other to produce a rich and detailed analysis that accounts for both the interactive momentary quality of talk production, as well as the social, historical and political influence of the wider context (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2003; Smith & Sparkes, 2002). As stated above, Edley and Wetherell (1997) propose, "the two approaches are most usefully understood as reflecting two sides of the same paradox; people are simultaneously the products *and* producers of discourse" (p206). Ideological

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[1] The thesis does not set out to advance a singular framework with this title. Rather, it explores the forms that a hybrid analysis, in which critical and conversational analyses are integrated with feminist theory, might take in order to deconstruct the discourses that legitimise sexual abuse against women.

analysis essentially studies the 'products of' part and conversation analysis studies the 'producers of'.

Addressing the issue of representing the social and interactional qualities of talk in analysis, Fairclough and Wodak (1997) proposed that the construction of discourse at a micro-level contributes to the structure and flow of the wider, macro-level social context. Drawing upon the work of Foucault, Bakhtin and the social Marxist theorists, Fairclough and Wodak propose, as do Edley and Wetherell (1997), that "discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially shaped" (p258). As such, discourse that is created and constructed on an interactional level and serves the purpose of communication between individuals, is also part of a reciprocal relationship with societal processes.

When analysts integrate the two approaches, they often do so using one or the other as a basis, adding in elements of the contrasting approach. Approaches that utilise critical, top-down analysis often attempt to draw out explanations that relate to the construction of the argument (Edwards, 2005), thereby offering an approach that integrates data and theory driven interpretation. Similarly, conversation analytic researchers, particularly those who perform feminist research, have attempted to incorporate ideological analysis in their data interpretations (for example, Kitzinger and Frith, 1999).

Discussing the contributions of Tainio (2003), Kitzinger and Frith (1999) and Speer (2002; see chapter one for a summary of their collective work), Wooffitt (2005) advocates the suitability of conversation analysis as a foundation for developing understanding of wider social contexts. He takes as illustrative the example of constructions of power in talk. Wooffitt argues that by deconstructing arguments or minor disagreements of opinion researchers can reveal how power is negotiated at the time when the struggles are actually occurring. He dismisses the necessity for a wider

ideological analysis, stating that such analysis is based in theoretical argument rather than real events.

Conversation analysts orient to a similar position to that advocated by Wooffitt. Most dismiss the need for the integration of ideological analyses, stating that they are not consistent with the data driven assumptions advocated by the conversation analysis approach. The tradition has produced much informative work on the interactional qualities of talk, many of which are drawn upon in the empirical chapters that follow. However, the thesis' orientation to feminist theory and the necessity for ideological critique that such a position warrants, therefore highlights the importance of adopting an analytical technique that incorporates ideological analysis as a central theme.

Successful attempts to attend to both levels of analysis have been performed with an ideologically informed integrative approach. Edley and Wetherell (1997) produced a 'hybrid' research study when they explored young men's constructions of masculinity. By drawing upon ideological analysis to attend to the social construction of the discourses they retained a strong link between the talk uttered and the wider social context in which it belonged. This enabled them to explore masculinity as a product of social life, culture and history, and to interpret it through ideological constraint. By also including a more detailed deconstruction of the interaction and construction of discourse, it was explained and interpreted as an account, a communication and as functioning within the immediate micro-social context. Analysis therefore became rich, detailed and multi-faceted, exploring how young men are both the 'products of' and 'producers of' masculinity.

Drawing upon the work of Fairclough and Wodak (1997) to analyse rape and sexual assault tribunal transcriptions, Ehrlich (1998; 2001) adopts an analytical position that draws out the origins of socially constraining and oppressive discourses in the interactions of conversation. For example, part of Ehrlich's (2001) analysis included a

deconstruction of a lawyer's line of questioning. Ehrlich revealed that by posing 'controlling' questions, such as "You knew you had a way out if there was any difficulty" (p80), the brief communicated several important pieces of information. Firstly, that he expected an affirmative answer and therefore that the proposition must be true, secondly, that the victim had prior knowledge because she 'knew' she had a way out, and finally that the victim could have avoided the incident. Ehrlich concluded that these three factors functioned to undermine the victim's allegation of sexual assault.

Critical authors, such as Anderson and Doherty (2008), Doherty and Anderson (2004), Lea and Auburn (2001), Lynn and Lea (2003) and Lea (2007), have increasingly sought to present an integrated form of analysis that deconstructs the interactional construction of social processes. Drawing upon a combination of critical theory and conversation analysis, Lea (2007) analysed the talk of sex offenders and the professionals working with them. Lea identified two discourses, 'desire' and 'commonsense', which served to minimise the severity of rape and allocate responsibility onto the victim. Analysis provided a deconstruction of the interactional qualities of talk and the social processes that the discourse maintained. Discussing the discourse of desire, Lea illustrates how a perpetrator minimises his responsibility for the rape by legitimising sexual interest in his victim; his construction builds up a description of her attractiveness, emphasising it with three-part-lists, detailed narrative and intonation. Lea concludes that this discourse serves to indicate that had the woman not been attractive she would not have been raped and, therefore, the rape itself is little more than sex. A similar approach was advocated by Anderson and Doherty (2008) who integrated a detailed deconstruction of the sequential organisation of talk with a broader consideration of social, political and cultural influences to analyse discourses of both male and female rape. Their findings also revealed the excuses and justifications that are constructed to remove accountability for rape away from the male perpetrator

and allocate it with the victim. They identified that central to the construction of blame and accountability is the issue of risk or hazard. The man, the rapist, is the hazard, and it is the responsibility of the woman to avoid him/it; blame is allocated when she fails in this endeavour. Accounts were therefore predominantly constructed around the victim's behaviour and character, with reference made to the perpetrator only when it served to provide additional information about the victim; he was little more than a shadowy 'character' in the background of the story.

These two examples of hybrid analyses show that it is possible to provide a robust analytical framework that integrates the top-down, theory driven, critical approach with the bottom-up, data driven, conversation analysis approach. Such a framework should draw upon the work of Edley and Wetherell (1997), Fairclough and Wodak (1997), Ehrlich (1998; 2001), Anderson and Doherty (2008), and Lea and colleagues, to provide the ideological critique, and upon the work of conversation analysts (such as Edwards, Potter, Schegloff, and Goffman) to provide the discursive tools employed in the construction of the account. In doing so both the 'socially constituted' and 'socially shaped' will be adequately represented.

2.4   Positioning the current research

Establishing a position within the field that simultaneously accommodates the feminist aims of understanding and change and remains true to the philosophical basis from which discursive psychology has grown, at the same time as avoiding the highly convincing ideological influences of science and realism has proven to be no mean feat. The integration of theory and practise remains problematic in discursive psychology (Rajapolan, 1999), requiring analysis to develop through a process of layering, where both construction and content are drawn out and explored.

Consequently, the position of the current research project can be summarised with the following assumptions:

1) The discursive individual is embodied within their culture; through their interaction with others they become alive and meaningful

2) The discourses employed in interaction are products of ideological process, as well as of the momentary interaction in which they occur (they emerge from both the macro- and the micro-contexts)

3) Within momentary interaction discourse creates oppression, but with feminist understanding and development it can also create emancipation and equality

4) Realism is rejected in favour of a relativist approach, but the choice of versions of reality that will aid women's emancipation is advocated

5) Discourse is constructed to do things, it is not passive. Analysis must critique argument, explore dilemma, reveal construction, unravel ideology, be reflexive and embodied, orient to the interaction and acknowledge temporal, historical and spatial influence.

6) The research process, including the dissemination of findings, must be a reflexive process.

The application of the discursive approach is the place where theory and practise meld. Utilising the principles set out above, the current thesis will investigate women's experiences of sexual harassment. As a piece of discursive feminist research that holds social embodiment as central, with the emancipation of women a fundamental goal, the research will embrace the ideological approaches, alongside the momentary interaction. The construction of discourse will be revealed, and the ideologies maintaining and being maintained in discourse explored.

3

The discursive positioning of the 'subject'

The previous chapter explored the analytic approaches of conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis. Each was contrasted against the other to allow an argument to form that promoted critical analysis as most suitable for the current research thesis. Critical analysis, it was argued, allowed the ideological elements of oppression and inequality to be explored, thereby satisfying the feminist foundations of this project. However, conversation analysis was not wholly rejected; the focus upon the detailed construction of talk, as well as the influences of the micro-level context were deemed to be useful for a project that seeks a thorough representation of women's experiences. Thus, an integrative approach was advocated with critical theory positioned as the dominant theory and the micro-level analyses of conversation analysis incorporated to promote discussion of interactive and conversational influences.

The present chapter seeks to build upon this foundation by introducing the topic of 'identity'. Discussion will commence with a brief description of mainstream theories of identity, followed by an introduction to the discursive approach. The conversation analytic approach to identity will not be presented in detail, though will be included as far as it enhances theoretical discussion. Firstly, production of identity positions as a function of micro-level influences will be explored, and secondly, the interesting findings regarding 'identity categories' will also be discussed. Drawing upon both the

conversational and critical theoretical approaches is beneficial to developing a more situationally grounded analysis of identity positioning.

Following discussion of the theoretical considerations, a research position will be described that imbues the feminist foundations of the research project whilst incorporating critical and ideological theories that can adequately explore and explain the positioning of subjects of social life.

3.1 The discursive turn

Explorations of human identity have intrigued philosophers and subsequently psychological researchers for many years (Gatter, 1999). Within mainstream Cartesian psychology identity is viewed as a product of the mind, logical and disconnected from the social environment (Bakhurst & Sypnowich, 1995) though reacting to it and within it to achieve essential social tasks (Weatherell, 2002).

Mainstream psychology has typically explained identity by drawing upon personality theories, thereby emphasising its consistent and fixed nature, the basis of which exists biologically and/or cognitively and is fine-tuned through socialisation. The foundation upon which these theories are built assumes that individuals are aware, logical, feeling and acting entities who occupy the centre of their conscious experience, experience that is objective reality (Sampson, 1989). The individual is continuous and predictable, providing behaviours that are therefore measurable and comparable.

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978) is a central mainstream theory of identity (Edwards, 1998). Social Identity Theory states that individuals are born into particular social categories, categories that uphold certain characteristics, which over time the individual becomes aware of and attached to, seeing themselves as belonging to and functioning within that category (Tajfel, 1978). The traits of the category are therefore

imbued within the individual and internalised, resulting in a stable and consistent identity.

Three processes occur in Social Identity Theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987). The first is categorisation, which assumes that in order to understand our social environment we must organise information into categories. These categories tell us who people are and what that means, as well as who *we* are and what that means. Appropriateness of behaviour is defined by reference to the norms of the groups to which membership is held.

The second process is identification, which assumes that the individual identifies with the groups to which they belong. As such, in-groups and out-groups are created where the groups to which the individual belongs become familiar and favourable and the groups in opposition become unfavourable. This can create an 'us and them' division. Identification occurs on two levels, the individual as belonging to a group and the individual as a unique person within that group.

The third process is comparison, which assumes that individuals need to hold a positive self-concept in order to function healthily and positively, a concept that is gained through comparison to others. As individuals compare themselves to people from other groups they draw out the positive characteristics of their own group and the negative characteristics of the opposing group, resulting in a positive comparison and therefore positive self-esteem.

The three processes interact with one another to produce an individual who can demonstrate a changeable social identity, that is placed in a 'self and other' comparison (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Furthermore, the theory itself is routed in social cognition, therefore creating the social individual as someone who functions on a psychological and individualistic level, with the social context placed as an external entity within which the individual functions (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). The social

identity is therefore separate from the social environment, though interacting with it in a meaningful and appropriate manner as determined by cognitive processing.

Whilst Social Identity Theory is well supported by experimental research (Turner et al, 1987), the disconnection of the social environment is a serious limitation when the focus of study is the social being. A particular concern discussed by Weatherell (2002) is the presupposition of homogeneity, or consistency, of identity, both within and across individuals. Weatherell proposes that identities are heterogeneous, being a combination of many different characteristics, drawn upon in differing ways depending upon the social context and often occupying seemingly opposing identities.

Furthermore, Edwards (1998) states that Social Identity Theory asserts a realist position, favouring truth and objectivity over relativism and the subjective social life. The theory assumes that when an individual discusses their identity the talk is descriptive and representative of truth, rather than a social action in itself, a construction of reality in which identity production is functional. In essence, the critique of mainstream psychology addressed in chapter two is applied to the topic of identity, asserting that identity is another part of social life that has been inadequately represented by mainstream psychology.

The discursive approach to identity theory can be seen as dating from the work of George Herbert Mead (Sampson, 1989). Mead (1934) offered a different perspective on identity, a perspective that views identity as a 'process' (p164) rather than a fixed and consistent entity, and as existing through social interaction, a 'conversation of gestures' (p178), rather than biologically or cognitively determined. This foundation for a more socially grounded approach to identity was adopted by discursive theorists who subsequently developed a detailed and rich theory that views the identity of a subject as a construct of discursive social life, *grounded* within the social context rather than merely *participating* within it (for example, Davies & Harré, 1984, and Gergen, 2000).

Of course, as with all discursive theory, the central assumption of the importance of language is also reflected (Gergen, 1998; Widdecombe, 1995). The meaning associated with particular identities is held and maintained within the interactional process of language (Zimmerman, 1998), through language the self comes alive (Shotter, 1999). Furthermore, the relativist position is also demonstrated, with discursive psychology emphasising the fluidity and flexibility of 'self' production, with no single, consistent reality existing, rather numerous possible selves that are employed in talk to serve particular functions. Thus, as stated above, identity is part of discursive social action.

Before proceeding to explore the discursive approach to identity in more detail, it is useful to acknowledge that turning away from mainstream theories of identity encouraged some critical discursive theorists to critique the use of the term 'identity' (see Malson, 2000). The meaning associated with the term is heavily imbued with mainstream definition, often representing a fixed, consistent, measurable and often predictable identity that belongs to an individual. As discussed, the discursive view of identity is somewhat different.

Consequently, critical theorists have attempted to reject the terminology of 'identity' and replace it with other more representative terms, such as "positioning" (Davies & Harrē, 1984: 43) and 'subjectivity' (Henriques et al, 1984). The term 'positioning' was advocated by Davies and Harrē (1984) to represent the complexity of the social subject, the constant link between the individual and their environment and the fluid, continuously evolving process that places an individual meaningfully. Subjectivity is most commonly associated with Henriques et al (1984; Bayer, 2002) and seeks to represent the 'life' experiences that positioning evokes.

However, critical theorists have struggled to reject the term 'identity' entirely. Malson (2000) overcame the difficulty of rejecting mainstream terminology by discussing the concept of 'identity'. Whilst this representation is clearly rejecting the

word, the repeated presence of it during her article is a metaphor for the difficulty critical theorists face when attempting to speak meaningfully about 'identity (but not the mainstream one)'. Alternative discourses are becoming more prevalent and beginning to establish stronger foundations from which to assert robust claims, allowing some aspects of identity to be discussed with discursive terminology.

Discursive identity represents the socially embodied individual, with identity part of social life, a social action. Thus, as part of the process contributing to 'identity' literature, when appropriate the current chapter will adopt the discursive terminology, drawing upon the term 'subject positioning' to represent the relational, fluid and socially active identity. However, where authors have presented their research or theoretical debate utilising the term identity, the term will be reproduced in this chapter, largely to ensure that the theoretical position of the research is represented. Nonetheless, it should be acknowledged that the current research rejects the mainstream theoretical position that the term identity evokes and therefore advocates the discursive approach of subject positions.

3.2   Discursive 'identity' positioning

As discussed, this research project has emerged from feminist informed critical theory, therefore the theory of subject positioning employed is underpinned by the assumptions of the critical approach. Suppositions of embodiment, interaction and ideology promote a theory of positioning that highlights fluidity, relative positions, subjectivity and meaning that is held in the social domain. Subjects are not positioned by their social environment, subjects *are* the social environment.

This section will introduce the four fundamental principles that constitute the discursive theory of subject positioning; positions are embodied and ideologically

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produced, positions are relational, positions are fluid and flexible and subjectivity is a product of subject positioning.

3.2.1 Embodiment, ideology and the production of subject positions

For critical theorists, the discursive positioning of the social subject is a mixture of political, historical, geographical and social influences, all of which are created within discourse (Gatter, 1999). Therefore, the position of subjects is viewed as a creation of society (Sampson, 1989), a product of the constant process of socially grounded interaction (Gergen, 2000). Through discourse the position of a subject is invoked, explicitly and implicitly.

The fundamental assumption of embodiment highlights the unity of culture and subject, stating that discourse, and therefore subject, is embodied within culture (Shotter, 1999). The process is simple – discourse is everything meaningful, the individual is therefore meaningful through discourse and the social is a product of interacting individuals. Meaning, discourse, social life and the individual are therefore inseparable and social life emerges through this embodiment. As discussed in chapter two, the meaning of social life is constructed through social processes, specifically ideologies (knowledge that is assumed to be 'true' and natural; is taken for granted). Thus, the embodied individual is a product and producer of ideology (Abell, Billig & Stokoe, 1999).

Simultaneously the individual is constrained and freed by ideology. Ideology makes available particular types of position that are deemed suitable for occupation by the individual; similarly, positions that are not available produce constraint. Of course, no position is completely unavailable. However, the structure of society is built upon ideological influence, influence that is robust and powerful. Occupying positions that contradict ideology promotes fragility and exposure to attack. Ideologies maintain

social practises, and as such argument that is supportive of existing social practise is by nature strong, robust and prevalent, argument that is unsupportive is by contrast weak, fragile and easily undermined.

The influence this process has upon subject positions should be apparent. Subject positions are a communication, both to the individual and to those around them, of the position that person is occupying at any given time. The position is a product of temporal, historical, situational, social, interactional, spatial and ideological influences. Each position is simultaneously related to the past, present and future; a product of discursive history, of context and of anticipation. Thus, as an embodied entity, the subject position is a communication of socially acceptable roles, behaviours, actions – a communication of social life.

3.2.2   Relational positioning: self and other in discourse

As discussed in the previous chapter, discourse is constructed through interaction between embodied individuals. As such, positioning the self, as a product of discourse, is a process which occurs within that interaction. Therefore, when the self is positioned it is usually done in relation to an 'other' or 'otherness'. Shotter (1999) discussed the importance of 'otherness', particularly in the construction of the momentary expression. He outlined the emergence of positions through the ongoing interactive experience of two or more people engaged in discourse. Through the talk that is subsequently produced the subject emerges, partly as a product of the speakers' utterances and partly as a product of the listeners' responses. The speakers' utterances will be influenced by their own position and conversational aims, as well as being a response to the position held by their interactive partner. Subject positions are therefore a continuously evolving product contained in discourse and relational to the person with which the discourse is held and the context in which the interaction is occurring. But the position of a subject

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is not just constructed through agentic self-talk. Self-positioning can also be inferred through positions the subject constructs for others, as well as through positions that are explicitly or implicitly rejected within narrative (Wetherell, 1995).

This approach is often referred to as relational positioning and has been drawn from the writings of Bakhtin (Gergen, 2000). Bakhtin (1986) wrote extensively about the subject of social life, advocating the importance of interaction with 'others' for shaping meaningful life. Furthermore, reaction to others was proposed to be an instant, spontaneous action occurring within the constant flow of social life. Hence, the individual is relationally positioned to everything that is happening at any given point of time.

Bakhtin's approach is becoming more widely cited amongst discursive theorists (such as Gergen and Billig), invoking the possibility that relational positioning may provide insightful discussion of subject positioning in social interaction (Gergen, 2000). Discursive theorists have yet to focus upon relational positioning in detail; though many discuss the concept of relational interaction, specific theoretical exploration to subject positioning has not occurred. This could be due, in part, to critical literature's lack of engagement with the topic of subject positioning on any large scale. Unlike conversation analysis, for which many studies focus solely upon the orientation to and employment of identity in talk (see Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998), critical analysts have focused more upon social processes above and beyond the level of the functioning individual.

One exception exists in the form of Edley and Wetherell's (1997) much cited study exploring men's masculine identities as a construction of self and other. The study revealed how constructing an identity was heavily dependent upon how opposing identities were presented. The young men they interviewed described how their masculine identity was unlike that of their sporty and traditionally masculine

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counterparts. As such, the definition of masculinity was reformulated, providing the sporty men as a counter-position of 'try hards', whilst the men interviewed positioned themselves as being non-sporty, but still being able to uphold the masculine identity because they did not need to try hard to prove they had it. Thus, the men were able to deconstruct and critique the masculine identity of their 'others', whilst simultaneously constructing their position of 'self'.

A similar study was performed by Hollway (1984) who showed how the sexual position of women was created through the discourse of men's sexual drive. If men are discussed as being predatory and as *needing* sex, the position of women becomes that of the provider of the sex, therefore as an object that can enable men to fulfil their needs. This position is inferred through a combination of the men's subject positioning and the ideologies that advocate men's entitlement as primary to women's.

Thus, the concept of relational positioning as a tool for subject positioning has been explored by critical analysts, though the extent of such investigation is relatively limited. Studying positioning from a critical perspective, particularly one that seeks to invoke micro-level contextual influences to enhance the scope of analysis, requires that the relational aspects of subject positioning be represented and explored. Bakhtin's work draws relational interaction into the critical field through the emphasis upon embodiment within the wider social context, whilst the work of Gergen and Billig allow ideology to construct the meaning conveyed through relational positions.

Feminist theory often advocates that women's oppression and subordination is not always a product of explicit prejudice, often it is a product of inferred prejudice – women are chastised not for being women, but for not being men. Through the construction of the superior man, the inferior women is revealed, constructed, promoted and judged. These processes are products, not of a direct subject position, but of a

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position created relationally. Thus, for research founded upon feminist aims, the concept of relational positions is highly beneficial.

3.2.3 Fluidity of positioning

Davies and Harré (1984) are advocates of the fluidity of identity. Their paper proposed that subjects have at their disposal a number of possible positions that can be drawn upon and utilised when appropriate. Gergen (2000) proposed that the fluid position is a combination of Mead's (1934) 'self as a process', engaged and produced in the interaction, and Bakhtin's (1986) 'flow of social life'. Therefore, the term positioning is seen as representing the process that flows through interaction, constructed actively as argument or inferred through meaningful location, that creates the subject as a living entity.

This fluidity implies that the individual has available to them numerous possible positions from which they can freely draw upon in order to represent themselves in interaction. In essence, what potentially occurs is a pool of possible constructions that are created and maintained by the social, cultural, historical and ideological influences to which the individual has been exposed. At any point in time a subject can draw upon any combination of those constructs to form their position, creating a "hybrid" (Wodak, Cillia, Reisigl & Liebhart, 1999: 16). Those drawn upon are liable to change depending upon contextual constraints and influences and upon what the individual is 'doing' with their position at that time.

The positions meshed together can, however, be contradictory (Wetherell, 1995), occupying opposing positions in different contexts, even the same context at times (Davies & Harré, 1984). These contradictory positions can be bound together, integrated as far as possible to produce a coherent whole. Billig et al (1988) describe this type of problematic meshing of meaning as ideological dilemmas. According to

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Protagorus, every argument has a counter argument (Billig et al, 1988) and discourse analysis functions on the assumption that accounts need to be protected from counter-argument by discursive tools (Edwards & Potter, 1992). However, these counter-arguments mean that in essence a dichotomy, or more probably a continuum, of opinion exists upon which an account must construct a particular position. With subject positions there are always positions and counter-positions and negotiation might involve the integration of several positions that are not entirely compatible. Thus, a dilemma occurs in the discourse during which the speaker must negotiate themselves a plausible, credible and robust argument.

