The Discursive Construction of Minority Sexual Identity in Work Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Sexuality is arguably the most under researched of all diversity areas in work organizations, and it is also one of the most difficult to research. Although studies have been carried out into the work experiences of sexual minorities, the focus has been the individual rather than the organization they work for; this thesis aims to address this gap, reporting on minority sexual identity, and its construction, in specific organizations. This process of identity construction within work organizations is located ontologically within theories of social constructionism, discourse and performativity, and explored empirically with reference to six organizations drawn from three different industry sectors: the Emergency Services, the Civil Service and the Banking sector. One of the main challenges of this type of research is a methodological one; discourse about sexual minorities is difficult to record. This thesis describes a novel method, a double-level story-telling process; sexual minorities recounted stories of their own workplace experiences, with further discourse created through the retelling of these stories in organizational focus groups. Three main themes emerged from the data: Silence, Disclosure and Response. Although sexuality is talked about, issues of voice and silence are particularly pertinent for those who are not part of the dominant heterosexual discourse. Disclosure of minority sexual identity presents the individual with a range of choices. Some choose to stay silent; others find their sexuality accidentally discovered, some are open about their minority sexuality when they start in a new workplace. Others decide at some stage to 'come out' to colleagues and friends. The act of disclosure or lack of it, and the response it engenders, has widespread repercussions for one's identity in the workplace. The thesis aims to contribute to our understanding of the workplace discursive construction of minority sexual identity, as well as contributing to our understanding of silence, disclosure and difference in organizations.

FOREWORD

Research involving narrative techniques affords the researcher with an opportunity to share personal experiences, the impact that the story has on the researcher, (Case, 2004; Winstanley, 2004), and the impact that the researcher has on the research. After all, the construction of any work always bears the mark of the person who created it, (Riessman, 1993: v). Since this thesis tells many stories, it would be unfair, perhaps even unethical not to tell my own. I therefore begin this thesis by locating myself and one of the events that led up to the research undertaking.

Several years ago, I had a conversation that was to change my life. At the time I was working for a major multinational, an organization that is almost a household name, where I believed like many other lesbian and gay people, that my sexual orientation had nothing to do with my work, and that I had never been discriminated against. It was not to continue. I was doing well; I had been to California and was asked to go and manage the company's operations in south-east Asia. A challenge which I felt able to meet and a promotion I was grateful to accept. Until, that is, I found out soon afterwards that homosexuality is illegal in Singapore, where the job was to be based, punishable by twenty-five years in prison. It took my (same-sex) partner and me less than 10 minutes to decide that this was not going to be possible. I returned to work to turn down the role. I had been out at work for some time, but it transpired in the course of the conversation with my boss, that he did not know. When I told him why I could not go to Singapore, I was expecting some warm words of comfort, at least an assurance that it did not matter and perhaps an indication of the next exciting role that was awaiting me. Instead, he declaimed six words that have stayed with me ever since, "Your career is at an end." It took me some time to face up to what had happened; part of the motivation for carrying out this course of academic study was to work through this event that had happened some years earlier. Using a Foucauldian analysis of the situation, perhaps this thesis is my resistance. Writing the last words of my thesis is cathartic in that I, as well as all the people who took part in this research, will have narratively developed an understanding of our own subjectivity and the subject positions that are available for us to adopt, though for me the fear and dread of that, or something similar, happening again will never be completely expurgated. The whole process has changed me (and, of course, my identity).

Methodologically, this thesis has been important to me in that it has brought together my interest in organizations with my own longstanding interest in language. I started my academic life as a linguist, and it has been a source of personal fulfilment to bring my interest in languages and linguistics to bear on my later interest in organizations. And, of course, there is always my love of stories...

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1. *INTRODUCTION*

1.1 THE DYNAMICS OF MINORITY SEXUALITY IN WORK ORGANIZATIONS IS AN UNDER-RESEARCHED AREA

The research grew out of a perception that of all diversity categories, there remains one that continues to be under-researched by organizational researchers, and struggles to be a recognized element of the diversity agenda within organizations. Indeed it is one of the most taboo topics within contemporary organizational theory: sexuality in general, and sexual minorities in particular, (Klawitter, 1998; McQuarrie, 1998; Hancock & Tyler, 2001). Even though the move to business case justifications for diversity interventions has broadened definitions of diversity to include sexual orientation, the lack of a legal imperative in the past for organizations to show any interest in this area has meant that references to sexual orientation in the diversity literature in the past have been at best cursory, perhaps giving a definition of diversity to include sexual orientation before returning quickly to the discussion on race or gender, (Kossek & Lobel, 1996; Cornelius, 2001; Ward, 2001; Zanoni & Janssens, 2003). Sexual orientation has also received less attention from organizational researchers in that it is, unlike most other forms of diversity, invisible (Woods & Lucas, 1993; Badgett & King, 1997), and in many cases silent. Invisible forms of diversity have been less researched in the management area than visible forms such as gender or race, (Clair, Beatty, & MacLean, 2002; Bowen & Blackmon, 2003: 1400); while Mumby (2004) suggests that identities may be the most fruitful focus of research in the area of critical discourse studies, he suggests that these identities might be "gendered" or "raced", (Mumby, 2004: 252). It is also suggested here that sexuality has, in the past, not been seen as an important area in organization studies by people working in organizations themselves.

1.1.1 The legal framework

The diversity management and organizational studies agendas have been changing, most notably since the dominant mobilizing vocabulary has moved from the need for social justice and morality to the business case for equality, (Dickens, 1997; Webb, 1997; Noon & Ogbonna, 2001). Operating within this new paradigm, diversity management is about valuing difference, and allowing every individual to reach their potential, rather than focusing on particular disadvantaged groups. Although the concept of diversity management overlaps with equal opportunities, it places different

emphases in its motivation, approach and methods for tackling this issue. Whereas the equal opportunities paradigm was concerned with an approach based on policies and procedures (driven by legislation such as the Sex Discrimination Acts 1975 and 1986, the Race Relations Act 1976, the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995) to promote fairness and equal opportunity, diversity management has concerned itself with building the business case for valuing difference, using organizational initiatives to emphasize the performance benefits of having a diverse workforce.

As such, diversity management weds the ethical agenda for fair treatment to the business agenda for high-performing organizations. Like equal opportunities, it aims at achieving a diverse workforce, and removing obstacles which prevent that, but because the motivation is about valuing difference and removing discrimination, the focus is less narrow than equal opportunities, going beyond race and gender to include sexual orientation, nationality, language, religion, lifestyle, ability and disability, family structure and age, amongst other aspects.

Yet, there is a tension between the rhetoric of diversity management, which encompasses many different minority groups, and the reality, reflected in the diversity management literature, where race and gender remain the focus of research, (Kossek & Lobel, 1996: 2). Indeed, sexual orientation and minority sexual identity in the workplace continues to be under-researched by organizational researchers. This is despite the fact that sexuality has been a subject for research since the 19th century, not only in medicine and psychology, but progressively crossing disciplines so that queer theorists (see section 3.2 for an explanation of Queer Theory) can now be found in nearly every academic discipline, including psychoanalysis, sociology, philosophy, literature and anthropology. However, organizational researchers have been slower to look at issues concerning sexual minorities in organizations for various different reasons. Even though diversity management tries to be all-inclusive and is driven by the business case, in reality many organizations start taking issues of equity seriously when forced to do so by legislation. Despite the raft of legislative measures referred to above, protection against discrimination for sexual minorities in law was only introduced in the UK at the end of 2003, (Employment Equality Regulations {Sexual Orientation} 2003), and only then because the British Government were obliged to do so by the European Union. However, despite this legislation being in place in several states in the US for

some years, minority sexualities in organizations are still under-researched in the United States. We therefore have to look further for a more convincing explanation.

1.1.2 Invisibility has been a key inhibiting factor in studying sexual minorities in organizations

Invisibility has provided, and continues to provide, researchers with a unique set of difficulties. There is a lack of information on what the issues actually are, which people are affected and where they work, as well as how their identity is formed by the organizational culture in which they work. Indeed, despite the large amount of research in lesbian and gay studies, only a small portion of the research is evident in core sociology textbooks and research literature, let alone organization studies literature. Most theory books in sociology and organization studies continue to overlook queer theory, excluding sexual minorities from the larger sociological landscape, (Nardi, 2002: 45). This is not a recent phenomenon; some time ago Arlene Stein and Ken Plummer (1994) made the case that gay and lesbian issues inhabit the margins of sociology, (Nardi, 2002: 45). That said, it appears that the situation is starting to change, with articles with a focus on minority sexuality now starting to appear in mainstream, peer reviewed cross-discipline and organization studies journals such as Personnel Review, Journal of Management Studies and Human Relations, (Day & Schoenrade, 2000; Bowen & Blackmon, 2003; Ward & Winstanley, 2003). This suggests that perhaps sexual minorities are moving from the margins to the mainstream and that there is a growing academic interest in sexuality amongst organizational and diversity researchers.

1.1.3 Sexuality has only been recently recognized as being important in the workplace

During this research project, a question was raised by many people: does sexuality in the workplace matter? The view held by many people is that it does not. It is expressed in different ways; during the field work for this project, even diversity professionals made comments such as, 'That is personal to the individual', or 'The organization is not ready to take action in this area'. In addition, the findings of this project will discuss comments made by heterosexual employees such as 'I don't talk about my sexuality at work – why should they?' Perhaps the most confusing has been when lesbian, gay and bisexual employees themselves say 'My sexuality has nothing to do with my career', a comment made many times during research

interviews. In this context then, it is unsurprising that this has been an under-researched area; organizational researchers depend on finding willing organizations as research subjects, and it is only relatively recently that organizations are starting to show an interest in this area, though that interest is growing with even the Harvard Business Review running an article called "Is this the right time to come out?", (Williamson, 1993).

1.2 MINORITY SEXUALITY IS AN IMPORTANT AREA FOR RESEARCH

Workplaces are sexual places (Hearn, Sheppard, Tancred-Sheriff, & Burrell, 1989; Woods & Lucas, 1993; Gabriel, 2000: 174), even if they are viewed as heterosexual workplaces. They are sexual places in a number of ways; first, organizations are segregated places, with sexual minorities congregating in certain work organizations. Second, people interact on a sexual level at work. Third, sexuality can also be expressed in the workplace in many different, sometimes even non-sexual, ways, (Woods & Lucas, 1993; Gabriel, Fineman, & Sims, 2000).

Organizations are segregated places, with sexual minorities congregating in certain work organizations. Previous research suggests that sexual minorities may congregate in some occupations rather than others. One reason for this may be geography; gays and lesbians are more likely to be located in urban areas than other people, (Binnie & Skeggs, 2004). One study in the US found that 59% of men in same sex couples were clustered in 20 cities. Gay people move to urban areas to find a tolerant labour market and a supportive gay community, (Klawitter, 2002: 333). Another reason may be the perceived tolerance of certain occupations; Badgett and King (1997) studied the occupational choice by gays and lesbians and how closely it followed the occupational patterns of anti-gay sentiments. Their results suggest that while gay men cluster in more tolerant occupations, lesbians do not, (Klawitter, 2002: 333).

People interact in a sexual way at work; the way people dress, their jokes and their interactions, even flirtations, (Woods & Lucas, 1993). It is interesting to note that a number of people interviewed as part of this project had met a partner, long- or short-term, at work. Clearly, actual sexual contact at work is rare, but the workplace nevertheless involves a good deal of socializing, and opportunities to meet friends, boyfriends, girlfriends, husbands, wives and partners. There are official and unofficial social events where such partners and friends are invited. Traditionally, these are occasions where sexual minorities have felt excluded, although this is

increasingly becoming rare. This research has shown that, increasingly, lesbians and gay men now bring their same-sex partners to social functions and this is well received by many of their colleagues.

Sexuality is also expressed at work in non-sexual ways, since discussions at work, even innocent ones, imply sexual orientation; talk of the weekend, the family and the children reinforce the heterosexual orientation of the majority of employees, and again it is a situation from which many people, though not exclusively sexual minorities, feel excluded, (Woods & Lucas, 1993). The laddish or macho culture of the organizations which took part in this research project was often raised as an issue, to be expected in the Police and Fire Service, but less expected though still present in the Civil Service and the Banks. The way this expressed itself ranged from the sort of banter heard in the station or office, to the type of after-work socializing, to an almost obsessive preoccupation by heterosexual men with certain sporting activities. On numerous occasions, sexual minorities felt excluded from conversation.

Sexuality has an enormous impact on the relations we form at work with our colleagues and customers, how well we perform, and ultimately the quality of our work. Sexual minorities may well choose to keep their sexuality out of the workplace, but in doing so they are making a decision which heterosexual colleagues do not have to make. They are also isolating themselves from a potentially very creative source of interaction. They may also choose to talk about their sexuality openly, in the same way that their heterosexual colleagues do. In either case, as they make this decision, their sexuality necessarily becomes, by definition, something to do with their career.

1.3 SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

In defining the scope of this project it was necessary to decide which groups or categories would be included in the study, and which would be excluded. To restrict the study to one particular category, which has been done in previous empirical research, for example gay men, (Woods & Lucas, 1993; Shallenberger, 1994), or lesbians, (Hall, 1989; Boatwright, Gilbert, Forrest, & Ketzenberger, 1996) was felt to be too narrow for the study of minority, that is to say non-heterosexual, sexual identity. The scope was minority sexual orientation, and therefore broadened out to include lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual identities. The latter was somewhat of an unusual inclusion, since the category is about gender identification, rather than

sexual orientation; it is also covered by separate legislation which is not discussed in this thesis. However, transgender individuals chose voluntarily to take part in the study, classifying themselves as belonging to a minority sexuality, and in addition, they have interesting issues of sexual orientation, which do not change when they change their gender. A previously heterosexual man may become a lesbian, or a gay man may become a heterosexual woman, and it was felt that they had interesting insights to offer on the issues of minority sexual identity in the workplace. Interestingly, Diana Fuss (1991) suggests that the heterosexual/homosexual binary can only secure its "seemingly inviolable dialectical structure" only by assimilating and internalizing other sexualities such as bisexuality and transsexualism. (Fuss, 1991: 2). It is interesting that the assimilation takes place within the homosexual half of the binary, leaving heterosexuality untainted by any deviation from what is 'normal'.

Those classifications which were deliberately excluded were those which were based on sexual behaviour rather than attraction or orientation, such as sadists, masochists or fetishists of any particular kind. Also excluded were paedophiles, or those who seek out intergenerational sexual relations below the legal common age of consent in the UK.

A word on terminology; a glossary of terms has been provided in Appendix A at the end of the thesis which the reader may find useful. Terminology has been used which is aimed to be inclusive such as 'queer', previously a term of abuse, but now reclaimed, and 'sexual minorities', that is to say those who are not heterosexual, and although the latter term is in less common usage, there is precedent, (Blasius, 2001: 4), and is preferred by the author. Queer theory, is referred to, rather than lesbian and gay studies; the former is a more recent academic movement recognizing the impact of discourse and language as well as the fluidity and instability of identity. The latter refers more to the academic area of study in the 1970s and 1980s which focused on the essential identity of lesbians and gay men.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The project takes a two-tier discourse analytic approach, exploring the relationship between the act of "coming out" or disclosure of lesbian and gay identity, the silence which is such an important part of gay experience in organizations and the work context. Discourse, along with the social practices that are an integral part of it, plays an important role in asserting, positioning and assessing one's sense of subjectivity,

as well as constituting the subject positions which are available for people to occupy in organizations.

This thesis utilizes data on a range of situations that is usually extremely difficult to access. First, it is difficult to access because sexuality, particularly in the workplace is seen as belonging to the private domain. Second, it is a difficult area of study because the postmodern view of sexual identity has made it difficult to focus on the individual as a subject of study. Queer theory suggests that identities are multiple and fragmented; as Gamson (2000) puts it, "hardly the stuff that allows a researcher to confidently run out and study sexual subjects as if they are coherent and available social types." But above all, it is the institutional that has been under-researched in organizational discourse analysis, (Gamson, 2000; Mumby, 2004: 252), as well as the relationship between the institutional and the discursive as a means of constructing the individual and their identity, especially as Mumby (2004) suggests "in the context of complex and contradictory relations of organizational power", (Mumby, 2004: 252). It is this area where data on minority sexuality is hardest to collect.

This project has aimed to address this by using a novel research method, incorporating a two-tier discourse analytic research method. It is based on storytelling and focus group research in six case-study organizations; two banks, two government departments and two emergency services, the police and the fire service. Each case study was conducted separately, and the first stage of the research involved individual interviews with between 7 and 22 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual people in each organization, where they were encouraged to tell stories about their experiences and how these have had an impact on their identity. The stories were then taken to focus groups in the same organization, to discuss, consider and give their reaction. Only stories from the police were used in police focus groups, and only stories from Bank B were used in focus groups in Bank B, and so on. The focus groups were drawn together from a cross section of staff within each organization.

The two-tier discourse analytic approach was intended to generate two different sorts of discourse material; personal experiences expressed as stories, and group interaction and conversations based on the stories of sexual identity and experience. Finally, issues of power and control are played through these critical instances of identity presentation, being evident in the discourse of coming out, silence and work context, (Ward & Winstanley, 2002).

1.5 AIM OF THE THESIS

The aim of the thesis is to explore the processes that construct the minority sexual subject in organizations, following in the tradition of post-structuralists and discourse analysts, (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002: 14), who, having decentred the subject are interested in how the subject is created, shaped and formed by those very processes. It is important to note here the midway theoretical position that is at the basis of the thesis. On the one hand, whilst it is recognized that identity is a social construction, and therefore theoretically not real, it is still a very real phenomenon for sexual minorities in organizations and therefore worthy of studying. On the other hand, it is recognized that identity is fragmented, and the same individual may take up a variety of different subject positions, (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002: 41). This is an important point for the thesis as a whole; whilst the thesis is looking at minority sexual identity, and therefore concerned with the discourses associated with sexuality in organizations, it is recognized that these are not the only discourses in operation in organizations. The same person may take up a subject position as an out lesbian, a voter in the election, a managing director, a guest at a dinner party or someone from a working-class background; all these different subject positions may be equally valid for the same person, but different discourses will be in operation and none is necessarily more important than any of the others.

1.6 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

The next section (section 2) explores the ontological basis underpinning the research, that is to say, social constructionism and discourse theory. There are many different definitions of discourse and discourse analysis. Section 2.2 takes definitions from different sources and develops a working definition for this thesis. Section 2.1 locates discourse theory within its ontological base of social constructionism; the idea that the world around us has been constructed has been around for some time, for example Berger and Luckman (1967), but recent interest in discourse, especially in the field of organization studies has reawakened interest in this area. This section explores the 'linguistic turn' in organization studies. Section 2.3 then goes on to explore the main poststructuralist building blocks of discourse theory, concentrating on those elements which will prove useful in developing an approach for studying the construction of identity. For example, based on de Saussure's structural linguistics, section 2.3.1 looks at the development of the concept of binary oppositions, in particular the way that Derrida built on de Saussure's ideas through the development of his concepts of Différance and

Deconstruction (sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3) to introduce ideas of power and domination, by showing that one term is always superior to the other. The discussion then turns to the other well known proponent of ideas of power and knowledge in discourse, Foucault. In section 2.3.4, Foucault's archaeological approach is discussed, and in particular his idea that an integral part of discourse are the rules that allow people to say, think and do some things and not others. The discussion then moves on to Foucault's approach to Power (sections 2.3.5 and 2.3.6) and one of the ways that minorities are marginalized in discourse through dividing practices (section 2.3.7). This is followed by a critique of the Foucauldian approach, recognizing that his ideas have, at one time or another, been seen as contentious. There have been different approaches to power in the literature, and a different approach could have been taken, for example Giddens' Structuration Theory, (Giddens, 1976, 1979, 1984), or Lukes' three-dimensional model, (Lukes, 1974), which are amongst the more well known ones. These approaches have had an important impact on our conceptualization of power, with Giddens primarily being interested in the reconciliation of the agency/structure duality and reflexivity of the subject, while Lukes' approach considers the way that power is exercised at different levels in organizations. Foucault's ideas, however, became crucially important to this project for four main reasons. First, he was a gay philosopher himself, and was one of the most important thinkers in developing our understanding of homosexuality; second, he challenged our understanding of sexuality as an essential, biological feature of our being by suggesting that sexuality was socially constructed, pointing to a remarkable proliferation of discourses about sexuality in the 19th century, (Foucault, 1976). One of Foucault's most provocative assertions and certainly one that acted as a catalyst for the development of queer theory, was that modern homosexuality is of comparatively recent origin, having grown out of a particular context in the 1870s. Third, Foucault was one of the main proponents of the idea that, just as sexuality generally should be, homosexuality should be viewed as a category of knowledge rather than a discovered identity, (Foucault, 1976; Spargo, 1999), constructed through discourse. Discourse theory has therefore become an important part of studying sexuality and minority sexual identity in particular thanks to Foucault's work. Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, there is an established tradition of using Foucault's work in organization studies, (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996: 206; Knights, 2002: 576).

Section 3, Conceptualizing sexual identity, begins by acknowledging that the study of identity is one of the most popular areas of study for contemporary organizational

researchers, and has a lengthy pedigree. However, previous research taking a discursive approach has argued that because identity is constructed, it may be described as a fiction, or an 'error', particularly the work of Judith Butler (e.g. 1990). This section argues that this approach is akin to a fundamentalist approach to social constructionism, and that while identity may be constructed, this does not mean that it is not worth acknowledging and studying, as it is a very real phenomenon for those that work in organizations. Moreover, to take a discursive monistic approach would deny the useful areas of work on identity that have been carried out previously in sociology. Section 3.1 therefore looks at these previous approaches, with section 3.1 introducing the ideas of Mead and the symbolic interactionists, section 3.1.2 introducing the work of Erving Goffman, section 3.1.3 looking at Giddens' approach to identity, as well as introducing the idea of social identity and the work of Jenkins. In section 3.2, Queer Theory is reviewed; although not the theoretical basis for this thesis, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge the role of queer theorists who have taken the study of minority sexuality from the area of lesbian and gay studies, and, using language and discourse, developed a cross discipline approach that is more inclusive and less centred on the lesbian or gay subject than it is on the heteronormative agenda that constructs them. Having recognized previous approaches, section 3.3 returns to postmodern developments and the construction of sexual identity, and then, in section 3.3.2, returns to Foucault, and his assertion that sexual identity is a historical construction. Finally, in section 3.4 the idea that identity is a process, rather than something which is fixed that the individual can reveal, is discussed and, in particular the idea that identity can be conceived of as 'identity work', as the individual develops a narrative of the self through their interaction with the discourse around them. This section ends with an exposition of the theory of performativity, which is useful in developing our understanding of the coming out process, and the continuing performance of minority sexual identity in the workplace.

Section 4 reviews the literature on sexual minorities in work organizations. This is an under-researched area and whilst there is burgeoning literature on sexualities, and a growing interest in sexuality in organization studies the number of books and articles published in peer-reviewed journals is still relatively low. Nevertheless, from this review it was possible to establish that the majority of research in this area has, for good reason, concentrated on the individual as a focus, rather than looking at the organization, lesbian and gay experience rather than the work context, and individual identity to the exclusion of the discourse which constructs it. This chapter is important, then, because it establishes the research gap which this project aims to

address, namely to approach specific organizations and to study the dynamics of minority sexual identity within them. This leads onto section 5, where the research questions are presented.

As discussed earlier, one of the challenges of this type of research is access. Access to the organizations, but also access to the data that will answer the research questions. One of the major contributions of this project, then, is the development of a two-tier discourse analytic approach, based on storytelling that not only accesses the narrative experiences of sexual minorities as individuals, but also gives an insight into the discourse that surrounds them in the workplace. This method is discussed in detail in section 6.

From the review of the literature and of the data, three main themes emerged, and the data is presented in three sections, based on these themes. They are 'Coming Out', 'Silence', and 'Difference'. Coming out is discussed in section 7; the disclosure of minority sexual identity in the workplace is a major feature of the work experience of sexual minorities and to some extent dominates the stories that they have to tell. However, even when they come out, and disclose a previously silenced part of themselves, they find that they have not left silence behind, and they find that silence is part of the discourse that surrounds them in organizations; it was found to be so significant that a separate section, section 8, discusses the dynamics of silence in detail. Finally, once individuals are out they have to manage a different identity and the various different responses to it, and since the response that they receive from others in work organizations does not just consist of silence, section 9 reviews the various types of response which gay colleagues have reported receiving from their work colleagues and the way that heterosexual members of the organizations reacted themselves during the focus groups.

Penultimately, before the conclusion, section 10 discusses the contribution that this project has made to our understanding of the discursive construction of minority sexual identity in work organizations. Section 10.1.1 summarizes the way in which this research has developed our understanding of the nature of silence in organizations and the way in which it has an impact on the subjectivity and subject positions of sexual minorities. Section 10.1.2 summarizes the performative nature of the act of Coming Out, and the way in which minority sexual identity is a reiterated performance. Section 10.1.3 considers what form organizational discourse takes around sexual minorities, and presents a model, which is developed from both the literature and also from a review of the data collected as part of this research. Of

course, there is language and talk, discussed in section 10.1.3a, often taking the form of banter and humour, but discourse does not just take a verbal form; there is also social practice and symbolic media. Specifically, formal and informal Rules, including policies and procedures, are discussed in section 10.1.3b, the Physical Arrangements of the work environment are discussed in section 10.1.3c, Signs and Symbols in the organizations are discussed in 10.1.3d, the dynamics of Dividing Practices are discussed in section 10.1.3e, and finally the Response to Difference from others in the organization is discussed in section 10.1.3f. While discussing the different subjectivities and subject positions created in organizations for sexual minorities, in section 10.2, the discussion turns to the analysis of the stories themselves, and the way that analysis of the plot can help us to understand sexual subjectivity. The notion that the traditional Aristotlean classification of stories is helpful, but does not go far enough, is posited, and as a result three themes or elements of stories are drawn out; one is the symbolic presentation of minority sexual identity in terms of victimhood, another is the element of irony in destabilising traditional conceptions of sexual identity, and the third is the role of the 'cautionary tale' in organizations, and the way that it can help present organizational reality for sexual minorities. Another significant contribution of this project has been to highlight the way in which work context is an important factor in the experience of sexual minorities in work organizations; this is discussed in section 10.3.

2. *DISCOURSE THEORY*

The influence of discourse theory has become widespread in organizational analysis (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996; du Gay, 1996; Hardy & Phillips, 1999; Hardy, Palmer, & Phillips, 2000; Grant, Hardy, Oswick, & Putnam, 2004b), and its role in the construction of social reality has also been acknowledged by queer theorists, (Gamson, 2000), who have highlighted the effect of linguistic practices on the construction of social reality for sexual minorities (see section 3.2 for a more in-depth review of Queer Theory and the link between discourse analysis as an epistemology and its contribution to the study of minority sexual identity). Discourse analysis, that is to say the use of discourse theory to study complex phenomena, is now recognized as one of the prime ways of studying organizational life (du Gay, 1996; Grant et al., 1998; Alvesson & Karreman, 2000; Oswick, Keenoy, & Grant, 2000). This approach suggests that discourse, as theory, not only creates social reality, but, as a means of analysis, also provides ways of understanding the world.

Yet, despite its widespread recognition as having an important contribution both ontologically and epistemologically, there is no agreed-upon definition of discourse theory and discourse analysis itself has, confusingly, many uses (Grant et al., 1998: 1; Alvesson & Karreman, 2000). As a field of study, it incorporates a variety of diverse perspectives, (Grant et al., 1998: 1) and is informed by a diversity of ontological and epistemological positions, (Grant et al., 1998: 13). The challenge, therefore, when using discourse theory is to be precise about what is meant by the term, and to avoid the methodological anarchism or irrationalism that critics have levelled at this approach, (Howarth, 2000: 133). In response to this challenge, this chapter argues for an understanding of discourse theory which is constitutive, that is to say that discourse creates the world around us, and discourse analysis which is both interpretive, that is to say it helps us understand our world, and critical, (Heracleous & Hendry, 2000). These two approaches are not mutually exclusive, and this thesis draws on both. This section aims to explore the aspects of discourse theory which are most useful in supporting this thesis, and argues for a mainly Foucauldian approach, while drawing in other useful key concepts from other theorists, such as, for example, Derrida, where appropriate.

