CHAPTER 4
THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER IN ORGANISATIONS

A number of different frames for understanding the functioning of gender in organisations were discussed in the previous chapter. These explanations ranged from focusing on numbers and demographics, individual characteristics, social processes to a perspective that focuses on the symbolic, often invisible ways in which certain patterns of power construct and organise organisations.

This chapter explores the notion of the symbolic and invisible patterns further in a discussion on the discursive constitution of organisations, focusing first on developments in the field of organisational studies which follow the linguistic turn or interpretive turn (Putnam & Cooren, 2004) and then on specific ways in which organisations are constituted into gendered structures. From this perspective, the gendered nature of organisations is discursively constructed. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of different discourses at work in the construction of gender in organisations.

The Discursive in Organisations

The linguistic turn in the social sciences (as discussed in chapter 2) has also found its way into organisational studies in recent years (Deetz, 2003) and in organisation studies it involves the study of organisations by focusing on the patterns of meaning and discourse in the workplace and the use and significance of language (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000). As such, it incorporates the ideas of social constructionism in terms of viewing knowledge and social structures as co-constructed and rooted in language practices (Hardy, 2004, Heracleous & Barrett, 2001). This has led to the emergence of organisational discourse theory, defined by Hardy (2004) as "the structured collections of texts that bring organisationally related objects into being as they are produced, disseminated and consumed" (p. 416). Organisational discourse theory generally sees institutions as constituted through language and discourse rather than action (Hardy, 2004; Phillips, Lawrence & Hardy, 2004). The discursive is seen as constitutive – as bringing into being "objects of knowledge, categories of social subjects, forms of self, social relationships, and conceptual frameworks" (Hardy, 2004, p. 416). Grant, Michaelson, Oswick and Wailes (2005) define discourse in

organisations as "referring to the practices of talking and writing, the visual representation, and the cultural artefacts which bring organizational related objects into being through the production, dissemination and consumption of texts" (p. 7). In this way, discourse is seen as a strong organising and structuring facet of organisations (Hardy, 2004). The discursive is evident in the textual as it influences ways of talking and also what can be talked about and therefore has an impact on organisational behaviour. It makes certain actions possible and others impossible or costly. Discourse also delimits the knowledge that is available of what can be constructed about these issues (Hardy, 2004; Phillips, Lawrence & Hardy, 2004).

Discourse further forms the basis of how people give account of themselves, to themselves and also to others (Doolin, 2003) and is therefore fundamental in the creation of individual identities in organisations. Identity is here defined as "the individual's self-understanding as constituted through the regulatory effects of power/knowledge relations" (Dick & Hyde, 2006, p. 549). Identity is the site of struggle of competing discourses and therefore personal identities are not fixed but are constantly negotiated and changed in discourse (Dick & Hyde, 2006; Meriläinen, Tienari, Thomas & Davies, 2004).

> Individuals are constituted as subjects through discourses and disciplinary practices and are complicit … in this construction process, turning themselves into particular kinds of subjects. Identities are mobile sites of contradiction and discontinuity – nodes where various discourses temporarily intersect in particular ways (Meriläinen et al., 2004, p. 544).

Individuals draw on a range of competing discourses to define and structure their subject positions, what Foucault refers to as technologies of the self (Meriläinen et al., 2004.)

Discourse provides "socially constituted, self-regulating mechanisms that enact institutions and shape individuals' behaviour" (Phillips, Lawrence & Hardy, 2004, p. 635) and so organisations become self-regulating mechanisms with discourse as the basis of the mechanisms of control and coordination (Doolin, 2003). From a discursive perspective, this process is seen as the result of the production of texts and

not by direct action. Texts have transcending properties that are more enduring than the transitory nature of actions in different settings. Discourse and the textual are thus closely linked to the process whereby institutions are produced and reproduced and how they are maintained and resist change (Phillips, Lawrence & Hardy, 2004). Phillips, Lawrence and Hardy conclude that "institutions are constituted by the structured collections of texts that exist in a particular field and that produce the social categories and norms that shape the understandings and behaviors of actors" (p. 638). They attempt to explain how some discourses manage to reproduce and gain salience when others do not. Certain actions are more likely to lead to the production of texts, certain texts are more likely to become part of influential discourse and then certain discourses have more impact in the production of institutions. In terms of action, they consider actions that are new and surprising or that have an impact on legitimacy as likely to lead to the production of supporting texts, as these require sense-making in the organisation. Texts generated by those who have legitimacy, power and resources are likely to become part of influential discourse and texts in recognisable forms or genres have a greater chance of becoming entrenched in discourse. Texts that draw on other texts are also more likely to become more permanent and significant. In terms of discourse, coherent and sound discourses are more likely to create institutions as well as discourses that are supported by or not contested by other discourses. The process of the organisation as constituting texts and being constituted by texts is an ongoing process of structuring and organising and the organisation is therefore not static (Doolin, 2003).

Discourse and Power

A discursive perspective of organisations allows for the study of language in organisations as relational and political and Deetz (2003) calls for more radical explorations of how groups and their interests are formed. A mere focus on language without an awareness of the establishment and continuation of systems of advantage and disadvantage is, according to him, a failure to reach the maximum potential of the linguistic turn. He also argues against research language which is still representational rather than generative and states that "most contemporary research looking at narratives, discourse, texts, and language retains a kind of neo-positivist distance and inability to see their work as moments unfolding in the life and time of concrete people and organizations" (p. 427).

The awareness of power discourse relations in organisations is informed by critical theory. Critical organisation theory examines the relations of control and repression as they exist in organisations and how these practices of power are linked to generalised assumptions and truths as they appear in broader social, economic and political structures (Ogbor, 2001). As such, it explores how power becomes legitimised into unquestioned truths and practices. The critical approach in organisation studies is a "discourse of suspicion" (Mumby, 2004, p. 237) focusing on the underlying and unseen structures of power and resistance and how these are motivated by the interest of certain groups. Mumby states that the critical approach in organisations studies aims towards liberating individuals from domination in this way. It is part of the modernist project, but also social constructionist in its investigation of the use of language in discourse in creating oppressive structures. The feminist nature of this study aims toward greater understanding of how the status quo is maintained and also how it can be challenged.

Institutions arise from a variety of possible descriptions and possible conflict in between the versions is often unseen (Deetz, 2003). The discursive production process can be seen as "sites and objects of/for struggle. Different groups do strive for control of (and for) the production of fixed meanings in both ideology and practice" (Chan & Garrick, 2002). Once produced, they seem self-evident and given and not as the outcome of possible conflict. As Deetz (2003) puts it: "We see the winner and not the latent conflict process in formation" (p. 423). The discourses are not passed on explicitly but rather become part of language and practice, invisible in their constitutive effect but also inevitably political in their creation of some things at the cost of others. Power relations are entrenched and rooted in the construction of institutions that are protected and maintained by various discursive processes such as naturalisation (Deetz, 2003). The political is an intrinsic part of organisations and a discourse perspective makes it possible to consider the "politics of representation" (Deetz, 2003, p. 427).

The discussion so far illustrates how the discursive perspective in organisation studies provides an alternative framework for viewing the issue of the gender stratification of the workplace as it allows for an exploration of how language use and discourse

within existing power relations informs aspects of identity and gender. Before I move into a discussion of the discursive construction of gender in organisations the use and study of discourse in organisations needs to be clarified.

Clarifying Discourse

The term discourse is used in a variety of ways in organisational studies (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000) and there are a number of different interpretations and methodologies in working with discourse in organisational studies. This perhaps necessitates introductory comments on the different ways of studying discourse in organisations before embarking on a discussion of the discursive construction of gender and the gendered nature of organisations.

The different approaches to the study of discourse in organisational studies lead to different distinctions in terms of the kind of discourse one can work with as well as the point of investigation in discursive studies (Hardy, 2004). The distinctions that emerge from the literature are: text/context (Hardy, 2004); language/context (Grant, Hardy, Oswick & Putnam, 2004); close-range/long-range or determinism/voluntarism (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000); micro **d**iscourse/macro **D**iscourse (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000); radical constructivist/realist (Fairclough, 2005) and constructivist/critical (Hardy, 2004). These distinctions will be discussed in more detail below.

Text/context.

Hardy (2004) states that distinguishing between *text* and *context* can be useful in discourse studies. She notes that the focal point of exploration could either be the directly textual or the contextual. The textual refers to the immediate features of interactions such as ways of talking and positions from which talk is happening, where the contextual refers to the wider, broader social context and how it is part of and constitutive of the text. Texts are considered as "symbolic, permanent inscriptions that have a degree of coherence, and equate agency with the ability to use texts as a way to contribute to the constitution of organizations" (p. 418). Texts become a source and medium of agency through the process of textualisation where "one actor makes sense of the utterances of another and embeds the interpretation in a second conversational act and, in doing so, objectifies, and shares background assumptions"

(p. 418). In this way texts become material and durable with increasing organising properties and capacities. The type of text, the type of actor, the dissemination of the text and the grand discourses are all relevant factors in the process of textualisation.

Language/context.

The language/context differentiation of Grant et al. (2004) is similar to the text/context distinction of Hardy (2004). One end of the spectrum involves focus on language in use in organisations with studies such as conversation analysis, speech act schematic and interaction analysis. Heracleous and Barrett (2001) refer to this as a functional approach that considers discourse as a communicative tool with purpose. Language is then studied as a tool that can be used in organisations to achieve certain goals. On the other end of the spectrum is a more context sensitive approach, involving aspects such as socio-linguistics, institutional dialogue, social semiotics and critical discourse analysis.

Micro/macro and determinism/voluntarism.

Alvesson and Karreman (2000) postulate a distinction similar to the text/context distinction although they describe it as a micro/macro continuum. Micro or local discourse here refers to language in use (similar to what Hardy (2004) calls text) and Macro to more universal and generalised phenomena referred to as **D**iscourse. (This is similar to what Hardy calls context). Micro discourse involves a detailed study of language in its specific context, Meso discourse is a sensitivity to language while at the same time focusing on broader contextual patterns, Grand Discourse involves an assembly of discourses and the integrated frames they represent and Mega Discourse refers to the universal connection of discourse material as it constitutes phenomena. For them, the tension between the micro and the macro, and the need to address both is one of the difficulties of discourse work. A focus on only Grand discourse can lead to disregarding the empirical and reducing complexity to one or two **D**iscourses where a micro discourse does not view the impact of the social reality and its impact. They argue for more attention to the details and variations of discourse as well as considering its production before moving into the level of **D**iscourse.

Apart from the micro to macro discourse distinction, Alvesson and Karreman (2000) also refer to another dimension of distinguishing discourse. They see discourse as

acting on a spectrum of determinism and voluntarism where discourse either precedes meaning or creates meaning. This means that the meaning of discourse can be seen either as transient or durable. The transient side of the spectrum considers discourse to be unrelated to broader meaning structures and rather as an action within a particular time and place. A transient view of discourse does not see it as constitutive or with much power and considers it to be autonomous. The other side of the spectrum, the durable side, considers discourse to be a structuring force of social reality with an influence that encompasses all aspects of it. Alvesson and Karreman (2000) refer to this as the "muscular" (p. 1 130) use of discourse, or a deterministic view of discourse.

Constructivist/critical.

The determinism/voluntarism distinction described above is similar to what Hardy (2004) refers to as the constructivist/critical distinction. A critical approach would typically focus on how structures of power and ideology inform discourse (similar to determinism) where a constructivist approach is more concerned with the complex ways in which realities are brought into being and how social practices are constructed by means of the discursive (similar to voluntarism). A constructivist approach focuses on the interpretive (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001), in the sense of its influence on the thoughts and interpretations of people. The critical approach, largely informed by the work of Foucault (Doolin, 2003), focuses on the political implications of discourse and sees discourses as "power/knowledge relations embedded in social practice" (p. 755), thus more than linguistic and textual but essential to social and material actions and procedures. A critical approach to organisational discourse seeks to understand the broader "bodies of knowledge, language and associated practices that organizational actors use to make sense of and control their world" (Doolin, 2003, p. 755) which influence the processes within organisations. It seeks to understand the social, linguistic and historical locations of these practices and aims at uncovering how individuals are set as subjects of discourses and practices of power. From this position, a critical explanation requires radical social change (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001).

Radical constructivist/realist.