The assumption that numerous positions are available suggests that a subject embraces free will to choose those they want. However, the implication of absolute free will is not upheld by discursive psychology; subject positioning can only comprise of what is available through discourse. In other words, positioning is discursive and if the discourse does not exist or can not be used, then the positioning does not exist or cannot be used. Ideologies function to give meaning to the discourse that people construct and they create boundaries for potential realities. Therefore, the positions available at a given time are limited by boundaries (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2003; Sarup, 1996).

Research on non-consensual sex has demonstrated the impact that discursive availability has upon positioning. Frith and Kitzinger (1998) found that women demonstrate difficulty refusing unwanted sex. Discursive theory postulates that this difficulty is a result of certain positions not being available to women, thereby meaning that they can not say no to sex because the position of woman taking control and rejecting a man sexually is not easily available to them. Of course, it is obvious to say that the words "No I don't want to have sex with you." exist and therefore can be used, yet women in this study repeatedly stated that they could not employ that discourse.

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Nicola Gavey found similar results when she interviewed women about their experiences of sexual harassment and found that the idea of refusing sex with men did not even occur to many women (Gavey, 1993). This study showed that the availability of 'sexually active woman' discourses was extremely limited. Their discourse was full of justifications for why they had to go ahead with the sexual intercourse and the idea of refusing it was presented as something they had not thought of doing, it was not a viable possibility.

The results of these studies are explained by the authors as products of the pervading male sexual drive discourses that position men as needing sex and entitled to it, and women as duty bound to provide it (Cairns, 1993; Hollway, 1984). The findings illustrate that due to these discourses, employing a set of words to convey a meaning ('No, I don't want to have sex') is not a simple task. The ability to take up certain positions is related to the suitability of the position for that individual, as dictated by social meaning and contextual variations. The position of a woman who does not provide for men is socially unacceptable and therefore more difficult to construct and occupy.

This approach to positioning has been criticised as overly deterministic (Korobov & Bamberg, 2004), with the forces of social process being presented as the overriding influence. However, as Korobov and Bamberg (2004) argue, positioning that allows agency can co-exist with positioning that is non-agentic and determined by social forces. This approach is merely a product of another fundamental discursive assumption; that we are *both* products and producers of our social world.

Of course, assuming they are available, positions that push boundaries can be adopted. However, they are likely to be weaker, less well developed than the favourable alternatives, and they will be highly dilemmatic. As such, the position will be difficult to maintain, easily undermined and quickly rejected by discourses of social

order and conformity. Whilst positions are created in a momentary interaction, they are continuously connected to the processes that construct the discursive structure of society. Flexibility within the micro-context of interaction is constrained by ideological influence, with the consequence of flexible and constrained positioning.

3.2.4 Subjectivity and the self

Throughout the literature of discursive positioning there is consistent and repeated reference to subjectivity, it is synonymous with embodied positioning. Whilst mainstream psychology has sought to reject the term 'subject' in recent years in an attempt to empower the participant, critical psychology has gradually adopted the term to represent the relational individual. Essentially the term has meant two different things, in mainstream psychology it meant subject to authority, yet in critical terms it means subject rather than object, a subject within culture and social life.

A major influence upon the discursive approach of positions was Michel Foucault. The work of Foucault was seen as producing vast change in the field of 'identity' philosophy and research (Ainsworth and Hardy, 2004). Foucault maintained that subjectivity is a process of multiple position practise, bound to our culture (Sawicki, 1988), being one of the first theorists to describe subjectivity as a product of the discursive history of the individual, rather than a product of cognitive consciousness (Sarup, 1996). Further, Foucault advocated a critical approach in which research revealed the oppressive processes of power (Sawicki, 1988). Thus, Foucault's theory of subjectivity combines all of the discursive assumptions; embodied individual, fluidity of positioning, product of interaction and critique.

Foucault's theory focuses heavily upon the processes of power and as such states that discourses made available are limited by the hierarchical position the individual holds in society; this forces subjects to take up discourses that are determined suitable for them

by ideology. This deterministic approach has been criticised by discursive theorists who argue that power is a constructed concept and it can be resisted and even rebelled against (Fairclough, 1992). However, the advocation of a critical approach to research implies that Foucault did believe in opening new, emancipating discursive space (Sawicki, 1988). Unfortunately Foucault did not explicitly state this in his writings, nevertheless the framework has been interpreted and adopted by discursive theorists, who have subsequently expanded it to include a more progressive element that allows change to occur (Ainsworth and Hardy, 2004).

Henriques et al (1984) are recognised as being the pioneers of Foucault's theory of subjectivity (Bayer, 2002; Weatherell, 2002). For Henriques et al subjectivity represents the life experience, unity of subjects and their discursive interactions. Building upon Foucault's work Henriques et al incorporated a psychoanalytic element into relational and embodied positioning. By embracing this theory they sought to account for the 'personal investment' that a subject appears to have when they take up one position rather than another equally available alternative position (Henriques et al, 1984). Hollway (1984) states that rather than simply focusing upon which positions people take up, analysts should also be asking why a particular position has been adopted. This approach has been heavily criticised by discursive theorists who argue that psychoanalysis is a realist theory and as such has an incorporated assumption of truth, an assumption that can not simultaneously accommodate a relativist stance (Parker, 1997).

Gavey (2002) explored this issue and concluded that whilst the issue of subjectivity is inadequately dealt with by relativist identity theories, the integration of realist psychoanalysis is not congruent with discursive aims. However, a discussion of subjectivity by John Shotter raises some interesting questions regarding the legitimacy of subjectivity as a term suitable for discursive psychology. Shotter (1993a) argues that

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perhaps subjectivity can not be theorised, perhaps it is merely a product of realist talk. Subjective experience implies an internal construct that is processing the personal experience. If internal processing is rejected, what role does subjectivity have left?

However, the theory of subjectivity promoted by Foucault advocates the multiplicity of position production, the relationship between the social and the subject and the history of discursive interaction that the social subject carries with them into each new interaction. As such, the concept of subjectivity has not been located as internal to the individual, rather it has been located in the social domain, but as held by the individual, representing their uniqueness. Seeking to retain subjectivity as part of discursive theory renders the problem of 'personal investment' unresolved.

When critical theory allows elements of the conversation and interactive level of analysis to be integrated into the ideological level, personal investment becomes an issue of interaction and argument. According to conversation analysts, individuals draw upon identity to serve an interactive function (Widdecombe, 1998). The interaction, the preceding arguments, the sequence of utterances and the micro-level influences therefore encourage a speaker to draw upon one identity rather than another.

Thus, subjectivity is more clearly understood as a product of the embodied, continuous, living subject. A relationship between the individual, the social and the historical, in which the individual experiences the discursive domain from their own unique, yet embodied position.

3.3   Conversation analysis and identity production

The discursive theory of subject positioning places the social subject firmly within the social context, with the meaning and function of positions represented as a product and producer of ideology. Such a theory has one limitation; it neglects the influences of the micro-context - interaction and argument. Discourse is not a passive medium, it is a

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social action, and therefore subject positioning is a social action. As such, whilst ideology ascribes meaning to the positions produced in talk, limiting availability and promoting constraint, the interactive process shapes their delivery and therefore its function within the micro-context. This approach was first advocated by Bakhtin in the early twentieth century (Billig, 2001). Bakhtin (1986) argued (as have his contemporaries, such as John Shotter) that social and psychological life is formed in discursive interaction and therefore any study of the social subject should attend to talk in interaction. Thus, the discussion that follows will explore the conversation analytic advocation of micro-level positions, concluding that appropriate integration of this approach with the socially situated critical approach is beneficial for the current research project.

3.3.1   'Identity' and the micro-context

Conversation analysis grounds talk within the immediate interactional context in which it occurs, promoting the micro-context as directly influential upon the production of talk. Whilst this focus has several different layers, of interest to the current discussion is the influence of interactive processes upon subsequent talk and the selection of words to produce particular meanings.

Identity (conversation analysts usually prefer to retain this terminology), as a product of talk, is therefore a product of interaction and of the micro-context. Research from the conversation analytic perspective has revealed how identities are practised in talk, achieving conversational tasks. Antaki (1998) explored a specific instance in which the name 'Fagin' (the Charles Dickens literary character) was employed in the context of talk about child abuse. Through the analysis of the sequence of talk in which the name appeared, Antaki illustrated how the employment of this famous character name served to induce laughter in the conversational interaction (presumably through his decrepit

appearance in films) and thereby avoid a more serious response from other group members.

The level of detail and the focus of analysis are well illustrated in the above example, conversation analysis seeks to reduce the employment of identity in talk to the level of interaction, sequence, order and action. Whilst Antaki argues fervently for the acceptability and usefulness of such analysis, critical theorists (and some conversation analysts, see for example Stokoe &Smithson, 2001) have condemned the focus on sequential action as explaining little about the dynamics and meaning of social life. Why does a young woman feel her identity is reflected in her clothing? What ideological influences are prevalent in such an interaction?

Zimmerman (1998) attempted to overcome this deficit by introducing a dependence upon the wider social context. He agreed that Goffman's 'loose coupling' (Goffman, 1983), or independence of the momentary interaction from the social context, was a correct assumption, but he expanded this by stating that the momentary construction of identity could be seen as interacting with the wider social context. Rather than relating all meaning interpretation to the momentary social context, he states that the social order of the wider social context influences the order of the micro-social.

Zimmerman's approach holds to the conversation analytic tradition, whereby he draws upon the details of language production to explain how the social is produced in discourse. By maintaining the importance of micro-influence, whilst integrating a wider social dimension, Zimmerman exposed the potential for macro-context agenda in momentary interactions within the conversation analytic tradition. Upon this theoretical expansion, he argued that actually there are two types of identity, those presented only within the momentary interaction and those transferable across interactions. As such, some forms of identity can be seen as being more consistent. He named the two types 'situated identities', which are specific to the interaction and 'transportable identities',

which are taken between contexts and interactions. Transportable identities represent the wider agenda, the continuity of influence that stems from social order.

This attempt to compensate for the limitation of providing socially restricted explanation is credible. Certainly, it opens a new field of exploration for the socially engaged individual, allowing life to be explained in terms wider than the immediate context; it neglects to include any form of ideological analysis. Whilst the tools individuals employ to communicate meaning are an important aspect of identity production, the ideological content of discourse is also an important contributor to the position constructed. Rejection of such influence can only lead to a partial explanation of the social subject (Widdicombe, 1995).

Thus, the focus upon the interactional context of talk has been shown to be beneficial to grounding analysis within the origins of the discourse. However, the degree to which analysis should be reduced to the interactive and micro-level, to allow ideological influence to be a primary focus, is somewhat different to that proposed by conversation analysis. The micro-context is therefore viewed as influential upon the construction of identity positions, but specifically in terms of developing robust argument and revealing the contexts in which particular positions are presented as credible.

3.3.2 Categories of identity

As discussed in chapter two, conversation analysis holds that meaning is produced through the ordered production of interactional talk. As such, it is held in the moment, produced only if relevant to meaningful communication and utilises the orderly features of talk to convey meaning. The conversation analytic approach adopts all of these assumptions in its theory of identity (Wooffitt and Clark, 1998). Embracing the discursive assumption that identity is a product of talk and that they are contextually situated, Antaki and Widdicombe (1998) summarise the conversation analytic approach

to identity as, "work[ing] up or work[ing] to this or that identity, for themselves and others, there and then, either as an end in itself or towards another end" (p2).

An important feature of identity production is the use of categories in talk. Sacks (1992) discussed how the orderliness of talk could be explained as the knowledge and use of categories. However, Sacks' employment of the term is different to the mainstream adoption of the term. Whereas cognitive psychology states that categories are internally organised collections of concepts designed to increase the efficiency of mental processing, the discursive employment of categories labels a collection of words which invoke particular meanings in talk production (Edwards, 1991). Categories represent groups of people or objects that share a common characteristic, such as 'doctor' or 'lawyer'. When people employ a category in their talk they bring with it a collection of associated meanings; as Edwards (2001) stated, "categories are for talking".

Identity is one of the most important categories employed by a speaker (Antaki & Widdecombe, 1998) and Davies and Harré (1984) state that the production of identity in talk relies on the prior knowledge and learning of the categories of identity. When identity is made relevant and oriented to in talk it will be produced with reference to organised and meaningful categories, either with the aim of inferring membership to the category by illustrating and owning its characteristics, or inferring qualities of self by owning membership.

Thus, the employment of identity categories is viewed in conversation analysis as a form of social action (Edwards, 1991). Examples of work performed on identity categories includes that of Widdicombe (1995). In her study Widdicombe investigated how category membership and non-membership was negotiated, how people position themselves as being one sort of person or another, whilst rejecting alternatives. Analysis showed that within interaction, subjects employ categories to work up a

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position for themselves, illustrating knowledge of the characteristics that such a category will invoke, whilst occasionally rejecting such an association.

A similar study by Edwards (1998) also explored category use. Edwards found that category use was situationally grounded (only categories relevant to the current conversation were raised) and that categories were active in talk (they served a purpose to the talk production and meaning). Thus, they were not passive collections of concepts used to label people or objects; they were actively employed tools of talk and they were situationally meaningful.

The categorisation of identity has been criticised heavily by critical theorists who argue that it takes away the fluidity of the construction of identity (for example Butler, 1990). Categories are imposed upon information giving it a false order and consistency, and some theorists believe that this overlooks the importance of inconsistency (for example, Potter, 2003). Critical psychology does not support the imposition of uniformity upon data. However, the concept of categories may be utilised by a critical approach that seeks to explore the construction of discourse, in addition to the ideological content. Through detailed analysis words such as 'mother' or 'woman' may be found to evoke particular meaning or inferred characteristics, and may be reflective of ideological processes.

The analysis of identity production that follows in chapters four, five and six will therefore include relevant explorations of category use. Category titles that appear to infer additional knowledge or meaning will be explored to reveal how they employ and reproduce ideology.

3.4   Identity in perspective

Having discussed the emerging discursive theories of positioning, the remaining and necessary task is to ground the current research thesis within existing theoretical and

research frameworks. The use of the term 'identity' has been discussed at length and the first objective of theoretical grounding must be the embrace of appropriate definition and terminology. As Malson (2000) states, the term identity is imbued with mainstream associations of disconnected, logical individualisation, rendering it a dilemmatic term to employ in embodied, relational discursive research. However, the term has also developed useful associations, allowing researchers to refer to the individuality of an account of the subject, not mentioning the grammatical benefits of employing much used, mainstream terminology. For this reason, the term identity is not fully rejected, though it is replaced where practical by more representative discursive terminology.

Where possible 'positioning' will be favoured, due to its association with embodiment and relationally connected interactions. Positioning focuses the reader's attention upon the interaction, rather than the individual contributions of the subjects involved in the interaction. Furthermore, the terminology of 'subject' will also be employed to replace the word 'individual', again due to the associations it invokes.

Thus to the grounding of theoretical position. This chapter has predominantly discussed the critical approach to positioning. Though the conversation analytic literature has offered some interesting insights into the practise of identity categories and the influence of the micro-context, critical theory has been adopted as the primary theoretical perspective. To uphold the aims of the current project, the findings of the study must be accountable as part of the wider social context, and whilst some conversation analysts have attempted to encompass the social, the lean towards the micro-detail of ordered talk is not beneficial. Further, the inconsistencies of positioning reveal dilemma and fluidity in practise, both of which offer interesting insights into, not only the positions people take up, but also the positions they do not. For women, the positions that cannot be adopted are often the positions that will empower them. Critical theory is considered to be more capable of exploring such findings.

Obviously, this discussion discloses the commitment of the thesis to the embodied, relational, discursive subject. Furthermore, the fluidity of positioning and the multiple possible positions available, though constrained by ideological influence, is also a fundamental assumption underpinning the research hitherto reported. As such, the discussion of research findings will attempt to focus upon emergent positions in the discourses of women and men, both in relation to their own position and to the position they construct for others. Positioning will be viewed as constructed through the discourse from which it emerges, whether that is an interactional interview or a wider cultural context of media production, and the influence of ideology and embodiment upon that positioning explored.

As promoted by the conversation analytic literature and the discussion in the previous chapter, the micro-level of interaction will not be neglected. Discourse is constructed in a momentary interaction for a particular purpose, therefore whilst analysis seeks to position findings as ideological, the construction of argument and therefore the immediate social context in which the discourse occurs will also be accounted for. At times, however, the particular focus of the analysis will differ; for example, studying relational positioning requires a more textually grounded analysis but studying the subject positions available to a woman requires an ideologically informed analysis. Therefore, the attunement of analysis to either micro- or macro-contexts will depend upon the particular issue being highlighted.

Furthermore, the participants in the studies reported in the empirical chapters in this thesis are from two sources, the first are interview participants, who constructed their discourses in interaction within a research context. The second group of discourse extracts is taken from newspaper articles and other such 'premeditated' sources, seeking to deliver argument to a remote audience. Each source promotes a unique style of discourse, a consideration that will be highlighted throughout the analytical process.

In summary, the theoretical position outlined in this section is a result of several theorists work, drawn together and integrated to form a more complex and detailed approach to subject positioning. Thereby providing an approach to positioning that is informed, critical and beneficial to the research being conducted.[2]

3.5 Aims of the thesis

When this research project was first embarked upon, the aim was simply to explore women's experiences of sexual violence. Indeed, the first study encompassed discussion on a broad range of issues, both hypothetical and experiential, that embraced the topic. As the research progressed particular areas of interest were identified and from the vast corpus of data generated from the interviews with women, the specific topic of sexual harassment and subsequently the sub-topic of subject positioning were drawn out for further analysis. At this point in the project, the aim of the research was adapted to accommodate these developments and a series of research questions began to emerge.

However, the project was designed to be exploratory and this important feature was maintained throughout its evolution. Thus, as each research question was posed, explored and answered through the data analysis, more were developed. Through this process the exploration unfolded and evolved with the research findings, rather than having been falsely forged at the outset. Hence, the research questions provided below were developed throughout the research process and often emerged during the early stages of discourse analysis.

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[2] Other researchers have also adopted the 'hybrid' approach to analysis, drawing upon two or more different fields. For example, Anderson and Doherty (2008) utilised a hybrid of feminist theory and discursive psychology to analyse talk about rape, and Kitzinger and Frith (1999) drew upon conversation analysis and feminist theory to develop an analysis to deconstruct sexual refusal.

3.5.1 Research questions

The research questions developed for this research project were therefore as follows.

<u>Explore the features of subject positioning in women's talk about sexual harassment.</u>

This research question underpinned all of the empirical analysis and has provided the building blocks from which the rest of the findings have emerged. As such, all three empirical chapters contribute to answering this.

<u>Explore the subject positions that are available to women.</u>

As above, to some degree all of the empirical chapters address this question. However, for the main part, findings are presented in chapter four where the issue of fluidity of subject positions versus the constraints of ideological influence is discussed.

<u>Explore the ideological influences on those positions.</u>

The ideological influences upon subject positioning were a fundamental focus of the research project, as shown by the repeated advocation for the critical approach in the previous two chapters. Therefore, all of the empirical chapters explore how ideology has shaped the women's discourses and therefore subject positions, but each chapter investigates the influence of ideology with a slightly different focus. Chapter four focuses upon the constraints that ideology place upon women's positioning; chapter five focuses upon how ideology influences the relational positioning of men and women; and, chapter six focuses upon how ideology influences the allocation of responsibility for sexual harassment.

<u>Explore the allocation of responsibility for sexual harassment.</u>

Though the allocation of responsibility is implicitly represented throughout the empirical chapters (as it is an implicit theme throughout the women's discourses), it is drawn out and developed in detail in chapter six. A high-profile example of sexual harassment presented in the public arena of journalism is deconstructed to show how ideology influences the allocation of responsibility, rather than the facts of the case.

<u>Explore the contribution that the discursive approach has made towards subject positions and the topic of 'identity'.</u>

This more general research question is designed to draw together all of the findings of the previous questions and therefore will be dealt with in detail in chapter seven.

4

The discursive construction of the subject position

This chapter is the first of three empirical chapters that present the analytical findings of the two studies performed. As discussed in the introductory chapters, the aim of the research was to explore women's experiences of sexual abuse, drawing upon feminist theory and discursive theory to interpret data. Study one sought to open a discursive space through which women could explore their experiences of sexual abuse. Six women were interviewed and encouraged to talk about a wide range of abusive encounters; all six described extensive and repeated sexual harassment. These experiences ranged from wolf whistles to flashing with masturbation, and through their reconstruction during the interviews the women gave detailed descriptions of themselves, their perpetrator and the interaction that resulted.

During the analytical stage of the study it became apparent that narrative construction was heavily influenced by 'who' was involved in the encounter. That is to say, the construction of the subjects involved and the positions they occupied was a dominant part of the account, and the argument, being put forward. Moreover, further analysis revealed that by drawing upon particular subject positions, the account inferred meaning and subsequently responsibility and blame.

Chapter three explored the discursive theory of subject positioning, describing several key assumptions. In summary, subject positions: are produced through the interaction of social life (Mead, 1934), draw meaning from social influences (Abell,

Billig & Stokoe, 1999), and serve a function in the macro- and micro-context in which they are produced (Edley & Wetherell, 1997). These assumptions promote subject positioning as embodied in context, flexible in its composition and production, constrained by social boundaries, and given meaning through, but simultaneously inferring meaning about, social processes. Thus, during discourse a speaker will usually negotiate a position that conforms to the boundaries of social acceptability, whilst serving a function of meaningful and credible communication (Edley & Wetherell, 1997). The two positions are not always conducive with one another, hence the process of negotiation and the production of dilemma (Billig et al, 1988).

Focusing upon the development and construction of the positions produced in the accounts of the women allowed a detailed exploration of the theoretical principles of positioning. Through critical analysis the influences of ideology and the wider social context were revealed, and by focusing upon the detail of discourse construction the influence of the interactional context was explored. By drawing upon both levels of analysis, the function of subject positioning could be understood as a reconstruction and maintenance of ideology, and as promoting a believable and credible account. The approach to analysis produced research that developed the theory of subject positioning further than previously attempted.

4.1   Method

As discussed in the previous chapters, this research project is both feminist informed and discursive. Feminist research has three main goals: to give women a voice; to produce 'naturalistic' research; to ground research in the social context (Wilkinson, 1999), and discursive theory centres upon the importance of discourse as a topic of study. The research methods utilised were therefore selected because they were considered to be compatible with these goals. For study one (and two; see chapter five)

semi-structured interviews were used to generate data that was suitable for discursive analysis. The interviews were conducted by the author.

4.1.1   *Interview data*

Interviews have been widely used as a method for generating qualitative data (for example, Gavey, 1993; Hollway, 1984; Kelly, 1988). Unlike traditional approaches to interviewing, in which the discourse generated is assumed to represent accurate reflections of events or opinions, for a discourse analyst interviewing is a form of social action (Tilbury & Colic-Peisker, 2006). The interview itself is viewed as 'conversation' between the interviewer and the interviewee (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Though the questions posed by the interviewer are in part pre-meditated and the interaction takes place in a 'research' context, the discourse that is generated is nonetheless a social interaction.

By utilising interviews as a method for generating discourse the feminist aims of the current research project were met. The data were treated as natural conversation, as a social interaction and importantly, because the participants were all women, it gave women a voice.