Section 2.1 begins by presenting social constructionism as the ontological basis for a discursive approach. The discussion on social constructionism argues for an approach which, while recognising the primacy of language as both constitutive and

interpretive, also recognises the 'felt real' aspect of certain phenomena and that the reality of lived experience means that, for example, gender and sexuality cannot be dismissed as mere constructions. The way they are understood, however, is crucial and it is this aspect that discourse theory will help us address in an organizational context. In section 2.2, the different ways of considering and defining discourse will be introduced, as well as introducing some of the language associated with discourse analysis or, in other words, the discourse of discourse. Next, in section 2.2.1 the main approaches to discourse are introduced, clarified and contextualized, concentrating on those areas of structuralism and especially post-structuralism which will help develop an approach to discourse theory. Within each, the most important theorists are highlighted. For example, the ideas of Ferdinand de Saussure will be explored to illustrate the main tenets of structuralism. The writings of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault will help to explain poststructuralist approaches. Clearly, the chapter takes more of a general approach to discourse analysis, but with the ultimate aim of exploring the ways in which discourse theory is able to support the exploration of the topic, namely the identity of sexual minorities in the workplace. At the same time, however, it is important to remember that organizations are not "discursively monolithic, but pluralistic and polyphonic, involving multiple dialogical practices that occur simultaneously and sequentially" (Humphreys & Brown, 2002: 422). Although this thesis aims to explore discourses on and about sexuality and specifically minority sexuality in organizations, it is recognized that discourses of sexuality are just some of many discourses which occur in organizations, and that there are many other discourses and identities which are beyond the scope of this thesis. The chapter concludes by highlighting the need to explore subjectivity and the role of the subject in discourse in order to utilize discourse analysis as a method for exploring minority sexual identity, which will be the focus of chapter 3.

2.1 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM AND THE LINGUISTIC TURN

The idea of the primacy of language in constructing our social reality is not new. The structuralist linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure argued in a series of lectures between 1906 and 1911 that language does not so much reflect as construct social reality, (Jagose, 1996: 79), challenging then the orthodox view that objects were assumed to have existed first (the essential, pre-discursive approach), and language was subordinate and constrained by them, (du Gay, 1996). Now theorists from many different fields, for example, philosophy, literature, feminism (and queer theory), anthropology and sociology have declared language to bring facts into being, (du

Gay, 1996). The idea that things have meaning only through a particular system of classification or 'language game', as Wittgenstein suggested, has profound consequences. The nature and essence of things is under question if one accepts that it has been socially constructed through language, (Burr, 1995; du Gay, 1996).

For de Saussure, language is not some second-order system whose function is simply to describe what is already there, (Jagose, 1996: 79), instead objects are constituted by the very language that is used to describe them. One of his main ideas was to describe what he thought was a common misconception, that language is the medium through which we express our authentic selves, our private thoughts and emotions. He asserted that our self-identity, our authentic self in other words, is constituted through language. In sociology, this idea was identified and taken forward by Mead (1934) and the symbolic-interactionists, (Mead, 1934), and it continued with the work of Berger and Luckman, (1967). The latter's work had profound implications for the study of identity, which is understood to be a key element of subjective reality and like all subjective reality, stands in a dialectical relationship with society and social reality. Crucially, Berger and Luckman put forward the view that identity is formed by social processes, (Berger & Luckman, 1967: 194). Once crystallized, it is maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations. Language is seen as having a critical role in this, for example,

> *" Language, which may be defined here as a system of vocal signs is the most important sign system of human society. Indeed the common objectivations of everyday life are maintained primarily by linguistic signification".* (Berger & Luckman, 1967: 51).

An understanding of language is thus essential for the understanding of the reality of everyday life as it constitutes both the most important content and the most important instrument of socialization. Language is the principal vehicle of the translation of objective reality into subjective reality, (Berger & Luckman, 1967: 153), and therefore the principal vehicle for the construction of identity. But it is important to note that construction is neither a single act nor a causal process initiated by a subject and culminating in a set of fixed effects. It is instead a process which operates through the reiteration of norms, (Butler, 1993).

This dialectic of the essentialist versus the social constructionist debate has been the focus of much discussion about the ontology of sexual identity; this very debate has been described as epitomizing one of the most important differences within the

modern history of transgression, (Dollimore, 1991: 11), and particularly in the area of sexuality, (Kitzinger, 1987; Sedgwick, 1991: 91; Seidman, 1996: 1; 2003: 25; Simon, 2003: 26; Weeks, 2003). Few would argue that language and social practice do not have an effect on the way that we understand our world. However, it is difficult to conceive of everything being constructed by language, when so much of our human activity appears to be extra-linguistic, (du Gay, 1996). Indeed, this view is understandable since social practice and lived experience makes us believe that what we feel is fact. It can be argued that language and discourse are the media through which all our understanding is constructed, but when individuals start talking about their own bodies, and especially the materiality of sex, their own experience seems to get in the way, (Butler, 1993).

To define everything as socially constructed would be an extreme position and one which would be difficult to argue in favour of. Indeed, the debate between constructionism, where the world is socially constructed, and essentialism, where objects exist before language, often assumes an argument at one extreme or the other; Judith Butler, feminist and queer philosopher, and a well-known proponent of the constructionist approach, puts forward the view that to follow either one of these arguments misses the point altogether, for the point has never been that everything is discursively constructed; "that view belongs to a discursive monism", (Butler, 1993). Undeniably, the constructionist argument becomes more difficult to accept when considering areas of our lives which we consider to be fact; for example, our bodies live and die, eat and sleep, feel pain, pleasure, endure illness and violence, and it is difficult to dismiss these "facts" as mere construction, (Butler, 1993). Identity is another such area where it is difficult to accept that who we are is constructed by the language around us. Indeed, at the more radical end of the constructionist position, it is easy to portray constructionists as linguistic idealists, or even fundamentalists, refuting the reality of bodies, the relevance of science, the alleged facts of birth, ageing, illness and death. Critics of this approach might also suspect that the constructionist would not allow sexually differentiated bodies, hormonal and chromosomal differences without reference to construction, (Butler, 1993: 10). But there is space for a compromise; it is possible to attain a compromise position and explain the facts that we experience as real, such as pain, pleasure and death, from a socially constructed viewpoint.

Laclau and Mouffe suggested such a compromise in developing the idea that events in the real world, referred to as objects, are real and exist external to thought, but it is

their interpretation, that is to say the concepts that we associate with them, which is socially constructed. For example,

> "The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of "natural phenomena" or "expressions of the wrath of God" depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as subjects outside any discursive conditions of emergence", (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 108).

Following this idea, then, the approach to social constructionism which is being developed in this thesis would not deny that aeroplanes were flown into the World Trade Center on September 11, (Gabriel, 2004c). What is constructed, however, is the meaning associated with that event; whether the terrorists were evil killers, religious fanatics or political activists drawing attention to the plight of the Palestinians depends on the structuring of the discursive field. Human beings need language to give meaning to, and to understand, the world, although there is no dispute that we and the world exist in an essential way. It is not that language is essential to our existence because it brings us into being or feeds us in a literal way; instead, it is our social existence, and our understanding of the meaning that we attribute to it that becomes possible through language, (Butler, 1997: 5).

In order to explore this concept further, let us take two social 'facts' which are germane to this thesis, gender and sexuality, and explore them using this social constructionist compromise. First, let us consider gender. A closer look at some of the common-sense concepts about our ideas of what being a man or a woman means, and they start to disappear before our eyes, (Edwards, Ashmore, & Potter, 1995), since they are made up of a multitude of constructions. Sex and gender are commonly understood to be pre-social and the fact that we are man or woman is understood as a biological, essential fact, and relatively fixed, (Noon & Ogbonna, 2001). Perhaps, it should be no surprise to discover that sex might be biologically derived and underscore the difference between man and woman, although even this is difficult to argue when one considers transgender individuals, transsexuals and intersex individuals. It is difficult to talk of the fixity of sex, when the sex is either

indeterminate to begin with, or changeable at will. But even less stable and 'essential' is the difference between the identity categories of masculine and feminine; these categories are in fact a historical invention, (Irigaray, 1993: 6; du Gay, 1996). The idea of there being two fundamentally different genders, that is to say gendered traits beyond the sexed body, is a relatively recent concept, as society in the Middle Ages operated on a one gender model, (Burkitt, 1998). In the 18th century, an interesting shift took place in how society thought about sexuality; not only the body, but the soul and emotions also become viewed as being gendered, creating a radical shift to a two-sex system, which had enormous consequences for women. Under the one-sex system, or at least the system where the differences in sex was a bodily attribute, men formed the universal human standard; by then becoming a distinct category, women were different and, by definition inferior. A whole host of attributes started to be explained in terms of gender, (Schuyf, 2000), with the feminine being attributed with negative characteristics and the by implication, the masculine adopting a positive meaning. For example, dishonesty was associated with women and therefore honesty became a male characteristic. Women were lascivious, and could not control themselves or their sexuality, and therefore men became the embodiment of sobriety and moderation. Indeed, this stereotypical view of man as the model of sobriety has been carried through to the modern-day organization, with men being seen as rational, analytic, assertive, tough and making good leaders, the perfect picture of asexuality, (Gutek, 1989). The gender category 'masculine' therefore developed its meaning through excluding that which it is not, that is to say 'feminine', (du Gay, 1996).

Second, let us turn the argument to sexuality and sexual orientation. Sexuality is understood by many people as a pre-social ontology, that is to say that it is not created by the social, but is an innate part of the human being. It is considered to be a biological function rooted in evolutionary imperatives, (Epstein, 1996: 147). Gay people feel that their sexuality is not just to do with behaviour, but is an innate part of themselves and feels real. Behaviour and identity then become so entwined that identity is felt to be part of the inner, essential self, and sexual unorthodoxy is a quality inherent in the individuals to which the social then has to respond, (Seidman, 1997). These essentialist positions, seeking recourse to a sexual nature or a pre-cultural structuring of sexuality, are highly contestable, though nevertheless worthy of careful consideration, particularly by those who would argue in favour of the constructionism of sexuality, (Butler, 1993: 94). For example, the search for the "gay gene" continues to generate publicity in a continuing effort to medicalise differences

in gender and sexuality, and confirm the essentialist approach to sexuality, (Kirsch, 2000). In addition, the strength of the essentialist argument in identity politics should not be underestimated; the argument for equal treatment has been predicated on the assumption that sexuality is natural, is beyond choice and is part of the essential being of a person. John Gagnon and William Simon wrote in "Sexual Conduct",

> "At no point is the belief in the natural and universal human more entrenched than in the study of sexuality." (Gagnon, J. & Simon, W. 1973: 3-4 in Epstein, 1996).

However, the essentialist explanation of sexuality does not adequately deal with a number of areas in the study of minority sexualities, concerning the ways in which we understand minority sexual orientation, and the *meaning* of the phenomenon, (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). There is an acceptance in society of the corollary that certain expressions of sexuality are 'natural' while others are therefore 'unnatural', (Epstein, 1996: 147). The idea that sexuality is a biological function rooted in evolution recognizes the primacy of a reproductive sexuality, thereby privileging heterosexuality, (Hancock & Tyler, 2000: 152; Jackson, 2003); this is then translated straightforwardly into social institutions. Furthermore, our understanding of homosexuality is constructed because, just as gender before it, it is a historical construction; the term did not exist before the late 19th century (see section 3.3.2 for a fuller discussion of the historical construction of minority sexuality). Society privileges heterosexuality, and establishes a power-knowledge regime of compulsive heterosexuality (Seidman, 1997; Butler, 1999).

The compromise referred to earlier, then, is the recognition that a phenomenon, such as gender, still exists, even if our understanding of the concept is made up of a multitude of constructions with associated meanings. By the same token, sexuality and sexual orientation exist and even if our understanding of sexual orientation is constructed rather than essential, it is still a real phenomenon for gay people. It is our understanding of it, its meaning, and the way we position it as unnatural and prioritise heterosexuality that is constructed in an 'unreal' sense. The next section goes on to describe how language and discourse are fundamental to social construction and how discourse theory will be used in this thesis to explore the issues associated with the social construction of homosexuality, and the power relations and the knowledge regime which privileges heterosexuality.

2.2 DEFINITION OF DISCOURSE

Discourse is not a term used just in organizational studies, and to restrict its definition to an aspect of organizational life would be limiting; this section, therefore, explores definitions of discourse in general. Discourse theory is used in a number of different disciplines, even though the origin of the term lies in linguistics and semiotics, (Howarth, 2000:1). It has become common currency in a variety of areas of academic study including critical theory, sociology, linguistics, philosophy and social psychology, to name but a few, (Mills, 1997: 1; Howarth, 2000: 1). It would be useful to explore a number of the terms which are used specifically in discourse theory, or some common terms which are used by discourse theorists in different ways. As discourse has its own discourse, this section identifies some of the most commonly used terms in discourse analysis and defines each of them.

2.2.1 Discourse

The term 'discourse' has a range of meanings. One group of definitions concentrate on the power of discourse to constitute the identity of objects. But before giving a definition to illustrate this, it is also necessary to identify what discourse *is* as well as what discourse *does*. The first definition offered here, as well as suggesting that discourse is constitutive of social reality, bringing objects into being, also suggests that discourse is just a set of statements, or, in other words, purely 'talk':

> "A discourse is a set of statements that brings an object or set of objects into being", (Parker, 1992: 5).

However, other theorists in the area have suggested that discourse refers to much more than just language, and, even though, clearly, it is one of the elements, there are those who believe that it would be quite artificial to conceive of discourse in exclusively verbal terms. For example, Norman Fairclough (1999) asserts that language and talk can be understood as social practice, and even when texts are essentially verbal, that is to say spoken texts, the talk is still interwoven with "gesture, facial expression and movement" to such an extent that it cannot be properly understood without reference to these extras, (Fairclough, 1989). He also maintains that as language is part of society and it cannot be studied or understood outside of that society, (Fairclough, 1989). Laclau and Mouffe describe this idea as follows:

> "A discursive structure is an articulatory practice which constitutes and organizes social relations" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 96).

The term 'articulatory practice', (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 113), is defined as the "construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning". A nodal point is the privileged sign around which discourse is organized, for example, the body in medical discourses, whilst meaning is only ever partially fixed, since meaning articulated in a closed fixed system would not allow for developments and changes in meaning. The following definition develops this idea by suggesting that discourse is a 'system of meaningful practices', which would include 'action', or social practice, as well as 'talk'. For example,

> "Discourse or Discourses (are) systems of meaningful practices that form the identities of subjects and objects," (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000: 4).

What both of these definitions have in common is that discourse is constitutive of social reality and of subjects, or individuals. Discourse expresses, but also creates, social relations and practices. As such, discourse is capable of transforming, indeed forming, our identities as social, and sexual, beings, (Mumby & Clair, 1997: 181; Reed, 1998). The term 'meaningful practices' is very broad, but is useful in this context, as it can be understood to incorporate broader cultural aspects of organizational life such as rituals, ceremonies and symbolic action. For example, one aspect of life in the Fire Service which is highlighted in a later section is the work environment and the fact that fire-fighters often have to shower together and enjoy very little privacy. This is a good example of a 'meaningful practice' which has very little language or communication, but may well have an impact on identity.

The definitions considered so far have identified statements, language and texts (both spoken and written), social practice, gestures and expression, but what is lacking is any recognition of the absence of any of these elements. Foucault's conception of discourse is important to our understanding of the term; he put forward the notion that discourse is best conceived as a series of discontinuous segments, of which the function is unclear and unstable. There are a multiplicity of structures and discursive elements which go to make up the whole; one of these discursive elements is silence, which he also identifies as being also an agent of power, a crucial element in any discussion of discourse and which is analysed in more detail in section 2.3.5. For example,

> "The make up of discourse has to be pieced together, with things both said and unsaid, with required and with forbidden speech." (Foucault, 1976: 133)

Foucault recognized that discourse and the discursive may be made up of silence as well as talk, implying that both can be illustrative of power and resistance. Paradoxically, whilst silence is the antithesis of discourse when used in its narrow meaning of 'talk', it is actually part of discourse when used in a broader sense. Following Foucault, then, this thesis uses the idea of discourse as including a set of unstable, complex elements, with the spaces in between those elements, or silence, being an integral part of discourse. The absence of 'language' or 'words' or what some would call 'discourse' is here seen as part of overall discourse.

The next quotation introduces the organizational aspect of discourse and recognizes the expression of discourse as text, as referred by Fairclough earlier,

> "The structured collections of texts embodied in the practices of talking and writing (as well as a wide variety of visual representations and cultural artefacts) that bring organizationally related objects into being as these texts are produced, disseminated and consumed", (Grant & Hardy, 2004: 6; Grant, Hardy, Oswick, & Putnam, 2004a: 3).

Here Grant & Hardy refer to the idea that it is not just writing, but talking too, which constitutes text. Indeed, as a researcher, one becomes acutely aware that organizations are made up of texts to be studied and interpreted, and even interviews and focus groups become text as they are transcribed before they are analysed. It is interesting to note that their definition refers to the constitution of objects through discourse, and specifically refers to discourse as the production and consumption of these texts.

These definitions are useful because they give a practical sense of what discourse is as well as what it can be used for. A further quotation brings the definition of discourse as talk and action to the field of organizational studies, and identifies the interpretive nature of discourse:

> "(The) language and symbolic media we employ to describe, represent, interpret and theorize what we take to be the facticity of organizational life", (Grant et al., 1998).

This definition recognizes the interpretive, as well as the constitutive, nature of discourse. Discourse is constitutive in the sense that it is constructive of social reality, (Heracleous, 2004: 177), but it is also interpretive in terms of being a medium for providing us with a meaningful understanding of the world around us, (Heracleous, 2004: 175), which, although it brings us nearer the idea of discourse analysis, is an important function of discourse and should be recognized. The definitions are therefore beginning to address the immediate problem of the many uses of discourse, moving towards a definition of discourse analysis, which is analysed in the next section 2.2.3.

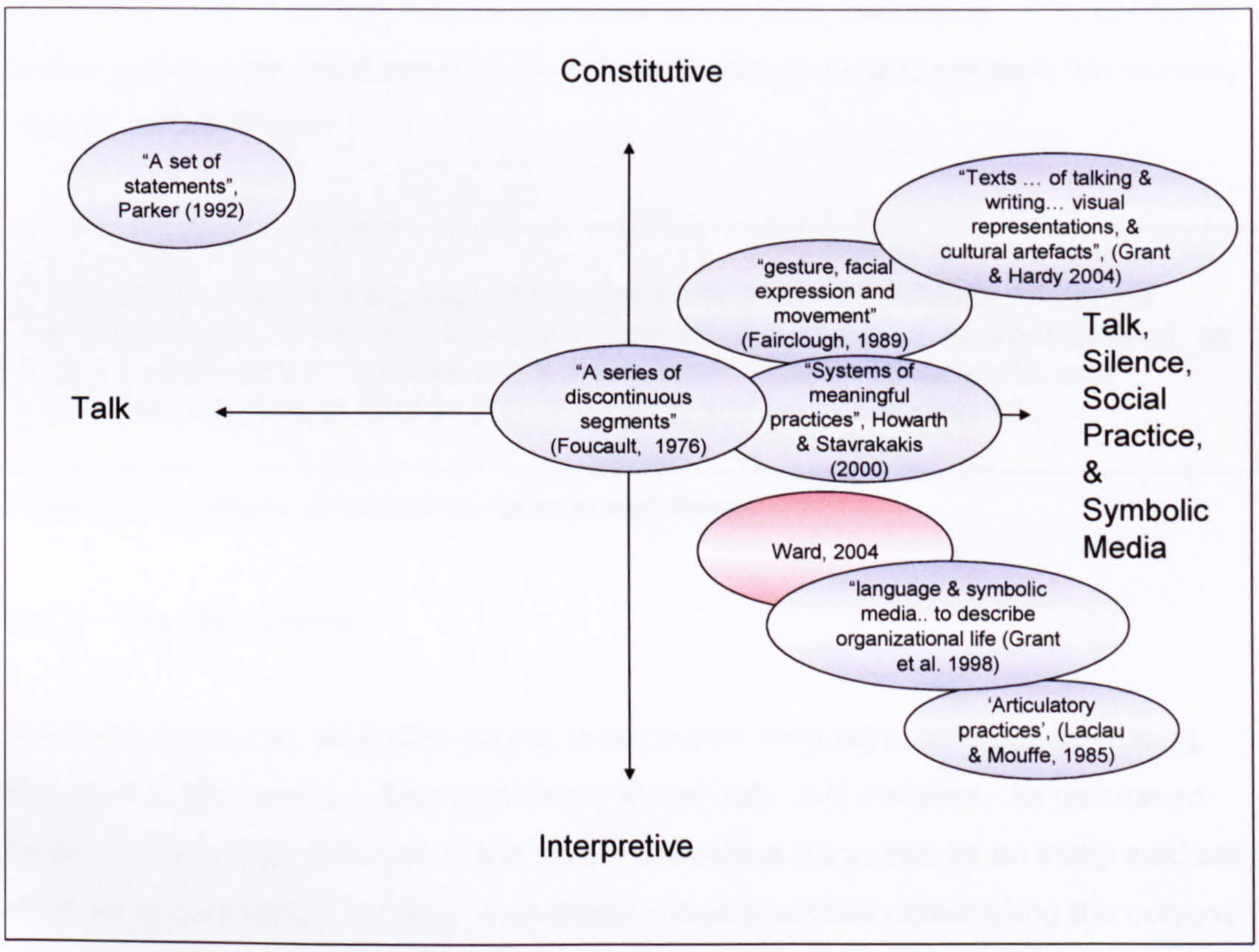


Figure 1: Mapping the definitions of discourse

There are therefore different definitions of discourse, each with a slightly different emphasis. In order to understand where the different definitions of discourse lie, Figure 1 shows those definitions that have been referenced in this section and where they lie on a continuum, where talk is at one end and a more discursive definition is at the other, including not only talk, but silence, social practice and symbolic media.

It is not intended to misrepresent these other researchers in any way, by suggesting a limited or fixed position on their part; instead, this is an interpretation of these specific definitions. At the same time, it is not intended to suggest that any of these researchers limited their field of study to either constitutive or interpretive aspects of discourse, but the definitions which have been referenced here tend to favour and support one or the other. In a sense there is a natural tendency for the definitions of discourse to favour the constitutive, since any definition referring to the interpretive would be moving towards discourse analysis rather than discourse itself. The definition used in this thesis has been placed in Figure 2, demonstrating that it incorporates some of the non-talk elements of the other definitions. This definition brings together the main points of the previous definitions and will form the working version for this thesis:

> "Discourse refers to language (both spoken and written), silence and social practice (ways of working, acting and interacting with others in organizations, as well as gesture and expression); it creates our organizational world, and provides a means of interpreting, theorizing and understanding it."

Figure 2: Definition of discourse used in this thesis

2.2.2 The Discursive

The term discourse, as stated above, is not purely language, although confusing though it is, the term can also just simply mean 'talk' or the verbal. As discussed above, the working definition in this thesis will define discourse as an integrated set of ideas or conceptual schema, including various practices determining the context and constitution of reality, (Hancock & Tyler, 2001: 23). However, one of the problems with definitions is that they impose fixed boundaries and categories, and by using this definition of discourse, it is not intended to ignore the many practices which may fall outside the term; indeed, even if a practice is not defined as being of discourse it does not mean that it has not been constituted by discourse. Therefore, in order to specify the all-embracing ontological category and theoretical field where objects are constituted, there is a separate term; the *Discursive*, which will be referred to in this thesis. It implies that all activities are shaped by a field of discursive meanings. For example,

> "The *discursive* can be defined as a theoretical horizon within which the being of objects is constituted. In other words, *all* objects are objects of discourse, as their meaning depends upon a socially constructed system of rules and significant differences", (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000: 3), original emphasis.

What is interesting to explore at this point, however, is Foucault's changing definition of what makes up discourse. Although, a discourse is not simply verbal in Foucault's work, for example as described in The History of Sexuality I (Foucault, 1976), his earlier work had left the understanding between discursive and non-discursive practices underdeveloped, and his archaeological definitions had provided for the extra-discursive, suggesting that there are processes and elements of our social world that occur outside discourse. He addressed this along with some of the earlier difficulties in his later writing, (Howarth, 2000: 66), developing a more all-encompassing definition of discourse.

2.2.3 Discourse Analysis

Because discourse theory has been used in a number of different academic disciplines, and because of its roots in the study of linguistics, it is useful to define what is meant by discourse analysis. The following definition suggests that, having put forward the notion of discourse as referring to all 'signifying practices', discourse analysis is the process of analysing these practices:

> "Discourse analysis refers to the process of analysing signifying practices that form the identities of subjects and objects", (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000: 4).

But discourse analysis does not just mean the analysis of language or practices, it is also a critical activity which can be used to analyse the rules that govern language use or social practice:

> "Discourse in this sense refers to those unwritten rules which frame what can and cannot be said about any given phenomenon", (Hancock & Tyler, 2001: 23).

Indeed, the way that discourse 'rules in' certain way of talking about a topic, and also 'rules out' or restricts other ways other ways of talking helps to construct social reality, (Grant & Hardy, 2004: 6). Discourse analysis is therefore also concerned with identifying and deconstructing the rules which govern signifying practices, as well as analysing those signifying practices themselves, which form the identities of subjects.

If discourse itself is made up of meaningful practices, as suggested above, it follows that discourse analysis can be interpretive; in addition, in following Foucault and accepting that our reality is made up of power relationships expressed through discourse, analysing those power relationships means that discourse analysis can also be critical. Both perspectives are necessary to our understanding of how discourse shapes the identity of sexual minorities in the workplace; how discourse helps shape reality for them, but also how discourse reinforces the unequal power relationship of the homo-hetero binary. Both perspectives embrace linguistic and non-linguistic communications and the social practices in which they are embedded, (Heracleous and Hendry, 2000). These are two different angles to understanding discourse and, together, they show that discourse analysis can be a tool to help understand how social reality is created, as well as a critical tool to help in understanding the world and the power relations within it, (Phillips & Hardy, 1997: 166).