Fairclough (2005) reflects on the difference between radical constructivist and realist

approaches to discourse and advocates for a critical realist social ontology as having greater potential value for organisation studies. This involves a combination approach that pays attention to both durable discourses as they present in texts as well as detailed linguistic analysis. The approach to discourse is here seen as relational matter, a relation between the linguistic on the one hand and the social or material on the other. Discourse becomes "the principal means by which organization members create a coherent social reality that frames their sense of who they are" (p. 918), thus a structure and structuring process at the same time. Organisations are in the same way simultaneously process (organising) and structure (organisation). A realist position on discourse also reflects "pre-structured" (p. 918) elements that could be discursive and non-discursive objects. Here, discourse is an object and a subject and an organisation is a "network of social practices [which] includes an 'order of discourse', a relatively stabilised and durable configuration of discourses (as well as other elements)" (p. 919).

To summarise the discussion on clarifying discourse so far: It seems that working with discourse in organisations involves two tensions. The first being a tension of focal point where one can either focus on the detail acts of texts and discourse (the Micro or textual level) or the broader contextual and social aspects (Macro or Grand discourse). The second is a critical versus constructivist tension where one can either focus on the political implications of a text or the constructive and constructed nature of a text. These tensions partly explain the diversity of approaches to the study of discourse. Although the use of discourse analysis in this study will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5, the aims of this study necessitate that both the critical and the contextual or Macro aspects of discourse are worked with.

Gender, Discourse and Organisations

After the preceding discussion on the different ways of studying discourse I now turn to a discussion of the discursive construction of gender in organisations. The patterns of meaning in the workplace are fundamental in terms of the reproduction the gender stratification of the workplace. A focus on discourse examines the ideologies that exist in communities instead of the traits and attributes of organisations. It explores the ideologies that reconcile people to their options and existing structures. Ideology is seen here as a belief system that maintains asymmetrical power relations. Silence

also forms an integral part of the discursive constructions of social systems (Gatenby & Humphries, 1999). When the operations of discourse are observed, the underlying assumptions are made visible and challengeable. Thus a focus on discourse can involve a challenge to theory or practice in terms of its basic foundational notions and involve a rethink of theory instead of mere additions. As such, a focus on discourse could involve challenging the basic assumptions of organisational theory instead of attempting to add more representative theory (Gatenby & Humphries, 1999).

Four Frames for Gender, Discourse and Organisations

In terms of the gendered nature of organisational discourse, Ashcraft (2004) distinguishes four frames to view the interaction between gender, discourse and organisations.

Firstly, discourse can be seen as an outcome, a certain communication style, or ways of talking and using language that are reflections of existing identities. In other words, the socialised nature of gender is seen as producing certain predictable communication habits. Secondly, discourse can also be seen as performance and therefore a way of creating or constituting gender in social scripts. The social scripts in organisations are acted on and acted out and "(re)producing difference inevitably amounts to (re)producing inequality" (p. 281).

Thirdly, discourse can be seen as a text-conversation dialectic. From this perspective, the organisation can be seen as constantly in an (en)gendering process, where interaction among members in the form of conversation is a form of organising and the organisation itself is a text. Thus the organisation emerges as members invoke it in discursive activity and at the same time it is also a prerequisite for communication as a text that guides discursive activity. Organisations are seen as "gendered discourse communities" (p. 282), producing gendered discourse and also a product of gendered discourse. If viewed in this way, the discursive construction of gender on the meso level is explored with a focus on the symbolic, abstract gendered nature of organisations as they become the structural and normative forces that inform interaction and action. In this way, everyday organising processes in organisations are guided by the meso discursive structures that provide the frame or structure of that which is possible, normal and desirable. The work of Maier (1999) referred to in

Chapter 3 is an example of an exploration of how masculinities and related hierarchies are carved into organisational shapes and structures. Feminists working from this position then call for new maps of communication that re-look and re-think the gendered nature of the discursive realm of organisations by pointing out that a "fundamental contradiction between feminist ideology and the demands of organizing amid patriarchal capitalism erodes the best of egalitarian designs" (p. 283). Alternative discursive constructions are then needed to change the structural design of organisations. A focus on the text-conversation dialectic also brings the notion of contradiction in relief where the contradiction between ideology and practice becomes evident. Contradictions create a complex interplay of problems that members of organisations have to negotiate and manage. A focus on the text-conversation dialectic emphasises the recursive relation between micro and meso layers of discourse with a focus on the constitutive nature of discourse: "Structure is steady and shaky; practice is inventive and derivative; and organizational form is the productive, promiscuous and fleeting site where structure and practice meet" (p. 283-284).

Fourthly, discourse can be seen as a social text and the focus is here on how societal discourse (en)genders organisations. This perspective looks at the macro face of discourse and the "broader societal narrative embedded in systems of representation, which offer predictable yet elastic and lucid, yet contradictory tales of possible subjectivities" (p. 284). Societal discourses on gender circulate in organisations, with some discourses with more support from institutions having more power to persuade and describe. Public discourse is seen as an organising principle that structures organisations. From this perspective, the textual gains more importance than the micro or actual interactions between people.

Mumby and Ashcraft (2006) advocate a discourse-based communicology perspective which considers the organisation to be "a nodal point for the articulation of a set of experiences, discourses and power relations" (p. 74). Within this, "gender is a complex, fragmentary, ongoing and contradictory accomplishment that unfolds at the nexus of communication and organizing" (p. 74). They argue that subjectivity is constructed through dynamic and unstable processes of communication but add that gender is not only discursive and textual but rather "situated, embodied communicative praxis" (p. 75) which is "enacted in a complex field of discursive and

non-discursive relations of power, accommodation and resistance" (p. 75). The "flesh-and-blood subject" (p. 75) needs to be rediscovered and examined by paying attention to the actors who speak and act with the constructed world. This does not require viewing gendered organisations as essences but rather as being performed in communication. They distinguish between discursive and non-discursive acts of communication and see the body, a "constitutive and constituted element in the crafting of subjectivity" (p. 75-76), as the organising process of organisations happens in an embodied way. They consider discourse as the available possibilities which circulate with varying levels of institutional support but want to explore how these possibilities are acted upon and take place in the material world and how communication practices happen within this sphere. Discourse should be examined, according to them, not only as text but as "dynamic, embodied communicative acts that shape organizational sense-making and relations of power … examining gendered identity therefore involves understanding the ways in which social actors take up particular discourses, contest others and shape still others for their own particular ends." (p. 78-79). There is a reciprocal and dialectical relationship between the symbolic/discursive and the material, material here not only referring to the political practices but also to micro practices involving the body and sexuality. Thus communication is seen as a material undertaking in which people take up discourses and "as they go about these performances, they breathe life into identity and difference" (p. 80). Mumby and Ashcraft (2006) continue to add "all feminine and masculine subjectivities are jointly crafted in the larger context of (gendered) relations of power" (p. 81). With power relations in mind, they argue for a project which is committed to studying the effects of gendered organising processes and how "some differences are produced precisely as a means to marginalize certain groups and privilege others" (p. 82).

Gendering Practices and Practising Gender: The Practice of Discursive Possibilities
Martin (2003) does not use the term discourse when referring to gender but her description of gender practices and practising gender makes use of the social constructionist notion of gender as a social construction, thus partially a process which happens on the level of meaning. She describes the gender process in organisations as a dynamic, mutual process of construction in which men and women construct each other and which has an effect on people's work experience. These

gendering practices impair women's identities and possibilities. She considers attention to the invisible ways in which gender is constructed as vital in uncovering how inequalities are perpetuated. The construction of gender in the workplace happens through the dual process of gender practices and practising gender. Gender practices involve the possible and available actions, the "repertoire of actions or behaviour – speech, bodily, and interpretive – that society makes available to its members" (Martin, 2006, p. 257). Practising gender entails the actual doing or acting of gender according to the available gender practices, "'the literal saying or doing of gender'" in real time and space (Martin, 2006, p. 258). The gender practices thus involve, among other things, the level of available meanings and interpretations. Gender practices generally take place in an unreflexive fashion and are multifaceted and subtle. Gender is therefore a social institution that involves inter alia certain meanings, expectations, and normative behaviours. Normative behaviour or practising gender happens with the institution (or gender practices) as backdrop. Gender is present in all work organisations in unhealthy ways for men and women as non-reflexive normative enactments of masculinities and femininities. Thus gender as socially constructed institution creates the framework for gender as practice. The practice of gender is a "system of action" (p. 351) that is constantly developing and changing. People act according to the available gender practices and do so "in the heat of the moment" (p.351). Gender emerges within a discursively constructed normative system and gendered action and practice takes place in local and particular contexts in terms of how it is learnt in childhood and therefore becomes automatic, like riding a bicycle. The material body becomes gendered through discourse and the behaviour of individuals comprises action within this system. She also refers to the work of Butler (1990) and her description of the performativity of action which seems act-like in the moment but is rather a replication and repetition of a set of norms. Practising gender is unreflexive and only sometimes intentionally gendered, but masculinities and femininities are enacted nevertheless and often denied as such, particularly by those in power (Martin, 2003).

Practising gender further involves agency, "the capacity to take action" (Martin, 2006, p. 259), in a manner that either complies with or resists established norms. Agency involves a possibility for transformation or a perpetuation of the status quo. As such, organisations act as gender practising agents, as do individuals, whether it be with

awareness of it or not. Gender reflexivity, thinking about one's actions and its effects, is often absent, and this means that the intention of an act might differ from the effect or nature of the act. This means that "what one intends – or thinks one is doing or saying – may differ from what one actually does or thinks and that the effects of one's actions may differ from those one intended" (Martin, 2006, p. 260), making gender reflexivity a valuable practise in understanding more about how gender works in organisations. Martin adds to this that gender is often practised in contexts where there are great differences in power and where men often hold more of the positions of power.

Given the invisible and undermining nature of gender practices, it is important to make these processes explicit and an understanding of how femininity and masculinity is practised needs to be developed (Martin, 2003). It is clear from the above that gender practices are multifaceted and therefore Bird (2003) describes femininity practices as complex actions that involve "different levels of reflection about, consent to, and complicity with masculinity practices. Women may in some cases feel cast into femininity practices but in other cases take them up quite strategically to preserve investments in the existing gender order" (Bird, 2003, p. 367). A focus on the practice of masculinities and femininities contains the possibility of undermining that order. A critical question can then be asked:

> Perhaps we can someday erase the taken-for-granted association between certain practices and 'masculinity' and between other practices and 'femininity', but if the result is that women, like so many men, are consumed by a form of 'success' that requires one to be obsessed by paid labor, will our 'degendering' have been worth it? (Bird, 2003, p. 368).

Discourse is a useful tool in the endeavour of making gender practices explicit and allows one to understand inequality and its production and reproduction within the context of programmed social processes which obscure how women may be "constrained to collude to their own disadvantage" (Garnsey & Rees, 1996, p. 1 044) and how men "may enact inequality with or without intention" (p. 1 044) in assumptions about what is normal and expected. The multiplicity in the functioning of discourses as they are rooted in language "requires unravelling before the weave of

preconceptions which render inequalities acceptable and inevitable are identified" (p. 1 045).

Gender and Power

The discursive practice of gender in organisations takes places within relations of power and struggles for meaning between different groups and this process is contradictory and discontinuous, therefore discourses cannot be seen as being only dominant or resistant, but rather as constantly at play or in struggle (Mumby & Aschcraft, 2006). The construction of gendered subjectivities takes place within the context of these power relations. The study of gender in organisations should therefore inevitably consider power relations as a vital aspect of gender organising. Gender constructions and the gendered subjectivities as they are produced are generally not neutral but rather involve the privileging of one group over another or the marginalising of certain groups. Some discourses have more opportunities to present themselves and occupy more space in the discursive, allowing them more influencing power while alternative discourses are generally present and these can challenge the dominant discourses (Meriläinen et al., 2004).

From this perspective, power is seen in a Foucauldian frame where it is explored, not in terms of its source, but rather in terms of how it works to reconcile individuals to their positions. It acts as a normalising structure that individuals use to examine, shape and transforms themselves. As such, it becomes a disciplining force. Resistance lies in the continuous presence of contradictory and competing discourses, as individuals take up some positions and not others. When individuals are faced with a situation where identity as performed differs from identity as prescribed through discourse, it creates discursive possibility to take up different positions and discourses (Dick & Hyde, 2006).