Several feminist authors have advocated the use of focus groups in research with women (see Wilkinson, 1999) and have shown that focus groups generate comparable data quality and quantity whilst using less resources (Morgan, 1996). However, interviews were deemed to be better suited to the sensitivity of the research topic of sexual abuse. Moreover, the explorative design of the study necessitated that women were able to discuss their experiences as freely and as broadly as possible; the interview setting was felt to be more interactive, providing opportunity for the researcher to expand upon interesting discussion points.

4.1.2 Participants

Arguably, the most important aspect of the qualitative interview is rapport (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). To conduct a successful interview the interviewer must establish and maintain a good rapport with the participant. Given the sensitivity of the interview topic and potentially rich data that could be gained from full and frank discussion, it was decided that the participants would be selected from friends and acquaintances. Interviewing friends offered the advantage of existing rapport.

Of the six participants who were approached (by telephone) and agreed to participate in the interview, four (Catherine, Laura, Sophie and Jenny) were long-term friends known to the interviewer on an intimate level. The topics of discussion were not novel interactions between these women and the author. The remaining two participants (Rachel and Fiona) were shorter-term acquaintances and therefore the interview was the first occasion upon which the topics had been discussed. All participants were fully informed about the aims of the study and the discussional topics to be covered within the interviews; the interview schedule was offered to each person, though none asked to view it.

The ages of the women ranged from 21 to 27 years. One woman was a full time mother and homemaker, two were full-time students and three were in full-time employment. All were white and working or middle class, with a varying level of education. In most cases the interview took place at the home of the author, with one exception when the interview took place in the woman's workplace.

4.1.3 Conducting the interviews

The interview schedule was constructed using the method outlined in appendix A. An example of the schedule is contained in appendix B. The interview time and destination was agreed with the participant. On commencement of the interview each interviewee

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was welcomed and thanked for their time and commitment. The ethical considerations were then raised with the participant; the right to withdraw, confidentiality and anonymity were discussed, and informed consent was obtained. Upon agreement of participation the interview was initiated. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and two-and-a-half hours; the longest interview was conducted in two separate sessions because of the participant's other commitments.

When the interviews were complete, participants were asked if they wanted to discuss anything else they considered relevant to the discussion. The interview was then terminated. Each participant was thanked for their participation and given a full explanation of the rationale and aims of the research, of the process of data analysis and interpretation of findings and of the storage, transcription and reporting of their interview. Also discussed was the availability and location of professionals who could provide help and support to the women if any of the issues discussed had raised concerns.

The interviews were transcribed utilising the method proposed by Edwards and Potter (1992; see appendix C for a copy of the guidelines). Each was then analysed by identifying relevant themes and deconstructing the discourses as outlined in chapters two and three (see appendix D for analytical guidelines). An example excerpt of the interviews can be seen in appendix E. The ethical principles of the University of Plymouth (2006) and the British Psychological Society (2006) were upheld at all times.

4.2   The paradox of the 'victim'

As discussed, the critical discursive literature has primarily sought to advocate a fluid form of subject positioning, with social and political ideology influencing and constraining discourse. The combination of fluidity and constraint produces a dilemma in an individual's talk, a paradox that must negotiate a place that successfully utilises the

freedom, yet remains within the boundaries of available (i.e. acceptable) social action. Indeed, this paradoxical existence of flexibility and constraint are illustrated particularly well within the discourse of one interviewee, Jenny.

In discussion about sexual harassment, Jenny like others, was keen to represent a position that was congruent with the social role in which she was involved, hence whilst on the one hand she represented a position suited to the situation, in addition she showed active management of that position. Through her active construction, Jenny demonstrated how fluid and flexible positioning could be. For Jenny, subject positions were literally constructed as something you 'pick and choose' depending upon the context and what they need to 'do'.

Extract one

1. J: ...if like it's a load of builders scaffolding and I'm walking under
2. the scaffolding and they do something I am not going to turn around and
3. stick my finger up because they would probably come and beat me up or
4. something (short laugh) but if its like somebody driving past and they are.
5. going quite quickly I may well like turn and say 'oh ⌡fuck o:ff' but so it
6. would depend on depend on the situation but other times I'll do it ur like
7. 'alright lads' I'll play along with your little game you know doing a 'I'm not
8. going to pay you that much attention'. Like take the building building
9. scenario again say your walking past and you get say a wolf whistle and
10. then blokes standing on the wall as you walk past saying 'alright darlin''
11. you know I probably would go 'alright' you know I'm not going to turn
12. around and go 'oh fuck off 'or you know something like that I-I'll be totally
13. like civil

In this extract Jenny constructs two positions, the 'rebel', who does not tolerate sexual harassment: "Oh fuck off", and the 'colluder', who 'plays along' with it: "I'll do it like, 'alright lads', I'll play along with your little game". The terminology of 'colluder' and 'rebel' is drawn upon to represent the ideological meaning of the positions being constructed; that women's roles revolve around the fulfilment of men's needs (Hollway, 1984). As such, in the context of harassment Jenny's role is to accept the harassment and respond positively to the men harassing her. Jenny's position of colluder does that and therefore adheres to the ideology; Jenny's position of rebel does not and therefore challenges that ideology. Jenny creates realism and believability for her account by using a high level of detail, which gives the listener an eyewitness perspective (Potter,

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1996), and through the employment of 'active voices' (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998), which adds facticity through quotation. Exploring how the positions of rebel and colluder are constructed, and the resulting impact they have reveals how those ideologies function.

The colluder is worked up through the emphasis upon participation in the harassment, albeit reluctantly. Jenny's introduction of 'I'll do it like' illustrates a strong action based quality, which explicitly highlights her own ability to participate in the situation in a manipulative and managed manner. The use of present tense creates a continuity of the position (Edwards, 1995). 'Game' is an interesting word, as it belittles the behaviours; here Jenny presents the situation as light-hearted and perhaps fun, it draws the listener into a scenario of almost harmless collusion. The use of 'lads' also contributes to this game-like quality, with its emphasis of youthfulness and boy-like antics. Jenny's construction shows the 'harmless fun' of men's sexual behaviour. This ideology minimises the severity of sexual harassment and presents it as something 'naughty, but innocent'. Jenny states that she 'plays along' with the game, a phrase that implies deceit and a lack of engagement, but collusion nonetheless. She presents herself as participating, but with reluctance. Here, Jenny reconstructs the archetypal dilemmatic position of women; entertain men and fulfil their needs, but do not allow your respectability to be compromised (Clark, 1987). Jenny works this up further when she states: "I'm not going to pay you that much attention". By not paying the men 'that much' attention Jenny is reacting to their behaviour in a way they will find acceptable, but she is not reacting enough to be seen as encouraging or condoning it. Throughout this scenario Jenny is an active agent; she is taking responsibility for her actions, as shown by the use of the first person pronoun 'I' (Abell & Stokoe, 1999), and she presents herself as controlling her responses.

The other position, the rebel, is the position that does not play along with harassment; she rebels against it and rejects the male attention. The rebel position shouts back, "oh fuck off"; it is a less detailed position, but has impact due to the use of strong language (Edwards & Potter, 1992). The term 'oh' reduces the statement giving it a more mundane feel. Whilst this is clearly an obscenity, it is produced as 'business as usual', with its commonplace presentation serving to relate Jenny to her position (Abell, Stokoe & Billig, 2000), in this case that of harassed woman. As such, "oh fuck off" is presented as a 'usual' reaction to harassment.

However, the position of rebel is less easily maintained and in extract one Jenny describes, at several points, how she could *not* say 'fuck off' to men who are harassing her. At these points Jenny begins to reorient herself back to the position of colluder. Jenny accounts for her inability to sustain rebellion by constructing the proximity (and therefore direct threat) of the harasser – the 'lads' are driving by and the 'builders' are standing near her. Here ideologies concerning the consequences for women who do not fulfil men's needs are evident; these ideologies make acceptable aggression against women when entitlement had been challenged or compromised (Greer, 1999; Wolf, 1990). If she challenges a man (or group of men) who is sexually harassing and he is nearby, Jenny's safety is therefore compromised: "they would probably come and beat me up or something", and emphasised by the extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986). Jenny develops this proximity with detail, thereby emphasising its impact (Edwards & Potter, 1992); there are 'a load of builders', the lads are driving by 'quite fast' and the builders are 'standing on the wall' or above her on scaffolding. Here the spatial positioning of Jenny and the men harassing her is important in her subject position construction. The active position of defender is acceptable and available when the harassers are speeding past her in a car, but when they are close to her and presented

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in a threatening position – above her – Jenny positions herself in the more passive role of collusion.

The colluder argument is robust, representing the socially acceptable and ideologically informed account; Jenny built positively upon her colluder position with each utterance, producing an increasingly detailed picture of the experience. The colluder position showed several different orientations, illustrating that it is flexible and fluid. In contrast, when Jenny discusses the rebel, the discourse that contradicts ideologies of gendered interactions, her discourse is fragmented, short and unstable. Jenny is unable to sustain a rebellious position and her discourse becomes dilemmatic, integrating the colluder to provide a more sustainable position. Jenny legitimises her dilemmatic rebel/colluder position by emphasising the threat posed by men.

This restriction upon the type of position Jenny can maintain illustrates the paradox that faces discursive positioning; the freedom to choose from infinite language combinations (Potter, 1996) combined with the constraint of ideology and social meaning (Billig, 1991). Ideology dictates which discourse positions are available to an individual at a given time, in a given context (Davies & Harrē, 1984). Therefore, individuals are constrained by ideology and whilst infinite discourses may exist, only a chosen finite number are available for use. For Jenny the positions available were colluder and rebel and she could draw upon those, combining them if appropriate and useful, to present her own position in a harassment situation.

Discussion will now expand upon this analytical finding to explore the different versions of subject positioning that can be constructed and the wider categories of acceptable versus unacceptable that such contrasting positions often fall into. Analysis revealed that an acceptable position for women to take up was that of 'nice girl' and the contrasting less acceptable position was the 'not so nice girl'. Once again, the fluidity

and constraint of such positions was explored and findings that engage with ideological critique are presented.

4.3 Positioning the 'nice girl'

A pervasive subject position within the interviews of the women was that of the 'nice girl'. The nice girl position shows how women are able to negotiate their position within the constraints of social acceptability or ideological restraint, yet simultaneously construct that position in a flexible and fluid way. Several different women worked up versions of the 'nice girl' position, each differing in the type of subject presented, once again illustrating the fluidity described in the previous section. Three such types of position were 'totally civil', the 'non-sexual woman' and the 'mum'.

4.3.1 'Totally civil'

The phrase 'totally civil' was drawn upon by Jenny at the end of extract one as an opposing position to shouting rude and abusive things at builders harassing her. "I'm not going to turn around and go 'oh fuck off' or you know something like that I-I'll be totally like civil". This sentence is delivered in a 'matter of fact' style, normalising the content and therefore the positions it represents, with the direct language creating two extreme and opposing positions, adding impact (Pomerantz, 1986). The simplicity of this sentence also implies a shared knowledge, an ideology at work, that being uncivil is not an acceptable position for a woman to occupy, despite being harassed. Jenny is not working up the civil position in any detail, rather she appears to be reassuring the listener that she occupies it, suggesting that she is orienting towards a position that will be more easily accepted. Another interviewee who showed a similar position was Catherine.

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Extract two

1. C: ...I'm (.) I don't like to offend people or hurt people but also (.) maybe
2. I'm quite we(.)ak well I don't know. I never wanted to be nasty to him... so
3. I'd be like 'Oh Hi Phil how are you? Yeah fine, sorry I can't meet you for a
4. drink' (Catherine)

Catherine's civility takes several forms and produces a thorough coverage of

characteristics that ideologically represent its presence – she is not offensive, hurtful,

nasty or rude. By drawing upon so many examples Catherine is able to show a

thorough knowledge of the civil position and therefore validate her occupation of it

(Edwards & Potter, 1992). By stating she 'never' wanted to be uncivil or offensive

Catherine creates an extremity, strengthening her claim (Pomerantz, 1986). Despite the

'accountability' weakness of extreme case formulations, Catherine's claim appears

quite credible. Attending to the sentences that precede the statement show how a

'softener' has been effectively put to use (Edwards, 2000). The sentences that describe

how Catherine doesn't 'like to offend', are less extreme, yet imply the same intention as

the latter sentence of 'never' wanting to be nasty. By introducing a softer, more robust

position at the outset, the more extreme position she puts forward further into the

narrative becomes more plausible, thereby maintaining its impact.

The civil position is further consolidated with the closing sentence in which she

constructs a play like rendition of how she engages in interaction with her boss, a

technique that draws the listener into her world, adding credibility and realism to the

account (Potter, 1996). This final sentence illustrates her ability to deliver socially

polite conversation; she draws upon the ideologies of civility to construct a play-like

formation exhibiting her ability to perform socially acceptable roles. She asks 'how are

you?' a polite and 'interested' question. 'Sorry I can't meet you for a drink' positions

the man as having requested that she meet him, thereby positioning him as engaging in

harassment behaviour, but Catherine's reaction maintains and emphasises the civility of

her position in the interaction. Moreover, by presenting such a mundane conversational narrative, Catherine minimises the severity of the man's harassment; he asked her for a drink and she was able to politely decline. Thus, Catherine draws upon an example of polite conversation to demonstrate to the listener that her own position is one of civility and good social standing.

The position of civility seems to function both within the micro-context of constructing harassment (positioning self and other and the consequences for accountability) and the wider social meaning of being a woman interacting in a sexual encounter with a man, albeit involuntarily. This civility echoes the moralistic ideology that Clark (1987) reported emerging in the eighteenth century, as discussed in the introductory chapter. The moralistic ideology is robust, due to its long history, but also it is influential upon women and their ability to negotiate sexual situations. Clark detailed how the ideology arose from a need to control men's sexual behaviours, though the morals were associated more heavily with a woman maintaining her chastity, than a man's appropriate conduct. Thus, the moral ideology constructs a meaningful position in which the woman is doing her utmost to remain pure and chaste.

Both women showed knowledge of the counter position, a position that Jenny states in the previous section would be one she would like to take up. However, neither Jenny nor Catherine are able to comfortably maintain the counter-position, rather they are both discursively prepared to justify their position of civility. This finding supports the feminist literature's claims that women have limited emancipating discourses available to them; 'fighting back' in the context of sexual harassment is not a position easily available to women.

4.3.2 The non-sexual woman

Many research studies have shown how women's sexual identities are used to work up accounts that position them as bad people (Kitzinger, 1995; see also Stokoe, 2003). These positions are constructed from well-known ideology concerning men's and women's sexual roles (see Hollway, 1984), as well as the moralistic ideology of the chaste woman (Clark, 1987; Kitzinger, 1995a). By understanding how these ideologies function and the positions they create for women, the rejection of the sexual woman position becomes necessary for women who wish to claim a valid and positively received position. By adopting the non-sexual woman, despite the sexual nature of the harassment interaction, the women can be seen to be upholding a socially acceptable position. .

Two constructions of the non-sexual woman were illustrated in the accounts of Laura and of Sophie. In both cases the women were engaged in sexually meaningful situations, Laura was being flashed at by a young man and Sophie was participating in coercive one night stands. Despite the obvious sexual meaning of the contexts they were in, both Laura and Sophie's ideologically informed account created a position that resisted sexuality:

Extract three

1. I: But kind of talk me through what happens because this is kind of what I
2. really want to understand you know.
3. S: you just I know this sounds bad but you just like kind of let them get on
4. with it just to you don't want to do it so you don't get involved in it you're
5. your just like a blow up doll in a way you don't have any part in it apart
6. from your what they're using if you see what I mean you have no emotional
7. tie to it you have no phy-hardly any physical tie to it or anything and all you
8. do is wish that it's over (Sophie)

Extract four

1. L: I literally looked for maybe I don't know a second two seconds you know
2. I it was as quick as that (she looks to one side and back again indicating a
3. quick turn of the head) and then just turned away carried on walking and it
4. was just as quick as that really (Laura)

Extract five

1. L: ...there were four coughs from the other side of the road but this time I
2. didn't look and he was most annoyed that I didn't look over because he was
3. (makes coughing sounds accompanied by frowns to illustrate increasing
4. irritation from the man) (Laura)

In extract three Sophie creates a discursive detachment between herself and the sexual

encounter through a powerful narrative (Potter, 1996) which is worked up using three

strong discursive techniques.

Firstly, Sophie draws upon the metaphor of the 'blow up doll'. Lakoff and Johnson

(1980) describe how metaphor creates the subjective reality which individuals

experience. Therefore, by describing herself as a 'blow up doll', Sophie not only

discursively replaces herself with the doll, but doing so metaphorically adds a sense of

realism to her description. Sophie takes on the doll's qualities of being lifeless and

empty. This is further developed by the choice of doll – 'blow-up' – which

immediately draws upon social meaning about gratifying men's sexual needs (Hollway,

1984) and the objectification of women (Cairns, 1998), supporting a situation of male

gratification as distinct from women's engagement.

Secondly, Sophie states 'don't have any part in it apart from your what they're

using... hardly any physical tie' undermining the physicality of the sex she is engaged

in to create a distance between her and it; she cuts all emotional tie with the experience,

rendering it meaningless, whilst also detaching herself physically. She refers to her

sexual organs as 'what they're using' again constructing the ideology of objectification

(Cairns, 1998) to validate the emptiness of the encounter and create a discursive

distance.

Thirdly, Sophie rejects accountability in the situation stating 'you just let them get

on with it, you don't get involved in it'. The generic term 'you' invites the listener to

join her in this experience, giving it credibility, as well as deferring accountability

(Abell & Stokoe, 1999). The statement itself creates a feeling of disengagement – 'let

them get on with it...don't get involved' – allowing Sophie to present herself as, not only passive (Allen, 2003; Gilfoyle, Wilson & Brown, 1993), but as though she is not actually participating in the event at all. The sentence 'don't get involved' resonates with images of distancing from a problem, someone walking around two people who are arguing or walking away from a fight, yet for Sophie it represents her body in relation to a man's whilst having sex. Therefore, these words work to separate Sophie from the event, leaving a listener believing that although sex took place, it was the work of the man, not of Sophie, she was not 'involved' in what happened.

With the combination of these three techniques, which all construct the ideology of women's objectification, Sophie manages to detach herself from the encounter almost entirely and certainly with enough credibility for the listener to doubt Sophie's engagement in the encounter. If Sophie was not engaged in the sexual interaction, positioning her as a sexual woman is difficult to achieve.

Similarly to Sophie, extracts four and five show how Laura's account also serves to disengage her from the sexual nature of the interaction, as she constructs a situation where she barely looked at the man's genitals. By acknowledging that she saw them at all, Laura's position as a woman in a sexual harassment situation becomes vulnerable – ideology dictates that women who are harassed ask for it, due to the encouraging behaviours they exhibit (Buddie, 2001; Doherty and Anderson, 1998), looking at his genitals creates an issue of accountability. To counteract such a challenge Laura's account is centred around minimising the importance of seeing his genitals and therefore creating a position in opposition to the ideology.

To minimise the likelihood of a listener concluding that she had been sexually provocative Laura draws upon four discursive tools. Firstly, she uses individual wording to directly minimise and exaggerate behaviour - 'just' and 'literally' (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Pomerantz, 1984), creating a credible and detailed account (Potter,

1996). Secondly, the statement 'as quick as that' represents the temporality of her engagement, emphasising brevity - 'a second two seconds'. By supporting the speed inducing language with bodily motions of haste Laura's account takes on an animated quality, increasing impact upon the listener as well as shaping the eye witness style of story telling that creates authenticity (Edwards & Potter, 1992). The repetition of the statement 'as quick as that' later in the extract consolidates its meaning for the listener. Thirdly, she works up her own ordinariness when she 'carries on walking'. The inclusion of this mundane activity acts as a stark contrast to the flashing she has just experienced and serves to normalise her position (Edwards, 1997), whilst placing, by default, all of the abnormal behaviour upon the flasher. The encounter becomes something that happened and that she saw, rather than something she was involved in. Finally, Laura avoids mentioning the man's genitals explicitly. Throughout her account she talks about her own behaviour, not looking, but does not state that what she is avoiding; this creates a distance from the sexuality of the situation.

In extract five, a description of a second flashing incident by the same man, Laura positions herself as disengaged from the behaviour. She states on two occasions that she 'didn't look', illustrating her active avoidance of the man's behaviour, despite being aware that it was occurring. Her avoidance is accentuated by the behaviours she describes for the man – 'four coughs' followed by coughing sounds representing annoyance at the subsequent lack of attention. Once again, Laura draws upon a combination of verbal and animated non-verbal delivery, increasing the impact and therefore the credibility of her argument (Potter, 1996). By describing the man's attempt to attract her attention in such an animated way, Laura serves to highlight her own position of non-involvement – her disengagement is reflected by his annoyance in a form of relational positioning.

Both extracts also illustrate how Laura avoids discussing the sexual harassment as an interaction. The account could have described the man's behaviour and Laura's reaction to him as an interaction, yet it does not, it constructs a story in which a man behaves in a certain way and the woman avoids engaging with his behaviour and so avoids interacting with him. Laura minimises the

Both Laura and Sophie are actively constructing accounts that reject the position of sexual woman. The focus of the construction is to appear detached from the situation in such a way as to make a sexual position incompatible with the facts worked up in the account. Both women achieve this by minimising the role that they play in the interaction. For Sophie, this was achieved by constructing a physical and emotional distance between herself and the sexual encounter; for Laura it was achieved by the construction of a series of behaviours that rejected active interaction.

4.3.3   Being a mum

In the previous section we saw how Laura evaded the position of sexual woman by disengaging herself from the flashing she experienced. This section explores a position that Laura actively worked up, that of a child-orientated mother figure.

Extract six

1. L: this happened about twenty to ten in the morning I'd just dropped
2. my son off at the pre-school, and so he obviously knows the times that
3. mum's are around dropping the kids off because it had happened to another
4. mum.
5. I: Oh right
6. L: ...but the next Thursday morning I was walking up and um on my way
7. on my way up towards pre-school...and so dropped Samuel off outside the
8. pre-school and again it was had a bit of a chat and it was about twenty to ten
9. walking back.

The construction of Laura's mother position occurs implicitly. Laura uses category entitlement to infer, legitimate and normalise her position (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Edwards, 1997). The terms 'son', 'pre-school', 'kids' and 'mums' are commonplace words that relate to the category of 'mum', thus by drawing upon these words to

formulate an account, Laura infers her membership to the category of mother (Edwards, 1997; Stokoe, 2003). Laura further supports this membership by describing actions that typify motherhood (Heritage & Lindström, 1998) and by presenting herself as engaging in interaction with other people from that category (Edwards, 1997) - she participates in 'a bit of a chat' 'outside pre-school', creating an image of mums gathered together, dropping their kids off and having a chat amongst themselves. Motherhood is an important and credible role for a woman to occupy. The notion of motherhood is central to cultural expectations of women's social roles and femininity (Nicholson, 1993). Whilst increasing numbers of women are choosing to be 'childfree' and reject the 'motherly' definition of womanhood, the counterposition of the non-mother is at present undermined by discourses of abnormality (Gillespie, 2003). Therefore Laura has enhanced the credibility of her account by constructing the socially acceptable position of the mother.