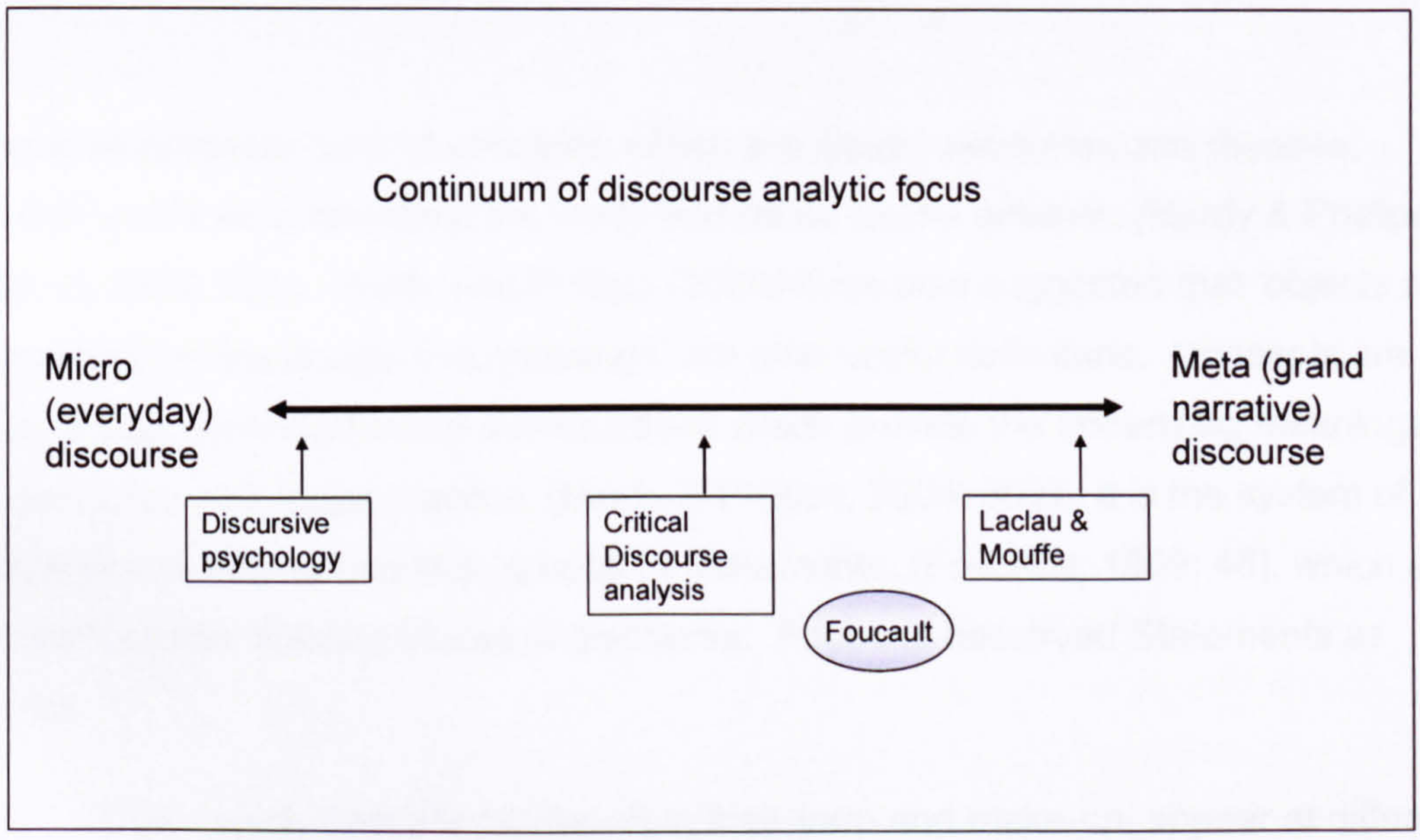


Figure 3: Continuum of Discourse Analysis

It should be noted at this point that there are different possible foci for discourse analysis, which can be described along a continuum. This is shown in the adjacent figure. Adapted from Phillips and Jorgensen (2002), it shows diagrammatically that there is a difference between meta-discourse, that is to say the discourse that operates at the societal level, using the approach developed by Laclau and Mouffe, (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) and micro discourse, or everyday discourse. Figure 3 positions Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis halfway along the continuum,

(Fairclough, 1989, 1995, 2001b). Micro-discourses are concerned with the operation of discourse in an everyday context whilst constantly implicating and being influenced by the meta-discourses in operation in society at large. The approach taken in this study, whilst drawing on theories from across the continuum, lies itself at the micro end of the discursive sociological scale.

2.2.4 The conceptual machinery of discourse

Some of the terms, or conceptual machinery, used in studies of discourse and discourse analysis should be highlighted. Foucault asserted that discourses are actually made up of a limited number of 'statements' for which a group of conditions for existence can be defined, (Foucault, 1969). In making this assertion, he uses a series of terms which have become common in the vocabulary of discourse theorists. These terms are the Statement, Concepts and Objects. Other terms which are important to the study of the individual within discourse such as Subjects and Subject Positions, or 'places of speaking', are defined and discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

Discourse produces sets of concepts, which are ideas, categories and theories, through which we understand the world and relate to one another, (Hardy & Phillips, 1999: 3; 2004: 301). Hardy and Phillips (2004) have also suggested that 'objects of knowledge' or 'intersubjective meanings' are also useful definitions. Concepts are more or less contested social constructions which provide the underlying meanings for discourse and social practice, (Hardy & Phillips, 2004: 302). It is the system of concepts that help to establish groups of Statements, (Foucault, 1969: 48), which are Foucault's basic building blocks of discourse. Foucault described Statements as follows:

> "Statements, which are different in their form and make-up, appear at different points through time, and come together to form an ensemble if they refer to one single object", (Foucault, 1969: 45).

Foucault goes onto explain that, for example, the Statements that come together to form the discursive discipline of psychopathology have all focused on the 'object' of madness. Statements are serious speech acts and linguistic practices performed in specific contexts. For example, assertions of global warning become statements when uttered by suitably qualified scientists and climate experts who present theories to support their claims, (Howarth, 2000: 55). This idea is similar to the work of the

linguist philosopher J.L. Austin (Austin, 1962), and supports the later work of Judith Butler (Butler, 1990), especially in developing the concept of Performativity which will be explored in more detail in section 3.4.2. Concepts depend on the ongoing construction of texts for meaning and may therefore change dramatically over time, (Phillips & Hardy, 1997; Hardy & Phillips, 1999). An example of this may be the way in which the concept of homosexual has changed over time from someone of criminally deviant behaviour, to someone whose minority sexual orientation identity is part of their identity. The most famous description of the changing concept of homosexuality was by Foucault in The History of Sexuality I, (Foucault, 1976), and is referred to extensively in this thesis.

Some concepts exist only in the expressive order, that is to say they remain a theoretical notion, while others may be attached to a material referent to produce an object. Concepts can be ambiguous and theoretical, whereas objects belong to the practical order and generally are a physical expression of a concept, (Phillips & Hardy, 1997; Hardy & Phillips, 1999, 2004). Objects are created within discourse by the rules of discourse that enable them to form as objects, (Foucault, 1969: 55 - 67; Howarth, 2000: 52). This is significant since the constitutive role of discursive practices is outlined in forming and determining objects, rather than the other way around. For example, the concept of a homosexual exists in our minds, but our colleague at work who comes out as gay is a physical entity which is given meaning by the concept of homosexual. An object is then created with the label 'gay' or 'homosexual'.

As with other complex and contested subjects in the social sciences, the meaning scope and application of discourse is relative to the different theoretical systems in which it is embedded. That is to say if a proper explanation of the subject is to be expounded here, it is necessary to be sensitive to the different theoretical contexts out of which it grew, (Howarth, 2000: 3), such as the work by structuralists, post-modernists and post-structuralists. In the following sections, the approach to language and discourse by de Saussure, Foucault, Lacan and Derrida is explored. The post-structuralist approach ultimately became the foundation for Queer Theory, a theoretical approach to sexual identity, which will be introduced in Chapter 3.

2.3 DEVELOPING A THEORY OF DISCOURSE

This section is entitled 'developing a theory of discourse', as the aim is twofold; first to bring together those elements of discourse theory which will help in exploring the

construction of identity of sexual minorities in organizations (see section 5). Second the aim is to highlight, more or less chronologically, the major theorists and their contribution to our understanding of discourse theory.

Structuralist theory is a good place to start developing a concept of discourse, since is assumes a clear analogy between language and social relations, (Howarth, 2000: 17). Structuralism, as a broad philosophical movement, and in particular the work of Roland Barthes, (Barthes, 1973), Claude Lévi-Strauss, (Levi-Strauss, 1994), and Lacan, (Lacan, 1977), was a reaction against the tradition of humanistic philosophy, particularly existentialism and looked to forces beyond the individual in order to explain the social world, highlighting rule-bound principles, (Seidman, 1994). It is important to consider structuralism as the philosophical movement out of which post-structuralism grew, because many of the concepts were developed by structuralists, and because some post-structuralists, for example, Foucault, began by employing a broadly structuralist approach. Although its intellectual roots can be traced back to Marx, Freud and Durkheim, the most profound source of structuralism lay in developments in linguistics, and the work of de Saussure, (de Saussure, 1974; Seidman, 1994; Howarth, 2000: 19), and the development of the binary, relational concept of language. The following sections go on to explore how the ideas of Binary Oppositions were developed by the post-structuralists, and by Derrida and Foucault in particular. The idea of power as an essential component of binary oppositions is expressed, Derrida's Decónstruction is explored, and the Rules of discourse, as described by Foucault are discussed, as is the Foucauldian notion of Power and power relations as expressed through discourse.

2.3.1 Binary oppositions

The conventional view in de Saussure's time was that language was a neutral medium for representing the world; words were said to acquire meaning by the concept they summoned up, (Hawkes, 1977: 19; Seidman, 1994: 196). De Saussure challenged this view by conceptualizing language as a system of signs whose meanings are created by relations of difference, (Howarth, 2000: 20; Kress, 2001: 31), and sets of linguistic rules. Signs are word-images, and are produced by the coming together, or conjunction, of a signifier, a sound-image, and a signified, or the concept. For example, the concept, or signified, of a tree is brought about by the word or signifier 'tree'. De Saussure claimed that this relationship was arbitrary and not necessarily fixed. He illustrated this point by the example of different languages

referring to the same concept. In addition, in the same language, words stay the same but the concepts they refer to may change, (de Saussure, 1974; Seidman, 1994: 196; Kress, 2001: 31).

These ideas raise the question of how words and concepts get their meaning in the first place; they do so in the specific ways that they differ from other words and concepts. This is called the concept of the binary opposition of signs. The meaning of signs lies in their relations of difference, particularly in their binary oppositions in a specific language system, (Seidman, 1994: 197). That is to say that the word 'man' takes on meaning because in the language system of which it is a part, it contrasts to the signifier 'woman', (Seidman, 1994: 197), or, for example 'mother' derives its meaning from the way in which it is differentiated from related terms such as 'father', 'grandmother' and 'daughter', (Howarth, 2000: 20). In the same way, 'heterosexual' derives its meaning from the way it is differentiated from 'homosexual'. Any element of language, therefore, is a product of the differences and oppositions established by the elements of the linguistic system, (Howarth, 2000: 22). This concept is crucial to the study of difference; difference matters because it is essential to meaning, (Hall, 2001b: 328).

One of the criticisms aimed at de Saussure's work is that it does not extend beyond the analysis of signifiers, words, phrases, expressions and sentences, (Howarth, 2000: 10; Kress, 2001). It was left to later structuralist and poststructuralist theorists to use this structuralist model to help understand wider social phenomena such as human subjectivity and agency in the social world, (Howarth, 2000: 11).

In summary, language is the place where meanings are produced, and these meanings play a major role in organizing the self and social institutions. Poststructuralists approach language as a system whose meanings derive from relations of difference and contrast, in much the same way as de Saussure and the structuralists. However, the latter took a scientific view of language, and aimed to uncover uniform linguistic patterns that gave order and coherence to human experience. Poststructuralists, on the other hand, highlighted the inherently unstable patterns of language and subjectivity, (Seidman, 1994: 201). In the next section, the ways in which the work of de Saussure, and well as the idea that signs are unstable influenced the work of Jacques Derrida.

2.3.2 Différance

One of the foci of the work of Jacques Derrida, one of the leading French poststructuralists, was on the logic of de Saussure's structural linguistics. Derrida agreed that the meaning of the sign lies in its relations of difference but disagreed that meanings are fixed once these contrary relations are established. Derrida proposed that the meaning of the sign is unstable, multivocal and changing. For example, taking the example of "man" and "woman" again, these terms seem universal as binary oppositions, but they carry variant meanings depending on national context, class, race, age and gender, (Seidman, 1994: 202).

Derrida's break from structuralism is more than just his view of signs, and is important because he takes de Saussure's work beyond the world of linguistics and applies to the concepts to the ways in which we understand the social world. As mentioned in the previous section, binary oppositions are important concepts when considering power and knowledge, which is a crucial concept in discourse theory and is discussed in more detail in section 2.3.5. The very concept of binary oppositions may give an illustration of this power; not only is one term more powerful than its binary opposition, but where cultural meanings are fixed by one social group, it can be seen as an act of power by this social group to impose its will on others, (Seidman, 1994: 202).

Another focus of his work was to critique Saussure's privileging of speech over writing as a means of representing thoughts and ideas, (Collins & Mayblin, 2000: 42; Howarth, 2000: 36). The relationship between speech and writing is essential to understanding Derrida's concepts of différance and deconstruction. De Saussure privileges speech because sound is perceived to be closer to thought and ideas, (Howarth, 2000: 36). Derrida, developing the work of Lévi-Strauss, who analysed different modes of social formation and the way that different symbolic codes gave meaning to everyday life in society, (Levi-Strauss, 1994), suggests that although writing is the inferior partner in the binary opposition, it is nevertheless able to distort and undermine speech because of its permanence and its ability to survive in the absence of speakers. Because of this, the 'absent presence' of the spoken voice is forgotten, (Derrida, 1976; Howarth, 2000: 37). The concept of the absent presence is an important concept in theorizing difference and is used in this thesis in demonstrating that silence is a discursive element in the construction of sexual identity in work organizations.

Derrida exposed the way in which speech is privileged in our thinking, which is symptomatic of a hidden logic in Western thought and philosophy; he called this logocentrism. Implicit in this idea are a number of binary oppositions which he thought to have been pivotal in establishing the Western order of truth, (Seidman, 1994: 202). Oppositional linguistic dualisms (Hancock & Tyler, 2001: 26) such as speech/writing, presence/absence, man/woman and so on are not equal values or partners as they would be in Saussure's structuralism, but they exist in a series of hierarchical relationships with the first term normally occupying a superior position, (Hancock & Tyler, 2001: 26); just as in the binary opposition of speech and writing, one is superior to the other, (Seidman, 1994: 203). Such terms appear over and over again in western philosophy and lie in opposition to each other. He argues that the binary is made up of a privileged term, or an inside, and an excluded or secondary term, or outside which does not just threaten the purity of the inside, but is actually necessary for its definition, and therefore just as necessary as the inside itself, (Derrida, 1976). In other words, the secondary term, or 'other', is needed by the first term in order to construct its identity, and in doing so ensures that the other is not only different, but less desirable, less acceptable and less powerful, (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004: 157).

Derrida's concept of deconstruction allows us to interpret the ways in which truth is ordered in discourse and the ways in which certain terms are marginalized, (Hancock & Tyler, 2001: 26). He refers to the relationship between these two terms as '*différance*', (Derrida, 1978), a neologism based on the French word 'différer' which brings into play both concepts of difference, a spatial concept, and also deferring, a temporal one. For example,

> "Until now, it has been a question only of the space of writing, its extension and volume, reliefs and depressions. But there is as a *time of writing*" (Derrida, 1978: 283, original emphasis).

Binary oppositions are important to meaning creation, but also to concepts of power. In critiquing Saussure's concept of binary oppositions, Derrida and the poststructuralists argued that there are very few neutral binary oppositions, (Hall, 2001b: 329), and that the very existence of such a binary relationship infused one of the terms with greater power. The next section on deconstruction looks at how the dynamics of that power can be exposed.

2.3.3 Deconstruction

Derrida uses the term 'Deconstruction' to explain not only those terms in binary opposition to one another that create a hierarchical relationship, but also that the first, or superior term, is actually defined by the other. For example, in this thesis, the findings show that the concept heterosexual is defined in organizations by the absent-presence of the concept 'gay' or homosexual', its oppositional other. Implicit in these two terms is the hierarchical superiority of the term heterosexual. Therefore, the presence of one term is dependent on the absence or 'absent presence' of the other. In this way, then, in deconstructing the meaning of terms it may be helpful to consider what terms might be defined by this oppositional absent-presence. Derrida does not just attack and reverse hierarchical relationships between concepts, (Howarth, 2000: 37). The core purpose of deconstruction is a critical strategy, subverting hierarchical discursive oppositions for the purpose of questioning their authority, rather than any over-riding aim to reverse existing values, (Seidman, 1994: 203). Derrida's concern with writing is fundamental to the process of deconstruction, or questioning of absences in texts, and the repression of certain terms, ideas and subjects in text. For example,

> "Writing is unthinkable without repression... It is no accident that the metaphor of censorship should ...(be) concerned with the deletions, blanks and disguises of writing" (Derrida, 1978: 285).

A deconstructive reading should therefore aim to highlight the 'outside' term, and the repression, deletions and blanks. In Derrida's own words,

> "(A deconstructive reading) must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of a language that he uses... (It) attempts to make the not-seen accessible to sight" (Derrida, 1976: 158).

Derrida also introduces the concept of *iterability* to conceptualize the way in which signs and language work. The concept captures the idea that language both presupposes the repeatability and alterability of signs and shows that there can never be fully formed contexts arresting the production of meaning, (Howarth, 2000:41). This idea suggests that language is infinitely repeatable and alterable in different contexts, and that there can never be fully formed contexts of meaning. Deconstruction shows how texts are polysemous, that is to say that they have

multiple meanings. To deconstruct is to analyse the relations between the dualities in the text, such as the positive and the negative, the central and the marginal, the essential and the inessential, the insider and the outsider, and to show the ambiguity embedded in them, (Boje, 1995: 1007). Much about deconstruction has to do with noticing voice. Who gets a voice, whose voice is marginalized, who gets no voice at all? To deconstruct is to unleash accounts that do not fit neatly into a prescribed view of the context in which the deconstruction is taking place, (Boje, 1995: 1008). The process of deconstruction is also about looking for patterns of silence or absence, to recognize what is not being said, as well as what is being said.

Definitions of deconstruction are difficult to find since although Derrida described deconstruction, he avoided its definition, and academics working in the poststructuralist tradition are nervous about definitions. However, the following definition by Joanne Martin summarizes the process in the following way, "an analytic strategy that exposes in a systematic way multiple ways a text can be interpreted. Deconstruction is able to reveal ideological assumptions in a way that is particularly sensitive to the suppressed interests of members of disempowered, marginalized groups", (Martin, 1990: 340).

2.3.4 The rules of discourse

Foucault was another leading poststructuralist writer whose early writings were deeply influenced by structuralism, (Seidman, 1994: 342; Horrocks & Jevtic, 1997: 90), as illustrated in Table 1. Among post-structuralists, Foucault is perhaps the most important to have dealt with issues of sexual identity, which is analysed in greater depth in chapter 3. He put an emphasis on the social construction of discourse and encouraged a renewed questioning about the categories of sexuality, (Gamson, 2000), having increasingly rejected structuralism as being too monolithic, static and inflexible.

Publication	Philosophical influence
Archaeology of Knowledge (Foucault, 1969)	Structuralism
Madness and Civilisation (Foucault,	Structuralism

1990)	
Discipline and Punish (Foucault, 1989)	Post-Structuralism
The History of Sexuality, Vols. 1 – 3 (Foucault, 1976, 1984a, b)	Post Structuralism

Table 1: The principle works of Michel Foucault and their influence, adapted (Seidman, 1994: 342 - 343)

The main differences in Foucault's two approaches were that the structuralist-inspired archaeology of discourse concentrated on the rules and structure of discourse, which is discussed in the 'Archaeology of Knowledge', (Foucault, 1969). Later, the more Nietzschean-inspired post-structuralist writings, such as those in 'The History of Sexuality' (Foucault, 1976, 1984a, b), and which are often referred to as Foucault's Genealogy, look more to conceptions of power (Howarth, 2000: 49). The two different approaches are not contradictory and are both useful to this thesis. In this section, Foucault's ideas of the rules of discourse will be presented and in section 2.3.5, his ideas of Power will be explored in greater detail.

Foucault's work on 'rules' differed from traditional structuralist studies of language in that he studied discourse, rather than individual elements of language, as an overall system of representation. The traditional linguistic approach was to take a linguistic term, which was simply a passage of connected writing or speech, and to explore the rules by which certain statements can be made in the present. This was the approach taken by de Saussure, (de Saussure, 1974). Foucault, however, gave this approach a new meaning; he studied and aimed to unearth rules and practices that produced meaningful Statements, which in turn provide a language for talking about a particular topic at a particular historic moment, (Rabinow, 1984; Howarth, 2000: 51; Hall, 2001a: 72). Statements which dominate, or subjugate others are examples of 'hegemonic' discourses, (Foucault, 1976: 124), which include implicit rules; a rule which precludes open discussion of the experiences of marginalized people means that knowledge of this taboo is present in the discourse (otherwise the experience may be alluded to), and thus is present in the 'speech' even if it is not talked about.

2.3.5 Power

Foucault does not abandon the archaeological, rule-based, perspective in later writing; indeed the two main approaches of archaeology and genealogy are later articulated together in what he calls the method of problematization, (Foucault, 1984a). Discourses are no longer treated as autonomous systems of scientific statements; instead they are the products of power relations and of the forces that form them, (Howarth, 2000: 67). Power has become a key element in the discussion of discourse, (Mills, 1997: 19), largely due to the work of Foucault, who stated that,

> "Power and knowledge are quite clearly articulated in discourse", (Foucault, 1976: 133).

Indeed, when considering the effect of discourse on the social reality of sexual minorities in organizations, it is impossible not to recognize the unequal power relationship between the homosexual minority and heterosexual majority. Foucault's work on power is often used by discourse theorists, especially those working in the critical tradition, which aims to take the part of those who suffer from domination and exploitation, (Fairclough, 1995: 186; Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, & Vetter, 2000), exposing the ways that discourse constitutes and reconstitutes social arrangements in organizational settings, (Grant et al., 2004a: 15). Foucault was instrumental in the rethinking of models of power; rather than simply assuming that power is a possession (so that someone takes of seizes power from someone else), he suggested that power was everywhere and expressed through the relations we have with other people. For example,

> "Power is not something that is acquired, taken by force or shared" (Foucault, 1976: 123).

This was quite a shift away from the traditional view of power that was seen as a violation to someone's rights or, as Marxist theorists believed, that power relations are determined by economic relations, (Mills, 1997: 19). Indeed, Foucault specifically excluded the idea that power existed outside certain other types of relations:

> "Power is not something that exists outside other forms of relations (economic, knowledge or sexual relations) but come from within them", (Foucault, 1976: 123 - 124).

Foucault's main analysis of power is that it is dispersed throughout social relations, (Knights & Willmott, 1999: 166), and that it produces, as well as restricts, possible forms of behaviour. Power in the Foucauldian sense is the capacity to become or to do certain things; it is exercised by individuals or collections of individuals who act upon each others' actions. It is not necessarily negative; there are many ways in which individuals can exercise power and negative actions are only one example, (Patton, 1998: 67). Social relations are inevitably power relations, (Mills, 1997; Patton, 1998: 67), since power is expressed in all relations wherever they occur. In fact, it is for this area of his work which Foucault is best known, even if this happens to be the most contentious (see section 2.4).

Foucault considered power relations in two different settings; one was the regime of power at the state level, and the other was the way in which knowledge was put to work through discursive practices in specific institutional settings to regulate the conduct of others. At the state level, Foucault suggested that when the fostering of life and the growth and care of population became a central concern of the state, a new regime of power took hold, which Foucault called bio-power. This is power as exercised over human beings, and also power exercised over the human body. It sees the body as an object to be manipulated and controlled, (Rabinow, 1984: 17).

At the institutional level, Foucault investigated the relations between knowledge, power and the individual, (Mills, 1997: 21; Hall, 2001a: 75). He suggested that knowledge was always inextricably linked to relations of power because it was always being applied to the regulation of social conduct in practice. This grounding of the relations between discourse, knowledge and power marked a significant development in the constructionist approach which has been outlined in section 2.1. It rescued discourse analysis from the clutches of a purely formal theory and gave it a historical and practical context, (Hall, 2001a: 75). For example, the discursive field in schools and universities produces Statements, or accepted versions of the truth, which are the result of struggles over whose version of events is sanctioned.

Knowledge can potentially be conceptualized as the product of the subjugation of objects or the process through which concepts and objects are constituted as subjugated, (Mills, 1997: 21). In other words, subjugated identities such as those of lesbians and gay men will have much more written about them, as objects of study, than the more powerful heterosexual majority. For example, if a simple category search is carried out on www.amazon.co.uk with the word 'gay', the results show 12,751 books on everything from gay literature and sex manuals to the discussion of the oppression, psychology or problems of homosexuals, both male and female. If

the term 'straight' is searched, there were only 1,716, most of which were not about straight as a referential term for sexuality, whilst searching under 'heterosexual' produces results which show only 76 books, of which the first three bestselling items are about straight men who have sex with other men.

Yet, power is not necessarily expressed in one direction, by the dominant group towards the subjugated, although Foucault and other commentators do not deny the reality of domination, (Halperin, 1995: 17). Institutions and organizations are made up of individual and social groups; power relations are expressed in the social relations between them, (Fairclough, 1989: 34), and are not always expressed as a binary opposition from on high, against weaker members of the organization. Foucault asserted that,

> "Power comes from below; that is to say that there is no binary opposition between the dominant and dominated in the general matrix of power relations, with this duality reproducing itself from on high against weaker and weaker groups and on into the depths of society. Rather we should assume that there are many different kinds of power relations, families, groups and institutions which maintain greater effects of division in society", (Foucault, 1976: 124).

In reading this, it is tempting to assume that Foucault intended us to understand that there is no binary opposition. However, it is probable that he was asserting that power relations are more complex than a simple binary opposition, and that actually power take two forms; power *in* discourse, that is to say the power expressed in social relations, and power *behind* discourse, (Fairclough, 1989), or hegemonic effects, expressed through discourse. Foucault goes on to say,

> "The great dominations are hegemonic effects which continually support the intensity of these confrontations", (Foucault, 1976: 124).

The critical approach to power and subjectivity introduced the concept of hegemony (Gramsci, 1971; Foucault, 1976), which refers to an ideology, most often articulated as 'common sense' or 'natural' that constitutes a form of cleverly masked, taken-for-granted' domination. Hegemony involves the mobilizing the active consent of dominated groups and constitutes an "invisible prison of intersecting gazes" for those who have little power to negotiate different ways of living and working, (Humphreys & Brown, 2002: 423). This leads onto the idea that discourse as a vehicle for power

can mean the domination of one discourse by another, in an oppositional relationship, (Fairclough, 1989: 91), leading to 'dominant' and 'dominated' discourse types. One type of discourse is established as the dominant one in a given social domain, and, at the same time, it establishes certain ideological assumptions as commonsensical, consistent with the view of discourses as rules. Dominated discourses can be contained by a dominant one, (Fairclough, 1989: 91; 2001a), which may be seen as legitimate, not because it is truer than dominated ones, but because a discourse can so dominate an institution that dominated types are more or less entirely suppressed or contained. The dominant one will then cease to be seen as arbitrary, in the sense of being one among several possible ways of seeing things, and will come to be seen as natural and legitimate. This is referred to as the naturalization of discourse, (Fairclough, 1989: 91), or common sense, and is mainly determined by those who exercise power and domination in a social institution, (Fairclough, 1989). The dominated discourse is under pressure to be silenced, suppressed and eliminated. Silence can then become a product of discourse as well as an element of discourse itself as Foucault suggests. Dominant discourses can also contain oppositional discourses, (Fairclough, 1989), which means that the dominant discourse credits the oppositional one with a certain limited legitimacy and protection. The minority is tolerated and accepted rather than put on an equal footing, (van Dijk, 2001). An example of this might be the way in which the London Metropolitan Police, until very recently, allowed self-organized networks for a range of under-represented groups, but the Gay Police Association was the only one not to be given any financial support.

2.3.6 Power and sexual subjectivity

Given the previous discussion on the privileging of one concept in binary opposition to another, and the presence of dominant discourses, it is, perhaps, no surprise that heterosexuality has turned into heteronormativity. The latter term is a neologism which has come to mean that heterosexuality is understood as the only normal underpinning of behaviour; it is central to the question of sexual subjectivity, because it has been exposed as a discursive effect and a socially constructed power-knowledge regime, which privileges heterosexuality, as a form of identity and category of knowledge, over homosexuality, (Seidman, 1997). In any discussion of power and knowledge, it is inevitable that the subject should be considered, both in terms of the way that power affects subjectivity, but also in terms of the way that the subject influences power relations. Foucault, especially in his genealogy, brought

together our thinking about power and the subject, (Knights & McCabe, 2003: 1593) (Newton, 1998: 417) and changed the way that we conceptualise subjectivity and the subject in discourse analysis, (Rabinow, 1984). He drew "analytical attention towards the sense in which power and identity are major preoccupations and affects of modern subjectivity" (Knights & Willmott, 1989: 551). Foucault explored the issues of power, knowledge and the impact on subjectivity particularly in The History of Sexuality, (Foucault, 1976, 1984a, b) examining the way in which discourses about sexuality illustrate the production of human beings as subjects, (Howarth, 2000: 77 - 78). Power helps to construct the identity of individual subjects by helping to create the circumstances by which subjects secure their own meaning and reality through identifying with, or resisting, the discursive practices that power evokes, (Knights & McCabe, 2003: 1593). That is not to say, however, that the individual subject necessarily has any choice or free will in the way that they are constructed in response to power relations; Foucault maintains that,

> "Power is not the result of a choice or a decision of an individual subject" (Foucault, 1976: 125).