In terms of this Foucauldian perspective, the relationship between power and knowledge is maintained through language and leads to self-policing of the identity against external notions of the ideal. Power is not deterministic but relational and lies in the relationships between different concepts or structuring ideals. It lies in the creation of what is accepted as truth and powerful discourses achieve their status in the posture of natural authority (Pullen, 2006).

Resistance then "takes the form of counter-discourses and reverse discourses, which produce new knowledges and new truths and thereby constitute new powers" (Meriläinen et al., 2004, p. 545). This can take place by exploiting contradictions and gaps in discursive patterns that open space for different versions of reality. Resistance lies in the individual's capacity to employ alternative discourses as it arises in the "surplus of meaning" (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996, p. 57). This can happen through counter-identification or dis-identification with the normative dominant discourse. Counter-identification is the rejection of a dominant discourse if it seems unable to adequately describe the individual. This becomes possible with an awareness of contradictions or tensions in the discourse, or an awareness of how others' interests are being supported by it. Dis-identification as resistance is the taking up of an alternative discourse and replacing the dominant one. Counter- and dis-identification create space for different action (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996).

Paradox, Contradiction and Irony

Power does not operate in simple identifiable ways in organisations and this is further complicated by paradox, irony and contradiction. Tretheway and Ashcraft (2004) see paradox, irony and contradiction as part of the fabric of organisational life and with this view, introduce the notion of irrationality into the study of the workplace. For them, irrationality is then fundamental to organisations. This emerges from the post structuralist notion that the world is not as rational as it appears and that representations of rationality and fixedness are discursive strategies. Organisational irrationalities are often gendered and these irrationalities are often expressed as organisational tensions. As such, organisations are littered with contradictions between ideology, practice and structure and these contradictions make organising within the organisation particularly difficult but also offer pathways for resistance.

Organisations have historically favoured terms such as rationality, reason, public, mind and male over emotional, female, private and body but these dominant discourses cannot completely deny these, giving rise to a perpetual tension between the dominant and the marginalised. Sexuality and emotionality are perpetually repressed in the organisational world but this does not erase it, it merely places it in the domain of contradictory tension and so everyday practice remains irrational yet

often invisible. The discursive becomes the space where these invisible tensions struggle for dominance, in terms of describing and ascribing fixed meaning and identity, also in terms of gender. Contradiction and conflicting descriptions are particularly evident in gendered discourses and exposing these tensions is important in creating a better understanding of the complexity of the gender debate.

Tretheway and Ashcraft (2004) suggest that the resolution of tension and paradox might not be the desired outcome but that ways of living with tension, paradox and irony should be pondered. Organised irrationality is a status quo and this form of "(dis)organization of gender relations is a particularly powerful, tangible way to explore normal irrationality of organizational life" (p. 85).

Martin (2004) illustrates different kinds of paradox in organisations: paradox of structure; paradox of agency; paradox of identity and paradox of power. Paradox of structure involves requiring different forms of participation, paradox of agency involves different expectations in terms of initiative; paradox of identity deals with membership and inclusion in different positions, and paradox of power involves the simultaneous positions individuals occupy. Within these paradoxes it is more difficult to adopt a female identity where messages about what women are interact with different messages about one's position in the organisation. She shows how being a woman is in one way contrary to being a professional. She then indicates how middle management women use humour as a way of negotiating their position (which contains both power and marginalisation) in reflexive, creative and playful ways.

Gender Discourse in Organisations

Studies of discourse in organisations have shown that the everyday talk of people does not involve the expression of single ideas and unitary approaches to life but that it contains different and often contradictory accounts of the world (Nentwich, 2006). Common sense understandings often contain opposing ideas and these are negotiated in everyday talk without necessarily solving them. One side of the position is sometimes favoured above another, allowing both to remain intact. The use of different "interpretive repertoires" (Nentwich, 2006, p. 505) can thus maintain the gender status quo.

A prominent example of this is the co-existence of equal opportunities talk and practical considerations talk in the workplace. Wetherell, Stiven and Potter (1987) were of the first to explore these discourses. They noticed how both equal opportunities discourses and practical considerations discourses co-existed in people's talk about gender in the workplace. Discourses on equal opportunities claim that everyone in the workplace is equal and that there should be equality between men and women. Equal opportunities talk seems to be considered a socially acceptable and correct discourse to adhere to. This discourse values general liberal values of egalitarianism and freedom of choice. People often position themselves within this discourse and contrast themselves with those who do not adhere to these values.

In contrast to this is the practical consideration discourse that does not draw on internal choice or internal beliefs but relies on the inevitability of biology and the natural order of some things. In this discourse there are natural constraints to the equal opportunities discourse. These beliefs, however, do not reflect the sexist attitudes of the person but are seen as simply natural, indisputable fact that men and women are biologically different. It is in this kind of talk that women are a risk not worth taking or not suitable for higher positions in the organisations. The discursive strategy at work here is the reference to common sense notions of gender that are portrayed as self-evident truths to support the discourse of practical considerations (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998).

The practical considerations discourse has various implications in the workplace, one of which is the so-called mommy-track: a separate career pathway for women choosing to have children. The practical considerations discourse upholds the idea that if the individual chooses to parent, one cannot help but consider her as part of this track as it is a logical consequence of her choice. This is seen as a 'practical inevitability' and women who do not want to form part of this have to work hard to convince the organisation that they do not fall into the category of needing 'practical considerations' and assistance. Some women report that they have to be careful of even mentioning their children, much less take some parent-related leave or use flexitime facilities made possible by some organisations (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998).

Some women are 'allowed' to become showpieces within this discursive structure as successful women in high positions, which prove that women are allowed to occupy any position in the organisation. They act as evidence of non-discrimination and typically bear the ambiguous burden of such a position. They are very visible and they are paraded as the pride and joy of the organisation. They have to work hard to prove that they deserve their position and they also act as role models to other women in the organisation. Their presence in the organisation is considered to be evidence of non-discrimination but they generally co-exist with a mommy-track constructing the mommy-track as a choice of individuals (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998).

The practical considerations discourse constructs women as burdened with certain aspects of 'femininity' and requires of women to distance themselves from all these aspects if they want to benefit from the equal opportunities discourse. These practical burdens associated with 'femininity' mean that there are unnoticed associations between masculinity and the ideal worker (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998). If one wants to be considered as such and one happens to be female, it takes some work to make sure that the female burdens are not associated with one. Benschop and Doorewaard (1998) report that successful women tend not to associate themselves with femininity, do not mention their children and do not make use of any organisational policies intended for those burdened by domestic responsibilities such as flexitime and even maternity leave. Garnsey and Rees (1996) also indicate how inequalities permeate equal opportunity programmes and texts such as Opportunity 2000 in the United Kindgom. They show how a notion such as work flexibility is introduced and used but that women making use of this option will still be disadvantaged by this choice.

Dick and Nadin (2006) refer to this notion as the natural differences discourse and see it as fundamental in establishing the notion in organisations that inequality cannot be avoided. They also point to a common sense notion of parenthood where women are often considered to be the best parent. The assumption of a natural difference between men and women leads to a further assumption that career paths are influenced by choices or preferences based on this natural difference. Within this discourse there is little acknowledgement of the social, cultural and political nature of this distinction or the political implications of this discourse and it becomes a way of ascribing

inequality to the inevitable forces of nature and individuals' choices within this structure. It paints a picture of consent, where women and men are happy with the choices they made and are reconciled to the status quo.

Nentwich (2006) points out that the discursive patterns used in everyday talk often mirror the dilemmas of feminist theory, referring to the sameness/difference debate and its consequences. She illustrates how equal opportunity officers choose different discursive repertoires, depending on the context and topic of conversation. Sameness ideas are used when discussing contemporary dilemmas of equity but difference discourses are used when trying to draw a vision for the future. "Shifting from one repertoire to another could therefore be interpreted as a strategy of dealing with the tensions inherited from feminist theory" (p. 515). She argues for seeing different discourses as equal, allowing them space in discursive investigations and "playing around with many possible understandings and perspectives without favouring one side over the other and forcing a decision" (p.516).

The point here is that these two kinds of talk exist simultaneously. Language use can be varied from moment to moment. This is what makes traditional social psychology studies problematic as traditional surveys might miss the complexity of these issues. There seems to be a theory/practice split with the practice undermining the theory. In this way the contradiction does not change the ideology but rather strengthens it (Wetherell, Stiven et al., 1987). Gender inequalities in the division of labour are often covered with a "cloak of equality" (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998; Benschop, Halsema & Schreurs, 2001, p.3) and the equal opportunities discourse can be and is mostly reduced to a marketing rhetoric (Whitehead, 2001). The explicit statements of equality often serve the purpose of legitimising invisible practices of inequality (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998).

Kugelberg (2006) refers to the existence of two opposing discourses, namely the company-based discourse and the experience-based discourse. The company-based discourse deals with the requirements of companies to grow and focuses on aspects such as productivity, competition and financial gain. Parenting becomes the domain of women within this discourse where men are considered as workers and women as possible mothers. The experienced-based discourse emerges in employees'

description of their experience of parenthood. Within this discourse, different meanings of parenthood emerge and there is more reference here to fatherhood as well as motherhood. It is from the company-based discourse that women remain discursively linked to motherhood and therefore make use of flexible options and policies more than men do. The gender neutral nature of the policy does not translate into practice and this turns the policy into a gender segregating mechanism (Kugelberg, 2006). The complex discursive struggle between these two discourses is influenced by the local context and different subject positions. When speaking from a position of management, parenthood was equated with motherhood but when speaking from the position of employee, parenthood and the combination of work and family was seen as something both men and women struggled with. There was some shifting between these two discourses in participants' talk and the company-based discourse seemed to have some dominance in the discursive space.

Runté and Mills (2006) trace the difference discourse to historical developments in the Second World War era in the USA. They note how women are still seen as problematic, both in organisations and also in organisation management theory, due to the above work-family conflict and the entrenched association between the female and the domestic or the female as the site where intersection between the discourses of work and family takes place. They trace this to the necessary move of women into the workforce during the war. Women were required to see themselves as capable of performing activities that were seen as masculine up to that point. This workforce participation was seen as a way of keeping the home front going, thus part of their domestic duty. The post-war period required a necessary retreat back to the domestic home sphere after the war, which entrenched the notion of the natural inevitability of the work-domestic division but also the desirability of the domestic for women. It also constructed female workers as temporary and helpers. They also point out how management theory has been active in the reproduction of this discourse, not only the reflection thereof, by viewing to the work-family debate as a female problem.

Diversity discourse.

Diversity management has emerged in recent years as another model of working towards equality (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000). It moves toward management of different working styles and aims to improve work-life balance for all individuals, not working

women only, thus moving away from viewing family and family friendly policies as the domain of women. This diversity approach aims to allow individuals to determine their own working patterns, despite age, race or gender (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005), tries to acknowledge difference and diversity and to create space for different groups to flourish in organisations.

Smithson and Stokoe (2005) identify a contradiction between official discourse and employees' talk when it comes to diversity management. Within diversity management programmes, official organisational policy is gender-neutral but Smithson and Stokoe (2005) found that employee's talk about gender still constructs the generic parent as female despite gender-neutral organisational policies. The use of gender-neutral terms in policies such as 'diversity policy' does not translate or transfer into the adoption of gender-neutral terms in everyday talk and "changing the terminology of equality does not in itself contribute significantly to advancing gender equality" (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005, p. 165). Everyday talk is still permeated by a fundamental connection between flexible arrangements and being female. The diversity discourse is used to claim the existence of a level playing field from which there is a choice to opt for flexible options. This choice is then strongly associated with being a mother. This means that diversity work policies are still considered to be for women. If this is the case, despite gender-neutral attempts, these policies are still used by women only which then maintains rather than subvert gendered practices in organisations. The diversity management approach, which is based on the notion of difference, then does not consider the power differential or possible systemic imbalances (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005) and thus has the "ironic effect of dissolving the basis of disadvantage" (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000, S24). Diversity management programmes often manage to establish the notion that given its policies, the work environment is fair, leaving the structure of the hierarchical organisation unexamined. It is supported by a discourse of individual achievement which assumes that success is based on work and integrity without acknowledging that attainment or achievement for women is often twofold in the form of home and work performance (Dick & Cassell, 2002).