Moreover, Laura's account is further enriched by the inferences concerning sexuality that the 'mother' position communicates, particularly when placed alongside her sexualised perpetrator. By constructing the 'mum', Laura infers that her position is not sexual. This is an important contribution to her account because by positioning herself as non-sexual her account remains credible; had she constructed a sexual position for herself, an account in which the perpetrator is held responsible would become fragile because of rape myth ideologies.

Laura works further credibility into her account indirectly by using a high level of detail, such as the day/time of the incident and detailed descriptions of her actions. This detail serves two purposes. Firstly, it creates a re-lived atmosphere to her account, drawing the listener in and verifying her version (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Secondly, the details are also mundane and serve to normalise both Laura's behaviours and therefore Laura's position. In doing so her account assumes facticity (Potter, 1996).

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Through analysing the ideology projected through women's talk about their positions as mothers, Wearing (1984) identified that motherhood represents working hard, being caring, putting the children first and being particularly good at satisfying needs. As such, women who identify themselves as mothers automatically associate themselves with these character traits (Edwards, 1997). These traits fall easily within the position of the nice woman, if not perhaps the nice girl. Furthermore, Wearing also states that whilst mothering is considered to be an important role, it does not maintain a high status. As such, the role of mother becomes illustrative of a respectable and worthy person, whilst maintaining a position that does not threaten or challenge patriarchal society. Consequently, the position of mother is a discursively stable position to create, as illustrated by Laura's apparent lack of concern to develop and inoculate her position more fully; she prefers instead to simply present herself as belonging to the category.

4.3.4 Living the 'nice girl' ideology

The overall aim of any discourse is to put forward a believable and credible account (Edwards, 1997). As such, in talk about their experiences of sexual harassment, the women have attempted to produce versions of the harassment experience that are credible (Edwards & Potter, 1992). These accounts have been imbued by ideology, demonstrating the positions that are acceptable for women to occupy in particular contexts and interactions. The 'nice girl' position is one such position, made more powerful by its basis within ideologies of morals, civility and sexual behaviour, thereby avoiding the negative implications of rape myths such as 'nice girls don't get themselves into trouble' (Koss, Goodman, Browne, Fitzgerald, Keita & Russo, 1994), but simultaneously maintaining such myths.

The 'civil' aspect positioned women as good members of society, demonstrating their ability to interact with others on a civilised level. The non-sexual woman rejected a position that would be dilemmatic for her to occupy, especially when claiming sexual harassment had occurred. Finally, the motherly position illustrated a construction that was conducive with positive female roles and a position of warmth and care. All of these positions feed into that of a 'nice girl' and serve to create credibility for the speaker. The nice girl positions are complex and yet simple, drawing upon strong metaphors, detailed patterns of characteristics and illustrating a robust ideological basis. Laura had only to use the word 'mum' and her account inferred a series of characteristics that were subsequently enhanced and consolidated by her description of apparently mundane activities.

Attending to areas of similarity and difference reveals that all subject positions draw upon similar ideologies, with the moralistic, sexual and civil being dominant throughout. Yet, each woman utilised the ideology differently, illustrating that the construction of positioning through ideology can occur with fluidity, provided it maintains the social meaning that the speaker is prepared to allow for.

4.4   Positioning the 'not so nice' girl

In addition to the 'nice girl', who represented the socially acceptable position of the woman who accepts sexual harassment with civility and grace, women also constructed the counter position of the 'not so nice girl'. This position sought to rebel against harassment, creating a situation in which women were able to behave as they chose, without being constrained by ideologies of being polite and civil. This position was, however, heavily dilemmatic, illustrating difficulty with maintaining discursive support and resulting in all cases with a renegotiation of position.

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4.4.1 "I'd like to punch them in the face, screw you dickhead"

To illustrate this point further, Jenny's description of how she would like to react to

sexual harassment displays a response that is really strong, aggressive and abusive:

Extract seven

1. I: How you would like to react?
2. J: ↓Yes. I'd like to punch them in the face 'screw you dickhead'
3. I: (laughs) no but you can't really do that. So what would you really like to
4. do?
5. J: I don- I don't know because I think a certain amount of that behaviour
6. there's not a lot you can do. (Jenny)

Extract eight

1. "I'm not really capable of saying piss off fuck off you twat" (Catherine)

'I'd like to punch them in the face screw you dickhead' and 'piss off fuck off you twat'

- these statements completely contrast the boundaries of acceptable and civil behaviour

that dominate the discourses of the women. Recall that in extract one Jenny presented

her subject position as a function of proximity, with close proximity justifying the

collusive position being constructed and distant proximity allowing the more aggressive

position. In this reaction Jenny appears to position herself within the potentially

threatening place of aggressor in close proximity, yet she does not present herself as a

victim or in danger – she occupies it in a powerful way. Furthermore, the statement

contains an unexpected level of detail when she says punch his 'face' and again gives

her rendition of what she would say. In this case, the detail appears to function not as

an issue of accountability, as Edwards and Potter (1992) would suggest, but as an issue

of impact, adding to the feeling of power.

This position of power contrasts heavily with the passivity of the 'nice girl'

positions, and moreover, with the position of passivity that women are typically

expected to occupy in society. By taking up this position Jenny is placing herself

outside the boundaries of acceptability but, importantly, she is doing so with agency.

Jenny is not side-stepping her own agency in this statement, she is assuming a more powerful position and through it she is challenging the social norms.

Indeed, the impact of Jenny's statement is high but as a consequence it is open to direct challenge from the interviewer, who replies 'you can't really do that'. Jenny has positioned herself outside the boundaries of acceptable social behaviour, within the context of sexual harassment, and her position has been challenged. When asked to return her position to one that is acceptable Jenny responds 'there's not a lot you can do'. This response relocates Jenny's position to that of powerless victim, unable to avoid sexual harassment. To inoculate this position against further challenge, Jenny changes her footing (Goffman, 1961; 1981) from the specific and personal 'I' to the generic 'you' thereby evading accountability (Abell & Stokoe, 1999). Through the generic pronoun use Jenny invites the female interviewer to join her in this position, to empathise and therefore, to allow her to occupy this position without challenge. Jenny's discourse and the responses of the interviewer illustrate how a woman can be forced to take a position that is socially acceptable, rather than a position that they wish to take. This is particularly meaningful in a context in which the interviewer is a feminist informed, critical analyst who advocates the development of discourses that empower and emancipate. The interviewer's reaction to Jenny's response showed the construction of constraint; the extract illustrates the process of oppression in action.

Similarly, the statement by Catherine also shows this dilemma of desired versus acceptable positioning at work, though more explicitly. Catherine states that she is 'not capable of' being aggressive and rude, yet the delivery of the words 'piss off fuck off you twat', suggest that Catherine has an interest in that response. These words are detailed and extreme and as a result have a large impact on the listener (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Pomerantz, 1986). However, unlike Jenny, Catherine undermines this

position herself; rather than occupying the position of powerful aggressor, she merely constructs its existence and then dismisses her ability to use it.

Addressing why Jenny and Catherine could not maintain a position of aggression in response to harassment is important. In recent years, feminist researchers have examined not only discourses that exist, but also those that do not. This area of research is important, as it enhances understanding of situations where there is an inability to maintain and uphold positioning. Kitzinger (1995) researched women's negotiation of sexual reputation and found that whilst women actively occupied several detailed positions, they showed difficulty negotiating positions that represented women as powerful and open about their sexual desire. This difficulty was due to a lack of available discourse with which to position themselves positively.

Gavey (1993) illustrated similar findings in a study focusing on sexual consent. Women's talk about consent revealed several discourses that maintain their inability to refuse sexual invitation, including those that place refusal as abnormal and those that restrict the choices that women can make; both inducing acceptance rather than refusal. Furthermore, the study also revealed the absence of substantial and robust discourses for refusal, with women asking 'why can't I say no?' (p102-3). Gavey explains this as an absence of the discourses needed to refuse sexual invitation. Hollway's (1984; 1998) study on the discourses of sexual desire explores this question further. The discourses form a position for women where they are to be sexually available to satisfy a drive that all men have, a drive that must be gratified. Combined with rape myths that position women as vulnerable to violence if they refuse sexual invitation (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994), this discourse renders sexual refusal an untenable position.

Thus, the difficulty Jenny and Catherine demonstrate with maintaining their desired position is seen as another symptom of women's inability to maintain positioning that exceeds the limits of discourse availability and of social acceptability. Justification for

retaliation to sexual harassment is not openly available to women, as such the position is fragile.

4.5   Conclusions

Critical discursive subject positioning advocates the paradoxical existence of the subject as a product of fluidity and constraint; positioning therefore becomes a negotiation. Through the exploration of women's experiences of sexual harassment this chapter has revealed that the construction and maintenance of subject positions demonstrates fluidity, flexibility and ideological constraint.

Women's discussion of sexual harassment revealed that their positioning in talk was dilemmatic and paradoxical. Jenny's discourse constructed two dichotomous positions, the colluder who played along with harassment and the rebel who rejected it and retaliated aggressively. Throughout her narrative Jenny oriented to several different positions that represented the rebel and the colluder, illustrating that her position as the recipient of sexual harassment was fluid and flexible. However, the discourse also revealed that Jenny's position was constrained by ideology. The ideologically 'acceptable' colluder was a position that she was able to orient to with a robust and detailed narrative. In contrast, the ideologically 'unacceptable' rebel was fragile and comparatively undeveloped. In Jenny's narrative it was clear that she did not want to tolerate unwanted sexual harassment from a man. However, she was unable to sustain the rebellious position and develop it fully. The ideologies of female vulnerability to male aggression and of the justification of male aggression towards women who challenge their entitlement and fail to fulfil their needs, provided a narrative in which Jenny could legitimately orient herself back within the colluder position.

The second section of the analysis presented in this chapter explored the fluidity and flexibility of the subject position in more detail. The 'nice girl' was developed through

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several different forms of discourse, including non-sexual woman, civility and the mum, all of which appeared to be collusive to the display of sexual behaviour demonstrated by the men. Each of those positions was strengthened by a set of ideologies relating to women's roles in society; these ideologies added depth and meaning to the narratives and therefore the positions constructed. In contrast, the 'not so nice girl', the rebel, presented a position that has little ideological support and therefore lacked detail and remained fragile and weak. Such positions were uncooperative, aggressive and rude and in contrast to the flexible position presented for the colluding 'nice girl', the 'not so nice girl' had only one obvious position, to be aggressive and swear at the men, "oh fuck off" or punch them.

Thus, whilst fluidity and flexibility were identified as consistent features of subject positions, they did not occur across all adopted positions; some subject positions illustrated more constraint than others. For women who collude with men's behaviour, allowing their own needs and desire for the harassment to stop to be overruled by the men's desire to demonstrate their sexuality or express sexual interest, the choice of position is flexible and fluid. For women who seek to rebel against the men's behaviour and to reject the 'sexual attention', the positions are fragile and limited. The discourses that reinforce women's oppression, specifically their sexual oppression, are fluid, flexible, robust and available. The discourses that challenge oppression and challenge men's behaviour are weak, limited and largely unavailable.

Patriarchal ideology has been practised for many centuries, probably several millennia, and as a result is highly robust. Furthermore, there are many variations and subtleties to the ideology that enhance and strengthen it, allowing patriarchy to thread its way through the foundations of discourse and social interaction. In contrast, feminist ideologies, or ideologies that seek to challenge patriarchy and offer alternative discourses, are newer, having only been in existence for the last two or three centuries.

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Thus, whilst they are gaining some of the strength and subtlety of patriarchal ideology, they are in the relatively early stages of development and require more use and development before they will become robust and detailed. When feminist ideologies are robust, the positions available to the rebel will become more varied, more detailed and less fragile, providing a stable alternative for women who seek to challenge oppressive behaviours demonstrated by men.

5

Relational positioning and the subject of sexual harassment

Chapter four explored women's discursive positioning within reconstructions of sexual

harassment. The focus upon ideological processes revealed that in discussion about

their experiences of sexual harassment, women perform a careful negotiation between

socially acceptable and unacceptable roles. Positions that promoted acceptable roles,

such as motherhood or civility, were adopted with ease, with elements of acceptable

positions drawn upon fluidly and flexibly throughout the accounts, with robustness and

variability. In contrast, positions that represented unacceptable roles, such as sexual or

aggressive women, were found to be fragile, limited and easily undermined.

The present chapter expands upon the findings of the previous by exploring women's

positioning of themselves, the victim of the harassment, relative to the man, the

perpetrator of the harassment. By representing both individuals, a dynamic emerges in

which the position constructed for the man influences the impact and structure of the

position created to represent the woman, and vice versa. As such, each position relies

upon the other to fully develop the meaning it holds.

In chapter three the concepts of 'self' and 'other' were discussed in detail. It was

noted that the positioning of the self in discourse could be achieved directly through

orientation to one or more subject positions, or indirectly by constructing an 'other' or

by rejecting a position (Wetherell, 1995). The term relational positioning refers to the

theoretical concept that inter-relatedness exists between the positions of self and other

that individual's construct within their accounts. Positions are seen to be a product of both the micro- and macro-contexts within which individuals live, as each individual creates their position through discourses that are both a product of their own history and of the person towards whom they are addressed (Bahktin, 1984). Furthermore, the positions created form a relationship between themselves and other positions, with the positioning of 'the self and other' a common feature of discursive interaction (Fairclough, 2003). Thus, relational positioning can be used to construct two or more positions alongside each other that infer meaning unique to their co-existence. Each can emphasise the qualities exhibited by the other, simply by existing together.

Davies and Harre (1984) describe five dimensions that should be taken into account when analysing a speaker's construction of themselves and another in talk:

1) Accounts will include both words and metaphors and through these subjects "ways of being" (p49) are invoked.

2) The words and metaphors may not be used intentionally, rather their placement in the account is itself a product of the type of event being discussed.

3) A speaker talks of an event with their own particular construction, others may speak of it differently, listeners may hear and interpret it differently.

4) Positions created are not linear, contained and fixed, rather they are cumulative, parts of positions moulded together to communicate meaning; they are continually evolving.

5) Positions in an account represent not only roles for participants but also processes of interaction such as power, rights, group memberships and so on.

Essentially these dimensions are extensions of the discursive principles already utilised for the analysis of positioning in chapter four. However, the last dimension extends such work, allowing messages about the meaning of the interaction of two positions to be communicated; messages about men and women, minorities and majorities, working and owning classes.

Earlier chapters have discussed the influence of feminism in discursive psychology, with particular emphasis upon the ideological processes that support and maintain patriarchal society. Chapter four grounded analytical findings in the ideologies that constrain the discourse positions available for women who are reconstructing their experiences of sexual harassment. As previously discussed, positions readily available for women are those that support and promote patriarchal values. For example: sexually available but not sexually active; subordinate, submissive and passive; civil, moralistic and honourable; powerless and objectified. Accordingly, the male counter-position is one of power and dominance, of sexual prowess and rationality.

Owing to the rape myth and male sexual drive discourses, such a construction displaces a man's responsibility for sexual harassment (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; see also chapters one and four). According to Anderson and Doherty (1996), rape myths function within discourse to defer responsibility and blame for rape away from the male perpetrator and onto the female victim; they legitimise and normalise rape. The social function of such myths is to maintain wider, dominant discourses of patriarchy. Chapter four illustrated that rape myths were also constructed in sexual harassment narratives, and furthermore, that much like narratives of rape, the myths functioned to place responsibility with the harassment victims.

In the context of a feminist informed research project, relational positioning involving a man and woman offers insights into the relative roles held by each within the context of a patriarchal culture. Eichenbaum and Orbach (1983) state that a

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woman's life is defined by its inter-connectedness with male others, with her sense of self produced from the position that she holds in relation to her male counterparts. As such a woman's position comes alive and becomes meaningful when placed alongside the positions occupied by men; woman is the 'otherness' to man (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1993). This form of relational positioning occurs throughout all levels of society, from work and intimate relationships to insignificant encounters with strangers.

Whilst the theory of relational positioning has been repeatedly cited, discussed and developed, the production of research focusing upon relational positions in discourse is somewhat limited. As discussed above, the application of the theory to the gendered and political sphere of male sexual deviance provides interesting and informative outcomes. Enhancing our understanding of the gendered dynamics of male/female interaction, particularly in the context of sexual behaviour, provides an important contribution to feminist informed theories.

Consequently, this theoretical framework was adopted to analyse the interviews with women, enabling the dynamics of gendered interaction to be teased out and explored. Several examples of relational positioning were identified in the interviews, but two emerged as being of particular interest and were located within the interviews of Catherine and Laura. Both women spoke of more 'serious' forms of sexual harassment and both accounts utilised effective forms of rhetorical contrast (Pomerantz, 1986) to position the victim and perpetrator.

5.1   Method

This study arose from a secondary analysis of the corpus of data discussed in the previous chapter. As stated, this chapter seeks to explore relational positioning. The interviews generated with the women in study one revealed several examples of this type of positioning and therefore provided the data for the findings presented in this

chapter. Thus, the participants, method and analysis are the same as for the previous chapter. As before, the ethical principles of the University of Plymouth (2006) and the British Psychological Society (2006) were upheld at all times.

5.2   The co-construction of victims and villains

The accounts of Laura and Catherine create strong caricatured positions of 'victims' and 'villains'. For Laura the villain was a 'psychotic' flasher and masturbator, for Catherine he was an uncivilised, amoral man, persistent in his unwanted attentions. For both women the victim was well meaning, civil, understanding and tolerant.

5.2.1   Mum Laura and the psychopathic assailant

Laura's experiences of sexual harassment involved two instances of flashing with masturbation, by the same man. Interestingly, her account of the experience showed how positions could be drawn upon to construct polar relations between a man and a woman. Opposing positions, for example sexual versus non-sexual, serve to exemplify and amplify the traits constructed, thereby maximising their impact upon the listener/reader. This interwoven construction provides a strong and robust account of the sexual harassment and consequently, of whom should be held accountable. Moreover, constructing established and robust ideologies in the account renders it more believable and more detailed.

Extract one

1. L: ...This happened about twenty to ten in the morning I'd just dropped my
2. son off at the pre-school, and so he obviously knows the times that mum's
3. are around dropping the kids off because it had happened to another mum.
4. (Laura)

Extract two

1. I: Umm. (1) Are they doing anything about it the police?
2. L: Yeah, I had to make a witness statement last Friday and um it could go to
3. court (.) though I really hope it doesn't because I don't fancy that at all but
4. they said you know well what would you like to see done do you want to s-
5. you know would you like us to have just really heavy words with him or

6. would you like to see this go to court but I said and I said um you know I
7. would like to see him have some sort of (1) you know some sort of
8. psychiatric assessment because to me you know if he's doing this at
9. eighteen this is surely when revention would be better because this is you
10. know I would imagine the early stages (1) of (1) you know someone
11. obviously who perhaps hasn't had proper relationships with women you
12. know perhaps has never had a girlfriend and has got himself slightly
13. obsessed with sex (1) and um and um with women!: It does [start on stuff
14. like this and goes on to become a rapist]
15. L: [and um yeah and he's obviously you know] sitting in his
16. bedroom you know without any (.) you know (1) these weird experiences or
17. whatever where he's kind of like going a bit mad so
18. I: I would say its getting quite serious when he's getting people's attention
19. [stood out (1) in clear view]
20. L: [Yeah (1) and lets and lets you know lets see see what sort of thing is
21. going on in his mind sort of type thing. But I don't know if that's the way
22. the police work they sort of say oh well we'll go and have heavy words with
23. him well that will teach him and its like well no not really because that will
24. just give him a problem with (.) with women in a way in that um >d-do you
25. know he could even be hearing voices he could even be in the early stages
26. of schizophrenia where you know he's got voices inside his head saying oh
27. that girl coming she's (1) she wants to look at me you know she's interested
28. in me whatever (Laura)

Extracts one and two show the relational construction emerging and taking shape. The positions are actually constructed in separate parts of the narrative, hence the two extracts, but they are constructed alongside one another and are inter-connected through the flow of the narrative. Chapter four offered a detailed deconstruction of the mother position that Laura constructed throughout her interview and extract one shows how she works up this position in this narrative. Laura utilises the words 'son', 'pre-school', 'kids' and 'mum', all of which construct a position of motherhood. The short extract is tightly packed with these words and working with the ideologies of motherhood that these words represent, it communicates to the listener a strong impression of a mother, associating with other mums and doing 'mum-like' activities.

Extract two is noticeably longer and is illustrative of the detailed nature of the account of Laura; the position of the perpetrator develops slowly and carefully throughout the lengthy description. Discursive psychology has drawn attention to the importance of studying the function and role of 'narrative' in account construction (Potter, 1996). The account in extract two shows an example of narrative formation in which a controversial and essentially unfounded opinion is put forward and developed

in such a way as to unfold a series of events and associated meanings that lead to an 'obvious' conclusion (Edwards & Potter, 1992).

The core element of Laura's argument in extract two is the position created for her perpetrator, the 'psychotic assailant'. This position has a particularly strong impact and credibility in an account of sexual deviance, owing to it being a powerful rape myth (Doherty & Anderson, 1998). Doherty and Anderson identified five rape myths with the fifth being "real rapists are psychopathic individuals" (p584) and it serves to exonerate the perpetrator by positioning him either as sane and innocent, or as insane and therefore excusable on the grounds of 'diminished responsibility'.

By drawing upon the 'psychotic' sexual deviant as a position for her perpetrator, Laura allows the myth to negotiate the difficult position of escaping blame herself, without being seen to blame the man. Of course, a position of psychoses is arguably extreme, and therefore vulnerable to challenge (Edwards, 2000). Thus, to strengthen her claim Laura develops the position slowly and utilises a narrative formation to do so. As such the position formation progresses from a small suggestion, 'psychiatric assessment', that implies a meaning but does not state it, into a full-blown assertion 'early stages of schizophrenia'. This progression encourages the listener to be drawn into the subtle argument, reducing the likelihood of challenge and therefore strengthening the credibility of her version.

The narrative begins by describing the police asking what she would like to see happen to this man. The presence of a police officer placing blame upon the perpetrator corroborates Laura's account of the perpetrator's guilt, increasing its credibility (Edwards & Potter, 1992). The police officer's position of seeking punitive consequences allows Laura to position herself in relation to this and as desiring that the perpetrator is given help rather than punished. This is the foundation of the position

that Laura develops for herself in this narrative; she is the understanding and empathic person, seeking remedy rather than punishment.

The help that Laura suggests is 'psychiatric' and this is the first occasion upon which she talks about the perpetrator's position, marking the basis from which she works up his psychoses. Laura develops the psychosis further by stating that the man 'is someone obviously who perhaps hasn't had proper relationships with women you know perhaps has never had a girlfriend and has got himself slightly obsessed with sex' (lines 10-11). In this sentence Laura takes the blame for her harassment away from the man himself and lays it with experiences (or lack of experiences) that the man may have had. Here she reflects ideologies around the male sexual drive (Hollway, 1984), constructing the man's sexual behaviour to be a result of not having had sex and inferring that the drive is so strong it will send a man mad if it remains unrelinquished. She draws upon the word 'obviously', which implies a belief in the truth of the statement that is to follow, yet she avoids challenge against such a strong assertion by adding 'perhaps' prior to confirming the truth she is to convey. As such, Laura successfully conveys that the 'truth' is obvious, yet she is expressing it with caution, therefore she becomes the reluctant informative, maintaining her credibility and deferring agency.