The connection between discourse, power and the subject and its subject position (or social identity) was made by Foucault (1976) and further developed by the French post-Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser. He asserted that the formation of individuals as subjects within discourse is an ideological effect. He posited the notion that identity is derived as a result of discourses of common sense, rather than purely socially produced, which occurs through language. He therefore rejected the notion that identity formation is somehow fortuitous. He also asserted that people are placed in a number of subject positions, depending on the discourse type they are operating in, (Fairclough, 1989: 105). What Althusser and Foucault seem to agree on, however, is that while Althusser's approach suggests that there is less chance involved with identity construction, there is, nevertheless little choice on behalf of the individual subject. Foucault explored in greater detail how people used dominant discourses to create subjects; the next two sections discuss these ideas in greater detail. They are the ideas of 'dividing practices' and 'resistance'.

2.3.7 Dividing Practices

The idea of the subject was central to Foucault. Indeed, Foucault was quoted as saying,

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> "The goal of my work during the last twenty years has not been to analyze the phenomena of power, nor to elaborate the foundations of such an analysis. My objective, instead, has been to create a history of the different modes by which in our culture, human beings are made subjects" (Rabinow, 1984: 7).

The first way which Foucault identified as the means by which the subject is objectified is through what he called "dividing practices". The most famous examples from Foucault's work are the isolation of lepers during the Middle Ages, the rise of modern psychiatry and its entry into the hospitals, prisons and clinics throughout the 19th and 20th centuries and the medicalisation, stigmatization and normalization of sexual deviance in modern Europe. The subject is objectified by a process of division either within himself or from others, and this process of social objectification, the individual is given both a social identity, or subject position, and a personal identity, or subjectivity, (Rabinow, 1984: 8).

Related to the idea of dividing practices, but an independent concept nevertheless, is the idea of 'scientific classification', (Rabinow, 1984: 8). Foucault points to a growing obsession with classifying sexuality, and the growth of medical discourses about sexuality. He combines the analysis of dividing practices and scientific classification in The History of Sexuality I, (Rabinow, 1984: 11).

Dividing practices were one way, according to Foucault, in which the subject is constituted. Another, is the way that the subject is constituted within power relations, and is discussed in the next section.

2.3.8 Foucault's concept of resistance

A crucial feature of Foucault's work is the idea that where there are power relations there is also resistance, (Knights, 2002: 582), as well as his emphasis on the production of 'reverse discourse', (Spargo, 1999: 21). He suggests that

> "Where there is power, there is also resistance", (Foucault, 1976: 125).

Foucault made the point in the first volume of The History of Sexuality that whilst juridical law seeks to confine, limit, or prohibit some set of acts, practices and subjects, it also provides the opportunity for resistance, (Butler, 1993: 109). In this way, the legal constriction of homosexuals as a group of people in the 19th century produced a public contest that may have inadvertently enabled the very social phenomenon that it sought to restrict, (Foucault, 1976; Butler, 1993: 109). Foucault

takes resistance as the starting point for analysing power relations; "opposition to the power of men over women, parents over children, psychiatry over the mentally ill of medicine over the population and of administration over the way people live", (Foucault, 1976). The act of resistance provides evidence that there is a capacity for relatively autonomous action by individuals with respect to certain areas of social life, (Patton, 1998: 75). It is only when the possibility for resistance has been removed that power becomes domination, (Patton, 1998: 68; Spargo, 1999). Minorities are not only created, but made stronger and empowered by hostile discourse, and then work against it in an act of resistance, (Spargo, 1999).

In the research presented in this thesis, there are examples of where discursive silence is used as a mechanism of power and control in order to silence potentially opposing views; for example, a gay manager was removed from his post, while managing the organization's response to Section 28 because he was seen as not being impartial. Although discourse can be used as a straitjacket to limit the ability of gay and lesbian people to construct their own identities in organizations, agency is not extinguished entirely, and, through resistance, discourse can be used to build power as well as to curtail it. In the example of one of our focus groups, there was a majority of lesbian and gay members; they themselves utilized their power to dominate and determine the discourse during the focus groups discussion. This suggests that, consistent with Foucault's views on resistance and reverse discourse, that in the attempt to silence certain voices by the dominant discourse, that same discourse creates the site of opportunity for suppressed voices to demand their legitimacy to be heard.

2.4 A CRITIQUE OF THE FOUCAULDIAN APPROACH

It is important to note that Foucault's work has, despite receiving wide acclaim, also been widely criticised. The elements of Foucault's thinking that academics find particularly hard to accept are to do with his conception of power, (Halperin, 1995: 16). The criticism returns constantly to more or less five themes. First that Foucault's descriptive analysis of power provides few criteria for judgement, no criteria with which to condemn certain uses of power, (Patton, 1998: 64). Second, that Foucault offers no alternative, no conception of the human being or society freed from power, (Patton, 1998: 64). Third, Foucault is criticised for reifying power, (Butler, 1993). Fourth, that Power is everywhere. Finally that the subject has no agency to act. This section does not aim to solve these difficulties, only to highlight them and recognize that they exist.

It is true that Foucault's conception of power gives no criteria for us to condemn certain uses of power, but this is because power is not a substance, to be owned and used or misused by anyone, but a type of relation which exists in social relations, (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996: 209). Power is therefore not possessed, but exercised, (Halperin, 1995: 16). It is what characterizes the complex relations among the parts of a particular society and the interactions among individuals in that society, as relations of on-going struggle. In taking a critical stance, this thesis aims to analyse the different ways in which power is exercised, perhaps to be critical of certain actions, but not to condemn power per se, because the approach followed is to recognize that power is present in all social relations and it has both positive and negative effects and consequences, (Knights & Willmott, 1999: 166). Foucault's approach to power relations gives no conception of society freed from power; if power is everywhere and always present in social relations, then even if those relations change, with the previously powerful losing their power, others will always take up the mantle, and power will always remain in their social relations. This is a particularly difficult concept for those who would struggle in a post-Marxist tradition for some utopian achievement of liberation. For example,

> "(Foucault's) insistence on the subversion of existing power, its equation of truth with power, necessarily robbed liberationism of any broader, deeper argument about the ends of society as a whole. In Foucault's world, there are no social goods or common ends; everything is a form of power" (Sullivan, 1995: 90).

This thesis does not aim to present an emancipatory view of sexual identity. It does not suggest that problems will be solved if the domination of minority sexualities by heterosexuality is ended. Nevertheless, there is an outcome of power: knowledge, (Knights & Willmott, 1999: 166). What the thesis does aim to do is to expose the dynamics, and different uses of knowledge, in minority sexual identity construction, and in so doing explore how power is exercised. There is a danger, of course, of discussing power so much that it is almost given an identity in itself, supporting Foucault's critics who would argue that in Foucault's analysis power is reified, a force which takes on an identity of its own to imprison those who are victimized in society. Sullivan suggests that, "angrily he (Foucault) rattles the bars of the iron cage", (Sullivan, 1995: 92), in an attempt to demonstrate that Foucault himself is an impotent victim of this own conception of power. But Foucault pre-empted his critics

who would argue that he has reified power by explaining that power is a complex strategy, and not one thing that can easily be objectified,

> "Power is not an institution, it is not a structure and it is not a certain strength which certain people have been given: it is the name that we give to a complex, strategic situation in a given society", (Foucault, 1976: 123).

Foucault's notion that power is everywhere has been described a "dark vision" (Halperin, 1995: 19) that goes against liberal enlightenment values; but Foucault's approach asserts that because power is everywhere, certain modes of domination may be eliminated, only to produce many others. However, these are rather blunt readings of Foucault, driven by politics of liberation. Foucault does, of course, maintain that power is everywhere, but that is not to say that it is all-encompassing, but that it is always present in social relations. For example,

> "The omnipresence of power: not because it could bring everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced all the time, everywhere, or at least at every point of interaction in social relations. Power is everywhere; it is not that is engulfs everything, it is that it comes from everywhere", (Foucault, 1976: 122).

Foucault's later writings explore the agency of the subject. Foucault does presuppose a conception of the human being; after all Foucault's analysis looks at cultural experience in so far as it affects the human, (Patton, 1998: 64). But it is Foucault's view that discourse produces power relations and that subjects act through resistance, rather than any innate desire for emancipation. Power invokes social actions which encourage the subject to act in certain ways; for example Knights and Willmott (1999) suggest the example of examination as an institutional practice which oblige students to use their freedom to "read, revise, memorize, question spot, and even develop their intellect", (Knights & Willmott, 1999: 166).

2.5 SUMMARY

This chapter began by recognizing the growing importance of discourse theory to the study of organizations, but also identifying that there is no agreed definition of discourse, even if many different definitions exist. By building on the different meanings of discourse, and making reference to some of the major researchers in this field, a working definition was constructed. This definition is useful, as it sets out the field of analysis and shows what can potentially be included in the area of study.

Examples of non-linguistic discourse in the definition include silence, gestures, expression and social practice. The latter in organizational terms may be understood as rites or rituals, ceremonies or symbolic action, amongst other things. Another fundamental component of the definition is the idea that discourse both creates the world around us and provides a way of understanding it; discourse is therefore a carrier of meaning, and a way of making sense of organizational life.

Power, was also discussed, in this chapter, as a key element in social relations, as expressed through discourse, and an important aspect of this study into the dynamics of minority sexual orientation in work organizations and the exploration of inequality in the workplace. This project developed an approach which was deeply embedded in discourse, and therefore this chapter has developed the theoretical underpinning of the thesis, and of the theoretical approach to power, by referring to the idea of binary oppositions and Derrida's concept of *différance* and the idea that one term in the binary is always more powerful than the other.

The chapter has also shown that Foucault is important to the development of this thesis in a number of ways. Although he maintained that discourses form social relations and identities, he also sought to incorporate institutions and organizations into a viable discursive approach, (Howarth, 2000: 82). He stressed that the main objects of inquiry are discursive practices. His work on rules provides the basis for the later discussions of hegemonic practices and 'common-sense' approaches in organizations. He also captured the performative and practical aspects of speaking, writing and communicating and connected them to questions of power, subjectivity and the body, (Howarth, 2000: 82). That is not to say, however, that a Foucauldian approach has been adopted uncritically, and section 2.4 discussed the main criticisms levelled at Foucault's ideas. For example, he did not give sufficient emphasis to the alternative spaces and counter-logics of resistance, (Habermas, 1987: 266 - 293; Howarth, 2000: 83), and whilst he recognizes that where there is power, there is also resistance (see section 2.3.5) he does not adequately address the role of the individual subject in resisting power. In the same way as other researchers (e.g. Knights & McCabe, 2003), the intention in this thesis is to draw on, rather than be a slave to, Foucault, and to draw on and inform the analysis with other perspectives (Knights & McCabe, 2003: 1592), particularly from Queer Theory and Critical Studies. Despite its importance in developing our understanding of power, few other philosophical works have had such impact on the area of sexual identity as 'The History of Sexuality' (Foucault, 1976, 1984a, b).

The study of discourse may reveal the power relations and forces of normalization that make understand bodies and identities in a certain way, (Spargo, 1999), but it is actually seeing the performance of this discourse in an organizational context which allows us to see those forces of normalization and power relations in practice in organizations. If discourse, as has been argued, maintains the power relations of heteronormativity, and repeated social practice is the performance of that discourse, it is by studying both that the organizational researcher will develop a fuller understanding of how organizations socially construct the sexual identity of its members. This thesis now turns to explore the social construction of sexual subjectivity in more detail.

3. *CONCEPTUALIZING SEXUAL IDENTITY*

The study of identity is one of the most popular areas of study for contemporary organizational researchers, and has a lengthy pedigree (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000:13; Brown, 2001: 113; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003: 1163). The issue of identity is central to our understanding of how individuals relate to the groups and organizations in which they are participants, (Brown, 2001: 114). There are consequently many different approaches, as well as many different theoretical positions and ways of understanding and conceptualizing identity.

Identities are usually seen as basic to who or what we are, and, in relation to sexual identities, it has been traditional to see an automatic relationship between desire and self-description, self and social identity, (Weeks, 2003; Weeks, Holland, & Waites, 2003). Postmodern and discursive approaches, though, have moved away from the idea that there is a 'true self', (de Levita, 1965: 1), that can be revealed, or that identity is an essentialist notion, (Collinson, 2003: 527 - 528). Identities are multiple, fluid and unstable, in a general sense, but also in a more specific sexual sense; after all, the work carried out by Kinsey in the 1940s illustrated the spectrum of sexualities, (Weeks, 2003: 199). Judith Butler has even described identity as a fiction, in the sense that it does not exist in any real, essentialist, pre-discursive way, (Butler, 1990, 1993). If it is constituted by discourse, it cannot be described as being real, and, if it is not real, it is, theoretically at least, a fiction. In addition, discourse theory has traditionally decentred the subject altogether. This poses a challenge, raising serious problems for the study of sexualities, and the researcher wishing to explore the lived experience of sexual minorities in organizations; given the fluidity and instability of postmodern identities, it is not possible, for example, to reveal an identity, either in terms of how the individual sees themselves, or how others see them, as it may be hard for the individual to categorize and put boundaries around themselves, their identity may not stay the same, and it may be hard to prioritise one aspect of their identity over another. As Joshua Gamson says "Identities are multiple, contradictory, disunified, unstable, fluid – hardly the stuff that allows a researcher to confidently run out and study sexual subjects as if they are coherent and available social types," (Gamson, 2000: 356).

Even though identity may be described as a fiction, or an 'error' (Butler, 1993), it is a necessary one, (Butler, 1993; Weeks, 2003), since identity feels real and is important to individuals. After all, whatever the complexity of studying the identity of sexual

minorities, organizations will waste no time in giving them an identity, (Gamson, 2000: 357), and it is a phenomenon, which is felt to be very real by individuals. What is more, identity categories may well be difficult given their constructed and fluid nature, but it is not possible to live in ignorance of the social and moral order created by them, (Bowker & Star, 1999: 3; Mumby, 2004: 252). If there is any doubt, try, as Bowker and Star suggest, the simple experiment of ignoring your gender classification and use instead whichever toilets are the nearest, (Bowker & Star, 1999: 3). Given that identity can be conceived to be unstable and fluid, but at the same time felt to be real and stable by individuals working in organizations, how should we frame our understanding of sexual identity in order to research the dynamics of minority sexuality in work organizations?

This section aims to answer this question by building on the long-standing tradition of studying identity, (Gamson, 2000), and treading a path in between the highlighting of identity as an area of study and the prioritization of discourse. Instead the focus is on the 'becoming', (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003: 1164), processual aspect of identity work, (Stein, 2003), to provide temporary answers to the questions 'who am I?' and 'what do others think of me?' This section is therefore organized into three parts; first, the relevant aspects of different traditional approaches to identity are drawn out to support the idea that identity formation is a constant process of negotiation between two constitutive elements. Second, starting with an exposition of Queer Theory, the difficulties with conceptualising sexual identity are discussed, in particular the unstable, constructed nature of identity as a category of knowledge. Nevertheless, it is important to study identity because it is an organizational reality, characterized for sexual minorities with a lack of congruence between the two constitutive elements. Third, the way that these two elements are played out in an organizational setting is discussed, with the idea that self identity, or subjectivity is developed through a process of self-narrative. The reduction in dissonance between the self and social identity is described as a performative act, as the individual takes up a subject position congruent with their subjectivity. Identity is further theorized as performativity as the individual continues in the subject positions that they have adopted in the workplace.

3.1 THERE ARE TWO CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS TO IDENTITY

There are many different approaches to the study of identity, springing from many different disciplines and a long tradition in the area, (Pratt & Foreman, 2000a: 142; Collinson, 2003: 529). Examples include, but are not restricted to, psychoanalysis,

(Freud, 1930), symbolic interactionism, (Mead, 1934), existential philosophy, (Sartre, 1958), Dramaturgy (Goffman, 1969) and social identity theory, (Tajfel, 1972). The field of study is so wide, that it is not possible to review the entire field of identity study here. This section therefore focuses on developing a specific theoretical position on identity, drawn from previous approaches, which will support the project. The approaches to studying identity mentioned here have much to recommend them, and there are elements from these previous approaches that contribute to the specific theoretical position that is described in this thesis. This section goes on to describe how there are broadly two different types of identity development, first the development of the self and subjectivity, and second the development of social identity or subject positions. The idea that social identity can be understood as a performance is discussed as well as the reflexive nature of self development and the idea that both self and social identity develop through interaction with others. This idea of identity through social construction and interaction with others was a key idea promoted by the symbolic-interactionists and by G. H. Mead (1934) in particular, and this is the starting point for the review of the identity literature.

3.1.1 Identity comprises self and social identity

Symbolic-interactionism is where individuals interpret others' gestures and act on the meaning yielded by their own interpretation (Blumer, 1966 in du Gay, 1996). Notions of self and identity are crucial to Mead's work; indeed, he was one of the first modern social theorists to explore the notion that identity develops within discourse, (du Gay, 1996: 28). Mead claimed that identities do not emerge through individual's own private experiences, but only in social life where 'other selves in a social environment logically antedate the consciousness of self which introspection analyses', (Mead, 1934). In other words, even though one might assume that the self is quite private, it actually only develops by engaging in social interaction, communication and language use with other people, (du Gay, 1996: 29).

The social self articulated by Mead has two constitutive elements, both involved in a constant process of identity formation: the 'Me' and the 'I'. Mead defines the 'Me' as the individual as an object of consciousness, later conceptualized as social identity, and the latter as the individual as having consciousness, later conceptualized as self identity. However, in Mead's conceptualization, both faces of the self are social and only emerge together in discourse. Because the 'I' is associated with the self, or subjectivity, it is associated with the fundamental sense of who and what we are.

However, the 'I' cannot exist in isolation, and therefore exists at the same time as the social identity, or 'Me'. The subjective sense of identity could not develop without the simultaneous constitution of the self as a social object. According to Mead, therefore the development of identity can only take place within the social and depends on discourse and communication. It is in this communication, particularly through language, that individuals become self-reflexive and gain control over their own response during social activity, (du Gay, 1996: 29-30).

For the interactionists, identity is both produced and transformed in a continuing, on-going process of symbolic social interaction, which has a number of consequences for the practice of sociological analysis. One of these consequences is that social action becomes one of the foci of study for researchers in sociology.

What is attractive about Mead's work, and the work of the symbolic interactionists, is this idea that the self is developed through a process of constant negotiation with others in the social world. What is less easy to accept is the notion that this process is a stage in the 'full development of the self', (Mead, 1994: 102), suggesting that there is an endpoint to self development. Another difficulty is the idea of a pre-discursive self that is shaped rather than formed by social interaction.

3.1.2 Managing the relationship between self and social identity

Erving Goffman's work has a theoretical background which is based in Mead's work, (Craib, 1998: 75). Goffman (1969) also recognized that the individual took their values and ideals from the society around them. He believed that once the individual had taken these values from other people, they then expressed those same values in their performance. For example, Goffman refers to the following quotation by Cooley (1922), in which he talks about adopting a social, or subject, position which is different, or 'better', than the individual's self identity, with a view to putting over to other people a professional or class identity:

> "If we never tried to seem a little better than we are, how could we improve or train ourselves from the outside inward? And the same impulse to show the world a better or idealized aspect of ourselves finds an organized expression in the various profession and classes, each of which has to some extent a cant or pose, which its members assume, unconsciously for the most part, but which has the effect of a conspiracy to work upon the credulity of the rest of the world." (Cooley, 1922 in Goffman, 1969: 31).

In section 3.3.3, the idea that identities are unstable and fragmented will be developed, but it is interesting to note that Goffman was a key proponent and theorist of the fragmentation phenomenon. In different situations and environments, individuals are called upon to exhibit different forms of appropriate behaviour. As the individual finishes one encounter or interaction and begins another one, they adjust their 'presentation of self' in relation to what is demanded in that particular situation, (Goffman, 1963a, 1969). Such a view is often thought to imply that an individual has as many selves as there are divergent contexts of interaction, an idea which somewhat resembles poststructuralist interpretations of the self, albeit from a differing theoretical perspective, (Giddens, 1991: 190).

This presentation of self can be conceptualized as putting on a show for other people; either sincerely, where the individual is taken in by their own performance, or cynically, where the performer is deliberately trying to delude their audience. Not all cynical performers are doing this out of self-interest; it may indeed be believed to be in the interests of the audience, for example when an individual tells white lies, or says what the customer wants to hear, (Goffman, 1969). These are two extremes, and reality will fall somewhere in between; the important idea here, however, is that the person which is presented to the audience is, in fact, a mask. It is the self we are striving to live up to, or the self we would like to be. The term performance refers to all the activity of an individual in front of a particular set of observers and which has some influence on those observers. These ideas have particular resonance here; in section 3.4.2, the idea that sexual identity is a performative act will be developed, but it is worth noting that the idea that a performer may try and delude an audience, and take up subject positions which are not congruent with their own self identity is particularly pertinent to sexual minorities who remain in the closet at work, and undertake a number of different strategies to manage their identity. This will be covered in more detail in section 4.2.1.

Goffman's conceptualization of identity management, or performance in particular situations, is described as a 'front'. In the workplace, an individual may be required to present a front to be consistent with the image demanded by a particular profession. This approach, which describes an individual's performance, might be conceptualized as dramaturgy; the work becomes dramatized, because the individual is not only expected to describe their capability in a certain area, but also to demonstrate it through their performance in the workplace. Goffman gives the examples of surgeons or police officers to demonstrate this point; both of these

professions have to carry out certain functions, perhaps not strictly necessary ones, in order for the audience to have faith that the individual actually belongs to that profession. Also work is dramatized by individuals who want to show that the customer is getting value for money; but making invisible costs visible is only part of the story. The individual must at times devote a considerable amount of energy to the dramatizing of the role, (Goffman, 1969).

An interesting point to make is that an individual's front is not consistent; it is contingent on the role that the person is playing. Therefore, a person may present a different front at home, at work, or indeed in different situations in the work environment. This idea is apposite for sexual minorities, who may well separate work and home, and perform different identities, and display their front in a different way in each place. For example, during this research project, there were examples of managers who were out to their friends, but not at work, and also examples of police officers who were not out as gay at work, and not 'out' as police officers to their gay friends. Clearly, there is a risk in presenting a 'front', and the fear of being found out must create a vulnerability in the individual, (Goffman, 1969). Indeed, Goffman suggests that the reaction of the audience may be worse, when they suspect that the performance is not genuine. "When the audience is known to be secretly sceptical of the reality that is being impressed upon them, we have been ready to appreciate their tendency to pounce on trifling flaws as a sign that the whole show is false; but as students of social life we have been less ready to appreciate that even sympathetic audiences can be momentarily disturbed, shocked and weakened in their faith by the discovery of a picayune discrepancy in the impressions presented to them," (Goffman 1969: 45). Again, this concept is particularly apt for sexual minorities in organizations; as individuals try to conceal their sexual identity, and put on a front in the workplace, people around them react with shock when they come out.

The idea of a performance is very appealing and supports the later work of the post-structuralists. The idea of changing one's performance is relevant to sexual minorities, but again, one of the issues is that of a pre-discursive identity which the individual chooses to express in different ways, rather than the post-structuralist approach of taking up a discursively constituted subject position and performing in a way which is consistent with that position. Goffman's earlier work "Stigma" (Goffman, 1963b) is an important work which deals with the ways people manage and perform in the context of potentially discreditable identities, and is referenced in more detail in section 4.2.1 on the management of minority sexual identity in the workplace.

3.1.3 Self and social Identity are sustained through reflexive processes in discourse

Giddens suggests that the self implies reflexive awareness, (Giddens, 1991: 52). Self-identity is not something that is 'given', it is something which has to be "routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual", (Giddens, 1991: 52), a process which is driven the question 'who am I?'. Giddens recognizes the strength of Mead's conceptualization of the 'I' and the 'Me', or self and social identity, but critiques the approach because he sees Mead's approach as connecting the unsocialized part of the individual (the 'I') with the social self (the 'Me'), rather than seeing subjectivity develop in a discursive system, (Giddens, 1991: 52 - 53). He therefore challenges the essentialist notion that identity is pre-discursive, only to be formed by social interaction. Instead, it is discourse itself and social interaction which constitutes it. Giddens summarises this by saying "self identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual", (Giddens, 1991: 53). He goes on to state that "the self (is) reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography", (Giddens, 1991: 53). However, Giddens conceptualizes identity as necessarily having continuity across time and space. Indeed, he suggests that a fractured identity or one where no continuous narrative can be sustained is a disabled one, (Giddens, 1991: 53). He goes on to describe this disability as being characterized by people who seek to blend with the environment so as to escape the dangers which haunt them. This is resonant of Goffman's ideas of stigma, an individual's 'front' and performance, and clearly one which resonates with minority sexual identity. However, the idea that a person is disabled because there is a lack of congruence between their self and social identity is one which is difficult to accept. It assumes that this situation is created by some deviant wish on the part of the individual, or some inability to create a coherent identity, and therefore assumes self-control and agency on the part of the individual, rather than a response, or resistance, to the power relations as expressed by discourse.

However, Giddens critique of Mead is useful because it starts to move towards a discursive understanding of identity. He introduces the concept of continuity, and at first glance this seems intuitively to contradict the discursive approach which allows for fragmentation. It may be that an identity stays the same across many years, or it may change rapidly as a person starts work in a particular organization, begins a relationship or ends a course of study. A person may be gay, but choose to get married, have children and live a heterosexual lifestyle. Another person who had

previously thought themselves to be heterosexual may come out as gay. In that sense, an identity may presume continuity, or it may presume instability in an ever-changing set of circumstances. Where an identity does presume continuity is where the individual has the "capacity to keep a particular narrative going", (Giddens, 1991: 54). Or, in other words, the ability continually to integrate and sort events from the external world into an "ongoing story about the self", (Giddens, 1991: 54). Therefore, it is the identity, or sense of self, which is continuous rather than any particular trait or aspect of identity, which continues in an uninterrupted fashion.

Identity is made up of more than just self identity. As well as implying the question 'Who am I?', identity also implies the question 'Who am I in the eyes of others', (de Levita, 1965: 7). It is not enough to assert an identity, that identity must be validated by those with whom we have dealings, (Jenkins, 1996: 21). In other words, identity is never unilateral, (Jenkins, 1996: 21), it is also social. Again, this is inherently linked to Mead's own understanding of identity, (Mead, 1994: 102), where individuals do not just develop the self through interaction with other individuals, but also because of the social attitudes of the social group to which they belong.

It is not enough to explore aspects of identity through self identity alone; what people think about us is no less important than what we think about ourselves, (Jenkins, 1996: 21). In other words, social identity is a game of 'playing the vis-à-vis', (Boon, 1982: 26). This thesis therefore aims to go beyond the exploration of self identity, to the exploration of social identity; it aims to explore the self-identity of sexual minorities, through an exploration of their own narratives and identity work, but also to go beyond this to explore what other people in work organizations think of sexual minorities, and through the study of micro-discourses in organizations to explore the performance of social identity. Whilst we should not ignore what goes on inside the individual, and the internal process of negotiation that goes to make up one's self identity, we should recognize that other expression of ourselves, the 'Me' as described by Mead, or our social identities, (Craib, 1998). Our social identity is made up of a host of factors including jobs, partnership status, hobbies and so on. One's identity in its totality is made up of one's self identity and all those social identities put together; it is fluid in so far as losing one of those social identities may change one's identity, but one's identity continues nevertheless, (Craib, 1998: 4). In stating this definition of social identity, it is also important, for the sake of avoiding confusion to state in addition what it is not. This definition should not be confused with 'Social Identity Theory', which has emerged from the world of organizational psychology,

and which, when introduced by Tajfel (1972) was described as "the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership", (Tajfel, 1972: 292).

The terms identity and subjectivity are occasionally used in ways which suggest that the terms are interchangeable. In discussing the identity of subjects, discourse theorists use the term 'subjectivity' to describe a concept akin to 'self identity' or the 'sense of self'. Kathryn Woodward (1997) defines subjectivity as follows,

> "Subjectivity includes our sense of self. It involves the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions which constitute our sense of 'who we are' and the feelings which are brought to different positions within culture" (Woodward, 1997: 39).