The diversity discourse, with the notion of difference as fundamental to it, also establishes a boundaried group: 'the diverse' (or those who are different from the

white, male and middle-class) and creates a "split between 'those who manage' and 'the managed diverse'" (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000, S23) which then becomes a way of cloaking discomfort with difference in language of tolerance. The 'diverse' becomes boundaried into a subject position of difference, and this ultimately perpetuates inequalities as the position of being the different 'other' invites being assigned essential categories and characteristics (Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). Being part of the diverse group also often implies a reduction in one's status (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000).

The construction of difference between groups can lead to that difference as being constructed both as an additional value or as lack and Zanoni and Janssens (2004) illustrate how managers move between these discursive positions. They also note how references to difference are always used in reference to the process of organisational productivity. The diversity discourse then forms part of a power relationship between managers and employees and is employed as a mechanism to enhance the goal of the organisation within broader discourses of economic rationality and organisational competence. The diversity discourse tends to obscure management practices and management employee relations (Zanoni & Janssens, 2004).

Competitive masculinity.

The discourse of competitive masculinity is discussed by Meriläinen et al. (2004) and Knights and Kerfoot (2004) as a discourse which links certain characteristics such as work orientation, assertiveness and rationality with masculinity while privileging this form of work behaviour over others. Masculinity and instrumental rationality have been historically associated since classical Greek philosophy and deeply influential of Enlightenment and modernist thought and the relationship between these concepts seems to be tenacious and persistent (Ross-Smith & Kornberger, 2004). Meriläinen et al. (2004) note that work addiction and self-assertion is typically associated with a professional identity. Competence is associated with control, masculinity and performance where incompetence is associated with weakness, femininity, lack of assertiveness and lack of performance (Chrisholm, 2001). Positions and duties that are higher in organisational structure are also associated with masculinity and lower duties and positions are associated with femininity (Benschop, Halsema & Schreurs, 2001).

Knights and Kerfoot (2004) argue that the competitive notion of masculinity can be repressive as it has to be attained and drives individuals into subject positions "of a compulsive, cognitive and goal centered design or a purposive, rational design of the world" (p. 436) and the compulsive tendency towards control and power. Instrumental rationality with its goal directedness is in contrast to, and eliminates non-instrumental intimacy and becomes a disembodied way of being in and relating to the world. It is also overly concerned with the development of the identity and self-mastery.

Competitive masculinity and instrumental rationality is in contrast to recent developments towards more feminised management styles (Fondas, 1997) and an assumption that a basic difference between the genders can also lead to an attempt to increase the status of 'feminine' qualities by emphasising and valuing these. This is a form of resistance to the notion of competitive masculinity with women seeing themselves as more empathetic, collaborative, supportive and thus more democratic, enacting a more socially sanctioned style. The discourse of different and feminised management styles encounters a number of difficulties as the discourse does not seem to have enough persuasive power to overrule the dominant notions of leadership (Chrisholm, 2001). It also leads to other problems such as essentialism or reinforcing only traditional notions of femininity (Benshop, Halsema & Schreurs, 2001). Thus these developments towards 'valuing the feminine' can be a further colonisation of the feminine and a continuation of describing the feminine as the opposite of the norm: the masculine (Gatenby & Humphries, 1999). Ross-Smith and Kornberger (2004) indicate that the masculine view of rationality is still predominant in ideas about management despite the development towards the feminisation of management. They argue that rationality has become masculinised and that it serves better to deconstruct and illuminate this process rather than to step into further gender dichotomies by trying to introduce the opposite so-called feminine. Suggesting an alternative to the dominant norm can increase the distance between the two opposites and inadvertently re-establish the dominance of the original norm. Rather, an exploration of the concept rationality and alternative forms of rationality does not further increase the dichotomy between rational masculinity and soft and emotional femininity and creates a more complex and holistic view of rationality.

The managerial discourse.

The managerial discourse is privileged in organisations and influences the organisational space through the publication of policies and texts, the performance of certain rituals and the codes of practices with its requirements of employees. This discourse is supported by other discourses such as bureaucracy, patriarchy and class that are sedimented into the broader socio-political context (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996). The discourse of bureaucracy centres on a rational, rule-governed system that orders organisations with administrative regulations. This discourse generally intersects with the discourse of patriarchy in the traditional masculine status of bureaucracy and the practice and expression of bureaucratic systems that have historically been dominated by men. This further intersects with class as the discourses of patriarchy and bureaucracy are typically expressed by certain individuals with upper-middle class positions (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996). The managerial discourse is seductive and seduces the person into a sense of influence, power and status providing a concrete and grounded sense of self that minimises anxiety (Whitehead, 2001). It also intersects with a discourse of individuality and the conclusion that inequality must be the fault of the individual (Whetherell, Stiven et al., 1987).

The discussion of discourses of equality and difference so far illustrates how limiting the ideologies people have access to can be. A way of talking is the product of the material conditions, power relations and vested interests. Inequality is naturalised and this keeps the status quo intact while simultaneously making it possible for people to enhance their self-presentation by using the equal opportunities discourse. Women have different reactions to this naturalisation of inequality. Some women accept the status quo as legitimate, some separate themselves from other women who take part in the "natural" functions of mothering and others aim to change the criteria of superiority (Whetherell, Stiven et al., 1987). People often tend to soften the impact of the status quo with a discourse of change that states that change will happen but that it must happen slowly and naturally and that the best is still to come (Whetherell, Stiven et al., 1987).

Different discourses at play/ intertextuality.

The existence of multiple, complimentary and contradictory discourses in organisations makes it possible for individuals to position themselves in a number of

different and sometimes contradictory ways within these discourses. This allows them to change and move their positions in their talk. Different individuals will not draw on discourses in the same way with a resulting choice in terms of the subject position taken. Thus the understanding of discourse, power and position in organisations should take account of the complex and varied ways in which discourse operates. Discourses, as they emerge, are therefore mediated and changed by the intertextuality with other discourses. As such, Leonard (2003) illustrates how gender difference discourse can be used in different ways. Organisations can, for example, evoke a feminine discourse when attempting to change managerial styles or women can use a masculine discourse to support their managerial role. She notes how doctors and nurses draw on a number of different discourses in their talk. These include discourses of professionalism, gender difference, performance and home. The different discourses can simultaneously empower and disempower in a play of gender and power for example when a subject position is taken with awareness and consciously deployed in workplace interaction. Negotiating different discourses becomes a complex process with a wide range of possible responses in a constant process of interplay between discourses. This means that work identities are constantly changing within this interplay (Leonard, 2003).

Organisations are stabilised by means of repeated speech patterns of what usually happens and what is usually said (Anderson, 2005). Organisational change starts when members try on different utterances and voices and project them into the future to evaluate their usefulness or worth in terms of the old practices. The introduction of new discourse generally involves an intertextual process that draws on old discourses. In this way, new ideas or discourses have to find a way into the dominant ones, showing some kinship, in order to prevail. New ideas are formed by interpreting past events differently and renewing them, making the ideas and notions of the past instrumental in the introduction of difference and newness. Past ideas can be used either by quoting and mimicking them or by referring to them with parody or irony. The new discourse is then linked in an intertextual manner to the dominant discourse or past idea. The speaker then takes up different voices and speaks from different positions in order to introduce new discourse. The speech act then contains the words of others and this aids in the persuasive value of what is said. Belova, King and Sliwa (2008) describe how Bakhtin's notion of polyphony can be used in the study of

organisations to illustrate how different voices compete for power and being heard. An examination of voice (who speaks) makes it possible to reflect on scientific products in terms of authorship and representation and how authors are placed in their own scientific narratives. It also makes it possible to explore the different voices of contradiction and dissent in organisations.

Davies, Browne, Gannon, Honan and Somerville (2005) further add that although discourses can be separated from one another it is possible for discourses to leak into one another. As such, discourses are not necessarily in binary positions but rather inextricably intertwined. The site of leakage or the nexus of the connection is the embodiment of discourses or the speaking person.

Discourse and the Body in Organisations
The more recent developments in the field of organisation studies towards discursive, linguistic or symbolic understandings of sex and gender have been discussed in this chapter so far. It is evident from these studies that this approach yields much and contributes to understanding the gender dilemma in organisations, particularly in understanding the often invisible and unsaid aspects of this complex phenomenon. Some concerns emerged about this way of studying organisations. Some of these concerns are similar to those discussed in chapter 2 and involve unease with the possible over-emphasis of the linguistic and the symbolic at the expense of the embodied and material aspects of individuals and their experiences and actions in the social world.

In the field of organisational studies, these concerns are with discoursism (Conrad, 2004), postmodern obscurity or elitism (Gergen, 2003) and a general neglect of the bodily and non-linguistic. Put differently, there is a concern with a discursivisation of the body (Styhre, 2004) and a collapse between the discursive and the non-discursive (Conrad, 2004). A number of authors tend to these issues specifically in the field of organisational studies and address it in a number of different ways to offer possible remedies for the dangers of 'verbocentrism' (Sampson, 1998) as discussed in the following section.

A starting point in this discussion is a mere call for research in postmodern organisational research to be useful. Gergen (2003) warns against organisational research that is removed from organisational life and caught up in postmodern obscurity or elitism. He states that the aim of research should rather be to produce "actionable discourses, that is, forms of language that can be put to use more directly within the sphere of work" (p. 454). Researchers then act as "participatory intellectuals" (p. 454) which could make postmodern or social constructionist research useable and palatable. This means a move toward forms of understanding that are linked to action and are actionable, and are therefore of use in organisations.

The knowledge-based nature of many workplaces today (as opposed to the physical-based labour of the past) combined with the linguistic turn in organisation studies both contribute to a disembodied science (Styhre, 2004) which creates forms of knowledge and understanding that do not catch or grasp either action or embodiment. When dealing with sex and gender, this becomes even more important and Martin (2006) reminds us that part of the challenge of studying gender at work is exactly that these dynamics are fluid, interpersonal, interactional, individual and collective. The dynamics of gender at work are "rich and complex, and difficult to record [and] even if one made video tape-recordings, much about gendering processes and relationships would be missed. As a result gender dynamics routinely elude researchers' efforts to capture them" (Martin, 2006, p. 269). Thus there is a danger in reducing events to words which "can take the heart and heat out of action" (p. 268-269).

The move towards an embodied study of discourse does not merely view the individual as a result of discourse but also in terms of her actual action and experience. To study individuals working in organisations requires that they be seen as part of a broader social context with a direct, bodily experience of it. These experiencing bodies should also be allowed to speak and therefore researchers should remain open to encounters with "lives, bodies and desires" (Morris & Beckett, 2004, p. 81) as the starting point of knowledge and learning. To ignore and neglect the body at work is to overlook the centre of the possibilities and experience of employees and the discursivisation of the body can be restrictive and exclude other possible descriptions. This privileges the "textual (i.e. intellectual) over the carnal ('lived') being" (Styhre, 2004, p. 111) and can inadvertently increase the unreflective

administrative use of the body. As such, the flesh-and-blood subject of discourse remains important (Mumby & Ashcraft, 2006).

Another result of a collapse of the discursive and the non-discursive can be that social or organisational structures are seen solely as discursive practices. This makes causal explanations impossible and creates a view of the social world as devoid of actors, making material aspects less visible. It is vital to consider discourse as rooted in the material and social practices by keeping in mind the social context of participants (Conrad, 2004).

The overemphasis on the linguistic and the verbal (as discussed in Chapter 2) can be seen as creating another disconnection between word and world where the word becomes separate and all encompassing. This is an inadvertent reproduction of the pervasive Cartesian dualism of our time. In this particular format it takes the shape of the textual being separated from the carnal, or the intellectual from the lived. This is remarkably reminiscent of the traditional divisions of mind/body, male/female and active/passive. These remain ever present and prevalent in organisational life and are experienced as real and natural (Baxter & Hughes, 2004). This dualism is difficult to overcome as it is pervasive in modern culture. This dualism is experienced as natural and real and not learnt. The learnt nature of the dualism can be made explicit and deconstructed by means of transgressive and creative language.

Davies et al. (2005) draw on the biological term chiasma (from Ziarek) as metaphor to describe the interchange between embodiment and discourse. This interchange involves both being constituted by discourse and constituting discourse. The biological term chiasma refers to the process when two chromosomes exchange genetic material. Embodiment is thus not only inscription it also inscribes as the site of agency, responsibility and rebellion. There is a chiasma of the constituted and constituting nature of the body and this notion "contests biologism, [and] it also challenges a constructivist reduction of the body to the passive surface of linguistic inscription and the corresponding abstraction of language from the body" (Ziarek, 2001, p. 5). On one hand, the body is constituted through language, and on the other the body is essential in the production of language. Memory serves as a good example

here and memory can then be seen as "stored as language on the deep surfaces in/on the body, and that memory is embodied language" (Davies et al., 2005, p. 344).