Furthermore, by asserting the possibility of limited past experience, Laura encourages the reader to feel sorry for the man. This draws upon the characteristics of the 'nice girl' position; Laura positions herself as caring about the man, as being tolerant of his behaviour and as having a desire to help him or ensure he is helped by others. In constructing her account in this way Laura also successfully minimises her interest and stake by enhancing the believability and therefore facticity of the account (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996).

The narrative of psychoses is further developed by drawing upon words that typify its presence, forming an association through category membership (Edwards, 1997).

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Laura refers to the man as being in the 'early stages' of something, stages being a word often used to describe psychological disorders, particularly schizophrenia (e.g. Zipursky & Schulz, 2002). She does not state what that something might be, a vagueness that renders her assertion unchallengeable (Edwards & Potter, 1992). The statement is supported by the interviewer who then replies that the man could become a rapist, allowing Laura to expand and consolidate the category membership by introducing terms like 'weird experiences' and even 'going a bit mad'.

The narrative then becomes fully developed when Laura states that the man could be hearing voices and is, perhaps, even in the 'early stages of schizophrenia'. Schizophrenia is a classic, culturally known psychoses, but also one that is misunderstood. Schizophrenics are often represented as being unpredictable, dangerous and the epitome of madness, therefore its use in this narrative forms an extreme position, adding considerable impact to the position Laura is creating (Pomerantz, 1986).

This extensive and detailed narrative works up a vivid and robust subject position for the assailant. Laura's use of rape myths makes this position difficult to overturn, though her narrative is so well developed it also inoculates against criticism and therefore puts her account into a strong position (Potter, 1996). Drawing upon the robust rape myth of the psychotic assailant presents a situation in which the man can be assumed responsible for the incident, but in such a way that he can also be exonerated. Simultaneously, Laura is positioned as a woman who is tolerant, understanding, empathic and generous, someone who seeks to help rather than punish. Both of the positions constructed by Laura are negotiated through socially acceptable roles incorporating appropriately used gender dynamics and allocations of responsibility.

5.2.2 Moralistic Catherine and the immoral, persistent man

Catherine's experience of sexual harassment differed from Laura's in that it occurred over a long period of time and was directed towards her by her boss, an important figure in the company hierarchy. The account of sexual harassment detailed by Catherine showed the same co-construction of relational positioning used by Laura. Like Laura, Catherine positioned her perpetrator as socially deviant, though to a much lesser degree than that implied by psychoses, and also like Laura, Catherine positioned herself within the boundaries of the 'nice girl' described in chapter four.

Chapter four described the ideologically imbued position of the civil and moralistic woman, a position that was adopted by Catherine throughout much of her interview. When describing her experience of sexual harassment Catherine makes use of this position, and adds her perpetrator as the counter-position of amoral and uncivil. Exploring these positions reveals that the counter of amoral and uncivilised works to legitimise and make credible the allegations of sexual harassment, and therefore places responsibility for the incident with the man. Catherine developed the civil position by drawing upon examples of the man's behaviour that signified a lack of morals:

Extract three

1. C:...I'd be like 'Oh Hi Phil how are you? Yeah fine, sorry I can't meet you
2. for a drink', 'cause he always used to kept ringing me to go out for meal
3. with him and like he quite explicitly oh um come up to a hotel with him in
4. Exeter for a night and things like that, so not even pretending there was any
5. pretence of friendship or anything. (Catherine).

The first and most noticeable difference between Catherine's extract and Laura's is the length – Catherine's narrative creates two relationally positioned subjects in only five lines, yet Laura's narrative develops through twenty-six. Of course, Laura provides a far more detailed account of sexual harassment than Catherine, though the robustness of the account and the meaning and information communicated is largely similar. Thus, Catherine has described her experience with considerably less discourse than Laura. Moreover, it is also noticeable that Laura created the positions of victim and perpetrator

separately, whereas Catherine's account develops the positions together; Catherine's positions are intertwined and emerge alongside one another in the discourse. The positions created by Catherine are relational and inseparable; the positions created by Laura are relational but will also exist separately.

Catherine's rendition of 'Hi, how are you? ... Sorry...' in line one serves to confirm her respectability as a person who knows and conforms to the parameters of polite conversation, positioning her as civilised, polite and even apologetic that she can not comply to the man's request. Catherine is not presenting herself as rejecting or hostile to the unwanted phone call, as such a position would fall into the unacceptable 'not so nice girl' ideology explored in chapter four and therefore may challenge the credibility of her account. By citing her response using the active voice quotation, Catherine constructs credibility by promoting a 'life-like' quality to her speech (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). Interestingly, Catherine draws upon a statement utilised by Jenny, "I'd be like", suggesting to the listener that she takes up the position though does so with some reluctance. Again, this contributes to the construction of the civilised and polite position, though it introduces an element of deceit and fraud to the position created by Catherine.

Alongside Catherine's civil subject position the perpetrator's position is created as being amoral and breaking social boundaries of politeness. Catherine first introduces the man's behaviour in line two where she says he 'kept ringing me', a behaviour that is fairly innocuous given that the man is her boss and could legitimately ring her. However, the word 'kept' is positioning the man as persistent and therefore, whilst ringing her may be acceptable, the frequency is not, and by inference the man's position is not.

In line four Catherine develops his immoral position further stating that he was 'not even pretending there was any pretence of friendship or anything'. Though the

friendship itself would have been 'pretence', therefore not genuine, Catherine's statement informs the listener that the man's lack of civility and morality was such that he did not possess the skills to hide his intentions beneath a cover story. She works up the invitation as being rather raw and direct, with no attempt to conceal his intentions. This leaves her perpetrator's position as crudely immoral and uncivil.

Catherine continues to construct her perpetrator's position by giving two examples of his requests. In line two Catherine positions him as asking her to go out for a meal with him and then in line three she adds that he 'quite explicitly oh um come up to a hotel with him in Exeter for a night'. The word 'hotel' acts as a metaphor for sexual intercourse, and the progression from the innocuous meal to the more meaningful invitation of sex allows Catherine to develop rather than simply state the man's position, thereby making her account more robust. The invitation of a meal, whilst out of place in the normal employee/employer relationship, is excusable, and therefore acts as a 'softener' for the more extreme invitation of sex (Edwards, 2000). In line four Catherine extends these two examples by stating 'and things like that', encouraging the listener to develop other examples of his persistent and immoral behaviours.

The position of morality that Catherine creates for herself is more implicit, embedded beneath the invitations, and constructed, as Davies and Harrè (1984) stated in dimensions one and two, through the use of word and metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In line three Catherine reports that the man 'quite explicitly' invited her to stay in a hotel. By reporting the event in this form, Catherine communicates a level of shock and disapproval at such a proposal, positioning herself through inference as knowing social boundaries and, more importantly, as moving within them. Catherine's earlier use of the word 'kept' in line two also demonstrates this construction, as her disapproval at his persistence promotes her position of social credibility and morality.

Both Catherine and Laura utilised the boundaries of acceptable positioning for women and men to negotiate a position in which the ideologies work to promote the positive aspects of women's roles and accentuate the negative aspects of men's behaviours. Catherine presents herself as firmly within the boundary of civility and manners, a position supported and promoted by robust ideologies of the refined and ladylike woman (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983). In contrast, the man is constructed through his sexual behaviour whereupon his position becomes not an issue of gender, in which his sexual behaviour could be legitimised as a demonstration of masculinity, but an issue of morals, in which he is presented as attempting to degrade the 'lady'. Laura positions herself as the mundane and ordinary woman, but furthermore as a mum, itself a representation of dependability, rationality and considerate of others. Her motherhood allows her to occupy a position of utmost acceptability. In contrast her perpetrator is a young, psychotic man, consumed by bad experiences and needing help before he can function normally. His sexual deviance and the narrative that Laura creates to describe it positions him within an extreme end of socially unacceptable behaviour. Although his madness can function to exonerate him from accountability, it will also position him as someone who can not function in ordinary, organised, rational society; he is abnormal and therefore his position will fall outside of the boundaries of acceptability.

Arguably the most interesting feature of both accounts is the use of two contrasting positions, both in terms of characteristics and their wider social meaning. Where positions are seen as being inside or outside of the social boundaries of acceptability, they are also seen as representing polar opposites of the same position. The positions created are not unrelated and separate, seeking to function as unconnected constructions that make their own argument and create their own credibility. Rather the positions share many similarities, but communicate opposite meanings.

Furthermore, the analysis has shown that the positions can be worked up alongside one another, not as two independent but similar descriptions but as wholly interconnected, descriptions that evolve through one another. To fully understand one position requires a knowledge and understanding of the other. As such, the positions are more meaningful when set alongside each other than when positioned alone; on their own they represent moderately meaningful, somewhat weak positions in terms of vulnerability to being undermined, but together they compliment and enrich each other. The non-sexual woman enhances the sexuality of the man, similarly, the madness of one and the rationality of the other. These positions represent dichotomous subjects.

Through relational positioning the two contrasting and dichotomised subjects therefore become caricatured. Extraordinarily, though relational positioning does itself create this emphasised dichotomy and thereby facilitates the consequence of potentially contestable argument, such a response is deflected by the inferred strength worked up through the relation between the two positions. Therefore, the listener is not inclined to challenge the account because the descriptions of the positions are credible.

Although the credibility of an account is one of the influential factors affecting its construction, the particular function of the accounts created by Catherine and Laura, as well as the other women who discussed their sexual harassment experiences, was to allocate responsibility for the incident. As such the women were challenged with providing a believable account that exonerated themselves and placed responsibility with the men, without challenging patriarchal influences. As discussed, blaming men for sexual harassment is contradictory to the powerful ideologies of the male sexual drive and rape myths, therefore requires a discursive tool that enables a robust account to be produced. Through the use of the dichotomous caricatures, Catherine and Laura are able to apportion responsibility implicitly upon the men. Though it is not explicitly stated, the two women promote the men's accountability simply by positioning the men

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are functioning outside acceptable social boundaries, and the women as functioning within them. Such a construction leaves the allocation of responsibility to the listener, therefore is not done by the women themselves, a move that would demonstrate strong stake and interest and therefore undermine the account (Edwards & Potter, 1992). With the presence of the caricatures and the robustness of argument, the two women's accounts lead the listener firmly towards the conclusion that the men are responsible.

5.3 'Agency evasion'

Where the allocation of responsibility is a primary function of an account, and the speaker is a woman seeking to hold accountable a male perpetrator of sexual harassment, a feature of the account will be the woman's own agency. Through the explicit and direct production of her own position the woman will produce agency; in its basic form, the production of herself will require reference to 'I' and an orientation to acknowledgement and ownership of herself as an active person in the account. Laura and Catherine illustrated this agentic positioning in the extracts above; Laura acknowledged and oriented to her position of tolerant, considerate motherhood and Catherine did so regarding her position of civilised and moralistic woman.

Further analysis of the relational positions constructed revealed that women were able to construct their own position without describing it. By describing their perpetrator they infer their own position in relation to him (much as Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983, and Wetherell, 1995, have stated). However, in doing so the women were able to avoid agency; their existence is inferred and can not be held accountable because it is not oriented to. This discursive tool emerged through the analysis of the interviews and has been named 'agency evasion'. In essence, agency evasion occurs when a speaker successfully constructs their own subject position by describing, not their own position, but that of someone with whom they are interacting.

An example of agency evasion was found in Catherine's description of harassment from her boss. The dominant construction is of the perpetrator's position, with little reference to herself and no active construction of her own position. Catherine's subject position is worked up through the position of her perpetrator:

Extract four

1. C: and the big boss who owned it throughout the country um horrible
2. horrible little man, very very short and wore stupid high shoes 'cause he was
3. so short I: really (laughs)
4. C: He always used to pay me like loads of unwanted attention and trying to
5. touch me all the time and then when I left he took me out for a drink just by
6. myself which I didn't want and he was like touching me he was trying to
7. touch me this is one that's just in my mind because after that he continued to
8. harass me for another three years. He was still ringing me when I was
9. working at Bristol University and that was two jobs on. (Catherine)

This paragraph is the first time Catherine mentions the experience. Her use of words like 'horrible' and her emphasis of his 'high shoes' create a powerful narrative of extreme case formulation (Edwards & Potter, 1992) which positions the man as unattractive, unusual and a little creepy; she later describes him as a 'horrible creepy little man', consolidating this image. This construction is strong, yet includes few words, the repetition and choice of words like 'horrible' and 'very' is influential to the meaning and facticity of the account (Edwards, 2000; Pomerantz, 1986).

Catherine's position begins to emerge within line four, where she is positioned as recipient of his 'unwanted attention'. She state he was 'trying to touch [her] all the time'; '...all the time' creates an extreme example (Pomerantz, 1986), exaggerating the impact of her previous statement and therefore consolidating the meaning and in this case the reality and seriousness of the action (Edwards, 2000). During this short extract Catherine mentions him touching her three times, with the repetition also appearing to function as consolidation of an image, but with a subtlety not seen in her striking description of the man's appearance. The feeling generated from this extract is claustrophobic, with Catherine positioned as powerless and submissive.

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Catherine position continues to emerge as a powerless victim, a person who is unable to react due to the powerful position her perpetrator is in. She employs the sexual discourses to construct herself as passive to his attentions (Gilfoyle, Wilson & Brown, 1993), even unable to convince him she did not want to drink alone with him. She states 'when I left [my job] he took me out for a drink just by myself which I didn't want'. Here Catherine's words carefully construct her passivity by describing his position. *He* took *her* out, they didn't go out together; she didn't want to be alone, but she didn't take a friend or invite others along herself. By constructing the interaction in this way Catherine represents herself as unable to behave and therefore unable to respond to his behaviour. In contrast, his position as active (touching her, giving her attention) is much more developed in the account.

Interestingly, Catherine continues to construct her role in the extract using first person pronouns, 'I' and 'me'. Typically this signifies agency (Abell & Stokoe, 1999), however, Catherine's account exemplifies a lack of agency; through her perpetrator's behaviour and power, Catherine's position of powerless recipient is created. This tool illustrates how the presentation of oneself within discourse, and importantly the orientation to that presentation, does not dictate that position be directly constructed. Catherine's position is more clearly seen as a reflection of the perpetrator.

This construction feeds off the passive/active ideologies of female/male gender roles in sexual situations (see Braun, Gavey & McPhillips, 2003; Cairns, 1993; Gilfoyle, Wilson & Brown, 1993; Hollway, 1995), these robust ideologies give her account legitimacy. Victim status is epitomised by passivity and powerlessness (Wood & Rennie, 1994), therefore, this construction shapes her role as victim rather than participant. The passivity and reluctance to refuse is emphasised and legitimised more explicitly by the existing relationship Catherine has to this man 'the big boss who owned it throughout the country'. This man is not just Catherine's boss, he is the 'big

boss', presented as a person of extreme importance (Pomerantz, 1986), importance that is related to her harassment. In relation to this position, Catherine's appears as one of smallness; he is the 'big boss', she the insignificant worker. Here the power differential inferred through the boss/worker ideology renders Catherine's position more constrained.

The power dynamics that women are required to negotiate in their discourses are well illustrated in this short extract. Catherine's representation of the 'boss' acts as a metaphor for the powerlessness of her own position in the harassment context; through the employee/employer position, Catherine further develops and enhances the positions of harassee/harasser, though both represent powerful/powerless. The dynamic of power is a strong theme in Catherine's short extract.

Catherine successfully utilises this relational positioning tool. Her perpetrator's position of villainous predator is worked up through his unappealing physical appearance and his apparent ignorance of appropriate social interaction and lack of morals. Once again, the relational positioning functions to polarise Catherine and her perpetrator, enhancing both, and flexibility is demonstrated as Catherine constructs her position by drawing upon both a moralistic counter-position to her perpetrator as well as creating an absence of subject position through agency evasion.

5.4   Conclusions and Discussion

Relational positioning was utilised by the women discussing their experiences of sexual harassment. Caricatured positions were constructed to co-exist within a narrative, using one another to exaggerate and amplify the impact of their own position. These positions were strengthened by their extreme case formulations, which were made more credible by the employment of discursive tools (such as vagueness). Relational positioning

therefore became a powerful tool for creating positions that were extreme and held impact, but that were relatively robust.

Similarly to the positions discussed in chapter four, the relational positions also adhered to the social boundaries of acceptability. These constructions revealed two themes – villains (the men) and victims (the women). The villainous men were shaped by positions outside the boundaries of social acceptability, such as the psychotic sexual predator. The men were sexualised, antisocial and essentially abnormal. This analysis revealed the psychopathic assailant and the persistent, amoral boss. In contrast, the women occupied positions that typified social credibility and civility, with Laura 'normal' to the point of being mundane and Catherine constrained by her adherence to polite interaction.

The positions of the villain and victim reflected the rape myth ideologies. The women negotiated positions for the men that represented a perpetrator (mentally unstable, relentless and remorseless). The positions they negotiated for themselves were more complex; to ensure they could not be blamed for the harassment the women constructed their own positions as counter-positions to the rape myth of blameworthy female victim. Thus, the sexual, passive, teasing, provocative (responsible) victim was strongly resisted by the presentation of a woman who was mundane, civilised, polite and more importantly, who illustrated a knowledge of the social boundaries of acceptable behaviour.[3]

Through the utilisation of these relationally positioned victims and villains, the women were able to infer blame and responsibility implicitly. At no point did any woman openly state that a man was responsible; to the contrary Laura spent considerable time working up a narrative that exonerated her perpetrator. Blaming men

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[3] It should be noted that had the author employed a conversation analytic approach a different explanation for these findings would have been offered. For example, rather than employing ideology to interpret findings, a deconstruction of blame and responsibility as a function of sequence, interaction and the immediate social context would have been explored.

for sexual deviance would contradict and challenge rape myth ideology and therefore would produce weak, easily undermined argument. Hence, women sought to implicitly infer blame, working with the rape myths to construct psychotic perpetrator's whilst contradicting the blameworthy female positions.

The discursive tool of agency evasion, discovered within the analysis of these interviews, provided further resources through which women could negotiate responsibility. The tool was used by Catherine, whose narrative created strong positions for both her and her perpetrator, despite providing no agentic description of her own position. Working through relational positioning, agency evasion allowed Catherine to construct her own position simply by describing that of her perpetrator, her own subject position was inferred through his. By creating an active, powerful and persistent man, Catherine's position was produced as a counter-position – passive, powerless and unable to form any successful resistance to him.

Agency evasion in relational constructions can be contrasted to the avoidance of accountability achieved by Sophie (as discussed in chapter four). Sophie constructed her 'non-sexual' position through metaphor ('blow up doll') and other discursive tools, which distanced her from the woman who had engaged in sexual activity. For Sophie, agency was avoided by constructing her position, but doing so in such a way that she was disconnected from herself. The tool of agency evasion illustrated that a non-agentic position can be constructed by developing a position that is relational to an agentic and responsible other.

Through the relational positions constructed by the women the gendered roles of men and women are presented, but moreover the dynamics produced through the constructed interactions between men and women were also illustrated. The production of acceptable and unacceptable roles for men and women demonstrates the gendered boundaries placed upon individuals. Further illustrated are the differing power

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dynamics for men and women, firstly shown by Catherine's boss/employee relationship, but also demonstrated in the intricate negotiations performed by the women to ensure they are positioned as civilised and mundane (and not responsible) whilst apparently protecting men from accountability.

Thus, it seems that for a woman talking about her experiences of sexual harassment, her position is defined by her inter-connectedness with her perpetrator's positions, but moreover, by her connectedness with the culture in which she is interacting. In its most extreme form the women's position actually comes alive through the man's; she is nothing without him. In more subtle forms, the women and men are interactionally and relationally defined, relying upon one another to define who they both are and the meaning their position holds. Yet the influence is not equal; the women must continually negotiate their position to resist and challenge responsibility, whilst the men appear to slip easily into a position of exoneration. The men, it seems, are the more powerful position and the women are defined around them.

6

Victims and villains: Positioning, ideology and responsibility

In chapter four, women's reconstructions of sexual harassment illustrated how individuals draw upon different aspects of subject positions to build up a position that operates within discursive interaction and argumentation. Supportive of discursive theory, these subject positions were found to be fluid and flexible, but also constrained by the boundaries of ideology, with lived ideology shaping narrative formation. Chapter five expanded this analysis to focus in detail upon relational positioning, an effective discursive tool through which subject positions were constructed in contrast with one another, thereby functioning to exaggerate their characteristics. Both chapters found that ideology is important in shaping the subject position, not only in terms of imposing boundaries, but also of communicating meaning and defining the strength of an argument.

Chapter five also offered a deconstruction of gender dynamics, illustrating that women's positions often emerge through men's. Imbalances in power were explored, alongside the ideological processes that maintain patriarchal gender roles. Women's talk of sexual harassment further revealed that occupying a position of innocence required careful negotiation within and around the influential ideologies protecting and condoning men and their behaviour.

This chapter explores the findings of a third study. This study aimed to expand the previous chapters by focusing upon the same topics but through a different medium of

discourse: media publications. The previous studies drew upon discourse constructed within a semi-structured interview context, and as such analysed spontaneous, momentary interaction that was produced within the context of psychological research. The present study sought to explore how sexual harassment is constructed within premeditated and planned articles and letters published in the public arena.

6.1   Method

The corpus of data selected for this chapter was collated from media texts; these included letters to the editor and magazine articles. Media texts are constructed for the public arena and therefore provide a contrast to the privately and intimately constructed discourse of the interview. Where interviews produce discourses that are part of an ongoing dialogue between two individuals, media texts present only one individual's discourse and are typically carefully crafted by their author (Abell & Stokoe, 1999). Media texts are considered to be "privileged perspectives" (Chouliaraki, 2000: 295), which actively shape the opinions of readers; they are powerful and exaggerated forms of discourse that can suppress and oppress or resist and challenge (Teo, 2000). Moreover, Fairclough (1995) argues that media texts are particularly useful for exploring cultural influences upon the positioning of the social subject, and Fang (2001) advocates the application of a hybrid style of analysis to media texts to reveal both the textual and the contextual influences on the discourse construction. The texts of the media were chosen to provide a set of data that contrasts with that of the previous two chapters; through this different medium the ideological and discursive constructions of subject positions could be explored and comparison made.

When this study was begun the topic of sexual harassment and the sub-topic of subject positions had already been chosen as the focus for the research project. Therefore, where the previous chapters presented analysis that had initially been broad

and exploratory, and data production was less restricted, this study was based upon specially selected samples of discourse, with analysis focusing upon and drawing out specific, predefined themes.

Thus, publicly presented cases of sexual harassment were sought and a widespread review of publicly available articles and accounts relating to sexual harassment was made. This included the reporting of tribunal findings, magazine articles of women's experiences of sexual harassment and 'problem pages'. The search revealed a set of articles that were published in newspapers and magazines, in both the United States and the United Kingdom. These centred on an article published in New York Magazine on 1st March 2004. The author was American feminist Naomi Wolf and the article described how she had been sexually 'encroached' upon when a student at Yale. She used the term 'encroachment' rather than harassment as she felt that it better illustrated the invasive rather than pervasive nature of her experience. However, the behaviour of her perpetrator fell within the wider definition of sexual harassment and was therefore deemed to be suitable for the current research project. The perpetrator was named as Harold Bloom, a professor at Yale, whose class she had taken some twenty years previously. The article was several thousand words in length.

Prior to its publication the details of the article were sent to journalists from magazines and newspapers in the United States. The recipients responded immediately, and fervently, and produced a series of counter-articles addressing the claims made by Wolf; all criticised her account in some form. The earliest response was published on 22nd February 2004, seven days before the final version of Wolf's article went to press.