Subjectivity is experienced in a social context where language and culture give meaning to our experience of ourselves and where an overall identity is adopted. Of course, our sense of 'who we are' is only part of the overall construction of identity. It is the positions that we take up within discourse, the positions that we identify with, together with our subjectivity, which constitute our identity, (Woodward, 1997: 39).

Here, Woodward is recognizing that the process of taking up subject positions is an important part of constituting identity. The term 'subject position' is not unlike the term social identity, described above. Subjects take up a number of available subject positions, created for them by discourse, (Phillips & Hardy, 1997) (Hardy & Phillips, 1999).

3.1.4 Summary of previous approaches

From these previous approaches which, it should be reiterated, are not an exclusive list of previous areas of work on identity, it is possible to draw certain important conclusions for the conceptualizing of identity in this thesis. So far, the postmodern approaches to identity have not been discussed in great detail, only previous more traditional approaches. These are summarized in the following table. The work of Butler, Althusser and Foucault is going to be reviewed in section 3.2 and 3.3.

Approach	Useful elements of Approach	Elements of Approach to be discounted
Mead / Symbolic Interactionists	• Idea of developing identity through interaction with others; • Two different aspects of identity – the 'I' and the 'Me'; • Identity formation is a continuous process	• Implied prediscursive identity; • Identity develops to a 'full identity'.
Goffman	• The idea of fragmentation of identity – a different one contingent on the setting; • Presentation of self; • Dramaturgy and performance; • Social identity is a 'front', the performance of which may change from one setting to the next.	• The idea that there is a true self to be revealed, that people deliberately try to present a front; • Approach neglects issues of power.
Giddens	• Discursive development of subjectivity; • Reflexive understanding of identity; • Identity as an ongoing story about the self.	• Idea of a true self which expressed in social identity, or a disabled personality if it is not; • Presumption of continuity across time.
Jenkins	• Idea of identity as 'what people think about us'	
Tajfel & Social Identity Theorists		• Identity is developed by membership of certain groups.
Craib	• Social identity is made up of series of different factors.	

Table 2: Summary of previous approaches to identity

The following sections build on these traditional approaches by developing the concept of identity and sexual identity in particular to include relevant areas of postmodernism and poststructuralism, starting with a brief discussion on queer theory, which has had a great influence on bringing discursive approaches to the study of alternative sexualities. Whilst valuable, previous approaches to social identity and self-presentation, (Goffman, 1969), have neglected the discursive processes of power and control that profoundly affect subjectivity, (Brown, 2001: 115) (Pratt & Foreman, 2000a: 141), which are particularly important to address in considering this internal-external dialectic in terms of sexual minorities.

3.2 QUEER THEORY

Queer Theory has grown out of a social constructionist, discursive approach to minority sexuality and, although the term 'queer' was once a term of abuse, it has come to be used differently to describe this theoretical model which has developed out of the more traditional lesbian and gay studies, (Jagose, 1996: 1). It emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s, a post-modern academic movement, heavily influenced by post-structuralist theory and loosely tied to confrontational queer politics (Gamson, 2000; Parker, 2001: 40).

This very action of reappropriating a term of abuse to identify an academic and political movement suggests that speech can be "returned" to its speaker in a different form, and that it can reverse the very negative connotations into positive ones, (Butler, 1997: 14). It is interesting that Queer Theorists have been successful at reappropriating the term "queer", whereas others have been less successful with other terms; for example, a term like "nigger", despite some recent efforts at reclamation, appears capable of only re-inscribing its pain, (Butler, 1993: 223).

3.2.1 What is Queer Theory? A definition

It is actually quite difficult to define Queer Theory, since any notion of imposing boundaries make postmodernists nervous, and indeed since the theory leads to the elimination of categories, definitions might be seen as antithetic. As a theory, Queer Theory's derivation from postmodernism and post-structuralism leads to the rejection of all categorizations as limiting and labelled by dominant power structures, (Kirsch, 2000). But a description of the main tenets of the theories is important to its understanding. A summary of these is presented in Table 3.

The aim of Queer Theory was to build an identity of resistance, not limited by labels or social constructions. The principle of queer theory is the disassembling of common beliefs about gender and sexuality, from their representation in film, literature and music to their placement in the social and physical sciences. The cross-discipline approach taken by Queer Theory means that organization studies is a potentially fruitful area for theory development, (Parker, 2001: 40).

Queer theory tenet	Description
Discursive approach to sexuality	Sexuality is seen as a production of power and knowledge, expressed discursively and enforced through boundaries and binary divides
Problematization of (sexual) identities	Identities are always on uncertain ground, entailing displacements of identification and knowing. The idea that identities may be conceptualized as being inherently unstable will be explored further in section 3.3
Cross-discipline approach	Queer theory embodies a willingness to interrogate areas which would not be seen as the terrain of sexuality

Table 3: The principle tenets of Queer Theory, adapted (Stein & Plummer, 1996)

Queer theory encourages analysis not only of the overtly homosexual, but also a reading between the lines for patterns of absences and silences through which texts deny same-sex desire. It reveals how the manufacture of a reviled homosexual in western societies has often been a method by which heterosexuality assured themselves of their superiority, (Adam, 2002: 19), through the construction of minority sexuality as an inferior identity and as a reviled category of knowledge.

3.2.2 Who can be called a Queer Theorist?

The principle Queer Theorists are presented in the following table, which maps out a chronology of queer, according to the publishing dates of the major contributing publications in this area. One of the first queer publications was Diana Fuss' edited work "Inside / Out", which came to represent a central statement about Queer

Theory, (Fuss, 1991). This was closely followed by Butler's "hugely impressive", (Parker, 2001: 40), "Gender Trouble", which, by building on the work of linguist philosopher, J. L. Austin, (Butler, 1990), suggested that gender is performative, and that gender and sexuality are historical constructions which we act out.

Year	Theorist	Principle work(s)
1989 and 1991	Diana Fuss	"Essentially Speaking" and "Inside /Out"
1990	Judith Butler	"Gender Trouble"
1991	Eve Sedgwick	"Epistemology of the Closet"
1995	David Halperin	"Saint Foucault: towards a gay Hagiography"
1996	Steven Seidman	Queer Theory / Sociology

Table 4: Principle Queer Theorists - Adapted from Seidman, (1996: p11 & 1997: p147)

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "Epistemology of the Closet" explores contradictory conceptual models of homosexuality, that is to say how homosexuality represents the identity of a minority, but at the same time helps to constructs heterosexual identity, (Sedgwick, 1991). In a typically deconstructive move, she attempted to show the unhelpful side of binary oppositions, the prime example being that when something is 'out', it implies something else being 'closeted', (Parker, 2001: 42). Well known names in the area of queer also include David Halperin who wrote a gay hagiography to Foucault, highlighting the Foucauldian basis for much of the work belonging to the Queer movement, (Halperin, 1995), and Stephen Seidman, whose edited collection of papers brings together the two fields of queer theory and sociology for the first time, (Seidman, 1996).

3.2.3 Where does Queer Theory come from?

The study of minority sexuality has moved rapidly through a series of major transformations and changes, including the name that academics gave to the field of

study, (Adam, 2002: 15). One of the first transformations was the sociological challenge to the accepted wisdom that sexuality was natural, while homosexuality was deviant. With the subsequent rise of social constructionism, the next step was to challenge the current understanding of sexual categorization. This gave rise, in the early 1980s, to the Lesbian and Gay Studies movement, a prominent political expression of a politics organized around sexual expression and a more positive analysis of minority sexual identity, (Epstein, 1996: 151). Many of the academic studies at this time sought to explain the origin, social meaning and form of the modern homosexual, (Seidman, 1997: 90). But, the problem was that this academic and political movement was seen to support an ethnic model of sexuality, which was broadly essentialist, and was seen to be exclusive of other identities, especially of race and gender, and the categories of lesbian and gay were seen to be disciplining forces for social categorization, (Seidman, 1997: 91). Queer Theory, a largely US-based academic movement, was an attempt to answer these criticisms by shifting the debate away from explaining the modern homosexual to questions of the operation of the heterosexual / homosexual binary, and from an exclusive preoccupation with homosexuality to a focus on heterosexuality as a social organizing principle, based on theories of power and knowledge, (Seidman, 1996: 9).

Although Queer Theory itself cannot be traced back to a single event, there are two publications which had a profound impact on placing Queer Theory on the map. It was set in motion by the pioneering work of Judith Butler (1990) and Eve Sedgwick (1991). It stepped back from the study of homosexuality to the question of how people and desires come to be separated into the two camps of homosexuality and heterosexuality in the first place. Sharing with deconstruction an interest in discovering the underpinnings of linguistic binaries like homosexual - heterosexual, queer theory proposed to delineate the regulatory regimes that sort sexualities and subjectivities into valued and devalued categories. The promise of queer theory was to move beyond the minoritizing logic of the study of a gay and lesbian ethnicity toward an understanding of the ways in which heterosexuality and family pull the cloak of virtue around themselves by manufacturing a deviant other, (Adam, 2002: 18). And moving away from the ethnicity model of sexuality raises the question: what of minority sexual identity? This issue is to be discussed in the following section 3.3.

3.3 SEXUAL IDENTITY

Judith Butler has criticised the whole concept of identity categories and refers to them as the site of necessary trouble, (Butler, 1990, 1991). Indeed, there are some

issues such as the fluidity of identities which do indeed makes things more complicated, but to go as far as Butler, an identity refusenik, and reject identity categories would be a difficult position empirically. Even Butler admits that she would be prepared to appear under the sign of 'lesbian' on 'political occasions'; she admits that it is possible to argue that while there is no transparent meaning afforded by the terms lesbian and gay, there remains an imperative to use these category errors, mistakes and 'catachrestic terms', (Butler, 1991: 16). Identity may be constructed, but it is a real expression of the subject positions that people take up and negotiate every day, not just in politics, but in the real life of organizations, (Brocklehurst & Ward, 2002). So what is identity? The rest of this section develops an understanding of identity which recognises its constructed nature, but highlights its importance as an area of organizational reality. First, the nature of identity is explored, and the idea that identity is constructed through language and historical concepts is discussed. Then the implications of postmodernism and poststructuralism for identity are explored by suggesting that identities are multiple and fragmented. Finally, whilst accepting that postmodernist approaches destabilize identity, the idea that the empirical reality of organizations implies necessary catachresis is represented.

3.3.1 Sexual Identity is constructed through language

Postmodern approaches describe identity as being constituted by language. Language is the condition of possibility for the subject, and not merely its instrument of expression. This means that the subject cannot exist prior to language, but instead is created and constituted by it, (Butler, 1997: 28).

It is understandable that the subject should be decentred in discourse-based studies, since Derrida suggests that human subjects are an *effect* of structure that pre-exist and shape them, (Howarth, 2000: 44). Butler's conceptualization of identity decentres the subject so much that she describes language itself as having agency; she describes it as a performance with effects. She recognizes that this is a difficult conceptualization and that we may have problems attributing agency to language, because we believe that only subjects do things with language, and that agency has its origins in the subject, (Butler, 1997: 7). Agency, or the power for the individual to take action, is an important area for consideration and Queer Theorists have tended to deprioritize the creative agency of human actors in the area of sexuality. There is therefore a perception that there has been a sociologically weak theorization of

agency at the heart of queer theory, (Roseneil, 2002: 29), and in the study of sexualities.

The poststructuralist philosopher Althusser also asserts that the subject is not self constituting, neither does it have any agency in the process. Instead, the human subject is an ideological effect. This means that the way people talk creates certain subject positions which people take up when they respond to certain names, (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002: 40). Clearly, the question arises, if one is constituted by language, but has no role or agency in the process of constitution, how do we recognize ourselves as subjects? Althusser introduces the idea of interpellation to capture the process by which a subject recognizes itself as a subject:

> "Ideology acts or functions in such a way that it recruits among the individuals (it recruits them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!', (Althusser, 1971: 174).

There is a problem with this idea, though; what if someone is called homosexual without their knowledge? This is, after all, a potential situation for any homosexual individual. The name constitutes the subject in a social sense, but it is possible for someone to be constituted socially without knowing or being aware that this has taken place. It is quite possible to imagine many different ways that a subject can be constituted, not only in a sexual sense, which may be quite contrary to the subject positions that the subject has chosen for themselves. It may be a great surprise to the individual to find out that they have been constituted in a certain way. For example, what if someone is 'named' as homosexual, but is not? As Judith Butler has put it,

> "One may as it were, meet that socially constituted self by surprise, with alarm or pleasure, even with shock", (Butler, 1997: 30-31).

So this raises the question, if discourse is constitutive of minority sexuality, does one have to be present in order to be constituted? Butler posits the notion that one does not:

> "One need not know about or register a way of being constituted for that constitution to work in an efficacious way", (Butler, 1997: 30-31).

Butler's comment is about the move from self to social identity; social identity is not just about our 'mark', that is to say what we project as ourselves through performance, but our social identity is made up of what others project onto us is with or without our knowledge.

Having constructed minority sexual identity, micro-discourses are then responsible for categorizing people within that identity. Being addressed as gay or homosexual, for example, does not merely mean being recognized for what one already is, but it means being given the very possibility of existence. It is ironic, though that a gay man or woman actually comes to exist by virtue of being addressed by the Other, the heterosexual, (Butler, 1997: 5). The act of disclosure is therefore not merely the reduction in the lack of congruence between the individual's subjectivity and the social position that they have previously adopted, but it may also mean contradicting the 'named' subject position that others have chosen for them.

One of the criticisms of Butler's work is the linguistic reductionism involved in her discursive analysis of sexuality, (Burkitt, 1998). The question arises why some people recognize themselves when they are named as gay and others do not. Why should language address different subjects in different ways? For example, some men almost exclusively practice sex with other men and claim that this is their primary preference, and yet do not and refuse to recognize themselves in terms of gay, bisexual or straight. These people adopt the more traditional performance of masculinity, while recognizing that their desires are not congruent with that performance, (Burkitt, 1998).

Previous approaches have suggested that identity includes the capacity to experience oneself as a continuity, the notion of always being a separate being, a comparison between self-observation and observation by others and the true self. It is difficult to talk about sexual identity as the 'true self' when, as can be seen in the following section, sexual identity is conceptualized as a constructed category of knowledge. De Levita describes some of the synonyms of identity: role, essence and individuality, (de Levita, 1965: 1). And yet, there is a move away from continuity, (Giddens, 1991), to fragmented identities, (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000), from the notion of always being a separate being to a more fluid understanding of identity, and away from the idea that there is one 'true self', to be explored and exposed during the research process, to the idea that there is not just one identity, but multiple ones. The extent to which each of us takes up a subject position and engages with one of these identity positions is dependent on the continuing, iterative and repeated

performances we give, and these performances form part of our identity work in organizations.

3.3.2 Sexual identity is a category of knowledge

Foucault (1976) asserted that the identity category of the homosexual grew out of a proliferation of discourses in the 19th century, signalling a historical shift in the conceptualizing of homosexuality from a behaviour to an identity, (Foucault, 1976). He insisted that the concept of the homosexual grew out of a particular context in the 1870s and that like sexuality generally, it must be viewed as a constructed category of knowledge rather than a discovered identity, (Foucault, 1976; Spargo, 1999). The sociologist Jeffrey Weeks, working at around the same time, in his seminal work "Coming out: homosexual politics in Britain from the nineteenth century to the present", (1977) presented the idea that Coming Out, while usually seen as a personal process, can also, through the acceptance and public demonstration of the validity of homosexuality, be seen as an historic process, (Weeks, 1977: Preface). Both Foucault (1976) and Weeks (1977) argued that there was clear evidence in the later decades of the 19th century of the development of a new sense of identity amongst many homosexual individuals, and a crucial element in this would undoubtedly have been the new public salience of homosexuality, reinforced by the legal situation, (Weeks, 1989). This provocative assertion, that modern homosexuality is of comparatively recent origin, and that it is a social construction developing as a result of dominant discourses, would certainly have acted as a catalyst for a growing body of literature on sexualities since the 1970s.

The literature has since charted different 'waves' of discourses that have impacted on sexuality and sexual identity at different points in time, and highlighting the changes in these discourses through history is useful for considering sexual identity. The point here is that discourses, as expressed by the law, were focussed on sexual acts, not a particular type of person, at least from the 16th until the 19th century. For example, the 1533 Act of Henry VIII stipulated that 'all acts of buggery were against nature, whether between man and woman, man and beast or man and man', (Weeks, 1989), and the penalty for this abomination was death. Although, terms such as 'molly', to refer to an effeminate gay man, or 'sapphist', to refer to a masculine lesbian, were in usage as early as the 17th century, (Burkitt, 1998), the emergence of sexual types and identities is believed to have only happened during the course of the 19th century, (Foucault, 1976; Weeks, 1977, 1989; Burkitt, 1998;

Schuyf, 2000), with the word 'homosexuality' first being used in 1869. The development of a homosexual identity became indispensable as a form of perversion against which a real man or woman could be defined, (Burkitt, 1998).

The negative aspects of the construction of homosexuality in the 19th century are obvious. The idea that a subject position or identity is constructed does not make it any less real for the identified. As already discussed, the homosexual was pathologized as a perverse or deviant type, at best a case of arrested development and an aberration from the heterosexual norm, (Spargo, 1999). With the emergence of homosexuality as an identity, came the emergence of the medical model of homosexuality, where the notions of sin and crime developed into concepts of sickness and mental illness, (Weeks, 1989), primarily a congenital abnormality rather than as before, a sinful and evil practice, (Dollimore, 1991; Greenberg & Bystryn, 1996: 88). This was a vitally significant move, even if its application was uneven. The scientific discourse was to rage for a long time as to whether homosexuality was acquired or congenital, and whether it was ineradicable or curable, (Weeks, 1989: 104), and, to an extent, this very same debate continues today, (Phillips, 2001; Watson, 2001).

Social regulation provides the conditions for the development of identity, (Weeks, 1989) and in the 19th century although the law, science, medicine and social mores established the limits, homosexual people responded by creating self-concepts (Weeks, 1989). Sexual variations and identities opposed to heterosexual hegemony are not simply its product for they have their own history and in the modern period, have emerged from spaces that modernism has created for them, (Burkitt, 1998). Of course, the spaces created by modernism were not just in the mind; urbanization and the spread of free wage labour were conducive to the formation of the modern homosexual, (Clausen, 1997; Lofstrom, 1997; Bailey, 2001). Industrialization created cities and anonymity, whilst a more mobile workforce meant it was easier to live as a single person. The emergence of sexual orientation as a component of personal identity was closely tied to changes in the organization of economic activity in the past century. Industrialization and urbanization allowed many men and women to separate from farm-based families and from prescribed productive and reproductive roles. Urban wage labour markets provided the economic means for men and women to create lives apart from heterosexual marriage and to create different sexual identities. Throughout the world, the ability to live as gay or lesbian is still greatly affected by the level of economic development and by personal wealth, (Klawitter,

2002: 329). Paradoxically, work organizations have, through providing the opportunity for personal wealth creation and independence, also provided the opportunity for minority sexual identities to flourish, whilst also providing the space for their silencing and discrimination.

3.3.3 Sexual identities are multiple and fluid

Identity has been theorized as fluid and multiple, (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996: 206; 2000: 98; Pratt & Foreman, 2000b: 18; Weeks, 2003: 124). Psychologists and sociologists have long argued for the existence of multiple identities within the same individual, (Pratt & Foreman, 2000b: 18), and this idea is not new, with Mead (1934) suggesting that there is a 'parliament of selves' within each person. But this is particularly pertinent for a discussion of sexuality, since many people in the West like to describe who they are by telling of their sexuality: 'I am gay / straight', (Weeks, 2003: 124). It places us securely in recognized discourses, embodying assumptions, beliefs, practices and codes of behaviour. Binary oppositions such as gay/straight help us to define our identity by providing boundaries, but these are often fragile, inadequate blocks to the flux of contemporary life and the range of possible ways of being, (Weeks, 2003: 125). Sexual identities are no exception and have also been theorized as multiple, contradictory, fragmented, incoherent and fluid, (Butler, 1990, 1991; Cohen, 1991; Fuss, 1991; Sedgwick, 1991; Tyler, 1991; Seidman, 1996, 1997; Gamson, 2000; Weeks, 2003; Weeks et al., 2003). The point is that people do not fit into one of two fixed categories of sexuality, gay and straight. In common with other poststructuralist understandings of the exclusionary and regulatory nature of binary identity categories, queer theory rejects the idea of a unified homosexual identity and sees the construction of sexual identities around the hierarchically-structured, binary opposition of hetero/homosexual as inherently unstable. Heterosexuality is also problematized and is rendered as much less monolithic and unassailable than earlier. In queer theory there is a shift in focus from the margins on the homosexual to a focus on the constitution of the homo/heterosexual binary, (Roseneil, 2002: 29). There is not just one homosexuality, but homosexualities, (Nardi, 2002: 47). However, postmodern approaches do not just support the view that there are many different sexual identities, they also emphasise the fluidity of sexual identity; some observers (e.g. Herdt, 1993, in Kirsh, 2000) have suggested that categories based on anatomical criteria are neither universal nor valid concepts for a gendered classification system. Sex as a reproductive act and sexual orientation are not necessarily concurrent and gender identity and expected gender roles do not

necessarily coincide. The descriptors of 'masculine' and 'feminine' are meant to be the same as gender roles, but in actuality often mask assumed orientation and sexual preference, (Kirsch, 2000).

It is difficult to make generalizations about entire categories of people who organize their lives around various sexual orientations; some lead mainstream lives, others transgressive ones and the differences are often linked to variations in race and social class. The lesson from the queer theorists is that the variations are often the answer, rather than the similarities, (Seidman, 1997).

People can move between these different sexualities at different points in their lives. There are sexualities which define gender attraction such as gay, straight and bisexual. But even bisexuality is just one example of the fluid and multi-faceted nature of sexual identity, (Storr, 2003: 153). It is difficult to say whether it is an identity that a person holds or whether it is a behaviour. Interestingly, it is potentially excluded under the binary gay/straight model of traditional thinking around sexuality, (Esterberg, 2002: 215). There is also asexuality which denies attraction of either gender, and there is transsexuality which redefines the gender of the individual. There are also sexualities to do with sexual practice and behaviour which cut across gender or sexual orientation such as sadomasochism and fetishism. Sexual identities are fluid and ever-changing, (Gamson, 2000); people who previously considered themselves heterosexual come out as gay, whilst gay people get married and have children, whilst others may choose an alternative sexual identity for political reasons.

3.3.4 Identity as organizational reality

Identities are important, even though Butler is against the identification of herself or others with 'categories of being' that have been the baseline for social movements, (Kirsch, 2000). Kirsch is one of a growing number of academics who argue against the tendency to invalidate identities, problematic as they may seem. Dismissing the identity, particularly of oppressed groups, relegates them to invisibility, which makes it difficult for them to construct the resistance necessary to counter the cruelty of lived experiences. There is also the way in which the queer critique of identity belies organizational reality for lesbian and gay men; they cannot have the luxury of not having an identity, because those who would persecute them inside organizations will soon give them one. Indeed, there has been a great deal of suspicion about the degree to which queer theory actually succeeds in being more inclusive of gender

and race. Of greatest concern is the politics which flow from it; Queer Theory has a problematic relationship to gay and lesbian communities, and, in its approach to deconstruction, lays lesbian and gay identities open to attack, (Currah, 2001; Adam, 2002: 19). What is not addressed by queer theory, and indeed those theorists who believe in the overall fluidity and instability of sexual orientation, is that minorities, including sexual minorities, exist within a larger culture and are labelled and determined by it, (Gamson, 2000; Kirsch, 2000).

A constantly moving identity presents unique difficulties for the organizational researcher, and concerns of how to study identities which are fluid and ever-changing has influenced the methodology chosen for the study, and discussed in a later section in more detail.

3.3.5 A lack of congruence between self and social sexual identity

The level of congruence between an individual's subjectivity and the subject positions they take up is particularly pertinent to the study of sexual identity, (Ward & Winstanley, 2003). For example, an individual's gay identity may remain part of their undisclosed subjectivity, with the subject position that they take up in the workplace, for example, that of a heterosexual employee. It is not easy, however, to resolve this incongruence and take up a new subject position. The best illustration of this is provided by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, (Sedgwick, 1991) in her work "The Epistemology of the Closet". Sedgwick proposes that the Closet, which Woods and Lucas (1993) assert is a major metaphor for sexual minorities, is an impossibly contradictory place. You cannot be in the Closet, since you can never be certain of the extent to which are have actually succeeded in keeping your homosexuality secret. But you can never be fully out of the Closet either since those who come to know refuse to give up the privilege of restricted knowledge and treat your sexuality as a secret to which they have special access. Coming out is also too soon and too late. It is too soon when affirmation of homosexuality is greeted with dismissal; it is too late because in coming out you have lied, (Sedgwick, 1991; Halperin, 1995: 35) The concept of identity formation through interaction with others is therefore very important in theorizing identity as it exposes the process as the lack of congruence between the subjectivity of the individual and the subject position that the individual takes up.

The following section explores the resolution of this dissonance through first the idea that subjectivity is a process of on-going self-narrative, and then that that coming out is a performative act, and that social identity is a continued performance.

3.4 SEXUAL IDENTITY CONCEPTUALIZED AS NARRATIVE AND PERFORMANCE

This section develops the idea that identities are sites of continuing identity work, and that it is a continual and on-going process, developed as a result of the constant negotiation that we are involved in with those around us, (Plummer, 1996; Craib, 1998). First the idea that subjectivity can be conceptualized as a narrative process is discussed, and its relationship to other processual conceptions of identity. The idea of identity as a process of performance is discussed and the theory of performativity is outlined; the discursive approach highlights the processual nature of identity in the iterable, or repeatable, nature of performed identity. This means that a discursive approach replaces the autonomous, rational self with language and linguistic structures as the principal means by which both identity and institutions are formed as well as the subject positions that people take up within them, (Seidman, 1994: 201).

3.4.1 Narratives of subjectivity

Czarniawska (1997) suggests that identity may be appropriately conceptualized as a narrative process where the individual and the people around them are continually involved in producing the narrative:

> "A continuous process of narration where both the narrator and the audience are involved in formulating, editing, applauding and refusing various elements of the ever-produced narrative," (Czarniawska, 1997 in Humphreys & Brown, 2002: 423).

Czarniawska's view of identity as narrative is not dissimilar to Giddens' idea of biography, but she develops the idea by introducing an audience, and the audience's role in developing the biography. Whereas Giddens posits the notion of reflexivity, Czarniawska suggests that others are involved; in this way, the identity of individuals is at stake in their interactions with others, notably in terms of how they choose to present themselves to others in order to manage both their perceptions of self and others' impressions of them, (Goffman, 1969; Galpin & Sims, 1999: 78; Brown, 2001:

115; Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004: 161). The idea that subjectivity can be developed and expressed as a narrative process is important for the development of the methodology which is discussed in more detail in section 6. The narrative process can also be conceptualized as something which is constantly performed; everything an individual does is in relation to their own narrative which creates and sustains their identity, (Ochberg, 1993; Galpin & Sims, 1999: 79). The performative nature of minority sexual identity is explored in the following sections, in particular the idea that coming out is a performative act and also that sexual identity itself is performative.