Doolin (2003) argues that although the insights gained from discourse analysis can be useful there is something missing namely an appreciation of technology as part of the ever changing process in organisations. He argues that "we should be careful not to construct a form of discourse analysis that excludes the non-discursive, rather than engages with it" (p. 756). In this regard, he uses the work of John Law on narratives or strategies of organisational ordering or structuring which aims to include materiality, including socio-technical realities. Law (in Doolin, 2003) considers organisations to be the result of different and unfinished attempts at ordering in the form of "'strategies' or 'narratives'" (Doolin, 2003, p. 756) where narratives are the telling and performance of the institution. Ordering narratives offer descriptions and prescriptions of what reality is like and should be like, in this way strategic without a necessary emphasis on subjective intention. Narratives are discursive, involving meaning making and meaning giving and also performed as interpersonal actions and achievements. They are materially heterogeneous, as they result in the embodiment of different social, material and technical forms which provide more stability and durability to the discursive. The social ordering process sediments into the technical, such as organisational information systems and "the ordering of the social is never purely social but rather is sociotechnical, in that the social and the technical mutually define one another" (p. 758). Despite relative sturdiness and permanence of such organisational structures, these are still, at the same time, incomplete and resistances and alternative narratives always exist, making the organisation precarious and unstable at the same time.

> Organization, and the ordering narratives that comprise it, are at once discursive in their action, relational in their performance and heterogeneous in their materiality. They simultaneously concern meaning effects of discourse, collectivities and social context, and technology and materiality, while not being reducible to any of these … In this view, social relations are embodied and played out in the ordering of technology and organizations (p. 758).

The challenges of including the body.

Despite concerns with working with disembodied discourse, an awareness of embodiment and an intention to study organisational life in ways that also makes this visible are challenging. In terms of this difficulty, Styhre (2004) argues that four different perspectives can enhance the understanding of the body in organisations: phenomenology, feminist theory, theories of practice and postmodern theory. A phenomenological view of the matter such as that of Merleau-Ponty assumes that all experiences are embodied experiences. Organisations are therefore not prior to human bodies but embodied. Where a phenomenological approach considers the body as prior to other structures, feminist theory contributes with a view of the body as the interface of the biological, social and symbolic. Feminist theorist's concern with the body (as discussed in chapter 2) springs from the general avoidance or overlooking of the body in social sciences. Theories on the performative see the body as something that becomes as much as it exists. In organisations, bodies are then both apriori aspects but they are produced to perform certain actions and to fulfil certain requirements. Theories of practice such as the work of Bourdieu (as discussed in chapter 2) also have a contribution to make in reflecting on the body in organisations. This theory considers habitus as the practised functions of the body which acts either aware or unaware but according to certain explicit or implicit rules in the social field. The social field is littered with rules, norms and artefacts and bodies interact in this. Postmodern theories on the body either view the body as an invention and destabilise the idea of the naturalistic body or see the body as inscribed. Thus the body is no longer seen as fixed but rather constructed and performed. This view allows for an exploration of the body which does not only see it as factual but also as symbolic and social. However, many postmodern studies in organisational science tend to emphasise the textual and the linguistic at the expense of an understanding of the embodied nature of it.

Conrad (2004) argues for forms of analysis that are more rhetorical and less linguistic and focus on "the symbolic processes through which the social and organizational actors draw upon existing social-linguistic structures to produce, reproduce, and legitimize systems of privilege and domination" (p. 429). He considers discourse analysis that allows for movement between the close-range and long-range

investigation as worthwhile in this endeavour. This approach to discourse as described by Alvesson and Karreman (2000) was discussed in more detail earlier in this chapter.

Styhre (2004) argues that the acknowledgement of the body and an attempt to move away from Cartesian reductionism can open new research agendas such as studying how employees use their bodies in their work, or how management activities are experienced in the metaphor or experience of the body. Research can also focus on how bodies impact organisation practices such as recruitment and appointments. Researchers can also look at how organisations deal with bodily difficulties such as weight gain and burnout as a result of work styles and requirements.

Ontological enquiry, as a method of studying and exploring practical embodied actions, is another suggestion made by Beckett and Morris (2001). Ontological enquiry involves the study of that which occupies the world and people and allows for a study of the conative (conscious action) and actual experience (social and affective aspects). This form of enquiry is seen as a method which renders sufficient accounts of the encounters with the world (Beckett & Morris, 2001). Linked to this although not identical in approach is a focus on stories and narratives. Collecting stories and letting people describe their own experience is seen as another way of catching action or experience in time and space (Martin, 2006). Davies et al. (2005) also use memory and the collection of stories (collective biography) as a way of embodied telling.

The female body at work.

A number of studies have emerged that attempt to address the body as it is lived and constructed in organisations. Davies et al. (2005) note how bodies at work are constituted into desirables and non-desirables with gender and sex inscribed onto the flesh. A somatic norm is identified and this normative body is a white, male body which renders other bodies problematic (Ziarek, 2001).

Trethewey (1999) describes how women's bodies are normalised and constructed in the workplace in terms of three prescriptions: fitness, communication and control. The body is considered professional when it is fit, when it communicates in an appropriate manner with appropriate non-verbal behaviour and gesture and when appropriately controlled and not overly sexual. The female body must be kept from its tendency to

overflow. Failing to carry and manage the body appropriately has negative consequences. Trethewey (1999) further describes how the emphasis on fitness can have negative consequences for those who are no longer able to or cannot portray such an image, such as the disabled or older people. She argues for scholars to continue studying women's embodied experiences in the workplace and how different women and women from different groups can resist some dominant discourses through their bodies. She notes how women's bodies are not unrelated to their positions in organisations and this warrants further exploration and study.

The professional body is also a young body, as she illustrates in her interviews with midlife women (Trethewey, 2001). These women are aware of a discourse of aging as decline that has implications for their career development. The entrepreneurial discourse becomes prominent in their talk as an entrepreneurial spirit is seen as an antidote to the dangers of aging. Thus their recourse lies in the individual taking up the challenge and managing the process for themselves which involves "aging successfully" (Trethewey, 2001, p. 214) and making careful choices and attempting to pass as younger women.

Dellinger and Williams (1997) reflect on women's use of makeup as a way of responding to the requirements of professionalism and the constraints set by the workplace. From their interviews with women she deduces that women generally feel that wearing makeup was associated with being healthy, credible and heterosexual. Their analysis suggests this requirement reproduces assumptions about gender and therefore reproduces inequality. Despite this they note that women view their makeup in a number of ways, as fulfilling a requirement, as a way of bolstering their confidence and also as a way of gaining power. Their analysis of interviews with women shows very little in the way of complete resistance against norms of appearance, but rather an awareness of and knowledgeable stance about appearance expectations. They therefore conclude that women participate in appearance practices with awareness but also strategically. The conclusion is that this practice reflects some of the docile body theory but also that agency cannot be written out of the picture and she therefore warns against a view of women as completely passive in this process. It remains important to explore women's experience within the complex process of appearance management.

Weitz (2001) also emphasises that women do not engage with beauty routines (in her analysis, hairstyles) in a passive and docile way but that women are aware of and manage their hairstyles as ways of seeking and managing power. Thus, it is a complex process of accommodating expectation while at the same time resisting it, where women are aware of expectations and either challenge them overtly or adhere to these as a way a gaining ground in society. What remains is that women adopt strategies of self-care and management within gendered constraints and expectations. Thus women use cultural expectations to achieve certain things and this is a process of agency, but at the same time women are not free to ignore these completely. Thus power obtained by appearance management is at most "fragile, bittersweet and limiting" (p. 683). The strategies then used by individual women to gain power has a counter effect for women as a group, by sustaining and strengthening the existing expectations and discourses.

The female working professional body is not only physically healthy but also mentally healthy and competitive as Blum and Stracuzzi (2004) illustrate in an analysis of articles on Prozac. This analysis reveals how this medication is used or seen as enhancing productivity, giving ambitious workers an edge they would not otherwise have. They found this discourse particularly linked to working women in need of a competitive edge. This is yet another way of structuring and enhancing the female working body.

The restraints, constraints and expectations of the female working body, as discussed in the previous paragraphs, are particularly pertinent and important as it relates to the construction of an invisible norm that is white, heterosexual and able-bodied (Dellinger 1997; Trethewey, 2001; Weitz, 2001). Thus these power restraints manage to ascribe more power to those women who are closer to the norm. Prescriptions for and inscriptions on bodies, are on the nexus of gender, sexuality and race. This gives some women in this matrix more power than others. As such, strategising within these constraints to achieve power means achieving it within a very complex web.

Conclusion

This chapter involved an exploration of the discursive construction of gender in organisations and how this complex process is described and grappled with in different versions of organisational theory. In order to do so, the discussion started with a number of different ways of conceptualising discourse itself as well as different points of investigation when dealing with discourse. A range of focus points can exist in discourse studies ranging from a micro focus that involves explorations of the detail of speech acts to a macro focus that explores the universal and generalised aspects of broader societal discourses as they construct gender.

The discussion on discourse and how it is used was followed by a discussion on the discursive construction of gender. Gender is discursively constructed on the micro level in daily communication habits and it also takes place as a performance of already existing discourse. The process of gender construction was described as a dialectic process where available local texts inform conversation acts while they are at the same time constructed by acts of conversation. These local texts are then informed by societal and public discourses.

The discussion then moved to a description of different gender discourses in organisations and the complex interplay of these as they produce, reproduce and also undermine the status quo. The discourse of equality was shown to be used by many in their everyday talk while this discourse is at the same time contrasted with a discourse of practical considerations or natural difference. Here it became clear how the presence of both these discourses act to establish a status quo of differential treatment and positioning. The diversity discourse as it was recently established in organisations forms a discursive attempt at undermining the gender difference discourse and its common sense truth-value. What emerged from this discussion is the tenacity of the gender difference discourse and while the diversity discourse operates on a formal level, everyday talk returns to 'natural' versions of masculinity and femininity.

The discourse of difference further informs certain discursive constructions of masculinity as competitive, logical and instrumental in a pervasive construction of masculine and feminine as opposites, where one has more value and power in the organisation. This form of masculinity is also constructed as a norm that requires hard

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work from women to position themselves as part of this discourse, often by negating aspects related to their femininity or by establishing distance from women as a group.

Discursive construction takes place in a complex web of different, opposing and contrasting discourses where the power relations involved in the discursive struggles are rendered invisible despite their substantial impact on this process. The presence of contradiction and contesting discourses maintains and manages the status quo while it also provides opportunity for resistance and destabilising the status quo.

The discussion then addressed concerns with an overemphasis of the linguistic at the expense of the material, here specifically referring to discourse studies in the field of organisational theory. This discussion is an echo of the discussion in chapter 2 that also reflected on some of these issues. Embodied research in organisational studies was discussed and a number of different attempts at including the body were explored. The female body at work was shown to be constructed into professional, fit, restrained, appropriate and competitive forms within strict norms of appearance. Women manage their bodies within this structure with some awareness and manage their own bodies strategically to fit in with the norms but also to gain certain positions by doing so. The management of the female body involves restricting its tendency to overflow and structuring it so that it can be considered as acceptable and fit to work.

To conclude this chapter, it seems that the discursive construction of gender in the workplace is a multi-faceted process of contradiction and contest within existing gender power relations that manage to reproduce themselves by invoking discourses of natural gender differences. This process largely manages to establish invisible norms of the ideal worker as embodied in a male, white body. The inclusion of those different from this norm then requires discursive effort and strategy both on the formal level of policy and organisational structure as well as the personal where individuals have to manage, structure and shape their identity accordingly and I am curious to see which strategies the participants in this study use in this regard.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH POSITION AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter serves as a description of the research position of this study as well as the research process that took place in this study. The chapter starts with a description of the aim of the research and then explores the research position and its implication for the research methodology used. The actual research process is then described.