The author conducted a thorough search of all magazines and newspapers published in the United States and the United Kingdom during the four-week period of mid-February 2004 and mid-March 2004. From those publications, all responses to Naomi Wolf's allegation were selected and included in the corpus of data. When the search

had been completed there were approximately 35 articles and letters, written by both male and female authors (though about three-quarters were female), and with roughly equal spread between the two countries. The authors included journalists, members of the public, feminist writers and academics.

The analytical framework set out in chapters two and three was utilised in this study. For a detailed description of this process see Appendix D. As before, the ethical principles of the University of Plymouth (2006) and the British Psychological Society (2006) were upheld at all times.

6.2   Positioning the exonerated perpetrator

In the previous chapter the construction of subject positioning was explored and it was found that perpetrator positioning, whilst taking several different forms, essentially constructed the male harasser as a mythical psychotic/abnormal sexual predator. In this study, these positions were not constructed for the perpetrator. Rather, Harold Bloom was positioned as either beyond judgement, and therefore by inference not responsible for his behaviour, or as incapable of being responsible because the harassment and his risk to Wolf was minimised. The former position, of Bloom as beyond judgement, was extreme, detailed and robust, and had considerable impact. This position ignored the allegation of sexual harassment made by Wolf, and was the dominant discourse throughout the texts. The second position, of the incapable perpetrator, gained strength by acknowledging that sexual harassment had occurred. However, it was overall a far weaker position than Bloom's being beyond judgement, largely because it was less detailed, less extreme, and therefore had less impact.

6.2.1 *Beyond judgement*

Naomi Wolf and the authors of the backlash articles positioned Harold Bloom as beyond judgement by emphasising and exaggerating his intellectual and personal superiority. In doing so, Bloom became the judge rather than the judged, and his responsibility for harassing Naomi Wolf was minimised. Interestingly, a glorification of Bloom began in the account of Naomi Wolf. Contrary to expectation, Wolf did not place Bloom in the position of stereotypical sexual predator, rather she focused upon Bloom's 'academic' position, which she portrayed in an excessively complimentary way:

Extract one

1. "Harold Bloom was one of Yale's most illustrious professors. Most
.2. of my friends in the Literature department were his acolytes, clustering
3. around him at office hours for his bon mots about Pater and Wilde. He
4. called students, male and female both, "my dear" and "my child". Beautiful,
5. brilliant students surrounded him. He was a vortex of power and intellectual
6. charisma... His aura was compelling – and intimidating."

Throughout this extract (and her account), Wolf uses multiple extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986), constructing a caricature position that places Bloom above others in his importance, intellect and power. Bloom emerges from this text, a radiant figure of incredible intellect: 'He was a vortex of power and intellectual charisma'. The word vortex is unusual and creates an image of a man who draws everyone towards him; 'compelling' consolidates this meaning. His students are his 'acolytes', a word that infers a God-like quality, one of reverence and divinity, yet they are also extraordinary themselves: 'beautiful, brilliant'. Bloom's power and majesty is worked up as though it far exceeds that of any other person. This extreme and detailed position of superiority is further worked up through his calling students "my child" and "my dear" (Edwards & Potter, 1992), combining condescension and authority with a more intimate quality. This enhances Bloom's position by presenting him as caring, nurturing and protective.

Wolf's account produces a position of utmost superiority for Bloom; he transcends all others in his importance and value, and as such, he is beyond judgement. However, the position is extreme and exaggerated. To some extent, the glorification of Bloom appears contradictory with Wolf's accusation of his sexually inappropriate behaviour; she did not draw upon the typical positions for perpetrators, as discussed in the previous chapters. Despite this, her construction of Bloom is believable. Wolf employs a combination of extreme language, metaphor and a high level of detail to construct a position that appears authentic, viable and strong (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Pomerantz, 1986). However, it is also her avoidance of overtly blaming Bloom that makes her account credible, because in doing so she adheres to the rape myth and other oppressive ideologies (Coates & Wade, 2004; Ehrlich, 1998).

Wolf's positioning of Bloom was similar to that of the backlash authors, who also constructed an iconic representation that was beyond judgement. The descriptions provided by journalists when discussing Bloom's position were striking:

Extract two

1. "Celebrated Shakesperean scholar... an intellectual heavyweight
2. feted by the American literary establishment" (Christine Odone)

Extract three

1. "Eminent literary scholar Harold Bloom" (Zoe Heller)

Extract four

1. "One of the world's leading Shakespeare scholars" (Oliver Poole)

Extract five

1. "A world famous authority on Shakespeare, Chaucer and Milton" (Nicholas
2. Wapshott)

Extract six

1. "Bloom is a colossal figure in American academic life, a monstre sacre, a
2. combination of Dr Johnson and Falstaff. He is the best-read man in the US
3. and the nation's top literary critic. His easy familiarity with the entire canon
4. of Western literature is awe-inspiring. He can extemporise lectures on
5. Proust, Kafka, Dostoyevsky and Cervantes and find a thousand potent

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6. interconnections between them. His memory is oceanic. His pronouncements
7. are floor-shakingly portentous and proscriptive...Like a gargantuan bouncer,
8. he stands before the nightclub called Literature, refusing entrance to the
9. unworthy. Life, he says, is too short to be spent reading anything but first-
10. rate work – and he, Bloom the Infallible, will tell you what that is." (John
11. Walsh)

These extracts predominantly work up Bloom's intellectual position as exceptional and

extraordinary. Most draw upon Shakespeare and therefore the intellectual prowess that

knowledge of his work infers (Edwards, 1991). The placement of Bloom as a world

leader consolidates his intellectually superior position (Pomerantz, 1986) and the

construction of him as 'one of' the most intelligent men in the world acts as a softener,

strengthening the extreme position (Edwards, 2000). The use of words like 'authority',

'eminent' and 'heavyweight' create impact (Edwards & Potter, 1992) and construct a

robust position of superiority for Bloom. In every extract, and in many of the other

authors' discourse, the term 'scholarly' is used to define, concisely, the position that

Bloom holds.

Extract six was taken from an article in which the author constructed three pages of

an account that continued this degree of reverence and discursive work throughout. As

with the other articles, it functioned to exonerate Bloom of all responsibility by creating

a position that was beyond all judgement. The inclusion of the names 'Proust, Kafka,

Dostoyevsky', construct the author's credibility, as well as Bloom's; knowledge of

these people reveals a substantial intellect and suggests to the reader that the author is

able to make an informed judgement about Bloom's intellect. This adds facticity and

authority to his account, making it more credible (Edwards and Potter, 1992).

The main focus of this piece is the position Walsh creates for Bloom. This extract

contains several extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986): 'best read man in the

US', 'gargantuan bouncer', 'memory is oceanic', which function to construct Bloom as

above a mere mortal. These formulations are vulnerable to challenge as they pose an

'unrealistic' argument (Edwards, 2000), but because of the other discursive work that

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Walsh has employed Bloom's position does not seem unrealistic. Intertwined with the extreme case formulations is a narrative that draws heavily upon metaphor, detail and repetition to bring Bloom alive, creating the impression that the account is credible and therefore that the Bloom constructed must be real (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Constructions of mundane information, such as Bloom's memory, work to produce a narrative in which the exceptionality of Bloom is expected and reliable (Potter, 1996). Moreover, the continuous yet linked and complimentary style of the extreme case formulations functions to make the argument credible; the argument supports itself, it is thorough, balanced and evidenced with 'facts', the apparent extremity of the claims therefore becomes less problematic.

The position created for Bloom draws heavily upon an implicit theme of godliness; he far outweighs any other human being in his ability to simply know about literature. Indeed, at the end of the extract, Walsh names him 'Bloom the Infallible', as if to finalise and consolidate the image, positioning Bloom as indestructible, trustworthy and honest (the qualities of God). Of particular influence upon the divine position is the analogy to the bouncer, with Bloom stood on the door of literature judging worthiness: 'Like a gargantuan bouncer, he stands before the night-club called Literature, refusing entrance to the unworthy'. Again, this sentence encompasses both mundane activity (night-clubs and bouncers are not representative of high credibility and worth) and a communication of something extraordinary ('gargantuan', 'judgement'). The imagery provoked by this extract is one of Zeus deciding the fate of the mere mortals on earth, again presenting Bloom as the strong and God-like figure whose judgement means everything.

By placing Bloom in this position, where he is superior to others, he becomes the judge rather than the judged. Walsh and the other authors raise him beyond responsibility for the harassment of which Wolf has accused him. At no point during

Walsh's article is Wolf's argument discussed, oriented to in any form or represented, however, through the positioning of Bloom, her responsible victim position is constructed relationally. Bloom is exonerated and Wolf by default is not.

6.2.2   The Harmless Victim

Whilst the predominant position constructed for Bloom was a man beyond judgement, another position at times drawn upon by authors was that of Bloom as harmless and as the victim of the incident. Chapter four discussed, and illustrated with examples, that the ideologically constructed subject position of the responsible perpetrator of sexual harassment is the sexualised, amoral, psychotic man. The innocent female victim holds the counter-position of being non-sexual, ordinary and civil. In the corpus of media data, Harold Bloom was not held responsible for the harassment, despite most authors acknowledging that he had harassed Naomi Wolf. These accounts therefore constructed a position for Bloom that was harmlessly sexual, or that was a victim of Wolf's behaviour.

Extract seven

> 1.   Although the old lech had made passes at other classmates, Wolf was so
> 2.   shocked that she vomited (Suzanne Moore)

Extract eight

> 1.   [Camille Paglia] said it was "indecent" of Wolf to wait for 20 years to "bring
> 2.   all of this down on an elderly man who has health problems, to drag him into
> 3.   a 'he said/she said' scenario so late in the game". Bloom, now 73, has
> 4.   remained silent on the matter. (Chris Miller)

In these extracts, the rape myths and discourses of the male sexual drive are constructed in the positions of the 'lechy old man' and the elderly, frail man (Doherty & Anderson, 1998; Hollway, 1984). These positions are made credible because they are mundane and normal (Abell, Stokoe & Billig, 2000). There is little exaggeration and very little detail in these two extracts.

Extract seven discredits Wolf's allegation by constructing a 'harmless' position for Bloom, which is complemented by an over-reactive position for Wolf and by the author reducing the harassment to a mere 'pass' (Hollway, 1984). Bloom's position is worked up through the category of 'old lech' (Edwards, 2001). The word 'lech' represents an explicitly sexual and somewhat deviant position, and therefore used alone would construct Bloom as a perpetrator. However, by also including the word 'old', Moore changes the meaning of the position, and infers pitiful characteristics (of decreased libido and failing masculinity), whilst also acknowledging the sexual connotation of the behaviour. The 'old lech' is not typically represented as a threat to women, rather as a nuisance. The combination of the 'old lech' characteristics enables Moore to credibly undermine Wolf's allegation; she does not weaken her account by challenging the veracity of Wolf's allegation directly, but she undermines it by representing Bloom as harmless and his behaviour as normalised. This is enhanced and emphasised further by the relational presentation of Wolf's extreme and exaggerated reaction of vomiting (Davies and Harrē, 1984; Pomerantz, 1986). Moreover, by positioning Wolf as overreacting, Moore employs the rape myth ideologies of women's irrationality and dramatisation of sexual attention (Ehrlich, 2001), again undermining the credibility of Wolf's allegation.

The author of extract eight produces similar arguments to those of Moore, though he utilises different discursive tools to enhance his account. He predominantly employs active voicing (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998) to position Wolf and Bloom through the words of another person. The voice utilised is that of Camille Paglia, a well-known American feminist, and therefore a credible opinion; feminists are, after all, the authorities on women's oppression and abuse. The position created for Bloom is constructed through a detailed three-part list (Edwards & Potter, 1992): 'an elderly man', 'health problems' and 'Bloom, now 73'. All three descriptions draw upon

ideology that highlights and builds upon the position of frailty and old age to construct victim status. The author employs relational positioning to create false extremity between the positions for Wolf and Bloom (Davies & Harré, 1984); Bloom is positioned as a frail old man and Wolf as accusatory and 'indecent'. Wolf is positioned as behaving immorally and without compassion, therefore the credibility of her allegation is undermined not by challenging its veracity, but by challenging her moral basis.

The truth of the allegation made by Wolf is not discussed in this extract, it appears to have been accepted; rather, Wolf's account is undermined by questioning the necessity of revealing that she had been harassed. As such, the sexual harassment is minimised and the accusation made by Wolf represented as a 'he said/she said scenario'. It is implied that Wolf is the protagonist and therefore the perpetrator. This creates a powerful image of a frail old man and a petty squabbling woman who has accused him of something trivial. This is consolidated in the final sentence which positions Bloom as silent. This appears to serve two functions; firstly, it creates an absence for Bloom, making allocation of responsibility difficult, and secondly, it provides more 'evidence' for the position of 'indecent' Wolf by positioning Bloom as morally superior and dignified.

6.3   Constructing responsibility for sexual harassment

In contrast to Bloom, the subject positions created for Wolf were all negative. As discussed in earlier chapters, ideology (in particular rape myths) dictates that women are to blame for sexually deviant behaviour (Doherty & Anderson, 1998; Hollway, 1984) and the journalists discussing the harassment of Wolf by Bloom employed these discourses. Predictably the positions created for Wolf included manipulation of men through sexual allure, superficiality and a desire for media attention, and a negative,

politically driven feminist position. All were constructed to position Wolf as responsible for the sexual harassment.

6.3.1   The manipulator

The manipulator represented the female sexual predator, the woman who entices men with her sexual allure, and manipulates them for her own benefit and gain. Drawing upon such a position functioned to undermine the credibility of Wolf's allegation. Authors repeatedly employed the construction of the manipulator in their articles, though interestingly they did so by citing quotations from a press statement made by Camille Paglia, the aforementioned feminist. Paglia's statement constructed several different criticisms of Wolf's claims, but it was one sentence in particular that was repeatedly cited in other articles:

Extract nine

1. "It really grates on me that Naomi Wolf for her entire life has been batting her
2. eyes and bobbing her boobs in the face of men and made a profession out of
3. courting male attention by flirting and offering her sexual allure." (Camille
4. Paglia)

Paglia opens the sentence by stating that Wolf's behaviour is problematic ('it really grates on me'). Wolf's position is worked up to be sexual alluring with the brief but effective description of 'batting eyes' and 'bobbing boobs' (Edwards and Potter, 1992), and exaggerated with statements like 'entire life' and 'made a profession' (Pomerantz, 1986). The 'batting' and 'bobbing' sexual behaviours appear somewhat comical, and initially create a cartoon like image, however this is merely a mechanism to soften the more serious meaning being communicated (Edwards, 2000): that Wolf uses her sexuality to gain male attention. Paglia develops this further in line three where she states explicitly that Wolf courts male attention.

By contrasting the light and comical presentation of Wolf's sexual behaviour with rational and ordered descriptions of the motivations behind her behaviours: 'profession',

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'courting' 'offering her sexual allure', Paglia further develops, with credibility, the narrative of a caricatured Wolf (Potter, 1996). In doing so, Paglia constructs explicit intentionality on Wolf's part, in which her sexual behaviours are not naively employed, rather they are used deliberately.

The deliberately sexually alluring woman undermines Naomi Wolf's account in several ways. Firstly, it attacks Wolf's credibility on a personal level. The role of a sexually predatory woman represents one who lacks respectability, who leads an immoral and socially unacceptable lifestyle (Clark, 1987). Secondly, through the production of an account in which Wolf is sexually alluring she can be positioned as inviting sexual behaviour and as such allegations of sexual harassment are undermined. Rape myths legitimate sexual deviance by portraying women victims as sexually provocative (Doherty & Anderson, 1998; Ehrlich, 2001); this rape myth is implicit within Paglia's statement. Thirdly, the construction encourages concerns in the reader regarding Wolf's motivation for writing the article. The calculated use of sexuality produces a woman who would not be concerned when confronted with sexual attention, therefore would not consider sexual harassment to be problematic. The implication is that Wolf's allegation of harassment must therefore have an agenda separate from the simple communication of horror that Wolf constructs.

Thus, as a sexual manipulator Wolf's credibility and therefore her accusation of sexual harassment are undermined. Wolf is positioned as responsible for provoking a sexual response from a man and therefore as responsible for the unwanted harassment she experienced from Harold Bloom.

6.3.2   Superficial Woman

The second position commonly constructed for Wolf within the discourses of the journalists and general public was that of the superficial woman:

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Extract ten

1. "Her maddening, apple-cheeked face kept dancing before my eyes, her
2. drama queen prose style kept haunting me like a bad smell" (Zoe Heller)

Extract eleven

1. "Little Miss Pravda" (Camille Paglia's nickname for Wolf, as cited by
   Suzanne Moore)

Extract twelve

1. "Wolf is a bourgeois princess" (Martha Rosler)

Extract thirteen

1. "[her writing is] blow dried and lip glossed into something media friendly
2. but ultimately self obsessed and banal." (Christine Odone)

Extract fourteen

1. "America's most telegenic feminist" (Marcus Warren)

Extract fifteen

1. "There is nothing commendable about such superficiality but, these days,
2. there are so many famous people, distinguished or otherwise, vying for our
3. attention that it is hard to know where to begin, or, more importantly, where
4. to stop." (Craig Brown)

The extracts construct Wolf's superficiality by referring to her appearance. The detailed

descriptions of 'Little Miss Pravda', 'bourgeois princess', and 'blow dried and lip

glossed' provoke strong imagery (Edwards & Potter, 1992), and employ ideology of

women's superficiality (Wolf, 1990). These position Wolf as a woman who is defined

by the way she looks, and therefore who is lightweight, superficial and disconnected

from the real world. This imagery directly undermines the intellectual position Wolf

ordinarily occupies as a feminist academic and writer.

The extracts develop this further by implying that Wolf deliberately occupies the

position of superficiality and does so to attract attention, specifically from the media:

'her drama queen prose style', 'telegenic feminist', 'vying for our attention'. The drama

queen position is particularly interesting because it constructs a tendency towards

exaggerating feelings and experiences to gain attention from others. However, the other

extracts also construct Wolf as enjoying and actively seeking media attention. This construction undermines Wolf's account by positioning it, not as making a credible accusation that has used the public arena to voice a real oppression, but as an effort to get public attention by exaggerating her experience and its impact.

Extracts ten to fourteen use extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986), detailed description (Edwards & Potter, 1992), and metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) to construct the robust position of Wolf's superficiality. In contrast, extract fifteen has a more serious tone and the author's use of a narrative formation allows the argument to develop slowly and carefully, creating facticity (Potter, 1996). Brown has been more overt than other authors in his presentation of Wolf's desire for media attention, but has avoided criticising Wolf directly. His reference to famous people, 'distinguished or otherwise', leads the reader, within the context of a critical article, to place Wolf within the 'otherwise' category and his concluding comment of hardly knowing 'where to stop' is another subtle criticism of Wolf. This narrative construction leads the reader carefully to the conclusion that Wolf behaved inappropriately when she made the accusation and that she did it because her desire for media attention was excessive. Wolf is not explicitly mentioned in this extract, enabling the author to construct a credible and robust account by avoiding accountability for overtly criticising her (Edwards & Potter, 1992).

Ironically, in The Beauty Myth (1990) Wolf discussed the paradoxical ideologies that locate women's worth to society in their appearance and their desirability to men, yet undermine them by demeaning those very same qualities. Wollstonecraft (1792) first documented this contradiction in the eighteenth century, and yet the ideologies remain robust and in constant use. The Beauty Myth ideologies have been employed by the authors of the corpus of data precisely to undermine Naomi Wolf's allegation of sexual harassment.

6.3.3. Wolf as feminist

Wolf's feminist position was, as could be expected, a common feature of the texts.

Naomi Wolf is famous because of her feminist literature, therefore it is not surprising

that this position was drawn upon in the authors' discourses. The anti-feminist,

backlash ideological construction of the feminist is usually an argumentative, bitter and

victimised woman (Douglas, 1994). Research has repeatedly shown that women often

reject the label feminist and avoid orienting to the position because of associated

negative qualities (Zucker & Lelchook, 2004). Negative constructions for the position

of feminist were drawn upon to undermine Wolf's account:

Extract sixteen

1. "...her constant portrayal of herself as a victim. Thus, we have Naomi the
2. victim of her youthful good looks (The Beauty Myth), Naomi the victim of
3. her sexual allure (Promiscuities), Naomi the victim of motherhood
4. (Misconceptions) ... Could we soon have Affluenza, in which Naomi
5. describes herself as a victim of her wealth?" (Christine Odone)

Extract seventeen

1. "And you might think about the millions of women all around the world who
2. suffer conditions of dreadful poverty and male violence of the sort rather
3. more dreadful than a "heavy boneless hand" on one's thigh." (Dierdre
4. David)

Extract eighteen

1. "There is no shortage of cause for righteous feminist outrage in the world:
2. child prostitution in South Asia, women being stoned to death under sharia
3. law in Africa." (Zoe Hellier)

All of the above extracts seek to challenge Wolf's feminist identity by drawing upon the

much criticised 'victim' feminism. The backlash to feminism often includes a discourse

concerning women's 'moaning' about their victimisation. The construction of the 'poor

me' attitude categorises feminists as moaning troublemakers and is often used to

undermine the emancipatory messages that feminist discourse carries (Douglas, 1994).

Such techniques are employed in these extracts; the discourses of victim feminism are

drawn upon to discredit Wolf by constructing her as another 'victim' feminist. In doing

so, the authors minimise the seriousness (and credibility) of the sexual harassment by

implying that Wolf's orientation to a victim position signifies little more than feminist moans.

In extract sixteen the author explicitly introduces the argument that Wolf positions herself as a victim, emphasising it with the word 'constant' (Pomerantz, 1984). She then provides her reasoning for this conclusion, in the form of a three-part-list (Edwards & Potter, 1992) that introduces and describes Wolf's feminist publications. Naomi Wolf typically writes her books by drawing upon her own life experiences to discuss feminist issues. Odone has used this writing style to construct Wolf as desiring and encouraging a victim position; Wolf is positioned somewhat comically as a victim of her good looks, sexual allure and motherhood. These things are not, of course, usually victim traits, and therefore this construction serves to undermine Wolf's credibility. This is further worked up in the final line, in which it is suggested that Wolf's wealth will be the basis of her next victim position.

Extracts seventeen and eighteen discredit Wolf by undermining the legitimacy of raising the topic of sexual harassment within the public arena, and of posing it as a problem. The authors employ a combination of feminist and anti-feminist ideologies to undermine Wolf's account, and detach her from the wider feminist cause (Zucker & Lelbrook, 2004). They argue that Wolf should concentrate her efforts on 'real trauma', implying that sexual harassment is not a serious issue, and cite examples such as 'child prostitution' and 'women being stoned to death'. The extreme case formulations ('millions of women', 'dreadful poverty') and detailed descriptions add facticity and credibility to the authors' accounts (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Pomerantz, 1986), and develop narratives (Potter, 1996) which directly contrast the real feminist issues with Wolf's 'pseudo feminist' issue of a 'hand on the thigh'. The sexual harassment incident that is described in detail by Wolf is minimised to this short and largely unthreatening behaviour. The employment of ideology concerning legitimate suffering, as a contrast

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to comfortable, privileged Western women's moaning about their inequalities, trivialises Wolf's account (Douglas, 1994). The function of this imposed prioritisation is to show that Wolf's claim that her experience was traumatic or oppressive is not valid, thus undermining the legitimacy of her claim that she was sexually harassed.