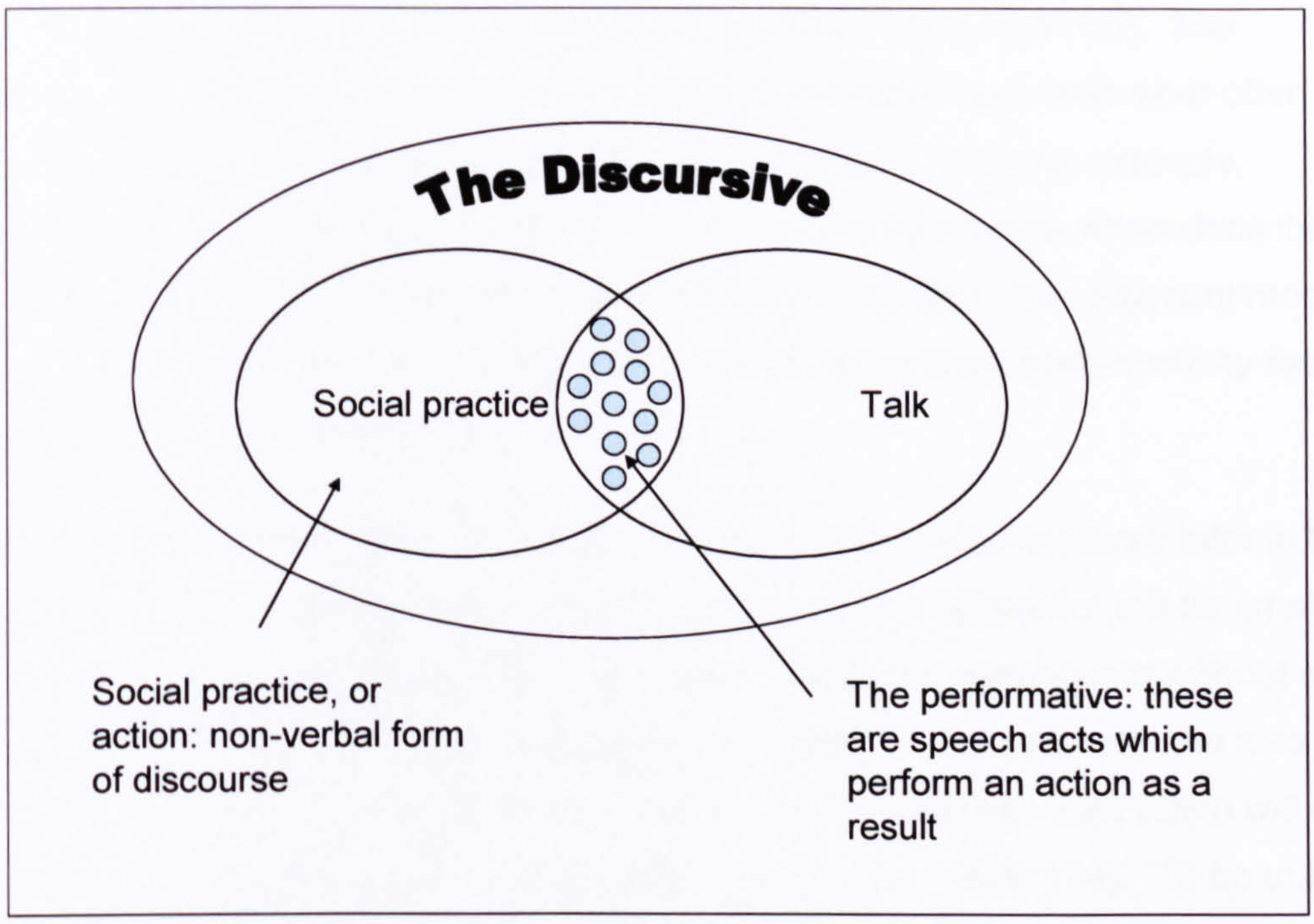


Figure 4: The relationship between performativity, talk and action

3.4.2 Coming out is a Performative act

The theory of performativity was identified by the linguist philosopher, J. L. Austin and developed by Derrida, and taken up by the feminist theorist Judith Butler. This theory reflects ideas of identity and identity management, such as the idea of performance, developed by Erving Goffman (1969). The main concept of performativity is that much of language consists of performative utterances, 'in saying what I do, I perform the action', (Hood-Williams & Harrison, 1998); its adoption by Queer Theory has led to the assertion that if sexual categories are unstable, then sexuality is something we perform.

Austin maintained that much of language was made up of performative utterances. In other words, by saying something, people perform the action at the same time. In

his seminal work "How to do things with words" (Austin, 1962), Austin was able to demonstrate the considerable extent to which language is used performatively. He maintained that the words have to be said in the right context for it to become performative; for example, the priest declaiming the marriage vows is only performative during the wedding ceremony, (Hood-Williams & Harrison, 1998), but not outside it. Derrida deconstructed Austin's approach and the performative uses of language and maintained that to be properly performative, the language must be serious and intentional; if said by an actor, or as a joke, the language will in some sense be void (Derrida, 1988 in Hood-Williams and Harrison, 1998: 80). The example of the marriage ceremony is one of the most well-known and most often quoted examples of performativity, and yet it is quite ironic, that this example, illustrative as it is of heteronormativity in society is used again here when describing performativity in terms of its impact on minority sexual identity. The adjacent model shows the relationship between talk and action, and also where performativity results from the interaction between the two.

In the same way, if coming out, a performative act which will be explored later in this thesis, is announced without some serious intent, then the statement will be empty. Woods and Lucas suggest that there has to be a 'frame' for coming out; without such a frame, others will see the act of coming out as puzzling. For example, the idea of going up to someone and bluntly stating "I'm gay" without further elaboration will elicit laughter from a lesbian or gay audience, (Woods & Lucas, 1993: 174). To be truly performative, the act has to have some serious intent behind it, such as a gesture of friendship, a political demand, or framing personal disclosure as a matter of integrity, (Woods & Lucas, 1993: 174). Performativity is not just a singular or deliberate "act", but a reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names, (Butler, 1993: 2). To come out just once would be to undermine the seriousness of the declaration. It has to happen again and again to be taken seriously. Butler suggests that the performativity attributed to the act of coming out is not just an act by an individual, but it is an act that is brought about by state discourse. By identifying homosexuality and therefore the act of coming out as inferior, the performativity automatically belongs to regulatory discourse. (Butler, 1997: 123). The firmer the link is made between speech and conduct, however, the easier it is to make a distinction between 'felicitous' and 'infelicitous' acts, and the stronger the grounds for claiming that speech not only produces injury as one of its consequences, but constitutes an injury in itself, (Butler, 1997: 23).

Because performativity is a speech act with effects, by coming out, the individual is knowingly putting themselves in an inferior position, even perhaps at risk. This can be compared with Foucault's idea of *'Parrhesia'*, which is similar to the concept of performativity, except that the effect of the speech act is dangerous, or involves a risk, to the individual who is making the statement, (Foucault, 2001: 13), and has the potential of hurting or angering the interlocutor, (Foucault, 2001: 17). It might be appropriate to consider that coming out is not the same kind of performance as the much quoted marriage vows, because the latter involves no risk, and symbolizes the approbation of society and invites the participants into a range of significantly enhanced lifestyle benefits, whilst the former, the act of coming out, involves significant risk to the individual, and in the act actually exclude themselves from many of the benefits that society has to offer. Coming out is not always, but may well be, an act of fearless speech, and whilst sexual identity may be performative, coming out is an example of perrhesiastic performativity.

3.4.3 Sexual identity is a performance

Performativity basically asserts that because all categories and identities only exist in the ideal, all attempts to reconcile the ideal with the real, result in performance, (Kirsch, 2000). It emphasizes forced and forceful reiterations rather than the intrinsic meaning of acts. The presumption is that gender (and sexuality) is something people act out. Gender is not an inherent quality that people possess. Butler argues that people mistake the acts for the essence and, in the process, come to believe that they are mandatory (Morris, 1995 and Butler 1993 in Kirsch, 2000: 87). Gender or sexuality is not something that people possess, instead people act a role which either idealizes expected norms, or is an act of resistance against that norm.

Hancock and Tyler (2001) explain that following Foucault, Butler's view is that gender and sexuality are an integral part of the body. They are, in fact, discourses which create the illusion of a stable and coherent gendered, sexual identity. Acts and gestures are therefore construed as being performative because they express the essence of identity, but that very identity is only a social construction which is created and sustained through discourse, (Butler, 1990, in Hancock and Tyler, 2001).

However, although the theory of performativity suggests that gender and sexuality are performed, and therefore not real, it does not mean that gender or sexuality can be chosen at will, (Spargo, 1999). For example, it would not be possible to choose

one's gender as one would choose what to wear that day from the wardrobe, (Hood-Williams & Harrison, 1998: 78), neither would it be possible, on waking, to choose whether to be gay or straight for that day. Despite this proviso, there are still critics of performativity, who see it as linguistic reductionism.

In recent years, it has become increasingly clear, at first to sociologists and then to others, that it is essential to distinguish between on the one hand, homosexual behaviour, and on the other homosexual roles, categorizations and identities, (Weeks, 1989). There is a problem with this approach, however. Although, defining homosexuality by same-sex object choice rather than sexual practices seems more sensible, opponents of lesbian and gay rights tend to want to portray it in behavioural terms, (Currah, 2001: 182). In addition, if sexual identity is defined by same-sex object choice, then sexual identities become inextricably linked with gender ones. The work of Judith Butler has shown that the presumed order of nature (a causality that proceeds from a bipolar sexed subject as being male or female, to gender polarity of men and women, and to a heteronormative sexuality) is a contingent, enacted social order. There is another way in which linking sexuality to gender becomes problematic. Opponents of the rights of sexual minorities still adhere to the model that construes heterosexuality as the normative end point of mature human sexuality; conversely, advocates of gay and lesbian rights affirm that heterosexuality, bisexuality and homosexuality are equally healthy avenues of development.

Butler's theory of performativity undermines this sociosexual order and helps to explain the concept of heteronormativity and the primacy of heterosexuality. And then the identity category of sexual orientation only remains intelligible if sex and gender remain relatively stable categories. So, according to Queer Theorists, not only does sexuality not have a fixed identity, but gender boundaries also become blurred:

> *"If gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way. Taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders ... When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one."* (Butler, 1991:6, in Kirsch, 2000).

Eve Sedgwick points out that there is a substantive connection in the minds of homophobes between gender nonconformity and homosexuality, and the pathologizing of effeminate boys and masculine girls. Defining homosexuality in terms of object choice uncouples homosexuality from this new pathology. Sedgwick lists sixteen possible meanings of the term sexual identity, ranging from biological sex to masculinity / femininity to political identification, (Currah, 2001).

> "It defines minority sexual identity as an infraction against what is socially acceptable", (Butler, 1997: 122).

The idea that masculinity or femininity is important in identification is useful concept for the discussion of performed sexual identity in certain occupations. For example, the Police is perceived as a masculine occupation, and individuals within it may be expected to perform in a certain way.

3.5 SUMMARY

The concept of identity is an important element of this thesis and cannot be rejected altogether, an approach which might be preferred by some queer theorists. The thesis aims to take a mid-position between the strict identity fundamentalism of mainstream lesbian and gay studies and the full-throttled identity iconoclasm of queer theorists, and highlights the potential that could result from a marriage between these two very different discursive regimes, (Currah, 2001). This section has highlighted the useful elements of previous approaches, whilst recognizing the instability of identity categories. The principal approach in this thesis is a discursive one, recognizing that discourse determines and constitutes the subject's identity, (Heracleous & Hendry, 2000), and is a powerful way of exploring struggles within organizational life, (Hardy et al., 2000). Identity is not constituted in any finished sense, instead discourse creates the scene of identity work that the individual carries out on a continual basis. Identity is made up of subjectivity (or what the Subject feels to be self-identity) and subject positions (or what the Subject and others perceives to be its social-identity). The Subject is both the recipient and producer of discourse; as such, identity can be expressed through on-going self-narratives, through which subjectivity is reflexively understood and interpreted, as well as through participation in competing discourses. Social Identity is created through the identification of the subject with subject positions in a discursive structure. Identity is relationally organized; the subject is something because it is contrasted with something that it is not. It develops through participation in relations of power and resistance as

expressed through discourse. It is fragmented; the subject has different identities according to those discourses in which it takes part, and always has the possibility of identifying differently in different situations. Finally, the taking up of a subject position is a performative act in two ways; first, the very taking up of the position is performative, and then the on-going performance of the subject position is performative in the iterative sense. Identity is therefore an on-going process of definition and redefinition. The next chapter develops the theme of minority sexual identity and explores how it plays out in a workplace and organizational setting.

4. SEXUAL MINORITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

One of the most taboo topics within contemporary organizational theory is sexuality, and sexual minorities in particular, (Klawitter, 1998; McQuarrie, 1998; Gabriel et al., 2000: 183; Hancock & Tyler, 2001; Ward, 2001). References to sexual orientation in the diversity literature in the past have been at best cursory, perhaps giving a definition of diversity to include sexual orientation before returning quickly to the discussion on race or gender, (Kossek & Lobel, 1996; Cornelius, 2001; Ward, 2001). One of the reasons that sexual orientation has received less attention from organizational researchers is that it is, unlike most other forms of diversity, invisible (Woods & Lucas, 1993; Badgett & King, 1997), and in many cases silent. Again, invisible forms of diversity, such as sexual orientation, have been less researched in the management area than visible forms such as gender or race, (Clair et al., 2002; Bowen & Blackmon, 2003: 1400). Not only has the area been under-researched, but there seems to be a gap in terms of empirical research into sexual minorities, and their experiences, in specific work organizations.

That is not to say, of course, that a literature with a long tradition about sexual minorities at work does not exist. The 1970s and 1980s saw a number of empirical surveys and analyses of discrimination against lesbians and gay men in organizations, often initially produced as small-scale studies and pamphlets, (Burrell & Hearn, 1989: 23). Examples of these were given by Burrell and Hearn (1989), and include "What about the gay workers?", (Campaign for Homosexual Equality, 1981), an empirical report on discrimination against gay men in the workplace, "Gay workers, trade unions and the law", (Beer, Jeffrey, & Munyard, 1983), a report on discrimination, "Danger!...Heterosexism at work", (GLC, 1985) an empirical report by the former GLC on heterosexism in the workplace and "All in a day's work", (Taylor, 1986), an empirical report on anti-lesbian discrimination at work.

A review of the principal examples of literature on sexual minorities in the workplace is presented in Table 5, and aims to build on previous literature reviews in this area by Levine (1979), Levine and Leonard (1984) and Croteau (1996). The search is, in all likelihood, not exhaustive, but is extensive, aims to be representative of the workplace sexuality literature during the period and, as such, continues the review of this literature to the present day. An electronic search of peer-reviewed management literature was carried out, which was augmented by a manual search of the lists of references in these works. But since the imposing of any sort of boundary makes

postmodernists nervous, one question which is bound to be raised is why it was decided to begin the literature review in 1979. There were three main factors; 1979 was identified in the literature as the first seminal literature review of this topic, homosexuality was only decriminalized in the 1960s, and, intuitively, twenty-five years seems a reasonable period to review for a relatively new area of study.

"The Sexuality of Organization", (Hearn et al., 1989), was a ground-breaking and much-quoted work, linking sexuality to the area of organization studies. It identified the work by Levine (1979) and Levine and Leonard (1984) as being a seminal, original, and comprehensive literature review of the early works in the area of minority sexual orientation in the workplace. Levine's paper "Employment discrimination against gay men", (Levine, 1979) was a literature review of all the major work in this area in the 1970s; prior to this homosexuality had not yet been decriminalized in the UK, and it is extremely unlikely that there would have been any academic interest in the position of homosexuals in the workplace. Indeed, Weinberg suggested in 1970 that, owing to sanctions against homosexuality, exact measurements of job discrimination were beyond the grasp of social science, and samples were not then obtainable, (Weinberg, 1970). The period chosen covers twenty-five years, which is a significant time-span, and intuitively seems a sensible, workable period to review.

Although journals were the major focus of the search, important books in this area were included, for example, Burke (1993), where police officers talked about their lives in The Job as lesbians, gay men and bisexuals, and Woods and Lucas (1993), which was a wide-ranging study of gay men in a variety of occupations in corporate America. Despite the occasional example of organization specific studies, e.g. Burke (1993), the literature review in the following section shows that the major focus of the literature in the past has, understandably, been the individual, regardless of the type of organization they work for.

	Focus on discrimination	Focus on the individual	Focus on the organization
2000 to present			"Spirals of silence", (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003)
			"Diversity in Blue", (Miller, Forest, & Jurik, 2003)
			"En-gendering differences, transgressing the boundaries, coping with the dual presence", (Bruni & Gherardi, 2002)
		"Walking the line: fear and disclosure of sexual orientation in the workplace", (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001)	

	"The relationship among reported disclosure of sexual orientation, anti-discrimination policies, top management support and work attitudes of gay and lesbian employees", (Day & Schoenrade, 2000)		
			"Inclusion, exclusion and ambiguity: the role of organizational culture", (Wilson, 2000)
1990s		"Organizing sexualities, organized inequalities", (Humphrey, 1999)	
		"Recognising the gay constituency in UK trade unions", (Colgan, 1999b)	
		"The comfort of identity", (Holliday, 1999)	
		"Staying in the closet versus coming out", (Day & Schoenrade, 1997)	
			"Sexuality, class & conflict in a lesbian workplace", (Weston & Rofel, 1997)
		"Research on the work experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual people", (Croteau, 1996)	
		"Lesbian identity and disclosure in the workplace", (Driscoll, Kelley, & Fassinger, 1996)	
		"Impact of identity development upon career trajectory: listening to the voices of lesbian women", (Boatwright, Gilbert, Forrest, & Ketzenberger, 1996)	
	"The wage effects of sexual orientation discrimination", (Badgett, 1995)		
	"Discrimination against gay men and lesbians", (Snape, Thomson, & Chetwynd, 1995)		
		"Professional and openly gay", (Shallenberger, 1994)	
		"The career interests and aspirations of gay men: how sex-role orientation is related", (Chung & Harman, 1994)	
			"Coming out of the blue", (Burke, 1993)
		"The corporate closet: the lives of professional gay men in America", (Woods & Lucas, 1993)	
1980s		"Private experiences in the public domain: lesbians in organizations", (Hall, 1989)	
	"Discrimination against lesbians in the workforce", **(Levine & Leonard, 1984)**		
1979	"Employment discrimination against gay men", (Levine, 1979)		

Table 5: The focus of literature on the workplace experiences of sexual minorities

A total of twenty-three articles which reported on research about sexual minorities in the workplace were therefore reviewed. Amongst these articles, five looked at discrimination, and seven took an organizational focus. The greatest number, (thirteen) focused on the individual; that is to say they reported on the work experiences of sexual minorities irrespective of where they worked. The total adds up to more than twenty-two because two articles spanned more than one area. Table 5 shows that a potential development in the type of research that is being carried out in this area. From the late 1970s to early 1990s the focus was on discrimination in the workplace; from the mid 1990s onwards the focus was on the individual, which is consistent with the aim of the then prevailing lesbian and gay studies to 'explain' the homosexual, where identity was prioritized to the point of

being reified. Researching the 'homosexual', and revealing homosexual experience in the workplace, has previously clearly been the most popular area of study. It is not possible to say definitively, from this one literature review, that the focus of research is now turning away from the individual towards the organization, but there does seem to be a trend in that direction, as out of the six articles published since 2000, five of them do have the organization as a focus, whilst the three articles by Wilson, Bruni & Gherardi and Bowen & Blackmon focus on the processes within organizations that have an impact sexual minorities. This finding is also consistent with the documented development of lesbian and gay studies from narratives of the self and the 'uncovering' of hidden lesbian and gay people, to the constructionist and discursive approach of queer theory, (Gamson, 2000: 351 - 357).

This research project aims to develop in this latter area of study, exploring the ways that minority sexual identity is constituted in organizations, focusing much more on the process of identity construction within organizations, as well as identity as a category of knowledge, rather than something to be revealed.

	Questionnaire	Interviews	Case Study	Literature review	Other
Discrimination	"The wage effects of sexual orientation discrimination", (Badgett, 1995), sample: 1680 people in the US General Social Survey	"Discrimination against gay men and lesbians, a study of the nature and extent of discrimination against homosexual men and women in Britain today", (Snape et al., 1995)		"Discrimination against lesbians in the workforce", **(Levine & Leonard, 1984)** "Employment discrimination against gay men", (Levine, 1979)	
Disclosure	"Walking the line: fear and disclosure of sexual orientation in the workplace", (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001), sample: 534 gay workers "The relationship among reported disclosure of sexual orientation, anti-discrimination policies, top management support and work attitudes of gay and lesbian employees", (Day & Schoenrade, 2000), sample: 754 gay workers "Staying in the closet versus coming out", (Day & Schoenrade, 1997) "Lesbian identity and disclosure in the workplace", (Driscoll et al., 1996), sample: 123 lesbians	"Impact of identity development upon career trajectory: listening to the voices of lesbian women", (Boatwright et al., 1996), sample: 10 lesbians			

Work experience	"The career interests and aspirations of gay men: how sex-role orientation is related", (Chung & Harman, 1994), sample: 63 gay & 60 straight men, focus: career choice "Diversity in Blue: lesbian and gay police officers in a masculine occupation", (Miller et al., 2003). Sample: 17 lesbian and gay police officers. Focus: workplace experiences.	"Coming out of the blue", (Burke, 1993), focus: workplace experiences "The corporate closet: the lives of professional gay men in America", (Woods & Lucas, 1993), focus: workplace experiences, sample: 70 gay men "Private experiences in the public domain", (Hall, 1989). Focus: workplace experiences, sample: 13 lesbians	"Recognising the gay constituency in UK trade unions", (Colgan, 1999b), issues of power & resistance, sample: 25 lesbians & gay men	"Research on the work experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual people; an integrative review of methodology and findings", (Croteau, 1996), focus: work experiences	
Exclusion		"Organizing sexualities, organized inequalities", (Humphrey, 1999), sample: 13 lesbians & 10 gay activists in UNISON	"Inclusion, exclusion and ambiguity: the role of organizational culture", (Wilson, 2000), sample: media organization		
Identity		"Professional and openly gay", (Shallenberger, 1994) – sample: 12 gay men			"The comfort of identity", (Holliday, 1999), method: video diaries
Silence				"Spirals of silence", (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003)	
Gay workplace			"En-gendering differences", (Bruni & Gherardi, 2002), focus: gay workplace "Sexuality, class & conflict in a lesbian workplace", (Weston & Rofel, 1997), focus: gay workplace		

Table 6: Previous research on minority sexuality in the workplace, by theme and research methodology

As is shown in Table 6, previous research is concentrated in certain key thematic areas; discrimination and its effects is perhaps to be expected as an area for research, as is the workplace experience of sexual minorities. But it is interesting to note that 'disclosure' has been one of the largest areas for research; five out of the articles reviewed considered this area, with all of them published since 1996. Less researched areas include identity, exclusion, silence and research into organizations which have a majority of gay employees.

Amongst the methodologies used to explore this topic, Table 6 shows that by far the most popular methods are interviews (7 publications), and questionnaires (6 publications). The other methodologies involved case studies and one research

project using video diaries. Literature reviews of previous empirical studies have also been included in the review, and these accounted for four of the publications. What is interesting to note is the popularity of questionnaires and surveys, in an area of research which has been documented as moving away from positivist research methodologies, in part due to the way that some positivist approaches have sought to denigrate the homosexual, (Gamson, 2000: 349 - 351; Badgett, 2001: 359 - 362).

4.1 DISCRIMINATION AGAINST SEXUAL MINORITIES IN ORGANIZATIONS

There is an inherent contradiction in being gay and working for an organization; whilst out gay employees are more committed to their organization, and are likely to feel more fulfilled and do a better job (Day and Schoenrade, 1997, 2000), there is significant, well-documented, discrimination against sexual minorities in organizations, (Levine, 1979; Levine & Leonard, 1984; Woods & Lucas, 1993; Croteau, 1996; Welch, 1996; Bowen & Blackmon, 2003). For sexual minorities, discrimination is a pervasive feature of the workplace, (Croteau, 1996; Gabriel et al., 2000: 174), as well as the fear of discrimination, which is a regular feature of lesbians' and gay men's experience. Management of this stigma and fear means that people are either forced to remain closeted (Boatwright et al., 1996) or people tend to separate their lives between work and leisure, (Boatwright et al., 1996; Croteau, 1996). Discrimination in the workplace can be formal and informal, (Croteau, 1996), including verbal harassment, property violence and loss of credibility or acceptance, (Zuckerman & Simons, 1996: 40). More formal types of discrimination can include decisions not to promote, to fire or not to hire, or to pay someone less on the basis of sexual orientation, (Badgett, 1995). Badgett's research reported that gay men were on average paid 20% less than their heterosexual counterparts, whereas lesbians, although paid less than heterosexual men, were paid on a par with women. In the UK, 36% of employers would be less likely to offer a job to a gay man, and 31% to a lesbian, (Snape et al., 1995). In the US, 26% of employers would not promote homosexuals, (Badgett and King, 1997: 75).

It follows, then, that to achieve greater commitment, the organization should have policies and procedures in place which encourage the positive treatment of sexual minorities, (Day and Schoenrade, 1997, 2000), or at least to prevent direct or indirect discrimination against them. UNISON, the white collar union achieved this through the creation of a lesbian and gay network and this subcultural grouping actually became part of the organizational structure in the union's commitment to self-organization. "Self-organization is not equated with separatism, it is about

empowerment" - UNISON's Director of Equal Opportunities, 1993 (Colgan, 1999b: 449; 1999a).

4.2 FOCUS ON THE INDIVIDUAL

This section takes the themes from the sexual orientation in the workplace literature as outlined above and presents each of them in terms of three important aspects of experiencing minority sexual identity; first, identity management and the performance of minority sexual identity in the workplace, second, disclosure and, finally, exclusion. Because of presumed heterosexuality in organizations, there is a requirement for those that are not out at work to manage and control information about themselves, whilst for those people who have disclosed that information to others and are out in the workplace there is a need to manage tension and social interaction, (Goffman, 1963b: 164).

4.2.1 Identity management

Woods and Lucas (1993) assert that the 'Closet' is a major metaphor for lesbian and gay people in the workplace. It is possible for someone's sexuality to remain hidden, or for lesbian, gay or bisexual people to stay 'in the closet', which distinguishes sexual orientation from most of the other diversity categories such as race or gender. Being in the closet, and not feeling able to tell anybody at work about one's sexual orientation can put constant pressure on an individual and have a negative effect on them and their work, (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003: 1403; Ward, 2003: 62). Goffman (1963) in his seminal work 'Stigma' developed an important analysis of the dynamics of non-disclosure and identity management. It should be noted, though, that Goffman's approach to homosexuality now appears to be outdated. He refers to three types of stigma; physical deformities, blemishes of individual character and tribal stigma, (Goffman, 1963b: 14). He puts homosexuality into the second category, along with mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction and alcoholism, (Goffman, 1963b: 14). Politically, this is a difficult concept to accept and sociologically outdated since homosexuality is no longer classified as an illness, as addiction and alcoholism now are, and, in the UK at least, being gay no longer results in imprisonment. As the diversity movement now sees sexual orientation as a diversity category (see section 1), it is probably more appropriate to conceptualize minority sexual orientation in the category of tribal stigma, along with race and religion. Nevertheless, this work has some important insights to offer about the

management of identity. Goffman suggests that the need to manage one's identity occurs because there is a discrepancy between an individual's actual social identity and their virtual one, (Goffman, 1963b: 57). Where the difference is not known, or not immediately apparent, the individual has a discreditable identity, whereas when they make their difference known to others, their identity becomes discredited, (Goffman, 1963b: 57). This section focuses on managing undisclosed identity; the next section on disclosure will look at managing identity once it has been revealed.

Some people choose not to reveal their sexuality and remain hidden from view for various different reasons such as the fear of harassment, bullying and physical violence. There are different ways in which lesbians and gay men manage their undisclosed minority sexual identity in the workplace, (Croteau, 1996). One way to do this is described as 'Passing', where the individual, faced with potential discrimination, lies in order to be seen as heterosexual, (Goffman, 1963b: 92 - 113; Woods & Lucas, 1993; Bowen & Blackmon, 2003). In particular the individual allows themselves to be seen as homosexual by one group of people, for example other homosexuals, but not by other groups, for example their work colleagues, (Goffman, 1963b: 93). Passing is facilitated through 'institutional heterosexuality' (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003: 1403) which assumes that all organizational members are heterosexual unless there is evidence to the contrary. In Hall's study some lesbians brought 'dates' to office functions and even had separate house-warming parties for heterosexual colleagues and lesbian friends, (Hall, 1989: 133). This is a practical example of the informing nature of the 'with' relationship that Goffman (1963) refers to, which means that the social identity of those that the individual is with informs the social identity of the individual themselves, (Goffman, 1963b: 64).