From the discussions in chapters 3 and 4 it is clear that the sphere of gender discourse is characterised by different and sometimes contradictory discourses. Each discourse has a certain imaginary audience and each audience determines what is considered to be appropriate action (Bevan & Bevan, 1999). The meanings attached to gender are by no means singular and clear, but rather, present day meanings and discourses render a multitude of possible descriptions, subjectivities and actions. To mention but a few: women are workers, women are mothers, women are equal, women are competent, women are intelligent, women are sex-objects, women are superheroes, women are frail, women are seductresses and women are pious, women are acknowledged and rewarded and women are abused and raped. It is within this frame that this study takes place.

Confronted with all these discourses, how does a contemporary middle management South African woman construct her own 'self/selves'? How is it related to context and audience? Which audiences are influential and which are inconsequential? Which determine appropriate action? Which discourses are linked to prevalent practices and which remain subverting voices of contradiction? With these broad and general questions in mind, I formulated the actual research questions of this project that are discussed below.

Aim of The Study

The aim of this study as described in chapter 1 is to explore the complex interplay of sets of meaning and how these are present in middle management women's talk about their experience of the workplace and further to explore which discourses inform decisions on appropriate action and identity. The aim is also to explore how women construct their own gender and which discourses are operative in these constructions. The sense-making processes involved in the active process of construction are studied as well as how contradictory

systems of meaning influence the construction of the self and world and how these discourses support or challenge institutions and the status quo.

Research Questions

The following guiding research questions where mentioned in chapter 1. They are repeated here for further clarification on the aim of the research:

Given the contradiction between the socially accepted discourse of equality and the gender stratified nature of the workplace, I will focus on the following research questions to explore a discursive ecology. The term discursive ecology here refers to the interrelated nature of discourse as discourse and statements have meaning in terms of their relation to and impact on other discourses (Livingston, 1997).

- Which gender discourses are present in women's talk about their own experiences of the workplace?
- Are there contradictory discourses present?
- What are the discursive mechanisms that keep these contradictions in place?
- How do women negotiate contradictory discourses in the workplace?
- Which subject positions are available?
- Do women strategise with and deploy contradictions to maintain and improve their position?
- How are dominant discourses challenged or entrenched?
- Which institutions are supported by the discourses?
- How does the discourse of equality operate in relation to other traditional discourses on gender?
- What are the ideological impacts of the contradictions in the workplace?

Research Position: Social Constructionism, Feminism and Self-reflexivity

In chapter 2, I discussed my epistemological position and approach to this project as a social constructionist feminist study. This epistemological position has certain implications for research and research methodology and the following section discusses the research implications of social constructionism and feminism and then continues to illustrate how discourse analysis is a suitable method of analysis to use in this study.

Feminist Social Constructionist Methodology

The social constructionist nature of this study requires methodology that takes account of the social nature of knowledge and meaning and further explores how social and cultural understandings construct and are constructed by identities and subject positions.

The feminist lens of this project seeks to apply the chosen methodology in a feminist manner (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000). This means that this research has a commitment to emancipatory values and the aim is to produce research that does not continue patterns of oppression, domination and silencing. The intention is to approach research participants in a collaborative style as a feminist approach to research encourages collaborative and participatory research. Knowledge is further seen as usable for purposes of political action (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000). Feminist psychological research from a social constructionist or postmodern stance involves seeing gender as performative, as role enactments where multiple selves are produced and reproduced. Feminist social constructionist research is therefore different from a standpoint feminist position that aims at uncovering the essential truths regarding women and their position. It sees the research process as a co-creation where researchers are involved in self-reflexivity, where they reflect on how they co-construct the research process (Gergen, 2008). A reflexive research stance means that the researcher reflects back on her own position and location and how that relates to the research process (Eagle, Hayes & Sibanda, 1999). In this way, objectivity does not mean eliminating the person and values of the researcher but accounting for the researcher's own position by self-reflexivity. The knowledge becomes *situated* in a specific context and locality (Haraway, 1991).

The perspective of the feminist researcher is embodied, specific and partial and it is this position of partiality that is considered or reflected on to make responsible knowledge claims possible. The researcher is always speaking and observing from a position and it is this position or location that the self-reflexivity is directed towards. This reflexivity is not directed towards a one-dimensional or linear subject but on a split or fragmented self that is contradictory, complex and continuously being constructed. This fragmented self is never entirely accessible or intelligible. Due to the multi-dimensionality of the self the researcher cannot be completely immersed in subjugation or privilege but is partially connected to both. Reflexivity requires a *critical* view on the different positions the researcher occupies within complex webs of positions and alliances and the power relations between them (Haraway,

1991). Reflexivity and the complexities associated with it will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

Feminist methodology also focuses on explicating the different subject positions of women and the aim in this study is not to provide universal truths concerning the women of South Africa but to make contextual statements, taking into account the diversity as well as different power relations with a temporary focus on overlapping, specific aspects of the identities (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000; Zietkiewky & Long, 1999). The study aims to allow competing voices to be heard and to reveal the varying nature of women's subjective experiences and ideas (Sunde & Bozalek, 1993). Focusing on the power relations in the interview situation is also important and researchers take care not to replicate exploitative and dominating conditions and to presume to speak for others (Knudson-Martin, 1997). A commitment to ethics is vital in feminist research, where the nature of data, being in-depth interviews, can sometimes compromise participants and it is therefore important to remain vigilant about this and to protect participants in this regard (Gergen, 2008).

The methodology of the study will be discussed later in this chapter. At this stage of the discussion, it suffices to mention the following: the implications for the methodology of this study with its aim to explore discourse, meaning and the constructions and constructedness of gender is that a participatory and collaborative research process is needed where my situation, location and position is considered to be part of the process. In this study I therefore include my reflections on the research process and interviews. The interview process and data analysis needs to allow space for differences and similarities to emerge to allow for an exploration of the interplay of different discourses and meaning sets and how these make different subject positions available.

Self-reflexivity.
Self-reflexivity is an important part of this study and warrants some further discussion and exploration here as it can be understood and applied in a number of different ways. My basic starting point and approach to self-reflexivity is to avoid the God-trick as Harraway (1991) calls it: "Ways of being nowhere and claiming to see comprehensively" (p. 191) by "unravelling and making explicit the cultural and historical values of the project and removing the category of 'privileged knowers'" (Lohan, 2000, p. 112). A social constructionist position requires a method that takes account of the constructed and co-created nature of knowledge, and self-

reflexivity therefore provides visibility of the author's position and the presence of the author in the text (Coffey, 2002). Self-reflexivity is also used in this study to enhance the legitimacy of the study (Adkins, 2002) as it involves the reader in the interweaving of different meaning sets. It is a means to allow the reader into the process of the construction of meaning and to provide some criteria by which the reader can ascertain the reasonableness of statements.

In terms of applying self-reflexivity, Gergen (2008) states that self-reflexivity can either be detailed descriptions of one's own involvement in the research process or a process of reflecting on the power relations involved in the research. Thus reflexivity does not necessarily involve a long personal narrative but rather observing the research process to understand how the project was created and how conclusions were reached (Lohan, 2000). In this study, I reflect both on myself and my involvement in the research process and also on the research process and the power issues related to it.

Adkins (2002) discusses the limits of reflexivity and uses the distinction between endogenous and referential reflexivity of May and the meta- and infra-reflexivity distinction of Latour. She argues that reflexivity can easily lead to research accounts that centralises the identity of the author, thus undermining attempts to change power relations in research. The distinctions of May and Latour have in common that one form of reflexivity (May's endogenous and Latour's meta-reflexivity) refers to the process of reflecting back on the self to make the text more believable. The other side of the distinction (May's referential reflexivity and Latour's infra-reflexivity) refers to an outward-looking process of reflection where reflexivity takes place in the world. Adkins (2002) suggests that referential reflexivity should form part of self-reflexivity to create social science that says something about the world it studies and not only something about the scientists. Thus one avenue of overcoming one of the limitations of reflexivity is to make it referential.

In this study, self-reflexivity does not involve exploring the complexities of myself or writing confessional tales (Coffey, 2002) but it is rather an attempt at acknowledging that I am part of the research. I am mindful of the danger of creating a self-indulgent or narcissistic text that makes my position central but I wish to be visible to enhance the credibility of the text. I do this in a number of ways, firstly with the brief description of who I am in chapter 1, then by stating my epistemological position and approach to this research topic and then by reflecting on the research process as it transpired, including the interviews and the data analysis. I am guided by

the suggestions of Beverly Skeggs (2002) that argue for care to be taken with self-telling, the process of providing readers with narratives about the researcher. Instead she suggests that reflexivity should involve paying attention to research practice and research participants. This would involve a

> feminist reflection on power and practice which folds into thinking about how social change can occur … this [means] attention [is] given to power relationships, attention to the representation of research participants, and attention to issues such as ethics, reciprocity and responsibility (Skeggs, 2002, p. 367).

Reflexivity then aims to avoid assuming the right to speak for the 'other' and aims to enhance collaborative authorship and a more self-conscious approach to representation in texts.

Discourse Analysis

After the preceding discussion of the social constructionist feminist research position and the implications thereof in this study, I now turn to a brief description of discourse analysis as a suitable method of data analysis. Discourse and discourse analysis was discussed in chapter 2 and chapter 4 and the discussion here serves to link the method of discourse analysis with the research position. The data analysis procedure followed in this study is discussed later in this chapter.

This study is an exploration of gendered meanings and how meaning is constructed and also how meaning constructs identities and social systems and institutions. Discourse analysis is a method that explores this as it studies accounts and conceptions and how these become fixed (Durrheim, 1997). Discourse analysis further focuses on the organisation of language and the consequences thereof, the constructions people have and the effect of these accounts. With discourse analysis it is possible to focus on the broad types of versions that people have of reality and the themes and theories people use to structure the world (Whetherell, Stiren & Potter, 1987). As a qualitative approach, discourse analysis assumes that words do not come in packages with specific meaning but that meaning is created in the interweaving of words and phrases in different contexts. Therefore the analysis of texts is always against a cultural backdrop that provides a shared system of meaning with sensitivity to language (Parker, 1999). Discourse analysis as a method of data analysis makes it possible to reflect on the

functioning of power in language and how knowledge and power relations produce different identity positions and social institutions.

The Research Process

The previous section of this chapter described the important aspects of the research position and the implications for research. It illustrated how this study aims to understand more about middle management women by focusing on the socially constructed nature of knowledge as expressed in discourse but also focusing on aspects of power. The research aims to understand more about how women's position in organisations are supported or challenged by language and discourse practices and further has an emancipatory value or intention. The research process of semi-structured interviews transcribed and analysed with discourse analysis is discussed in the following section.

Research Participants

This study was conducted by interviewing women with experience as middle managers in organisations. A woman was considered to be in middle management according to the description of her own organisation. Participants were obtained through snowball sampling. Snowball sampling involves approaching one case that helps with information on similar persons (Strydom & Venter, 2005). I asked each participant to refer me to another person whom they know who is in a similar position to them. In this way I obtained participants who are similar in position (Neuman, 2000). (The participants are introduced in the next chapter).

Given the multiracial and multicultural nature of South Africa as well as a history of exclusion and oppression, it was important for me to interview a diverse group of women, to allow for different and possibly competing accounts of reality to emerge. In the end, the participants represented women from different racial groups as I actively attempted to ensure this during the recruitment process and the sample is therefore heterogeneous. This was not achieved to enhance the representational value of the study, as accurate representation of an outside reality is not the aim of the study, but rather to make space for diversity and to allow different voices to be heard within a historical context of exclusion and discrimination. South Africa's particular history of privileging some voices over others (White over Black and male over female) has particular effects in terms of the discursive structure and a homogenous sample would access only a limited number of available discursive repertoires.

Participants were women from different types of organisations, and women from different organisations such as government, non-government and private businesses were interviewed. After two pilot interviews to explore the structure and questions of the interview, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten women. Interviews ranged from between 30 to 60 minutes and were audio-recorded using a mini audio-recorder.

In terms of number of interviews Kvale (2007) notes: "Interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need" (p. 43). This is clearly influenced by the aim of the research, here to explore signification and not to be representative. He further notes that it is common for interview studies to have 15 ± 10 interviews and comments that researchers can benefit from doing fewer interviews with more time to analyse the interviews. Wood and Kroger (2000) also support this idea and comment that discourse analysis researchers should not apologise for small samples "as bigger isn't always better" (p. 81). In this study, I found a saturation point after ten interviews as there was enough data to work with in order explore and analyse discursive structures relevant to the topic. Qualitative researchers use saturation to help determine sample size and saturation is traditionally framed as the point of completeness where no new information or ideas are generated (Holloway, 1997) or the major categories of the study have gained sufficient depth and breadth to allow the researcher to develop the category or theme in depth in terms of its properties and dimensions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In discourse analysis, saturation is framed slightly differently and it occurs when there was sufficient data to make, warrant and justify an argument. In other words, saturation in this study occurred when there was enough data to make a number of significant arguments in enough detail (Wood & Kroger, 2000).