The contrast between the subject positions constructed for Naomi Wolf and Harold Bloom is stark and extensive. Bloom is revered, worshipped and therefore a valuable and credible member of society; Wolf is criticised, undermined and therefore neither valued nor credible. Both sets of positions seek to construct an alternative version for Wolf's account of the sexual harassment, a version in which Wolf is blameworthy. Wolf's guilt is achieved by positioning her as sexually alluring and manipulative, superficial and as a misguided feminist. Bloom is exonerated through his brilliance, his intellect, his worth, as well as his fragility and age.

6.4   The complex argument of the innocent victim

In writing her article, Wolf produced an account that constructed the argument that she was the victim, Bloom was the perpetrator and Yale, the university at which Bloom was a professor and she a student, was to blame. As discussed, blaming men for sexual harassment produces a fragile and weak argument that directly challenges ideology. Wolf, like the women in the previous chapters, therefore constructed an account which clearly positioned the perpetrator as sexually harassing her, but simultaneously attempted to defer some of the perpetrator's responsibility onto something else, in this case Yale.

Whilst subject positions formed part of the argument, the article drew upon many different types of 'evidence' to construct Wolf's credibility. These included logic, issues of morality and corroborative accounts (Edwards & Potter, 1992). In contrast to the previous sections, which showed how extreme case formulations, description and

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narrative allowed argument to develop robustly in relatively few words, Wolf's own account was complex, long and detailed.

Extract nineteen shows the introductory paragraph of Wolf's article; a paragraph that introduces the themes that underpin her argument:

Extract nineteen

1. " In the late fall of 1983, Professor Harold Bloom did something banal,
2. human, and destructive: He put his hand on a student's inner thigh – a
3. student whom he was tasked with teaching and grading. The student was
4. me, a 20 year old senior at Yale. Here is why I am telling this story now: I
5. began, nearly a year ago, to try – privately – to start a conversation with my
6. alma mater that would reassure me that steps had been taken in the ensuing
7. years to ensure that unwanted sexual advances of this sort weren't still
8. occurring. I expected Yale to be responsive. After nine months of many
9. calls and e-mails, I was shocked to conclude that the atmosphere of collusion
10. that had kept me quiet twenty years ago was still intact – as secretive as a
11. Masonic lodge."

Wolf opens her account by presenting a strong, three-part list of words: 'banal, human and destructive'. Whilst these words have a high impact, emphasised by the three-part formation (Edwards & Potter, 1992), they also have mundane meanings that function to minimise Bloom's behaviour (Abell, Stokoe & Billig, 2000). With this short utterance, Wolf represents her experience as something perfectly normal, yet at the same time absolutely awful (Pomerantz, 1986). Rape myth ideology pervades culture (Buddie, 2001) and supports the belief, sexual harassment is just a 'bad pass'. By stating it is commonplace and also that it is human, Wolf emphasises the normality of harassment by reconstructing the rape myth ideologies.

Immediately thereafter, the harassment is described in more detail and begins to position the perpetrator, Harold Bloom: 'He put his hand on a student's inner thigh'. The act of sexual harassment is encapsulated in the words 'inner thigh', and this simple but strong and detailed presentation creates an impact (Edwards & Potter, 1992). In using these words Wolf also constructs the invasion of personal space and the proximity of the offender. With this construction his advances cannot be deemed innocent; instead they carry strong sexual connotations and inference of inappropriate behaviour. The

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word 'student' introduces a category title, and draws upon the series of qualities associated with students and professors (Potter, 1996; Wowk, 1984). Teacher/professor produces assumptions about responsibility and rules of conduct, of which sexual harassment is arguably one of the most shocking breaks; student produces assumptions of powerlessness, subordination and obedience to authority. This is further emphasised by the end of the sentence 'a student whom he was tasked with...grading'. The introduction of the grading infers the presence of power dynamics.

Teacher harassment of students is unacceptable in British and American culture, unlike other forms of sexual harassment, therefore by employing this thread of argument Wolf highlights the immorality of the situation. In addition, by drawing upon the positions of 'professor' and 'student' within a single paragraph of text, Wolf is producing a relational position. In doing so, the characteristics and positions of each are emphasised by the presence of the other (Davies & Harré, 1984). As shown in chapter five, relational positioning is an effective discursive tool and creates a strong argument built around the positions of the individuals involved.

The most dominant discourse in Wolf's account was Yale's responsibility for the harassment. Institutional responsibility for women's oppression is a frequent discourse in feminist literature (see for example Greer, 2001), as is the specific discussion regarding institutional failure to challenge and stop the sexual harassment of women by men. Therefore, by drawing upon this thread of argument Wolf is able to employ the pro-feminist ideologies and discourses. Moreover, this account allows Wolf to adhere to ideologies concerning blameless perpetrators (Hollway, 1984) whilst also deflecting responsibility away from herself, the victim (Doherty & Anderson, 1998).

Wolf draws upon feminist ideologies to support and emphasise her expectation that Yale would 'be responsive' to an invitation to discuss the issue of sexual harassment. She exaggerates their avoidance with a detailed sentence describing 'nine months' of

effort and 'many e-mails and calls' (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Pomerantz, 1986), and illustrates the various chances that Yale had had to respond by also including an attempt to contact her alma mater. The complete avoidance by Yale is relationally positioned against the construction of Wolf's mundane and undemanding requests for reassurance that women were no longer being victimised (Davies and Harre, 1984). Wolf's account implies that Yale has something to hide, that they are deliberately and strategically avoiding her.

Yale's avoidance is then redefined and consolidated in the final sentence, which includes the metaphor of the 'Masonic lodge'. The Mason's represent highly patriarchal individuals and have had a somewhat chequered past in terms of women's rights and moral issues. Hence, by employing this metaphor Wolf positions Yale as collusive and closed, aiding men's rights at the expense of women (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This argument, and the wider argument of Wolf's article, constructs an implicit statement of responsibility. Wolf's narrative infers that by ignoring the issue of sexual harassment, Yale has colluded with women's sexual victimisation. Therefore, though Bloom harassed her, he did so because he could, because Yale allowed him to. Thus, Wolf is able to simultaneously construct Yale as responsible for the harassment and Bloom as the perpetrator.

To further support her dominant discourse of institutional failure Naomi Wolf's account later drew upon several different sources of corroborative 'evidence' (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Initially, she described the experiences of six other women who had also been sexually harassed by their professors and whose allegations had been ineffectively dealt with by the institutions to which they belonged.

Of this group of women Wolf stated "They were a distinguished group, including a lawyer, a college dean, and a chaplain", establishing the intellectual and rational credibility of her sources. However, it is the descriptions of the other women's

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experiences that are important for Wolf's account. Firstly, she draws upon examples in which the women have experienced something similar to her, describing their allegations and the formal complaint to a grievance committee that was either rejected or resulted in only minor action being taken against the man involved. An example that encapsulates both these threads was a woman named Deborah Amory. The following extract illustrates Wolf's portrayal of the account:

Extract twenty

1. "She was at a dinner at Mory's, seated next to a faculty member. He got
2. drunk and put his hand on her leg. She was startled – another student asked
3. her later if she was okay... Amory filed a grievance....she was told that "I
4. had been right in considering his behaviour inappropriate"...the [report of
5. the committee's decision] suggested the faculty member get alcohol
6. counselling, and to stay away from students when he was drinking... there
7. was no mention of professional consequences." (Naomi Wolf)

Immediately apparent in this extract is the similarity of this woman's experience to Wolf's; she is a student/he a faculty member and the man put a hand on the woman's leg, causing her to startle. Whilst the response of the college is reported as being one of agreement that inappropriate behaviour had taken place, the subsequent consequences are mild. Wolf increases the facticity of her account by utilising a third person quotation when reporting that the college had acknowledged wrongdoing (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998; Nylund, 2003).

The last part of the extract explains the consequences (or lack of) for the male perpetrator. The retributions of counselling and not drinking around students are presented as being inappropriate given the behaviour and violation by the subsequent statement 'no mention of professional consequences'.

With this form of corroboration, Wolf not only supports the credibility of her own harassment experience, in terms of the event itself, but she also further develops her argument regarding Yale's responsibility. By illustrating that academic institutions are failing to protect female students from their male professors, Wolf is drawing upon the

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feminist ideologies regarding large scale institutional failure. Wolf therefore constructs not only Yale as blameworthy but society and its institutions.

Thus, to provide an account in which the responsibility for harassment could be located away from the victim, Naomi Wolf constructed a comparatively complex argument by employing several different discursive tools and a range of sub-arguments. Firstly, she refrained from blaming the perpetrator, blaming instead the institution whose weak procedures and desire for impeccable reputation allowed harassment to occur without consequence to the perpetrator. Secondly, she emphasised and worked up the relational positions of student and professor to highlight the power differentials and the inappropriateness of the harassment. Thirdly, she provided case examples of women who had had similar experiences, corroborating her own account. Finally, she drew upon extreme case formulations, vivid descriptions and narrative to construct these threads of argument robustly and credibly.

6.5   Conclusions

This chapter has embarked upon the unique task of analysing one woman's account of sexual harassment and a series of subsequent responses, all set within the public arena. By analysing both the article written by Wolf and the subsequent response articles, the constructions of sexual harassment, subject positions and responsibility were explored from the different perspectives, allowing a direct comparison.

The fervency with which Harold Bloom's innocence and Naomi Wolf's guilt was constructed, argued and defended by the authors reflects the naturalised norms and therefore discourses to which the authors are exposed. The inclusion of rape myths was repeatedly found in the backlash accounts, through which credibility was enhanced and argument strengthened. Owing to the availability and inclusion of ideology, the incorporation of a large number of extreme case formulations, both on the level of

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account construction and of the subject position as a whole, did not detract from the believability of the authors' accounts. To position Bloom as innocent and Wolf as guilty (albeit of other crimes) was relatively easy.

In contrast, the construction of the innocent victim was a complex, careful and largely ineffective negotiation. In a culture in which ideology blames women for men's sexual deviance (see the previous chapters), the discourses of an innocent victim are weak, brittle and in relatively short supply. In contrast to the brazen and forthright accounts constructing the blameworthy victim, the innocent victim account builds argument slowly, appealing to the intellect of the reader. The argument is multi-faceted and seeks strength in corroboration and detail.

Thus, agreeing with ideology and blaming a victim whilst exonerating a perpetrator is easily done. Disagreeing with ideology and attempting to present the victim as innocent is not only a cumbersome task, but as evidenced by the themes discussed by the backlash, it provides a fragile account, open to challenge and easily undermined by counter-argument.

In terms of the positions employed, this analysis revealed, as did the analysis in chapters four and five, that subject positions are defined and shaped by the ideological influences upon men's and women's cultural roles. Women's sexuality is criticised and problematised, used to undermine their credibility as a worthwhile individual making a worthwhile contribution. In contrast, men's sexuality is legitimised and encouraged, and if it becomes deviant it is excused, brushed aside and explained away with talk of sexual drives and men's needs. Harold Bloom's worth and value was accentuated and emphasised; it provided the foundation of his innocence.[4]

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[4] As noted in footnote three above, conversation analysis would have offered a different interpretation for the construction of responsibility. Rather then employing ideological analyses, a detailed deconstruction of the account, in terms of sequence and interaction, would have been used to identify how responsibility and blame were 'worked up' by writers within their accounts.

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The paradoxical existence of women is once again illustrated in the positioning of Wolf. As discussed in the previous chapters, women are encouraged to be both sexually available for men, so that their needs can be met, but simultaneously sexually unavailable because moral decency and respectability dictate that a woman should not be sexually active (Clark, 1987; Hollway, 1984). The subject positions created for Wolf demonstrated this paradox; she is condemned for her sexuality, her superficiality and her feminist beliefs, yet these are all characteristics which culture encourages in women. Furthermore, the beauty myth (Wolf, 1990) appeared to be active in the discourses of the authors.

7

Concluding Arguments

This final chapter reflects upon the thesis that has evolved and taken shape. In the introductory chapters, the three fundamental aims of the project were formulated. These were to reconstruct and explore women's experiences of sexual abuse, to draw upon discursive psychology to analyse and interpret findings, and to provide a contribution towards the feminist effort to emancipate women.

In a world dictated by men and their needs, this project was feminist informed and unashamedly concerned only with women and their experiences. Through its evolution, the project became more focused, and specifically explored women's experiences of sexual harassment, with a particular emphasis upon constructions of subject positions.

At the outset of the thesis, the discursive literature was thoroughly reviewed, exploring pertinent issues and debates within which the author attempted to find a comfortable research and theoretical position. Through extensive reading (and considerable angst on the author's part) it was concluded that the aims of exploring women's oppression and providing a contribution to political and social change, could not be achieved fully through either the critical or the conversation analytic frameworks. Thus, it was proposed in chapter two that a 'hybrid' analysis would be performed in which both the ideological processes of critical discursive psychology and the interactional qualities of conversation analytic perspective could be integrated to provide a more detailed and thorough discursive analysis. The work of Wetherell,

Potter, Billig, Gavey, Edwards and Lea and colleagues was therefore drawn upon to provide an integrated analytical approach that combined ideological interpretation with detailed discursive deconstruction.

The initial literature review undertaken at the outset of the study also incorporated studies investigating sexual harassment, and other forms of women's sexual abuse. Particularly influential in these areas were the feminist informed, ideologically driven contributions of Hollway, Gavey, Ehrlich, and Anderson and Doherty. These researchers had identified a series of discourses that justify, excuse and minimise men's sexual abuse of women. The discourses render women powerless to reject or challenge men's abusive actions, and encourage women not only to conform but also to actively partake in their own oppression. As a consequence of these discourses, men who abuse women sexually often escape punitive sanctions on the grounds of diminished responsibility or the perceived inevitability of their behaviour.

The third field of literature reviewed was the growing body of theory and research concerning subject positioning. Discursive theorists are increasingly advocating subject positions as an alternative theory to those of 'identity' (see Davies & Harrē, 1984). The discursive nature of the current thesis and the theoretical and philosophical position of the author led to a move away from the more mainstream definitions and theories of identity towards discursively constructed and socially defined subject positions. Embodiment, fluidity, flexibility and ideological constraint therefore became the central features of the subject of psychology (Davies & Harrē, 1984; Gatter, 1999; Gergen, 2000; Sampson, 1989).

From this theoretical and philosophical literature review a series of five research questions were developed:

1) Explore the features of subject positioning in women's talk about sexual harassment.

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2) Explore the subject positions that are available to women.

3) Explore the ideological influences on those positions.

4) Explore the allocation of responsibility for sexual harassment.

5) Explore the contribution that the discursive approach has made towards subject positions and the topic of 'identity'.

Whilst each question is set out as though distinct from the others, when the analysis was performed it became apparent that they were very much interwoven. Each empirical chapter presented has addressed all of these questions in some form, and importantly each has also fulfilled the overall aims of the project summarised above.

This chapter will evaluate the project against the three fundamental aims, describing and discussing the successes and highlighting the limitations and consequent implications. The contributions to the field in terms of research and theory will also be presented, as will the implications for future research.

7.1   Reconstructing women's experiences of sexual harassment

This research project demonstrated that integral to reconstructions of women's experiences of sexual harassment are the subject positions of the male perpetrator and female victim. The analysis revealed that there is a selection of subject positions available at any given time, dependent upon the context, and that these contribute to the allocation of responsibility and blame for the sexual harassment. Moreover, the two data sets, one drawing upon the voices of women victims and one upon the voices of the general public (both male and female), illustrated that the construction of responsibility is dependent upon whether the speaker is the victim, or is another individual otherwise unconnected with the incident.

The ideological analysis of the data showed that the subject positions constructed for both the perpetrator and the victim drew upon robust ideologies of sexuality (for

example, Cairns, 1993; Doherty & Anderson, 1998; Ehrlich, 2001; Hollway, 1984), morality (for example, Clark, 1987; Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1983), and womanhood (for example, Gillespie, 2003; Nicholson, 1993; Wearing, 1984; Wolf, 1990). The ideologies were shown to shape and constrain the subject positions that were drawn upon by speakers. As discussed in chapter four, subject positions were found to be fluid in sexual harassment discourse, continually moving and changing, supporting Davis and Harrè (1984) and others' work. Jenny's discourses showed that, unlike the fixed and consistent 'identities' described and defined in mainstream research, subject positions evolved within narratives, with different parts of a position drawn upon and constructed alongside other parts. Jenny and the other speakers often worked up several positions simultaneously and integrated them to produce a meaningful representation within the argument/account being constructed. It was argued that the combination of constraint and fluidity produced a dilemma in discourse, in which subject positioning developed as a negotiation between movement and development and limitation and constraint.

The typical presentation for sexual abuse ideologies, according to Anderson and Doherty (1996), is supporting the blameworthiness of the female victim and exonerating her male perpetrator. By drawing upon two different sources of data, from the public and private arenas, the author illustrated that the construction and function of the ideologies is dependent upon the context in which they are reproduced and the argument to which they contribute. In both the private and the public arenas the ideologies that shaped the men's subject positions worked to exonerate them of responsibility for their behaviour. Studies one and two showed that when women discussed their own experiences of harassment, the subject positions employed were of sexualised, immoral men who had performed deviant acts, but who could not be held accountable because they were either pitiful and unthreatening or of unsound mental health. This was exemplified in the account of Laura who employed the mythical psychopathic rapist

(Doherty and Anderson, 1998) to diminish the responsibility of her otherwise culpable perpetrator. Discourses that minimised responsibility were also found in chapter six. The account of Naomi Wolf (discussed in chapter six) constructed Yale University as responsible for the sexual harassment because it had failed to stop Harold Bloom from harassing his female students. The authors discussing the incident exonerated Bloom by positioning him as beyond judgement and as an unthreatening, harmless 'old lech'. Therefore, whoever the speaker was and in whichever context, the male perpetrator was always exonerated of responsibility, despite culpability often remaining unchallenged.

In contrast, the victims' subject positions differed according to the context. In the private arena, in which women were constructing their own experiences, the ideologies concerning responsibility were working 'backwards', attempting to relocate it away from the victim. To achieve this, the female victims drew upon several subject positions. Some positioned themselves as non-sexual or physically distant from sexual encounters, producing a counter-argument to the sexually alluring responsible victim. This was exemplified in the account of Sophie, who reconstructed an incident in which she was coerced into having sexual intercourse with a man. Sophie acknowledged that she had engaged in the physical act of sex, but she distanced herself from the encounter by positioning herself as a 'blow up doll' and as emotionally disconnected. Other women drew upon civility and morality, positioning themselves within the boundaries of polite social interaction by exhibiting knowledge of and adherence to social rules. The account of Catherine illustrated this subject position. Finally, one woman, Laura, drew upon the subject position of the 'mother' and 'carer' to exhibit the qualities of positive womanhood. All of the subject positions constructed by the female victims functioned to show that they were not responsible for the sexual harassment; they provided a counter-position to challenge that of the responsible victim. By reconstructing the oppressive ideologies as 'reverse discourses' (Diamond & Quinby,

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1988) and ensuring that they positioned themselves as the opposite of the blameworthy victim, the women were able to make credible their blamelessness.

However, challenging the usual presentation of ideology meant that the arguments constructed by the women were potentially weaker and more easily challenged. The detailed analysis showed that their accounts therefore employed a variety of discursive tools. These included detailed description (Potter, 1996), narrative formation (Edwards & Potter, 1992), extreme-case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986), active voices (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998), play-like construction (Potter, 1996), metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), and category use (Edwards, 1997). It was shown that by drawing upon a selection of these tools the women were able to challenge ideology with reasonable success.

In contrast to the private arena, in the public arena the accounts were shown to be exaggerated, comical, light and full of impact; they were usually not worked up in detail, rather they were represented in a few, strong words. The discourse employed numerous extreme case formulations and usually resulted in caricatured subject positions. The positions, particularly those constructed for the victim, were numerous and all functioned to allocate responsibility for the sexual harassment onto the victim. By employing the ideologies also used in the other subject positions, Naomi Wolf was positioned as sexually alluring and provocative, superficial and manipulative, and immoral and lacking compassion. The analysis showed how these negative positions undermined the credibility and legitimacy of Wolf's allegation and how responsibility thereby fell upon her shoulders. This was exemplified, somewhat ironically given that Wolf (1990) authored *The Beauty Myth*, in the ideologies of female superficiality and manipulation that were constructed by many authors. Wolf is portrayed as superficial, self-obsessed and manipulative, with particular emphasis placed upon her beauty. The activities involved in the maintenance of beauty (make-up, wearing designer clothes and

having styled hair) were particularly emphasised by the backlash authors and used to undermine Wolf as a credible author.

Another finding that was highlighted by this project was the lack of available emancipatory discourses. This was represented throughout the analysis through the ideological constraints upon women's innocence, but it was exemplified in the exchange that occurred between Jenny and the interviewer. When Jenny attempted to contradict the ideologies and position herself as aggressively rejecting the constraint of patriarchal ideology, she was immediately confronted by the interviewer and forced to renegotiate her position within the boundaries of available discourse. The irony of this exchange, given the feminist (emancipatory) aim of the project, was inescapable. However, this exchange made it apparent that Jenny had positioned herself too far outside of the ideological boundaries and, probably, too aggressively. Unlike the other women, whose avoidance of blame was supported by their employing the oppressive ideologies to work in their favour, Jenny explicitly rejected and challenged the ideologies. Her position therefore became vulnerable, even when the interaction was with a feminist informed interviewer.

By deconstructing the accounts of sexual harassment produced by men and women, the discourses that oppress women and maintain their sexual victimisation were revealed and explored. Whilst this suggests that the author fulfilled the first aim of the research project, consideration must also be given to the methodological and analytical limitations of the project, and the consequences they might have had upon the validity of findings presented. The project limitations are addressed within the following two sections.

7.2 Discursive psychology and studying women's experiences

The second aim of this thesis was to conduct a project that upheld the assumptions of discursive psychology and that deconstructed discourse from both a critical and a conversation analytic perspective. The author challenged mainstream psychology's assumptions of objectivity, consistency and universality, and argued, like others have previously done (for example, Oakley, 1998; Shotter, 1993; Weatherell, Gavey & Potts, 2002), that it is the variability, the detail and the complexity that is important when attempting to theorise the subjective human. Moreover, it was argued that the source of oppression against women is not inside the individual's head, rather it is constructed in the social interactions between individuals. By locating oppression in the social context, widespread change is therefore more achievable. Women's subjective experiences, shaped by ideologies and therefore the availability of different discourses, will be broader, more varied and hopefully emancipatory and powerful.

As discussed in chapter two, discursive psychology makes several assumptions, and these were adopted to develop the following set of theoretical and analytical principles:

1) The discursive individual is embodied within their culture; through their interaction with others they become alive and meaningful

2) The discourses employed in interaction are products of ideological process, as well as of the momentary interaction in which they occur (they emerge from both the macro- and the micro-contexts)

3) Within momentary interaction discourse creates oppression, but with feminist understanding and development it can also create emancipation and equality

4) Realism is rejected in favour of a relativist approach, but the choice of versions of reality that will aid women's emancipation is advocated

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5) Discourse is constructed to do things, it is not passive. Analysis must critique argument, explore dilemma, reveal construction, unravel ideology, be reflexive and embodied, orient to the interaction and acknowledge temporal, historical and spatial influence.