Gay men and lesbians who do not signal their sexual orientation are therefore often thought to be heterosexual. This phenomenon is understood as 'Covering', which is similar to Passing, but involves the individual simply not disclosing information, rather than actively lying. In fact, people who 'cover' may be ready to disclose their minority sexuality, but refrain from doing so only to keep it from looming large and to reduce tension and make it easier for themselves, (Goffman, 1963b: 125). In the following quotation, this lesbian university employee allowed her colleagues to believe that she was heterosexual,

> "In terms of lesbian identity, the university culture was one of silence, and that was the model I followed. I found it particularly awkward not to do so

because everyone at work knew me as straight and to change this perception would take what I thought to be a dramatic act" (Mintz & Rothblum, 1997: 7).

Visibility is an important issue for stigmatized minorities, but should be distinguished from 'known-about-ness', (Goffman, 1963b: 65). Sexual orientation is, generally speaking, invisible, which means that if other people know about an individual's minority sexuality, they generally have prior information about them, (Goffman, 1963b: 65). This provides difficulties to the organizational researcher, but even more so to the lesbian or gay man in the organization, who may not know whether to reveal their sexual orientation to their colleagues or not. Indeed, much of the research in this area suggests that there is some variability in the degree of openness and disclosure at work, (Croteau, 1996). In two of the quantitative studies reviewed by Croteau, about 30% of the lesbians interviewed did not think anyone at work knew about their sexuality. Even when there is no serious discrimination, the reasons why people choose not to come out at work are not surprising; anti-gay jokes, presumption of heterosexuality and questions regarding when the person is getting married is a constant reminder of their difference, (Hall, 1989), with the result that employees are constantly preoccupied with concealing this aspect of their lives. "The process of concealment called for constant attention to every nuance of social interaction", (Hall, 1989: 129).

4.2.2 Disclosure

The management of one's identity in the workplace, either through covering one's minority sexual identity, or through passing as heterosexual logically leads to a further possibility; that of disclosing the information to other people. And by voluntarily disclosing the information, the individual transforms themselves from someone with potentially discreditable information to manage, to someone with uneasy social situations to negotiate, (Goffman, 1963b: 123).

Although many gay people choose not to reveal their sexual orientation at work, a recent study found that homosexual employees who are more open about their orientation are also more likely to feel psychologically committed to their current organization as well as experiencing less conflict, (Day & Schoenrade, 1997). They also found that this was likely to be real commitment, rather than a sense of being stuck. Nevertheless, the decision to come out is one of the most important career decisions faced by gay employees and one that many others do not have to make,

(Ragins and Cornwell, 2001: 1) (Clair et al., 2002; Bowen & Blackmon, 2003: 1401)(Lucas & Kaplan, 1994). Many sexual minorities will carefully assess the prevailing organizational climate before disclosing their sexual orientation, (Mintz & Rothblum, 1997; Clair et al., 2002: 1401; Schope, 2002). Indeed, because this aspect of diversity is invisible, it is possible for sexual minorities to sample prevailing opinion, as if they were heterosexual, before they come out as their colleagues would not behave in the same way if they were 'out' or visible, (Woods & Lucas, 1993; Clair et al., 2002: 1401).

Humphrey suggests that there are three reasons why people decide to come out at work. First, the respondents felt that it was an issue of honesty and integrity at the personal level. Second, they felt that there were significant benefits in building open relationships at the professional level. Finally, there were respondents who thought it was important to educate colleagues about sexual minorities, (Humphrey, 1999: 138; Clair et al., 2002: 1402). The decision to come out cannot be taken lightly; indeed there are a whole host of concerns to be considered. For example, there is the level of homophobia in the workplace, or even in the industry, the attitude of colleagues towards lesbians and gay men, and how they are treated, (Woods & Lucas, 1993: 219). Not least are more personal considerations, such as the individual's confidence to challenge homophobia, or that way that they are going to respond to colleagues once they have come out, (Woods & Lucas, 1993: 220).

The form of disclosure is crucial, as the revelation will form the individual's sexual identity for those around them, (Woods & Lucas, 1993: 174). This research will show, however, that the decision is not always taken freely by individuals and whilst some people will give careful thought to coming out, others will have the situation thrust upon them. However, some people struggle to find the right time and place to come out, and their difficulty in finding the right frame sometimes means that they fail to come out altogether, (Woods & Lucas, 1993: 174). Several respondents in Hall's study felt that their 'secret' was not always in their control, revealing their lesbianism through their physical appearance, (Hall, 1989: 131). A lesbian who wore jeans to a clerical job said, "The way I dress I was, in a way, forcing it down their throats". Another woman said "At the time they started suspecting, I made a mistake and cut my hair short. That was the tip-off", (Hall, 1989: 132). Some try to take a minimal approach, dropping hints or allowing others to stumble across evidence such as photographs of partners; it is quite common for stigmatized individuals to play down

their presence for fear of a backlash, just as Kanter (1977) described how women try to become socially invisible in the workplace, (Woods & Lucas, 1993: 176).

In the piece of research by Boatwright, where ten gay women in a variety of occupations are interviewed, the respondents suggested that coming out was an important experience; one of them said that she had 'captured something' that had previously been 'denied'. The coming out process was also described as a second adolescence, but because they were older, they had better coping strategies, (Boatwright et al., 1996). Gay men often speak of coming out as the final frontier, as if it were the final destination on a long, arduous journey, (Woods & Lucas, 1993: 172). Coming out is indeed a process of disclosing something that has previously been hidden, but it is more than that; it is part of fashioning a lesbian or gay self that did not exist before coming out began, (Stein, 2003: 132). In other words, being gay or lesbian is not a truth that is discovered, it is a performance which is enacted.

Although much of the literature has focussed on the disclosure decision taken by the individual, there is less research on the response from others in the organization to sexual difference. In Humphrey's study, twenty-three lesbian and gay individuals in public sector jobs were interviewed, and some of them recounted the reactions from other people when they came out at work, including avoidance and lack of acceptance, (Humphrey, 1999: 139). Of course, with actual discrimination being common, and the fear of potential discrimination epidemic (Woods and Lucas, 1993), it is easy to think that the response to difference is always a negative one, which is not always the case.

4.2.3 Exclusion

Like members of other non-dominant groups, sexual minorities cannot always predict whether they will be accepted and may find it difficult to predict the reactions of other people, (Mintz & Rothblum, 1997; Bowen & Blackmon, 2003). The ultimate exclusion for an employee is to be excluded altogether; sadly there have been numerous instances of lesbian and gay people losing their jobs. In Humphrey's study, of the 23 lesbians and gay men interviewed, three had been discharged from the military on the grounds of homosexuality, three had been outed in the national tabloids which had resulted in their retirement from work, one lesbian had voluntarily transferred due to homophobia in the workplace, one gay man had been dismissed due to fears about AIDS, and others suspected they had not been offered jobs in the first place,

(Humphrey, 1999: 136). However, inclusion and exclusion is often much more subtle. Being identified as an outsider may lead to social isolation and hostility, (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003: 1402). In this research project, one lesbian in the Fire Service was included in the Watch banter through her male colleagues betting on who would be able to sleep with her first, whilst exclusion was arrived at informally through the withdrawal of affection and excluding a gay colleague from eating with the group.

Another form of exclusion is the self-exclusion that gay people impose on themselves, and the increased division between work and home, involving a simple double life of those at work who think they know the whole person, and those outside work who really do, (Goffman, 1963b: 98). As reported in Hall's (1989) study, one lesbian recounted, "these guys go home and their friends are the same people they see all day. For me, coming to work is bowing out of my world completely, and going into theirs", (Hall, 1989: 131). The lesbians in Hall's study also realised that if they shared the ordinary events of their day-to-day lives, they would show that they were different from everyone else. One way to avoid this was simply to avoid heterosexual colleagues and any situation where they might have to socialize with them. There are also situations where the individual lives a 'double-double' life, moving in two circles each of which is unaware that the other exists with its own and different biography, (Goffman, 1963b: 98); an example of this might be the police officer who does not come out as gay in the workplace, but equally does not tell their gay friends outside work that they are in the police, and in the two different contexts their identity might be discredited.

One method of socialization is literally to socialize with colleagues; most jobs do involve a degree of socializing, which leads to countless situations which involve sexuality. Traditionally male activities such as sporting activities are opportunities to do business and become part of the team, (Woods and Lucas, 1993: 23). Although gay men are not necessarily unwelcome in any of these settings, they may find themselves unwilling or unable to join in the sexual banter that accompanies these occasions, (Woods and Lucas, 1993: 23). And for those people who wish to exclude their gay colleagues, social occasions are another opportunity to do so. However, socialization into the job and the organization can sometimes take more of a sinister overtone for sexual minorities, and it is not uncommon for them to go through some kind of initiation.

4.3 FOCUS ON THE ORGANIZATION

Much of the literature focuses on the 'gay man' or 'lesbian' as their focus in research, irrespective of where they work. Nevertheless, a very small number of articles has considered the organizational context; a few studies in the past have even looked at small organizations where sexual minorities were in the majority; for example a study of conflict and trust in a lesbian car-repair workshop in the US, (Weston and Rofel, 1997), and more recently a gay newspaper in Italy, (Bruni and Gherardi, 2002). The former was an anthropological analysis, using a case study approach, of a strike in a lesbian workshop, called Amazon. The researchers interviewed eight out of the ten women who worked there, including the two owners. The strike was about a number of issues, but largely about pay and conditions. The major difference in being out at Amazon to coming out in a straight organization was as one mechanic put it, "(you) didn't *have* to talk about being dykes. It was pretty obvious!", (Weston & Rofel, 1997: 28). In a sense, Amazon was no different to any other small business which fosters 'multiplex' relationships between its employees, that is to say enabling employees to build up relationships which transgressed the work/home divide, but the research found that a principal effect of allowing employees to be themselves in the workplace was to integrate emotions into workplace dynamics, (Weston & Rofel, 1997: 28). In particular, this manifested itself as a strong sense of trust, and a feeling that a common lesbian identity would overcome other differences, (Weston & Rofel, 1997: 29). In Bruni and Gherardi's ethnographic case study of a gay newspaper in Italy, the researcher was a straight man who was asked whether he had a boyfriend or whether he was single. He replied truthfully that he was single. Interestingly, the same dynamic of 'covering' one's sexuality came into play, and he later came out to his client as straight, (Bruni & Gherardi, 2002).

One case study, (Wilson, 2000), researched the area of inclusion and exclusion in three different organizations, and looked at the treatment of diversity within the framework of organizational culture. The original aim of the research was to explore how men and women progress in organizations, but this inevitably led to consideration of how other groups, including homosexuals, fared. In one of the companies, a professional services organization, it was reported that "one would have to be very discrete if one were gay", (Wilson, 2000: 288). In another one, a media organization, it was suggested that it was "OK to be gay", (Wilson, 2000: 293).

In Wilson's (2000) study, the importance of analysing symbols in organizations was highlighted; she showed that one of the characteristics of the organization which

differentiated it was that sexuality was not brushed under the carpet, and sex was a significant 'symbol' in the organization. This would suggest that in organizations which are prepared to talk about sexuality and acknowledge the existence of sexual minorities, there may be a more positive environment for them. However, this organization recognized sex and sexuality in a positive way; it would be interesting to investigate this issue in an organization where sex is a symbol, but not addressed as positively. A major symbol in some organizations and occupations, which can have an impact on sexual minorities, is the use of uniform. It can alleviate some of the problems of deciding what to wear, and can potentially reduce an employee's visible difference, as one lesbian nurse explains, "I was in a dress with a little cap perched on my head. It wasn't until I left the Health Service for another job that I realized I did not know how to dress," (Holliday, 1999: 477). Although a large body of work exists on the importance of signs and symbols in organizations, and there has been an important study on the interaction between gender, symbolism and organizational culture, (Gherardi, 1995), there is a gap on the impact of organizational symbols on sexual minorities. The study into the Midwestern police department suggested that police culture typically embraces symbols of aggressive masculinity, such as physical strength and toughness, while also adopting behaviours intended to reinforce their heterosexuality, such as dominating behaviour towards women and the ridiculing and harassment of gay people, (Miller et al., 2003: 365).

The language people use at work about sexual minorities is an important part of their workplace experience. In the case study by Wilson, despite the organization being relatively accepting of gay men, it was reported that in a group discussion, heterosexual men still felt able to make comments such as "enough of them about", "nearly overrun" and "not here - we got rid of them all", (Wilson, 2000: 293). Homophobic remarks are commonplace, and it may be no more than a joke, comment or anecdote that sets the tone. In a survey of lesbian and gay journalists reported by Woods and Lucas, 81% had heard derogatory comments about gays or lesbians in general, or about a specific employee, (Woods and Lucas, 1993: 16). Often, sexuality is linked to the person's ability to do the job. For example one trader on Wall Street said of a colleague that it was bizarre "that the guy's a fucking faggot and he's still trading", (Woods and Lucas, 1993: 17). However, it is not possible to mention language without mentioning the fact that whilst vilified, sexual minorities are paradoxically also largely ignored (Woods and Lucas, 1993: 5). Even in forward-thinking organizations, where progressive diversity management practices have given a voice to previously silenced sexual minorities, discourse around those very

same sexual minorities may be, ironically, sometimes silenced, (Ward & Winstanley, 2002). The literature seems to be inconsistent in this area: there is a focus on derogatory language, with less discussion on other important areas of discourse, such as issues of stereotyping, issues of what is said and what is silent, (Ward & Winstanley, 2002) and also examples of language of affirmation and acceptance.

Team-working and group behaviour can have a tremendous impact, both positively and negatively on the lesbian or gay individual in the workplace. For example, one heterosexual female assistant would not work with her lesbian manager because of group pressure from other colleagues, (Humphrey, 1999: 141). Also, managers in service roles may be out with colleagues internally, but may not be out to the public, as in the case of one lesbian social worker reported by Humphrey. One adolescent client found out and requested a change in carer, (Humphrey, 1999: 141), which leads to a change in behaviour between working with colleagues and external service provision. This research project found that, in the Fire Service, there is a difference in external service provision, where fire-fighters take pride in giving everyone the same high standard of service, and internal working with colleagues, where there are frequent examples of sexual minorities being badly treated, (see section 10.3.2).

Nevertheless, where lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people have been in the minority in organizations and unwilling to be identified, it has not, on the whole, been easy for researchers to select specific organizations and study the dynamics of minority sexuality within them. Three recent studies, however, are an exception, having focused on single organizations; the British Police, (Burke, 1993), UNISON, a trades union in the UK, (Colgan, 1999), and a study of lesbian and gay police officer in a Midwestern police department in the US, (Miller et al., 2003). Burke's study reported the experiences of lesbian and gay police officers, largely in their own words. Colgan's (1999) study drew on interviews with twenty-five lesbian and gay union members in order to illustrate the value of developing lesbian and gay networks. Miller et al (2003) took an interesting approach, recognizing that the police is an occupation which is gendered and sexualized and their research, involving sending anonymous questionnaires to seventeen police officers, and looked at the ways in which heterosexual masculinity informed practices and social interactions within policing, (Miller et al., 2003: 355). These studies have attempted to give an insight into specific organizations and what it is about them that create a positive or negative environment for sexual minorities in the workplace. It is interesting that two out of the three studies are in the police. In addition, given the relatively recent dates

of publication, it would suggest that taking an organizational perspective is a developing area of research. This thesis aims to build on this work and address a perceived under-researched area by focusing on six specific organizations; two banks, two government departments and two emergency services.

4.4 SAMPLING

A key issue in the history of researching the workplace experience of sexual minorities over the last twenty-five years has been the recruitment of the sample. Research reviewed by Levine (1979) recruited sample populations from advertising in gay media, gay bars and gathering places, and 'homophile' organizations, such as gay interest groups or campaigning groups, (Levine, 1979: 159). Hall used a process of snowballing, or asking one interviewee to introduce the interviewer to others, and began the process by asking her own friends, (Hall, 1989: 129). This issue was still a significant one when Woods and Lucas began their seminal study in the spring of 1990. They describe encountering a problem which social scientists immediately encounter when trying to study a population that is difficult to identify: how does one locate potential participants? (Woods & Lucas, 1993: 253). They also used snowballing initiated through personal networks, and friends, just as Hall (1989) did some years later. Interestingly, in both cases, the sampling method influenced the choice of population and ultimately the overall study; Hall, a lesbian, focused on the experiences of lesbians in the workplace, whilst Woods and Lucas focused on the experiences of gay men, as they found it difficult to recruit lesbians for their sample, (Woods & Lucas, 1993: 256).

Burke's study in 1993 was one of the first to focus on a specific organization, the Police, and his sample recruitment of both lesbians and gay men was made easier through the existence and engagement with the study of the Lesbian and Gay Police Association (LAGPA, now known as simply the GPA), and the fact that Burke was a former Metropolitan police officer. It was not until 6 years later, in 1999, that another study was able to look at the experiences of lesbians and gay men in a specific organization, when Humphrey carried out her study in UNISON, one of the larger trades unions in the UK. She recruited her sample from male and female gay activists within the union, who worked together regularly on lesbian and gay issues, though they actually worked, for their principal areas of employment, in different public sector organizations and occupations, (Humphrey, 1999: 134). More recently in 2003, Miller, Forest and Jurik carried out a questionnaire study in a Midwestern

Police Department, contacting 17 gay police officers, again through their lesbian and gay Police Alliance, (Miller et al., 2003: 355).

Despite these two studies, however, the most common method of sample recruitment has been through advertising, networking and personal contacts. Even the most recent empirical study in this literature review has used this method. Shallenberger in 2001 recruited twelve volunteers through personal contacts and adverts in the gay media, (Shallenberger, 1994: 122).

It appears, then, that a key difficulty with this area of research has been the identification and recruitment of a sample of both lesbians and gay men within a specific organization. The sample recruitment for this research is described in section 6.3.2. Neither networking, personal contacts, nor advertising in the gay media have been used in this project, and in that sense the study has been unusual, and even ground-breaking in the level of access achieved at an organizational level. This perhaps signals a shift in the readiness of sexual minorities to speak out, although it should be remembered that the researcher is nevertheless a gay man, which is believed to have facilitated access.

4.5 SUMMARY

It is, perhaps, unsurprising that the focus of much of the literature is on the lesbian or gay individual. An individual's identity and their sense of who they are has been the subject of much general research, and it has been recognized that this issue can be much more complex for a lesbian or gay man; just coming to terms with their own identity can be incredibly taxing in itself, (Driscoll et al., 1996). Research into sexual minorities in the workplace has concentrated on treating lesbians and gay men as subjects, arguably with good reason; the psychological drain of constantly managing an identity, or in some cases, a front, (Goffman, 1969), can interfere with other aspects of development such as the career, not to mention the energy which is put into learning how to manage "the oppressive sequelae of homophobia", (Driscoll et al., 1996: p239). Often, though, the decision is taken by employees to disclose their orientation to others in the workplace, and this is one of the most important career decisions faced by gay employees, (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001: 1).

This section began by identifying that sexuality, and minority sexuality in particular, is one of the most taboo topics within contemporary organization studies. It was also suggested at the beginning of this section that sexuality is under-researched

compared to race and gender in the diversity arena, and that there seems to be a gap concerning empirical research in this area. The section continued with a review of the most important literature in the area of sexual minorities at work over the past twenty-five years highlighting that while discrimination has been a major theme, other important areas reviewed in the literature include identity management, disclosure, exclusion as well as organizational dynamics such as the use of symbols, team-working and group behaviour and the use of language. The section ended with a review of sampling methods, suggesting that the previous reliance on studies of the individual, rather than the type of organization that they worked in, may have been connected with the previous difficulty in identifying research participants. The most common recruitment methods previously had been advertising, networking and personal contacts. With the growth in lesbian and gay networks in organizations, other means of recruitment are now possible.

This literature review section has identified that the area of minority sexuality in organizations is under-researched, particularly empirical investigations in specific organizations, and this project aims to address this. The specific research questions are addressed in the next section.

5. *RESEARCH QUESTIONS*

The integrative literature review of recently published management literature in the area of sexual orientation has identified that research has mainly focused on the experiences of the individual and has sought to 'explain the homosexual', irrespective of the organization.

It is suggested that there may be a real gap in the literature regarding the organization and its effect on the sexual identity of the individual, especially regarding the discourse, power and knowledge that sexualize identities in institutions. One of the aims of this project is to bring a searchlight to focus on specific organizations and to compare the different subject positions that are created as a result. It is therefore suggested that the research questions should not only cover discourse and its constitutive power, but also the concept of subjectivity and subject positions. These issues informed the main research questions, which are:

- How is minority sexual identity constructed in the workplace?

- What are the subjectivities and subject positions that are discursively constituted by and for sexual minorities in work organizations?

Since there has been relatively little focus on the effect of discourse in specific organizations on the minority sexual subject, another question is suggested:

- Does the discourse of minority sexual identity differ from one type of work organization to another?

Following Foucault's concept of reverse discourse, a subsidiary question follows on from the third research question, considering how sexual minorities act in the discursive spaces created for them:

- What impact, if any, do sexual minorities have on the organizational discourse in specific work organizations?

6. *RESEARCH METHOD: THE TWO-TIER NARRATIVE*

Focussing on the stories of sexual minorities, rather than the 'real' underlying identity of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transsexuals is not new, (Kitzinger, 1987: 90; Woods & Lucas, 1993; Shallenberger, 1994). And yet, narratives from individuals, although portraying, in part, the identity work that people undertake do not, in themselves, give an insight into the wider discourse in operation in the organization. An approach which focussed solely on individual stories and narratives was therefore not enough. One of the major contributions of this thesis is a research method which grew out a need not only to access self-narratives, but also discourse that surrounds people in organizations. It would be very difficult for a researcher casually to pick up and collect examples of what people in organizations say about sexual minorities and minority sexuality. Whilst people in organizations do talk about sexual minorities, it is unlikely that they do so with any regularity, and to collect examples would have involved an unrealistic amount of 'hanging around', though the work of Attila Bruni and Sylvia Gherardi demonstrates that 'hanging around', and a more ethnographical, methodological approach, can be very effective in researching the area of gender and sexuality, (Bruni & Gherardi, 2001, 2002; Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2004, 2004, forthcoming).

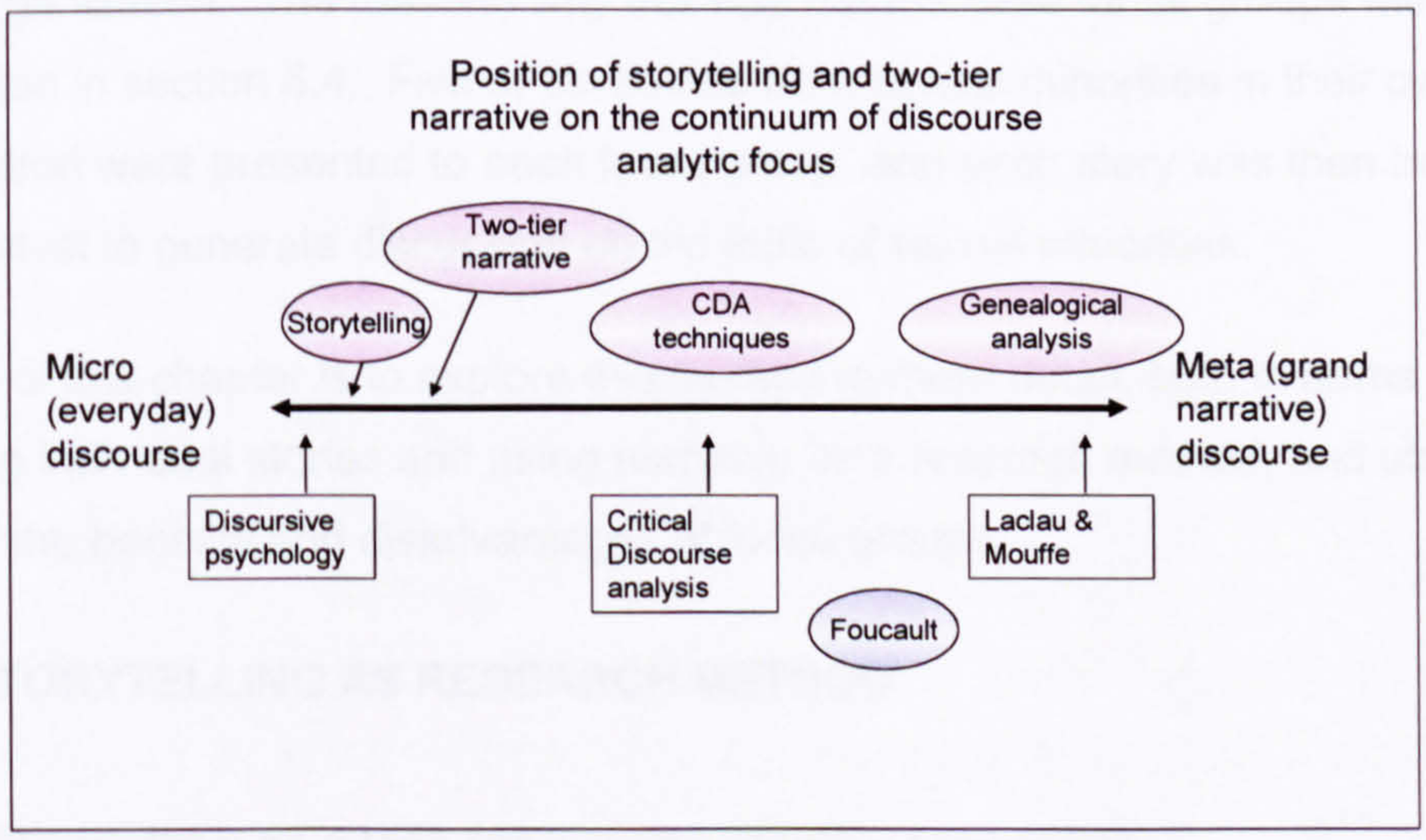


Figure 5: The position of storytelling and two-tier narrative on the discourse analytic continuum

A two-tier story-telling approach was therefore developed whereby accounts were elicited from individuals, and then these stories were used in focus groups of employees in each organization. The adjacent figure shows where storytelling lies on the continuum of different discourse analytic techniques, which was discussed in

section 2.2. It also places the two-tier narrative technique, on the continuum and shows that while storytelling may be conceptualized as being part of everyday discourse, the two-tier narrative lies slightly to the right on the continuum, as it looks at creating extracts of discourse which, while it may reflect the every day conversations that people have in the workplace because it has been created in the focus group, it is, by definition, less 'everyday'. This approach is consistent with the idea that narratives are co-constructed, (Grant et al., 2004a: 6); Grant et al explain that stories are not only authored by those who introduce them, but also by their readers and various interlocutors. In a sense, the reactions to these stories actually become part of the narrative of sexual minorities in organizations. The benefits of this approach are that discourse about sexual minorities in organizations, which is notoriously difficult to collect, becomes accessible, and also that the voice of personal experience is no longer privileged as the only vehicle of truth. Instead, the stories are used as a vehicle for accessing other discourses in the organization, (Gabriel, 2004c: 74). This method therefore addresses some of the ethical challenges which are explored in section 6.1.3.

Sexual orientation was not controlled for in the make-up of the focus groups. In some of the organizations, at least, the sample was representative of the mix of the whole organization. The reasons why this was not the case for all groups will be expounded in section 6.4. Five or six stories from sexual minorities in their own organization were presented to each focus group, and each story was then treated as a catalyst to generate discussion on the topic of sexual minorities.

The aim of this chapter is to explore this method in more detail, both in terms of collecting individual stories and using narrative as a research method, and also in terms of the benefits and disadvantages of focus groups.