The Interview

Semi-structured interviews were used in this study as the aim of the study is to understand how women use, deploy, make sense of and are constructed by gender discourses. Interviews as data gathering procedure can provide detail and depth accounts of women's talk. Semi-structured interviews with an interview guide were used as the interview guide provides some structure to the conversation and allows for specific topics to be covered without over-structuring the conversation or completely inhibiting spontaneous speech and interaction.

Kvale (2007) distinguishes between two metaphors for interviewing, namely mining and travelling, and my approach toward the interviews was informed by the metaphor of the

interview as a journey where the interviewer and interviewee are co-travellers. The epistemology of this project lends itself toward travelling interviews where the interviewer and interviewee wander through landscapes and explore different parts of the area together as a mutual journey unfolds. This journey does not only bring knowledge to both parties but also changes the traveller. Thus interviewing is an intertwined process of knowledge construction. Kvale (2007) notes that postmodern interviews are sites of construction of knowledge - an "inter-view, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a common theme" (p. 21). The interview is therefore an active process and an act of constituting knowledge through social interaction where meaning is created. The interviewee is not seen as a "vessel waiting to be tapped" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, p. 151) but as someone who brings alternate possibilities and ideas. In a discursive study such as this, interviews aim to develop a variation of responses and to allow diversity to emerge in an informal exchange. Such an interview can also stimulate confrontation between different discourses and be sensitive to differences between participants' and researchers' discourses (Kvale, 2007).

I used an interview guide in the study (see Appendix A) in order to provide some structure to the interviews and to keep the conversation focused on the broad research questions. Interview guides can range from a rough guide to detailed worded questions (Kvale, 1996) and I used the guide simply as a broad structure for the interview conversation. This structure provided a list of topics or areas to cover as well as possible questions to assist me make use of the available time effectively while at the same time retaining systematic comprehensiveness (Patton, 2002). I then developed questions around these topics as the interviews progressed. The topics in the interview guide included the participant's experience of being a woman in the workplace, covering such aspects as career path development, career strategies used and obstacles encountered. The guide also includes the general topic of the interaction between the work and home contexts as well as asking about participants' ideas on gender equality. I also sometimes enquired about contradictions and how women negotiate and make sense of them. The broad structure of the interview ranged from initially asking women about their personal experience of being a woman in the workplace to asking about their views on gender equality in the workplace as well as how they would advise young women entering the workplace. Thus the beginning part of the interview dealt with their own experience and the latter part more with their ideas about the topic in general. The intention of asking women about their own experience was not to uncover the essential truths of their experience but rather to provide a platform for diversity and to discover the different meaning

structures. I found that the questions about women's own experience in the workplace sparked the development of ideas and prompted them to start thinking about the topic, sometimes differently than before or in more depth than before.

The kinds of interview questions asked in the interviews aimed at both the thematic (uncovering the topic of the interview) and also the dynamic (promoting good interview interaction). The aim was to remain largely unstructured to allow more spontaneous and unexpected answers to emerge. In general the interview moved between thematic questions such as 'tell me about' and dynamic questions that promote more interaction and the flow of the conversation (Kvale, 1996). Different kinds of questions as described by Kvale (1996) were used:

- Introducing questions
- Follow up questions that prompt for more response
- Probing questions such as 'could you say more about that?'
- Specifying questions that aim to operationalise behaviour
- Direct questions
- Indirect questions such as 'how do you think others think about this?'
- Structuring questions that introduced different or new topics
- Silences that provide time for reflection and associations
- Interpreting questions with rephrasing or clarifications such as 'or is it correct that?'.

See Boxes 1 and 2 below for excerpts from interviews and examples of interview questions:

Box 1: Excerpt from interview with Andy

A: Uhm, could I ask you. As you know I am doing a research project on women in the workplace. Could you just broadly and generally reflect on your experience as a woman and in your career and we will take it in more detail from there.

Andy: Ok, so. When I started … way back when twenty-five years ago, uhm, I think things were very unequal, visibly and you can just feel it. You can just feel that you were almost substandard in the workplace [strange noise no talking]. And I worked in the department of health, for government. And …yes I, my main job function was counselling but I had to go to set up programmes in hospitals and communities. Do HIV/AIDS projects, water projects. Whatever the need was, kind of getting to the general health framework for government. [Ok. Followed by [But it was very tough. And this is the part of being a woman in the workplace that is not sexist. The nice thing about being in the Department of Health is that it is full of women, it is nurses and social workers, and they tend to all be women. I mean, the few and far between are men. But the dynamic as well about being in a government setting was like 'ag, just watch out, you are a newbie and you are going to burn out. We were also as enthusiastic when we started. And now we are just these burntout resentful bitter people'. And also almost setting me up to fail so that they can say 'you see, we told you so'. Squelching that young energy, you know. Ja…

A: So that is where you started. Talk me a bit through it.Of your experience particularly as a woman in your career path, changes that progressed?

Andy: Ok, so. I mean, you know, the story that I always tell about my first job, was … The Deputy Director at the time was male, and was giving me at the time a little bit of extra attention. You know, and I think the thing that was fascinating of that is that everybody could see that I was uncomfortable … but also treated me that as if I was in some way responsible and to blame for all this attention that I was getting. Nobody ever came to my rescue, nobody ever you know, assisted me. It was my first job, you know, I didn't know what to do with the person in power who is fawning all over you and being inappropriate. You know, even my female boss. And I am sure she saw it, but left it there. And she also in turn victimised me even further or held me responsible for his behaviour. Uhm, which was an interesting thing [unclear], also that silence. You see that inappropriate behaviour but everybody is just silent. And everybody is just looking the other way. And so, as the victim, you don't know where to turn, I mean, everybody can see it. [It is clear. Followed by] It is clear, why isn't it, you know, why is nobody helping me. Like I am only twenty or whatever, twenty-two you know?

A: Ja, and instead of helping you they were actually [Blaming me, they are blaming me.]

Andy: Uhm, but very clear was that I was at the bottom of the rung uhm, that I really have to work to prove myself. And I did, you know. I became a workalcoholic, really slogged. And it was also very clear that I worked harder than the male counterparts. Because almost that mentality of you have to be more, run faster, you know. I thought that they were just, you know, they were just doing the bare minimum and getting recognised for it, I do more than my share and was still criticised and still under the fire there. You know, I was in the firing line a lot for some reason.

A: And the firing line, what was that?

Andy: For instance in meetings. Uhm, if I was doing a project. The meeting would rip the project completely apart and criticise and so on and so forth. A male colleague would say 'oh, I am doing like this and this', and we 'oh, very well done', and with just that distinction. And I constantly felt, so at the time, now that I am reflecting on it, and being quite rational, but at that time I felt inadequate, I felt that I had to do more, work harder, work harder, can you see you are just not getting it right, can you see you are just not getting it right. And I really believed it, because I think at that stage that I had the, uhm, the [unclear] of what was happening. I was just pushing pushing … And I think that women in particular are pushed to have that drive. You know? And I did have that drive. Then I moved to provincial government. Also a female boss. Even worse. Like so hardcore. So hardcore. I mean, I was expected to come in at work at 6:30, and lucky to leave at 8:00 or 9:00. You know. [Laugh] Uhm, and she was, the work load was just immense. Just immense. And things would just get dumped. It would just get dumped, and dumped and dumped on my desk. But I was also in that mentality that 'I will show you, I can do this'. I was a bit blindfolded. [Bring it on. Followed by [Ja, I can do it with my hands tied. [Laugh] With a cloth in my mouth and my eyes blindfolded. You know, so I really just pushed and pushed and pushed.

Box 2: Excerpt from interview with Linda

A: What strategies did you use to work yourself up?

Linda: Hard work

A: Hard work …

Linda: Hard work and networking and I use my contacts, the different projects that I was exposed to from the time that I came into the company uhm it was a very interesting time for Company X we where uhm …the strategic equity partnership the American partnership and came into the company for several years. I made very very good use of people I knew in higher offices and I made absolutely sure that they knew who I was that I knew them and when positions became vacant uhm I was … actually, I've only actually applied for one promotion in Company X the other, the other promotions I was given … so that was, once again I got to where I am through hard work, integrity, honesty and by playing the political game, if you don't play the political game you are not going to get anywhere and that's basically its based on who you know … and where they are in the game and waiting for a gap to come.

A: And obstacles?

Linda: Other women,

A: Other women?

Linda: Other women have always been obstacles, that's it, that's my answer, other women.

A: In what way?

Interview Transcription

The interviews were recorded with an audio-recorder and transcribed. In terms of interview transcription convention it seems that transcription conventions and techniques fall on a broad continuum with naturalistic transcription conventions on one hand and denaturalistic transcription on the other. Naturalist transcription involves the detailed capturing of every speech utterance where denaturalistic transcription involves standardising interview material, by correcting grammar and removing interview noise and stutters and pauses (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005). The research design and paradigm is important in determining the researcher's choice in this regard where a naturalist approach involves a view of representation that aims to discover the real world where a denaturalised transcript focuses more on the meaning contained in speech as it constructs realities. Naturalised transcription techniques are generally related to conversation analysis studies. Denaturalised transcription techniques are a verbatim depiction of speech content without the focusing on the detailed actions of speech acts. The accuracy concern in denaturalised transcription is to ensure that accurate meanings and perceptions as presented in conversations are transcribed. This form of transcribing is more linked to ethnography, grounded theory and critical discourse analysis and therefore more appropriate in this research project as the field of interest is more related to meaning rather than the mechanics of speech. Kvale (2007) also notes that detailed and specialised transcription are not necessary for meaning analysis where the focus is not on linguistic style, speech or social interaction and that the decision on how detailed the transcription should be depends on the aim of the research. This research project therefore lends itself more towards denaturalised transcription.

It is also important to note here that a social constructionist understanding of transcription does not view transcription as a representation of the reality of the interview. It is rather already a construction. Transcription can never be transparent as the relationship between language and meaning is not transparent (Lapadat, 2000). Transcription can then be seen as initial "thematic anticipations" (Parker, 2005, p. 65). Oliver, Serovich and Mason (2005) note that it is difficult to find clear guidelines for transcriptions in discourse analysis and emphasise

that it is impossible to present everything in transcription and that researchers always need to make decisions about what kind of detailed information to include.

There is some difference of opinion regarding whether the researcher should transcribe all tapes. Some feel that the researcher should transcribe all material where others feel that the researcher should transcribe a few interviews and then develop a transcription protocol (Lapadat, 2000). It remains important for the researcher to always remain aware of the difficulties surrounding transcribing.

In this project I opted for a denaturalised version of transcription. After transcribing two interviews I developed a transcription protocol and used the assistance of a transcriber. The transcription protocol was loosely based on guidelines of Parker (2005) and preserved some of the messiness of ordinary speech (Devault, 1990) but also removed some the detail related to speech act mechanics.

The transcription guidelines as set out were:

- Indicate who is speaking by an initial, eg. A:
- Indicate emphasis by underlining
- Shouting by capital letters
- Interrupt by one person [Followed by [
- Overlap =
- Hesitation ()
- [unclear]
- Pause …
- [other things: noises laughter etc]

In terms of direct quotations from interview material used in the data analysis section in chapter 6, it is important to note that these quotations are used to give examples of participants' expressions and to indicate how certain discourses, ideas and meanings are represented in the interviews. As the purpose of these quotations is to reflect meaning, most of these quotations were 'cleaned up' in terms of grammatical errors and other speech aspects not directly related to the meaning of what was said.