6) The research process, including the dissemination of findings, must be a reflexive process.

These principles produced a hybrid[5] approach to analysis, which attempted to overcome the limitations of the critical discourse approach (predominantly that it did not deconstruct accounts and arguments) by incorporating elements of the conversation analytic approach. The analytical style continued to evolve throughout the thesis; the analysis produced in the three empirical chapters is the product of several cycles of development.

The success of the approach is shown in the unique findings of the thesis. As discussed in the introductory chapters, relatively few studies have focused upon subject positioning. The findings presented have shown that the concept of subject positioning proposed by Davies and Harré (1984) provides a detailed and rich understanding of the human subject. Subject positions were found to be fluid, flexible, constrained, relational and evasive, and they have several functions, including the allocation of responsibility and accountability. They were also shown to be influential and to serve a greater purpose than simply communicating meaningful information about an individual. The benefit of the hybrid approach was, of course, evident throughout the deconstruction of the sexual harassment discourses. However, one area in which it became particularly useful was the exploration of relational positioning in chapter five.

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[5] As referred to above, the hybrid approach did not form or advance a singular approach to analysis. Using the same process as those who have previously utilised this method, the author formulated an analytical approach that drew upon and integrated elements of the conversation analytic and critical approaches with feminist theory, producing a multi-layered deconstruction of speakers' accounts.

In this chapter, the combined analysis of the detailed account construction and the shaping of the content through ideology, revealed that rape myths and other oppressive ideologies shape relational positions, and they exaggerate and caricature them with little or no impact upon the credibility of the account. As such, relational positions were shown to be powerful constructions of subjects and therefore considerable contributors to the allocation of responsibility.

The hybrid approach also revealed a new discursive tool, which the author named 'agency evasion'. This discursive tool was found to work within the construction of subject positions; by positioning themselves relationally to their male perpetrator, the women were able to avoid taking agency and therefore avoid responsibility and accountability for the harassment. The tool was drawn upon by Catherine who constructed her own position in the sexual harassment incident without referring directly to it. Her entire subject position was constructed through her construction of the man's behaviour. This is an important and useful tool for women because it gives them the opportunity to implicitly reallocate blame away from themselves. The woman's subject position is not directly oriented to, therefore her position remains unclear and it would be difficult to credibly construct her responsibility for the harassment. Unfortunately, this tool could not be more fully explored in the context of the current project. However, future research could explore the 'agency evasion' discursive tool further by identifying and deconstructing other examples of its employment. Obviously the current data collection was limited to talk about sexual harassment, but deconstructing the tool's use in discourses where responsibility is a central issue or where agency is evaded for other reasons would provide interesting insights.

The project's rich and detailed findings, that represent both the interactional qualities of discourse and the ideological processes of society, are a product of an analytical

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framework that attends to both the macro- and the micro-context of talk (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2003). Of course, it could be argued, by conversation analysts in particular, that the interactional level of discourse has not been adequately addressed. Indeed, compared to conversation analysis the deconstruction of discourse contained in this thesis attends little to the interactional qualities of interviewer and interviewee, and of article author and public reader. Similarly, the transcription method utilised was relatively basic in comparison to the detailed method used when conversation analysis is applied to discourse. However, as the principles listed above reflect, it was not the intention of the author to offer a micro-analysis of the turns of speech and the sequence of utterances. Rather it was intended that the discursive construction of ideology be understood in more detail than is typically offered by critical theorists, by identifying the discursive tools that made credible different accounts and by picking apart the arguments that forged responsibility and blame. The transcription that was used and the hybrid analysis that was performed fulfilled this aim. It has offered an understanding of how ideology is constructed in discourse, and in particular how ideology constructs subject positions, and the implications that has for the overall argument and account.

The project has further achieved its discursive aims by deconstructing data generated from two different sources, the public and the private arena. Utilising contrasting data sets, particularly those that have such different characteristics (the spontaneous and momentary interaction of an interview and the contrived and crafted delivery of a media article), in part validates the findings outlined in the previous section. The presentation of ideology between the data sets exhibits many similarities and differences, but importantly it illustrates numerous continuities within these. It is the continuity across the findings that supports the validity of the project.

The feminist aims of the project, which are discussed in detail below, were deemed to be upheld by an approach that sought to give women a voice, to ground findings in

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the social context and to study discourse as a topic. Indeed, the findings presented have shown that discursive research can offer a rich, detailed study of the negotiations within discourse, the reconstructions of social processes and the origins and maintenance of power relations between men and women. Change, as has been stated, will be more widespread if it is encouraged at a social level. In its purest form, relativist research can not offer answers, but as a feminist informed project, these findings represent a voice for change. From these representations of oppressed women's voices (and women's lives) must emerge a recognition that an alternative discourse needs to be practised, an emancipatory discourse that challenges this oppression and makes available subject positions in which women actively and confidently refuse to tolerate unwanted sexual attention.

An important feature of any feminist research project is ensuring that the process of research development and dissemination is reflexive (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). When successfully conducted, discursive analyses, particularly those that draw upon the critical theories, do by their very nature include reflexive analysis. All interpretations of discourse are critiqued for ideological and argument construction, a process that requires the researcher to reflect upon how the data has communicated the meaning that it has. What researchers often neglect to acknowledge, however, is the contribution that their own values and knowledge have had upon this process (Gill, 1995).

In the introductory chapter the author expressed her position as a feminist informed researcher. This position was held alongside an array of other values concerning social equality and inclusion, but also alongside the author's position as a subject in a patriarchal culture. During the interpretation of the data generated these values, knowledge and influences were frequently drawn upon and critiqued for their influence upon the shaping of the subsequent findings. Therefore, throughout the research process the author employed various techniques to ensure a reflexive and contemplative

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engagement with the data. For example, each interpretation of the data was critiqued, with the author questioning why and how the interpretation had been made, and an analytical journal was written, in the form of memos that documented the process of data deconstruction and project evolution. Furthermore, Speer (2002) states that feminist researchers often experience conflicts when analysing and validating women's voices whilst applying feminist interpretations. The author was keen to avoid over-interpreting the women's experiences or reconstructing them as products of feminist theory and analysis. Thus, the reflexive process allowed the data to guide the project evolution without the author's values being overly impressed upon it.

7.3   Contribution to feminist action

This project was first and foremost a contribution to the principal feminist goal of women's emancipation. The author set out to further develop existing findings about the societal processes that oppress women and maintain patriarchy, with a particular focus upon women's experiences of sexual harassment. Hollway (1995) stated that there were no available discourses through which women could construct their own sexual desire and sexual intent. Emancipation can be achieved through the practise of discourses that counter those of women's oppression (Mann & Huffman, 2005), and this will result in production of discourses that support women's sexual autonomy (Jackson, 1987). Drawing upon feminist theory and feminist informed research to direct and shape the thesis development supported the principle feminist aim of women's sexual emancipation.

The adoption of discursive psychology was one feature of this project that supported the feminist aims. Feminist researchers aim to not only 'hear' the voices of women and validate their attitudes and opinions, but also to critique those voices to reveal and challenge the processes that oppress (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1997). As discussed

above, for mainstream psychology, oppression is an attitude and located at the level of the individual. Discursive psychology, in contrast, locates oppression within ideology and therefore at the societal level. To embark upon change, the former requires that every individual be encouraged to change their attitudes and beliefs. The enormity of the task of reaching each person does not require discussion. For discursive psychology, change is undertaken on a societal level because men's oppression of women is not viewed as an individual attitude, but rather as a social process in which men and women play their parts (Diamond & Quinby, 1988). Challenging ideology and creating emancipatory discourses occurs on a cultural level through social structures (Ehrlich, 2001), institutions (Wolmark, 2003) and through mediums of widespread communication (Fairclough, 1992).

As discussed in the introduction, feminists first began to draw society's attention towards the oppression of women some two hundred years ago. At that time it was not possible to communicate to large numbers; printed literature was still limited to the few with sufficient income to buy the relatively expensive books and newspapers. However, with the invention of radio and television, and later the internet, and with the advent of printing machinery and the mass production of lower-cost literature, the messages of feminists were passed to an ever increasing audience. The twentieth century introduced feminism in its most potent form and brought feminist issues (such as unequal pay and discrimination) into the forefront of government policy (Ehrlich, 2001) and British legal reform (Zeegars, 2002). Feminism has not always been successful, and certainly change has not occurred with the velocity or impact that first and second-wave feminists had hoped for. However, it is clear that oppression must be challenged on this societal level if widespread change is to be produced. This thesis has offered further understanding of the societal processes that oppress women and therefore makes a useful and important contribution.

Specifically, this thesis has shown that the discourses of oppression are prevalent in sexual harassment reconstructions and, importantly, that they contribute to the allocation of responsibility and accountability. Women, it seems, are by default responsible for sexual harassment, and their male perpetrators are exonerated. When the women victims reconstructed the incident of harassment, their accounts were complex arguments structured to avoid blame and infer their innocence. In contrast, when people unconnected with the incident discussed it, the woman was blameworthy. In both cases, the male perpetrator was exonerated, and in both cases the veracity of the allegations was rarely a discussion point. It seems that whether or not a man has committed sexual harassment is irrelevant, arguably they usually have; rather the important factor is who should be blamed for the incident, and invariably that is the role of the woman.

A further contribution in this arena has been the findings of the emancipatory position adopted by Jenny in chapter four. The interviewer easily challenged Jenny's position of 'rebel' because it was outside the boundaries of available (patriarchal and oppressive) discourses and therefore weak and vulnerable. This exchange also illustrated the author's collusion with oppressive ideology. Whilst the author is a feminist who has incorporated emancipation as a central aim of the research project, it is apparent that she is also a subject within a patriarchal culture.

Combined, these findings highlight the current position for women who are harassed by men; they must be proactive in their reallocation of responsibility, but simultaneously must not be seen to reject patriarchy and oppression outright. Obviously, as a feminist the author argues fervently that this is not acceptable and that alternative emancipatory discourses need to be developed. These discourses can then be disseminated through literature and verbal presentations and then practised within everyday social interactions, gradually increasing the availability of non-oppressive

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subject positions. Women should have available a choice of positions in sexual harassment that allow them to be strong and assertive, rejecting the sexual attention on the basis of its unacceptability. Importantly, these positions should be robust and able to withstand challenge.

The findings also have relevance to legal and social forums. The police, tribunals and court cases involving sexual harassment should be informed about and trained to recognise the types of discourses that men (and their briefs) might employ to exonerate or diminish perpetrator responsibility. These forums should be encouraged to be critical of the process of justice and of the accounts constructed by those involved. Awareness of and challenge to the discourses that reallocate responsibility for men's sexually deviant behaviour onto their female victims will be another step towards women's emancipation.

In addition to ensuring that the fundamental theoretical and philosophical frameworks were compatible with the feminist aims, the author also incorporated several design and analytical features to ensure they were upheld. From the outset, the project was led by the voices of women, upholding feminist research principles (Longino, 1996), and partially validating the findings (Hammersley, 1992). The first study was designed to explore women's experiences of sexual abuse as broadly and inclusively as possible. Women were therefore the participants of semi-structured interviews that were used to generate initial ideas about the direction of the thesis. It was from these women's voices that the topic of sexual harassment emerged as a central issue and therefore became the focus of the research. The direction of the project was therefore a product of women's experiences. Furthermore, by adopting interviews to generate the data, the author employed a method that is generally regarded as particularly beneficial for feminist research because of the focus on subjectivity, detail and discourse (Weatherell, Gavey and Potts, 2002). The process of interviewing, with

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its informed consent, reciprocal relationship between interviewer and interviewee and participant centred approach, is empowering for the women participants (Speer, 2002; Wilkinson, 1999).

Whilst the thesis has advocated and attempted to uphold a fundamental feminist aim, it could be argued that the research itself contained little reference to and integration of the broad range of feminist theories that have been developed. As set out in chapter one, the author did not provide a full review of feminist theory, nor was any attempt made to incorporate such knowledge in the analysis of the data. Rather, it was the intention from the outset to provide a feminist *informed* project, which drew upon feminist theory to make salient the design and methodological issues regarding researching women and to select a theoretical framework that could reveal and explore oppressive processes. As such, the feminist theories were reviewed insofar as they contributed to this aim. Moreover, much of the research reviewed and utilised to develop analysis and data interpretation was selected on the basis of its alignment with feminist objectives.

A second criticism of the project's approach to upholding its feminist aim is arguably the lack of 'positive' discourses (Hoskins, 2000). Emancipation requires that alternative discourses are made available to women, discourses that counter those that oppress (Hollway, 1995). This project has not identified any positive discourses (other than the one Jenny offered which was successfully challenged and subsequently retracted), rather it has focused solely upon exploring the oppressive discourses. However, as Hammersley (1992) has stated, to make available discourses that offer women robust alternative emancipatory subject positions requires that the oppressive discourses are fully understood, in terms of their functioning, their employment and their construction. To this end, this feminist informed project has made a useful contribution.

7.4   Concluding thoughts

Thus, this thesis has been an exploration of discourses of sexual harassment. In particular, it has focused upon subject positioning and the ideologies and interactional qualities that shape it. The feminist and discursive theories that have underpinned the thesis have shaped its evolution and the findings that have been presented, discussed and critiqued form a contribution to the research and theoretical domains, but primarily to the understanding of the processes that oppress women. By furthering understanding of the discourses of oppression, they are revealed and challenged, and new emancipatory discourses can be developed to replace them.

Further contributions to women's emancipation can be made by developing and extending the findings presented in this thesis. Firstly, the concept of relational positioning can be further understood by exploring its production and employment in reconstructions of other types of sexual abuse, for example rape and severe sexual assault. Secondly, as stated above, the discursive tool of agency evasion, a form of relational positioning, could also be further explored by deconstructing its use in discourses of more severe forms of sexual abuse. Thirdly, the useful and largely successful application of the hybrid approach to analysis could be further developed. Researchers have repeatedly acknowledged the limitations of applying either the macro- or micro-analyses and have advocated the need for a more integrated approach. The analysis performed in this thesis has provided a hybrid framework. Future work could explore the possible integration of a more detailed interactional analysis, working towards further orientation towards the conversation analytic approach. The above critique of the hybrid approach has illustrated that further work could address the balance between the two approaches, working towards a hybrid that utilises both approaches as fully as possible.

In this way, this thesis, together with past and future work, can continue to challenge and hopefully change the subject positioning of women in our society in relation to men, thereby enabling them to achieve an equal footing reflected both in discourse and action.

Appendices

Appendix A

Generating an interview schedule

During the construction of the interview schedule the specific direction of the study was still unknown. The extensive literature review carried out during the first stage of the research project had provided a basis from which areas of interest had arisen. However, these remained general, with the broad topics of gender and sexual interaction selected as a possible focus for the project. The interview schedule was therefore constructed to be as fluid and as broad as possible. It was expected that by generating a corpus of data that explored the broad topic of women's sexual experiences, interesting and relevant themes would emerge during the first stage of the analysis and would provide the basis for the project. This inductive and flexible approach was considered to be of utmost importance because it allowed women's voices and the discourse produced to guide the evolution of the study, rather than the researcher's own aims.

Given the potential sensitivity of the topic, the first section of the interview schedule contained questions that would allow participants to become more relaxed within the interview context. Hence, the opening questions were based upon reporting information like marital status and giving a brief history of intimate relationships. The second section of the interview introduced discussion about sex. This section aimed to encourage women to discuss their 'real' and 'ideal' experiences of sexual relationships with men. The concept of ideal sex was designed to give women the space to position themselves outside of the confines of traditional sexual roles. Ideals are not automatically confined by realities, hence drawing upon the concept gave women the

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opportunity to expand their sexual position. The real sexual situation encouraged the women to position themselves more realistically. The two types of sexual interaction were explored with the central questions: 'If you could have sex in any way that you wanted, what would your ideal sex be?' and 'What is your real sex?'.

Other sections within the interview included discussion about acceptable and unacceptable sex, coercive sex and cultural influences upon sexuality. However, it was the last section of the interview schedule, the section exploring women's experiences of sexual harassment, that provided the main corpus of data utilised in study one. The opening question in this section was: 'Have you ever experienced sexual harassment?'. Women were then invited to discuss any experiences that they considered relevant to the question. It is important to note that women were not given any definition of sexual harassment; responses to the question were dependent upon the women's own definition.

Although the question schedule was designed to be exploratory and as unstructured as possible, some follow-up prompts were developed and included in the interview schedule. When the interviews were conducted the author was relatively inexperienced at conducting interviews and therefore the opportunity to draw upon more detailed questions, should the need arise, was felt to be beneficial.

Appendix B

The interview schedule

Collect information about marital status.

What makes a good <u>intimate</u> relationship with a man?

What role does sex plays in an intimate relationship?

What role has sex played outside of relationships?

How do women in general define <u>ideal</u> sex?

What are their experiences of <u>real</u> sex?

How does the participant define ideal sex? ('If you could have sex in any way that you wanted, what would your ideal sex be?')

What is her experience of real sex?

What is <u>acceptable</u> and <u>unacceptable</u> sex? (prompt for discussion on coercive sex)

Experiences of <u>unwanted</u> sexual attention. Explore these in detail; get accounts of who did it, what happened etc. ('Have you ever experienced sexual harassment?')

How does it feel to get unwanted sexual attention?

Is unwanted sexual attention about sex or something else?

What are her opinions about unwanted sexual attention?

Does sexual harassment affect women's daily lives?

Could it be any other way?

Appendix C

Transcription guidelines

Research based upon conversation analytic methods has revealed that meaning and understanding are produced within the intricate patterns of word use and discourse production (Zimmerman, 1998). Whilst the analysis utilised in the current research project does not draw heavily upon conversation analytic techniques, the findings and developments within the area were used to supplement and sensitise the discourse analysis (Potter and Edwards, 2000). To pay adequate attention to the more detailed aspects of discourse construction it is necessary to have a transcription of the production of talk, providing as a minimum information about voice intonation and word emphasis. As a result, it was necessary to integrate into the interview transcriptions, methods for recognising those features of the talk. The transcription framework outlined by Edwards and Potter (1992) was therefore applied. This included the following transcription annotations:

<	Notable decrease in the speed of talk
>	Notable increase in the speed of talk
↑	Increase in intonation of talk
↓	Decrease in intonation of talk
(.)	An audible pause in talk that is too short to measure
(n)	A pause in talk of n number of seconds
underscore	Added emphasis on a word
::::	Elongation of the previous sound (number of colons represents length)

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[word]   Indicates overlapping speech between two or more speakers

hhhh   Audible intake of breath

To promote anonymity the participants names were changed at the transcription

stage, as were any additional names mentioned during the interview and on occasion

place names that were considered to be demonstrative of the identity of the individual.

Appendix D

Analysing the data

I approached the discourse analysis by firstly identifying the repetitive themes both within and between the interviews. Transcription revealed some of the themes that were later developed; however by reading the texts several times others were seen to emerge. This approach is essentially bottom up, allowing the texts to guide analysis, hence I was looking for themes that appeared to be relevant to the participants constructions of their experiences rather than themes that would answer a set question.

When themes had been identified the texts were coded. For simplicity I used a multi-coloured coding scheme (each theme is marked on the transcript by a different colour), allowing excerpts relating to themes to be easily identified in later stages of analysis. During this process, the descriptions of the theme content and representation, as well as my own thoughts about the analyses progression were all recorded in memo form. It was interesting to note at this point that all six women had experienced sexual harassment to some extent and three women had had experiences that had affected them deeply at an emotional level as well as a psychological and physical level.

Identifying the themes and constructing detailed descriptions for each produced a large amount of potential data. Hence, it was necessary to select one of the major themes for further more detailed analysis. The data was rich and showed several strong possibilities including further investigation of how acceptable and unacceptable harassment is constructed; the representation of trust and knowledge and identity construction of victim and perpetrator. All themes showed exceptional potential,

however I decided to follow up the position construction theme. The reason for selecting this theme was essentially based upon my own interest in the constructions being presented. It became clear, even at this early stage that the women were keen to present themselves as the 'victims' of the 'villainous' men's behaviour. The subject positions of victims and villains became a strong theme in the analysis from this point onwards.

The more detailed analysis was begun by firstly identifying all instances of position construction of victim and perpetrator within the interviews and then extracting them. Each extract was then subject to analysis that focused upon identifying the tools of discourse construction, as detailed by Edwards and Potter (1992), Potter (1996) and Woofitt (1992), with the integration of an ideological analysis (Billig, 1991). In doing so the identification of the function of the discourse was made apparent (Edwards and Potter, 1992). When construction and function were identified the meaning of the discourse and therefore the account given was induced and available for further analysis. At this point the focus upon was emphasised less and the analysis began to integrate a more top down approach drawing upon ideology to inform understanding of why women would construct particular meanings in particular places during their accounts. Drawing upon the various works of Billig, Hollway, Gavey and Anderson and Doherty, the findings of the analysis were explained in terms of cultural norms, particularly those which confine the identities available to people within certain contexts. In this case, the positions available to women within contexts of sexual harassment were developed by integrating understanding about ideologies concerning women's roles in relation to men and women's roles within sexually defined interactions. Critical knowledge of cultural norms allowed a deeper understanding of the positions being presented.

Appendix E

Example excerpt from the interview with Jenny

I: Okay. I mean like some of the different types of um sexual harassment that have been

identified I'll just tell you the list and you can say what you think about them is the

there's sort of the sexual harassment, sexual assault, um pressure to have sex, um sexual

abuse um child as opposed to adult, um obscene phone calls, coercive sex, ur domestic

violence, flashing, rape and incest.

J: Flashing.

I: Yes, flashing

J: What's flashing got to do with anybody? (laughs)

I: (laughs) what you don't think that's sexual harassment?

J: well I don't know I mean I suppose it depends on what- ↑I don't know who does

flashing? (laughs)

I: Some men do don't they

J: Yeah but running down the street you know who gives a shit its about nakedness

isn't it that's not about trying to I don't know I guess I'd never thought about it. I'd

never thought it as in like you know like if I quickly- ↑Oh I don't know I don't know

(laughs). You know if some bloke is running down the street and like flashing his

naked body to a woman I'm not quite understanding how that's sexual harassment that's

just a bit like you know well you've got issues mate get over it but its not you know

usually its something kind of done if you tried to make the woman flash then fair

enough but I'm not quite understanding that (   )

I: Right. I don't know I mean I don't know what people do when they flash but I would say that it can some people consider it to be harassment because maybe if someone is showing them their sexual organs the point is it is their sexual organs therefore there being harassed by someone in a sexual way it could just be that the link is there basic, or it could be that something else goes on with that or I'm not sure maybe there's noises or maybe something about the (3) you know the softness (laughs) or not softness you know

J: I don't know. I don't know.

I: maybe they don't show it maybe they do things to it I don't know

J: No that's true actually 'cause think about it right there was a situation with um my mum years ago on a beach and this bloke came over and flashed his dick in her face and that's kind of like yeah yeah fucking flashing alright. (laughs). I get it now. I think I was thinking more of a streaker

I: Oh I see

J: and that kind of context of you know a bit of a man or anybody running onto a football pitch and doing a little flash about and I was thinking you know I'm not understanding that but I get it know. Yeah.

I: I mean so out of those you know what- I spose there are two two sorts of questions I would like or two sort of two sorts of experiences I would like to know. One is how normal do you think these experiences are for women and the other is what does it feel like to have these sorts of experiences, so you know in terms of those that I listed how normal do you think yeah how normal do you think they are?

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