Discourse Analysis

The use and study of discourse was discussed in chapter 2 and also in chapter 4 and will here be discussed only in terms of the use and application of discourse analysis in this study particularly. As can be seen from the previous chapters, discourse analysis as a methodology has developed tremendously in recent years and a number of different approaches to this method exist. The discussion in chapter 2 illustrated how discourse analysis is a study of signification and the "horizon of meaning" (Parker, 1999, p. 3) of texts. The discussion in chapter 4 illustrated how discourse studies differ in terms of conceptualisation of discourse as well as the point of investigation. The focus point of discourse studies broadly falls on a continuum from micro focus (with detailed explorations of speech acts) to macro focus (with exploration of universal and generalised broader societal discourses) (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The purpose of this study is to analyse middle management women's talk to explore the gender discourses that inform their talk and their ways of making sense of the world and to explore how they negotiate dominant and marginal discourses of gender in the construction of their own gender and identity as well as the production and resistance of the status quo. Thus for purposes of this study, a form of discourse analysis that focuses on the text as well as the broader societal dominant and marginal discourses is indicated.

In terms of Alvesson and Karreman's (2000) distinction (earlier described in chapter 4), this study's point of focus therefore falls in the category of a meso-discourse analysis where sensitivity towards language use is combined with an awareness of broader patterns of meaning and discourse. In the attention towards the broader societal patterns of meaning and dominant discourse, this version of discourse analysis leans toward critical discourse that aims to render an "account of intricate relationships between text, talk, social cognition, power, society and culture" (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000, p. 1 132). The distinction of Alvesson and Karreman (2000) stems from organisational theory and is somewhat different from the recent distinction between discursive psychology and Foucauldian discourse analysis that has emerged in psychology research publications (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Wiggins & Potter, 2008; Willig, 2008). Discursive psychology is described as being strongly influenced by conversation analysis principles and it is concerned with discourse practices and the performative nature of discourses and how discourses act in the talk of participants (Willig, 2008). Discursive psychology sees discourse as both constructed and constructive, action-oriented and as situated in a sequential speech, institutional and rhetoric environments

(Wiggins & Potter). Foucauldian discourse analysis is described as focusing on discursive resources or what Willig (2008) describes as the "discursive economy" (p. 172) and its role in selfhood, the power issues involved and how the "discursive economy" supports institutions and social practices. Willig (2008) describes the work of Parker (1992) as an expression of Foucauldian discourse analysis and notes the steps he sets out as a guide to practising Foucauldian discourse analysis. Hook (2001), however, notes that Parker's (1992) version does not address historical context or genealogy of discourse, the social, historical and political underwriting conditions of knowledge or the materiality of discourse adequately. Hook (2001) further comments that Foucault did not reduce discourse to meaning and this notion differs from Parker's (1992) idea that discourse analysis can be done where there is meaning. Hook (2001) notes that a Foucauldian understanding of discourse involves more than meaning and includes historical and material contextualisation of discourse.

The data analysis procedure used in this study was heavily influenced by this work of Parker (1992) and is described in more detail below. Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2008) conclude their description of Foucauldian discourse analysis with the statement: "We also cautiously advised that perhaps there is no such thing as 'Foucauldian discourse analysis', and that if such a thing existed it would look quite different to linguistic versions of discourse" (p. 105). This statement reflects some of the difficulty with categorising and distinguishing different forms of discourse analysis and illustrates some of the complexities in defining the discourse analysis used in this study. It therefore makes sense not to consider discourse analysis as a singular thing but rather a process of observation and exploration.

The version of discourse analysis used in this study is informed firstly by Alvesson and Karreman's (2000) focus of meso-discourse, where the broader discursive patterns are explored with a sensitivity to the language use of participants. In terms of the distinction between Foucauldian discourse analysis and discursive psychology, the analysis fell more in the domain of Foucauldian discourse analysis while retaining some elements of discursive psychology as it retained some focus on the language use and speech acts of participants. It is, however, not Foucauldian in that it does not offer a genealogy of the discourses discussed and explored (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). The Foucauldian aspects that were addressed in this study were the technologies of the self, subject positions and subjectification (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008) and exploring how these technologies are used to govern the self, the different subject positions as well as the ethics of self-formation. There was a focus

on the interface of discourse and practice and discourse and subjectivity dimensions (Willig, 2008) .

Data Analysis Procedures

Given that no clear step-by-step approaches exist in terms of discourse analysis, I used the point of focus (meso-approach) as guideline and starting point for approaching the data. With an awareness of the aim of the study and a point of departure I immersed myself in the data and read and re-read it a number of times until a manner of approach and structure emerged. I first analysed each interview separately in detail before a cross-analysis between the different interviews started.

I read the transcribed data of each interview separately. The first step here involved reading the text and making notes and free-associating on words and themes as they emerged. The second step involved re-encountering the interview, this time with a few specific questions in mind, to see what emerged. The answers to these questions formed further free associations and notes. The questions I used to assist my reading of each interview were:

- Which objects are spoken about and how are they constructed?
- What kind of subject positions are available in this text? Who must one be to understand the text?
- Are there any explicit or implicit contradictions in the text?
- What does the text want me to think, believe and feel?
- How does the text achieve this?
- Which institutions are supported by this text?

Some of these questions were taken from the work of Parker (1992) and others were developed as I sat with the data.

The questions that were taken from the work of Parker (1992) came from the following criteria for distinguishing discourse that he identified. Parker (1992) identified 20 steps originally and the following were particularly useful in the analysis:

- The transcription of interview material into text – the object of study becomes a text.

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Initial exploration of the text includes free association on aspects and ideas. This free association involves exploring the connotations and links associated with the text.

- Distinction between two layers of objectification: the objects or topics the text refers to and the discourses present in the text.

- Identifying the subjects of the text and the knowledge necessary for participation in the discourse.

- Identifying which cultural understandings are employed by the text. Identifying contrasting discourses and points of overlap between them. Identifying reflexivity in the discourse which can point to other discourses present. Reflecting on the historical situatedness of the text.

- Investigating which institutions are supported by the discourse and how the text would deal with objections.

- Investigating the reproduction of power relations and examining the ideological effects of the discourse (from Parker, 1992).

The questions I developed allowed me to identify and reflect on specific discourses as they emerged in the texts and the third step in working with individual interviews then involved identifying specific discourses in each interview.

After dealing with each individual interview separately I then reflected on a cross-analysis by reflecting on the discourses as they emerged in the different interviews to see how different discourses and patterns or ideas developed and if there were any differences in the discourses. I would typically use phrases that made an impression on me such as 'it's my fault' as an expression of a certain discourse. This process therefore involved isolating different discourses as far as possible. With these discourses in mind I re-read the data, searching for expressions of these discourses as well as their effects, contradictions and silences around them. I used coloured pens to identify certain discourses in the text and then started writing about these discourses. Writing about the discourses, how they emerged, what they represented and which other discourses they referred to formed another part of the process as it sometimes caused me to revisit some of my ideas about how a discourse operates.

In the end, I found that some discourses crystallised into shapes and forms that gained structure. They propelled me into different lines of thought, they engaged my imagination,

reminded me of images, stories, books and films. As such, they perturbed me and gained a sort of externalised shape. This allowed me to communicate with them and to feel their effects. While all of this was happening, I was moving around, walking in the veld, sitting in the sun with pages of interview text and free association notes. An internal dialogue started that prompted me to write. As such, my experience of these discourses involved a whole body immersion experience with excitement and curiosity as different discourses, ideas, feelings and arguments developed.

Criteria for Establishing the Trustworthiness of the Study

Fixed quality criteria for qualitative research from postmodern or interpretivist standpoints are not available and where earlier positivist qualitative researchers struggled to develop set criteria for qualitative research, this has become even more problematic with the advent of postmodern qualitative research (Seale, 2003). The acknowledgement of the inability of language to reflect a complete picture of the world renders all scientific accounts vulnerable and introduces a crisis of validity (Gergen & Gergen, 2003). Early criteria for evaluating the trustworthiness of qualitative research include those of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and also Marshall and Rossman. Lincoln and Guba (1985) use criteria such as credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability and later also included authenticity (Schwandt, 2001). Marshall and Rossman (1999) use credibility, transferability, confirmability, and replicability as quality criteria for qualitative research.

The above criteria were kept in mind in this study but the work of Parker (2005) was found very useful with regards to setting up criteria for evaluating the trustworthiness of social constructionist research and this study. Parker (2005) mentions the importance of grounding work in existing research. In this study this is particularly important as much has been written on this topic and the existing research and literature is important in terms of the available constructions of the issue. The next criterion is coherence and I focus on coherence of argument in this study. The next criterion of importance is that of accessibility with clear accounts of and descriptions of the research process, the background to the research and the interpretations. In this study this was aimed for throughout with description of and transparency of the research process and I include comments and reflections on the process as it progressed. The principle adhered to here is that adequate description increases the credibility of the research as Parker suggests that it is important to know how we know

instead of what we know and the "starting point is to emphasise *the activity or process of research rather than the objects we attempt to know*" (p. 3).

Reflexivity forms another way of increasing the accountability and credibility of the research, as the emotional investments, positions, and the moral political standpoint are made explicit to the reader (Gergen & Gergen, 2003; Parker, 2005). Reflexivity is engaged in here with the assumption that visibility of my position is important as it assists the reader to contextualise the study but at the same time, the main aim remains to reflect on and explore the conversations with the participants and how meaning and realities are constructed in these conversations. The issue of voice is often important in constructionist research and participants are often asked to comment on the researcher's interpretations. In this study this was not undertaken as the aim was not to privilege the immediate perspectives of the participants but to explore the different discourses present in the texts. Triangulation in the context of this study involves showing different ways in which the issue might be understood and this is explored in the final chapter (Parker, 2005). Finally, in the last chapter I use some literary styling to express my conclusions and ideas of the data in a different manner. Gergen and Gergen (2003) describes literary styling as an alternative to realist approaches and the use of the literary mode indicates to the reader that the account is not an accurate map of reality but an interpretive act. In this study, this is used to a limited extent as I use a metaphor from fiction when concluding and summarising. This is clearly an interpretive act with the intention of allowing the material to speak differently and to be heard differently.

Given the complexities of quality criteria in qualitative research, the following statement by Alvesson (2002) serves as an apt summary of important factors and the need for research to be based on "(a) care, awareness and insightful handling of the production/construction processes; and (b) care in the interpretation of it" (p. 166). This statement informed much of my approach to creating trustworthy and credible research.

Ethical Procedures

The study received ethical clearance from the Ethics and Quality Control Committee of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Pretoria. The ethical principles of confidentiality, privacy, consent and doing no harm were adhered to in this study (Olesen, 2005). Participants were contacted telephonically, informed about the aim of the study and asked if they were willing to participate in the study. They were informed that I would need about an hour of

their time and that the interview would be recorded. They were informed that their participation would be anonymous and that the research would be published in a research dissertation and academic journals. On the day of the interview I explained the purpose of the study again and reiterated confidentiality and that all identifying information would be removed from the raw data including names of organisations or employers that might come up during the interview. On completion of one of the interviews one participant requested that a particular section of the interview be removed and this was done accordingly. I also explained that participants were free to withdraw from participation at any time during the interview.

All the participants seemed to enjoy the interviews and none of them seemed to experience visible distress during the course of the conversations. Feminist approaches to ethics (Gergen, 2008; Olesen, 2005) consider issues of power and strive for research that is collaborative and participatory. I remained aware of this during interviews and was conscious of the power that the interviewer or researcher might have (Olesen, 2005). I think that participants felt free to express their own opinions even when they were under the impression that it differed from mine. My experience of the interviews is that they did not create a power relationship that silenced participants or privileged specific viewpoints or voices. Participants generally expressed the desire to be helpful but also expressed their own views with ease. There was also no deception used in the study. Part of feminist ethics further involves considering the impact of the research and how the research can contribute to improve or enhance the lives of women and the aim of this study is to gain further understanding of the gender stratification of the workplace in order to generate knowledge that can be used to address the issue (Brabeck & Brabeck, 2009). A number of participants became interested in the topic as the interview progressed and mentioned that they had not given the topic much thought before and that they had a few things to ponder after the interview. This is a good example of how interviews are more than data gathering conversations but rather creative and political interactions.

Conclusion

It is not advisable to aim for recipes of research within the framework of social constructionism and in the course of this research project the methodology and research processes used, although guided by literature on discourse analysis and social constructionism, developed in an organic way from the interaction of the researcher, the participants and the data. Thus the statement that discourse analysis is different for different

people. Within the difference and methodological diversity I aim for good practice in qualitative research, hoping to achieve trustworthy use and interpretation of the data by keeping the reader in the loop by disclosing my own orientation and making the research process and how it came to its conclusions clear.