6.1 STORYTELLING AS RESEARCH METHOD

6.1.1 Storytelling as a lens for viewing identity processes

It has been recognized in the literature that the notion of identities as types of self-constructing narratives is a rich, and yet relatively unexplored area, (Brown, 2001: 115). Individual identity narratives are not solely private concerns, but are instead 'intensely governed' by, for example, social conventions, community scrutiny and legal norms. In short they are power effects, complex outcomes of processes of subjugation and resistance that are contingent and perpetually shifting. To analyse

effectively the often subtle web of power relationships within which people author their self-narratives, we need to be sensitive to the hegemony of discursive practices, (Humphreys & Brown, 2002: 423). For example, human beings have been described as being 'in actions and practice, as well as ...fictions, essentially a story-telling animal', (MacIntyre, 1981: 201; Sims, 1999: 46). In addition, Ricoeur posits the notion that 'the narrative constructs the durable character of an individual, which one may call his or her narrative identity', (Ricoeur, 1991: 77). This idea is developed further by Dan McAdam (1997) who states, 'We are all tellers of tales. We each seek to provide and scatter our often confusing experiences with a sense of coherence by arranging the episodes of our lives into stories', (McAdam, 1997: 11). McAdam's thesis is that we make ourselves and our identity through the stories and myths that we create and tell about ourselves, (McAdam, 1997). Sims describes this same phenomenon by suggesting that we lead storied lives, continually producing storied versions of what is happening in our lives, (Sims, 2003: 1197).

Kitzinger (1987) also reminds us that studying identity 'accounts' is a useful way of studying subjectivity, since "a lesbian identity is a woman's subjective experience of the intrasubjective account of her own lesbianism", (Kitzinger, 1987: 90). She goes on to assert that since the researcher has no direct access to the subjectivity of the individual, it is necessary to rely on what individuals are able and willing to say about it, and so,

> "An account of lesbian identity is the story (or one of the stories) a woman tells about her subjective experience of her lesbianism", (Kitzinger, 1987: 90).

If we understand the world narratively, then it makes sense to study the world narratively; indeed, narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience, (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 17-18). Amongst a number of useful applications, Boyce (1996) suggested that storytelling is useful for expressing employee organizational experience, confirming shared meaning of organizational members, but most importantly amending and altering organizational reality, (Boyce, 1996: 19). This suggests that storytelling is not just about recounting experience, it is also a means of creating the discourse which constitutes organizational reality (cf. section 2.2.1)

People do not just tell stories: they tell stories to "enact" an account of themselves and their community, (Boje, 1995: 1001). Stories also shape the course and meaning of human organization, being the preferred sense-making currency of human

relationships, (Boje, 1991b: 106; Wallemacq & Sims, 1998: 120). In recent years there has been a growing interest in organization studies which focus on the link between storytelling and organization, (Boje, 1995: 1001; Gabriel, 2004a).

Although Czarniawska (1998) suggests that the advantage of using narrative, even with its alternative mode of knowing, remains uncertain, (Czarniawska, 1998: 5), two major advantages of using story-telling, or narrative enquiry, were identified as a result of this research. First, there was the power to surface information about people who had previously been denied a voice. Second, telling stories about the organization was a useful medium for employees to articulate issues of sexuality at work, which otherwise they would find difficult to describe. Indeed, Wallemacq and Sims (1998) suggest that some people are denied the right to make sense, because they have been unable to produce a narrative to go along with a situation, (Wallemacq & Sims, 1998: 121; Sims, 1999: 47).

There are analytic advantages in locating identity in individuals' self-narratives. These narratives are authored impositions in which peoples' self conceptions and experiences are 'emplotted' and which facilitate self-understanding, the achievement of a mature identity and individuation, (Wallemacq & Sims, 1998: 123; Humphreys & Brown, 2002: 422 - 423). This approach permits the researcher to account better for identities as continuously constituted and reconstituted through discursive practices and enables us to place people's beliefs in a historical, biographical context regarding what they believe to be most significant about themselves, (Humphreys & Brown, 2002: 423).

Storytelling is, in fact, an ancient medium for communication and meaning-making. Serious studies about myth, narrative and storytelling have been conducted by scholars with different theoretical traditions and disciplines, (Boyce, 1996: 20), and it has developed with a rich and varied genealogy, (Boyce, 1996). Brown refers to stories and narratives as processes for sensemaking, (Brown, 2003: 97). They are an important symbolic form, through which meanings are constructed and shared, (Brown, 2003: 97). Stories which are specifically about homosexuals have been largely absent from the organizational literature, even though stories about homosexuals per se come from a long tradition, which has changed over the years, as described by Plummer (1995),

> "In Renaissance England, it was partially the story of a world of drunken and sexual excess – surrounded by werewolves, anti-Christs and witches. In the

early western twentieth century, it was partially a story told by "sexperts": of pathologies, conditions, continuums, disorders and disease, side by side with the creation of a distinct homosexual identity and the elements of a diverse homosexual culture with a unique sensibility. There are many signs – not to mention academic treatises – that suggest the past century has witnessed the creation of distinctively new stories around homosexualities", (Plummer, 1995: 81-82).

This research aims to help to develop the tradition of telling stories about minority sexualities. The next section discusses the use of storytelling in organization studies.

6.1.2 Storytelling as a lens for viewing organizations

Storytelling is a relatively recent addition to the area of organization studies, (Gabriel, 2000), only becoming a legitimate topic for organizational researchers in the 1990s, (Boje, 1991b; Gabriel, 1991; Martin, 1992; Czarniawska, 1998: 14; Gabriel, 1998), but it is one which has grown in importance as researchers explore their power to communicate the character of the organization in stories which are essentially part of the fabric and life of organizations (Wallemacq & Sims, 1998: 122; Sims, 1999: 56; Gabriel, 2000; 2004c: 72; Grant et al., 2004a: 5; Ward & Winstanley, 2004). Indeed, people process information and manage the collective memory of the organization through storytelling, (Boje, 1991a: 9). Dialogues that processually constitute organizations contribute to ongoing processes of narrative construction and refinement. The stories that are authored through dialogues are one symbolic means by which meaning is variously negotiated, shared and contested, (Humphreys & Brown, 2002: 422; Mumby, 2004: 242), though of course stories are not the only means by which meaning is mediated in organizations, (Gabriel, 2004b: 24). Indeed, Boje (1995) has referred to organizations as storytelling systems, (Humphreys & Brown, 2002: 422).

This project aims, then, to bring together the narrative study of minority sexualities and the use of storytelling in organization studies. Indeed, it might be suggested that one of the types of 'distinctively new stories around homosexualities' is stories about sexual minorities in organizations. Second, as can be seen by the stories presented, this research shifts the emphasis from the 'homosexual' as object to the study of narrative processes within organizations, thereby placing the organization and its processes firmly at the centre of the study. Third, it develops organizational

storytelling research as an area of critical research; previous storytelling research has recognized the sensemaking element of narrative, but only some of this work has been critical, (Mumby, 2004: 242).

6.1.3 Ethical challenges in story-telling research

Research looking at organizational stories does not necessarily address the dynamics of power, dominant groups and lesser heard voices, but they are a very good vehicle for doing so. In meeting the ethical challenge of this sort of research, it is necessary to identify the perspective of the researcher, so that the limitations of the researcher's point of view are identified, whilst explaining why the researcher has analysed the stories in a particular way, (Boyce, 1996: 20; Alexander, 2002). As a gay man, my own identity helped to gain access to the respondents and helped build up the trust required to carry out the interviews. It is important to acknowledge this as it may explain why these stories have been analysed as they have been; it also means that this thesis helps to develop the idea of a reflexive interaction within the research engagement, (Linstead & Thomas, 2002: 17). Indeed, it is important to recognize that the power in this type of research lies with the storyteller, although Czarniawska's notion (1998) is perhaps a little extreme when she suggests that the interviewers are interview victims more than the interviewees, (Czarniawska, 1998: 42). Clearly, an organization will have a plurality of stories, voices and realities, as well as a multiplicity of ways to interpret stories, (Boje, 1995: 998). The choice here to 'follow' the gay story in the organization, to use Boje's Tamara metaphor, clearly privileges one voice, a voice that has previously been silenced. One epistemological impact of privileging a previously-silenced voice is the idea of the confessional discourse, (Foucault, 1976), and the idea that experience is an authoritative source of knowledge, (Gabriel, 2004b: 28). Gabriel suggests that this puts a responsibility on the researcher not only to celebrate the story, but to privilege those that deserve to be privileged and silence those that deserve to be silenced, (Gabriel, 2004b: 29; 2004c: 74). Clearly this has created a dilemma; by carrying out storytelling research and collecting a large number of stories, the researcher has to decide whose stories to tell.

There are other ethical challenges to carrying out this type of research; for example, researching the experiences of a minority which often remains silent for reasons of self-preservation, and then repeating the stories in a wider forum, might be described by Derrida as an 'act of violence'. In the same way that Czarniawska (1999) set up a

conversation between various texts that otherwise not have spoken to one another, (Czarniawska, 1999: 104), this project has also given life to texts that otherwise might have remained hidden. By sharing these texts, opposing texts have been forced to talk to one another on the terms set out by the researcher, and by carrying out the analysis, the researcher has had the last word. The clear ethical dilemma, therefore, is remaining faithful to the voices from the field, the voices that have previously remained silent.

Another ethical challenge is that of retelling narratives which may not be true, (Riessman, 1993: 21). Stories are unique amongst discursive devices in organizations in that they have a plot, but also claim to represent reality, (Gabriel, 2004b: 19). Poetic licence is a vital feature of the storyteller's voice, (Gabriel, 2004b: 19), but does this mean it should not matter whether the story is true or not? The answer to this is often that the truth of the story lies not in its accurate depiction of facts but in its meaning, (Gabriel, 2004b: 20; 2004c). Since one of the aims in this research was to develop a method which could access personal experience as well as examples of discourse within the organization, this interpretation is an important one. But the question of whether stories should be true or not was raised at two separate points in this research; first, during one of the focus groups, a participant identified themselves as the subject of the story, and declared it to be untrue. The discussion had to be brought to an end, partly because of the group's concern about the validity of the story. Second, purely fortuitously, and in an entirely different context, it was learned that parts of a story that had been collected a year earlier were inaccurate. In the first case, the participant of the focus group, and subject of the story who had been portrayed in a poor light, had been lying and the story turned out to be true in every detail, corroborated by credible witnesses. In the second case, the inaccuracies were embellishments, and could be defined as poetic licence, and the main plot of the story remained true and effective. The researcher's faith in the veracity of the stories was restored, but as a result a healthy scepticism remained, recognizing that stories do not have to be true, but they do have to demonstrate verisimilitude for them to be taken seriously, (Brown, 2003: 100), and when poetic licence is taken too far it can seriously damage the legitimacy of the authority of the storyteller (Gabriel, 2004b: 23), and, indeed, the researcher. But these two incidents do serve to illustrate Gabriel's concerns about the hegemony of 'voice', or knowledge through personal experience, (Gabriel, 2004c: 73). The risk in organizational research is that the voice of personal experience may be made up of illusions and self-deceptions and yet may still be accepted as the authentic source of

understanding and sense-making in organizations, (Gabriel, 2004c: 73). This risk implies a potential new direction for storytelling research, in two ways. First, that the researcher themselves become responsible for disentangling the voices, understanding them and privileging those that deserve to be privileged and then silencing those that deserve to be silenced. Second, the researcher's task is not merely to retell the story or narrative, but to use the story as a vehicle for accessing deeper truths in the organization, (Gabriel, 2004c: 74).

6.1.4 What is a story?

David Boje (1991) suggests that the process of collective storytelling occurs as a multitude of tellers relate bits of story lines and in aggregate the full tale is collectively created, told, revised and maintained, (Boje, 1991a: 9). He defines a story quite simply as,

> "An exchange between two or more persons during which a past or anticipated experience was being referenced, recounted, interpreted or challenged," (Boje, 1991a: 8).

Another definition of a story, following the Aristotlean tradition, is that stories having a beginning, middle and an end, and are held together by a plot, (Riessman, 1993: 17; Gabriel, 2000). However, this definition allows for other narrative devices that convey meaning, such as clichés, platitudes and labels, (Gabriel, 2000: 21). Gabriel (2000) has expressed concern at, "the increasing tendency to view every sign, every snippet of conversation, every image and every cliché as either being a story or telling a story", (Gabriel, 2000: 2). Indeed, many organizational stories, reported by researchers, amount to little more than 'slogans' virtually drained of meaning. One of the reasons for this, suggested by Gabriel is that members of organizations are neither story-tellers nor story-listeners, only information handlers. The reality is probably somewhere in between; employees are officially information-handlers, but unofficially, and more by accident than design, they can also be good story-tellers.

The importance of plot has been discussed by many researchers, with some such as Boje (1991) dismissing it, and others arguing that events need a plot to bring them into a meaningful whole, (Czarniawska, 1998: 2; Wallemacq & Sims, 1998: 122). The importance of plot goes back to Aristotle where the difference was made between a simple story, relying on chronology, and a story with plot which arranges events according to a sense of causality, (Czarniawska, 1999: 64). The stories

highlighted here all have a plot to a greater or lesser extent, and the plot does describe events which are causative, that is to say contain an event which causes something else to happen. This criterion was identified because a plot makes a story much more powerful in putting its message across, and because without plot, a story relies on pure chronology, (Czarniawska, 1999), which would mean a lack of the richness required to explore this topic. In other words, plot is an important sense-making device. As Weick (1995) put it,

> "The requirements necessary to produce a good narrative provide a plausible frame for sensemaking. Stories posit a history for an outcome. They gather strands of experience into a plot that produces that outcome. The plot follows either the sequence beginning-middle-end or the sequence situation-transformation-situation. But sequence is the source of sense", (Weick, 1995: 128; Galpin & Sims, 1999: 78).

6.2 THE ORGANIZATIONS

6.2.1 Anonymity

The aim of this section is to provide background information about the organizations and a context which will help the reader to understand and interpret the data. There are some occasions when anonymity is helpful, (Yin, 1994: 143); for example, the study of sexual minorities in organizations is likely to be sensitive for the individuals, but also for the organization, for whom anonymity in the final report may have been a condition of access. Although this is an unpublished report, a balance has been sought between the need for anonymity and the need to give enough information about the organization to make the context meaningful. Yin (1994) suggests three levels of compromise: first, to name the organization, but not the individuals. Second, to name the individuals, but not to attribute directly any comment to an individual. Third, to avoid naming any organization. The first two compromises, however, are not possible in this case. Given the sensitivity of this research, in some cases naming the organization might potentially damage any future research relationship, whilst in two cases, one Government Department and the Police Constabulary, anonymity was a contractual requirement of carrying out the research. I undertook not to name any individuals who took part in this study, and this was a condition of their being interviewed. The third compromise is the one which I have chosen to follow, with the proviso that I will have to make reference to the type of

organization, and at times the type of activity that they undertake. This is clearly frustrating; whilst in one sense this project closes a gap in the literature by carrying out research in specific organizations, it is not possible to name them. However, all six organizations are amongst the most well known organizations in the UK, and all of them are organizations with which ordinary people will have had dealings in one form or another.

One of the findings of this research is that the concept of sexual minorities is highly context specific; this means that while the findings will be presented in a thematic, rather than case study format, reference may have to be made from time to time as to the type of organization and its sector.

6.2.2 The six organizations – a summary

In total, six organizations have been studied as part of this project. They were selected not only because they were willing partners in the research process and provided access to the researcher, but also because these organizations represented a range of businesses, grouped into three main sectors or areas of activity. The six organizations were made up of two banks, two government departments and two emergency services, the two latter groups being publicly owned, while the two banks represented the private sector. These and other characteristics of the organizations taking part in this study are summarized in Table 7. Three of the organizations have about five thousand employees or less, which I have defined as small. The other three have more than seventy thousand, which I have defined as large. Using the Deal and Kennedy definitions of culture, the organizations represent two different cultures - process and tough-guy cultures, (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). The two civil service organizations represent the process cultures, and the two emergency service organizations represent the tough-guy cultures, whilst the two banks have significant subcultures within them that represent both. For example, personal and financial services and consumer banking may well be described as having a process culture, whilst the more macho environment of investment banking with its trading floor fulfils the criteria of the tough-guy culture. It is useful to have a mix of different organizational characteristics; this is so that the comparative analysis can be more informed. At a very basic level, the research findings may show that individual variables are not enough to explain certain phenomena; for example, different findings in two large organizations may suggest that the size of the organizations does not provide adequate explanation.

Table 7: Summary of main characteristics of organizations taking part in this study

Organization	Sector	Public / Private	Size	Culture ***(Deal & Kennedy, 1982)***	Type of data collection
Government Department A	Civil Service	Public	Small – c. 4,000 employees	Process	Pilot Study
Government Department B	Civil Service	Public	Large – c. 84,000 employees	Process	Full study
Rural Police Constabulary	Emergency Service	Public	Small – c. 5,000 employees	Tough-guy	Full study
Shire Fire Service	Emergency Service	Public	Small – c. 850 employees	Tough-guy	Full study
Bank A	Banking	Private	Large International investment and commercial financial services firm	Composed of Divisions with distinct subcultures – Process and Tough Guy	Pre-pilot study
Bank B Plc	Banking	Private	Large (Top 4 Banking Plc) – c. 78,000 employees	Composed of Divisions with distinct subcultures – Process and Tough Guy	Full study

6.2.3 Bank A: a major International Bank

A pre-pilot study for this project was carried out at the London office of Bank A, a major American financial services firm. Bank A has an annual revenue of just over $18 billion, has its Headquarters in New York, and operations in 50 countries worldwide. In 2000, at the time of the research, the Bank had just gone through a major merger, combining one of the world's largest commercial banks, with one of the world's best known investment banks. Both institutions have histories going back over 200 years. The merged institution has five main divisions, including the Investment Bank, Treasury and Security Services, Private Banking, Private Equity Investing and Retail. Diversity management has a very high profile at the Bank with over sixty local diversity councils in operation around the world, a comprehensive diversity education programme and corporate support for employee networking groups, which have a participation of over 5,000 employees worldwide.

6.2.4 Bank B: a major UK Banking Group

Bank B is one of the largest financial services groups in the United Kingdom, made up of seven business groups: Personal Financial Services, Business Banking, a credit card division, Private Clients, Global Investors, Capital Markets and 'Bank B Africa'. The Group has a presence in over 60 countries and serves over 20 million customers world-wide, and has over 78,000 employees. Shareholders funds were in the region of £15 billion at the time of writing. Bank B has been extremely active in the area of equality and diversity, and beyond the Vision statement, some of the wide-ranging achievements have included the appointment of diversity managers, with different managers responsible for different diversity categories, including sexual orientation, the setting up of Task Forces in each of the diversity category areas including sexual orientation and a wide-ranging employee survey, which again included questions about sexual orientation. There has also been an organization-wide equality and diversity awareness training programme, including video and intranet training material, and a four-hour individual foundation module in Diversity.

6.2.5 Department A: a small Government Department

The pilot study for this project was carried out in Department A, which is one of the smaller UK Government departments. Department A has approximately 4,000 employees. It was formed in 2001 from the demerger of one of the larger

departments. It is a policy department with very little public contact outside its immediate area of expertise. It has a headquarters in London with regional offices in Sheffield, Runcorn and Darlington. Despite the traditional feel, the Department has made significant progress in managing diversity in recent years. Employees receive equal opportunities training, there are regular workshops on various different aspects of diversity, and equal opportunities have formed the basis for specific measures included in annual performance appraisal forms. Although, in the past, the focus has been largely on the better known areas of diversity such as race and gender, the Department has nevertheless made progress in other areas such as sexuality. There is an employee network for lesbians and gay men, testimonials from gay employees have been used at equality conferences in the organization, and a banner carrying the Department's name has been carried at London's annual Lesbian and Gay Pride march.

6.2.6 Department B: a large Government Department

Department B is one of the larger government departments, employing approximately 84,000 people. It is a major 'processing' department and therefore has operations as well as policy. With a head office in London and major offices in all large towns, it is, nevertheless, a fragmented organization, with offices all over the country and enquiry offices in the smallest of communities. It has a high level of contact with the public. Government Department B demonstrates its commitment to equality and diversity at the highest levels of the organization, with its Chairman being the Diversity Champion for the Civil Service. The Board and senior managers are actively involved in promoting understanding of diversity as a way to deliver quality customer service, and to create a positive working environment. The Chairman chairs regular meetings with staff from a range of backgrounds. A panel of Directors from across the Department act as Diversity Champions to set business direction and to oversee the implementation of equality and diversity objectives. It monitors representation at different levels of the organization on the basis of race, gender and disability and for the first time is monitoring sexual identity through the inclusion of a question on sexuality in the 2003 staff survey. Recent progress has included a new diversity and equality intranet site to share good practice in both diversity and equality implementation, equality targets at national, regional and area level and a recently-established consultancy team, 'Business through Diversity', to help embed diversity into all business processes.

6.2.7 Shire Fire Service: a semi-rural Fire Brigade

The Shire Fire Service is a medium-sized regional division of the UK Fire Service. The Shire Fire Service employs approximately 850 people, making it the smallest organization to take part in this project. The Service is in a semi-rural location, with a number of medium-sized towns, and therefore there is a mix of whole-time and retained, or part-time, fire-fighters. Retained fire-fighters are usually employed in rural areas or those areas where the fire risk is relatively low. Nevertheless, given the density and nature of the industrial base in certain areas of the county, it has a disproportionately high level of operational risk. In addition to operational fire-fighters, the Service is made up of Control Staff and Support Staff. There are approximately 740 operational fire-fighters, 24 Control Staff and 87 Support Staff. There is a total of twenty-four fire stations, with nine of them being whole-time stations. Following the Home Office Thematic Review in 1999, and subsequent equality and diversity initiatives, the Service is in a good position to make a real difference within the organization for minorities. There is a full-time Equal Opportunities Officer who takes part in a network of personnel managers and equality practitioners. The Chief Fire Officer takes a leading role in equality issues in the UK Fire Service and played a significant part in organizing a recent national equalities convention. Awareness training is scheduled to take place in the near future for various different diversity categories.

6.2.8 The Constabulary: a rural Police Force

The Constabulary is the largest rural police force in the UK covering the largest geographical police area in England, extending 180 miles in length. To give some impression of the scale of the area, the police headquarters of the Constabulary is actually nearer to London than the furthest extremity of the Force. Policing a large rural population, and covering large distances, makes responding to target times for emergencies a challenge for the Force. Even within a largely rural area, there are still urban communities which make tackling crime more complex; cities present their own unique policing issues, as do the popular seaside resorts in the area. There is a seasonal influx of tourists, causing the population to rise from about 1.5 million to eight million; dealing with such a large number of tourists presents its own problems, especially as the Constabulary has fewer officers per members of the population than most other areas of the country. There are over 5,000 employees, including 2,000

support staff, making the Constabulary one of the largest employers in the area, though still one of the smaller organizations in this project.

6.3 DATA COLLECTION – THE INTERVIEWS

My preference has been to use the passive voice throughout the thesis, a common convention in academic writing to convince the reader of the objectivity of the thesis, (Case, 2004: 49), but in reporting decisions about my field work and describing the process of data collection, I feel it more natural to turn to using the active voice and will use it for the rest of this section on data collection, providing an opportunity to incorporate reflexive analysis into the report. Developing a reflexive understanding is a key aspect of organizational discourse analysis, not only enriching research practice, but also providing 'between the lines' information that can lead to successful research outcomes, (Prichard, Jones, & Stablein, 2004: 213).

6.3.1 Collecting stories in organizations can be difficult

Collecting the stories can be difficult, especially when the topic is particularly sensitive. Indeed, this sensitivity has been one of the reasons that relatively few stories collected from sexual minorities in specific organizations. Boje (1991) followed the participant observer tradition of collecting stories which occurred in various social scenes around an office-supply firm. He recorded everyday conversations and captured spontaneous storytelling episodes, (Boje, 1991b: 111). It was not possible to follow this method, because of the specific aim of collecting stories which recounted the experience of sexual minorities within the organization, and whilst sexual minorities are often the topic of conversation it is unlikely that I would have been able to pick up these conversations whilst 'hanging around' with a tape recorder. I therefore decided to collect the stories through a series of interviews with lesbian, gay bisexual and transsexual employees who were willing to take part in the study.

6.3.2 Recruiting the sample

I recognized that gaining access to lesbian and gay interviewees would be a challenge (see section 4.4 for a discussion on the difficulty of sample recruitment in previous research). On the one hand, I was attempting to address a gap in the literature; presumably there was a gap there for a good reason, and that might have

been because it was just too difficult. On the other hand, the population I was trying to access, that is to say lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transsexuals in organizations, is a population which is often stigmatized, potentially invisible and silent, (Ward & Winstanley, 2003) and it would have been of little surprise if participants had been unwilling to come forward for fear that the research might identify them as a member of a deviant group, thus putting them at risk, (Farquhar, 1999: 49). One of my learning points from the research process was that anonymity is extremely hard to guarantee, and there is a very real risk of being identified after someone has talked to a researcher.

Clearly, who I am helped me to gain access. I am a gay man with experience of working in organizations.

The route of my initial contact with the organizations varied. I began by contacting Stonewall, the professional lobbying group for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals to ask whether they could recommend any organizations interested in taking part in this research. They put me in contact with the lesbian and gay group of Bank A. Once I had been introduced to them, and recruited several volunteers from within the group, I then used the process of snowballing to recruit other volunteers, some of whom were not yet out at work. Bank A formed my 'pre-pilot' study. Because I had accessed this organization through the lesbian and gay network, and not through more official channels in the organization, I was unable to convert the project from stage one, which concentrated on collecting individual data, to stage two, which concentrated on focus groups. My learning point from this part of the field work was that I had to get access at the organizational level, and then access to the lesbian and gay employees, which is how I negotiated access with all the subsequent case-study organizations (in the case of the Police and Fire Service, the lesbian and gay networks are national, and the organizations regional, and so were not linked in the same way). However, I felt that the stories I collected from individuals in this Bank were so useful that I have included them in this thesis.

Government Department A, where I carried out the pilot study for this research project, was unusual in that they, along with Government Department B, contacted me. I had presented a paper at an academic conference, (Ward, 2001), which was reported in the news section of the professional Human Resources press, (People Management, 2001: 9). As a result, the Government Departments contacted me and expressed an interest in taking part in the study. In Government Department A, there was a lesbian and gay network which asked for volunteers amongst its own

members. In Government Department B, although there were two lesbian and gay networks, one based around the organization and the other based around the union, the organization recommended asking for volunteers on the organization's Intranet. Everyone had access to it, and it was felt that the use of this tool would increase the response. In fact, from that one organization, there were over one hundred and forty volunteers to take part in the study.

Bank B was the next organization to be contacted. I had had some professional contact with them in the past and had become acquainted with the Director of Equality and Diversity. I discussed my field work with them, and suggested that, since they were interested in carrying out work in this area, the output of this research would give them valuable information on the experience of sexual minorities in their own organization. They readily agreed and put me in contact with the recently formed Sexual Orientation Task Force, whose members I interviewed.

With the Police and Fire Service, I had to contact several regionally-based organizations before I found the ones that would take part. In both cases I also contacted the lesbian and gay networks, LAGPA in the case of the police and the Lesbian and Gay Section of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) in the case of the Fire Service. Again, interviewees were also recruited from snowballing, as interviewees were able to introduce me to other employees, some of whom were not members of the network and some of whom were not out in the workplace. The Police and Fire Service were more difficult to access than other organizations, since the LAGPA and the FBU networks are national, and the organizations are organized on county or metropolitan boundaries.

6.3.3 Number of interviews

Storytelling as a form of data-collection is effective, but highly inefficient. Previous story researchers, such as Boje and Gabriel, found few stories in their research which would have been highly rated by folklorists. This is partly due to the content, but also due to the fact that some people are good storytellers and others are not. This aspect was certainly borne out by this piece of research, as some respondents not only saw their organizations as 'story-free spaces', (Gabriel, 2000: 23), but also saw their own sexual identity at work as being devoid of any story which could inform, describe, or even entertain. Sometimes this was because they assumed the type of story I was looking for; surely a sexual story has to be a Tragedy, with the

interviewee taking the role of the victim? I assured the interviewees that I was not looking for exposés, although because the majority of the stories are of this type, the question is raised whether interviewees tell the researcher what they think the researcher wants to hear.

It should come as no surprise therefore that I contacted as many as one hundred and ten people to be interviewed. The participation rate was extremely high; only eight of the people contacted were unwilling or unable, giving a participation rate of nearly 93%. I subsequently carried out interviews with one hundred and two people who described themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transsexual. I did not use a further ten of these interviews as the organization in question did not wish to pursue the research. The total number of interviews used as part of this research project is therefore ninety-two. The following table gives details of how many people were interviewed in each organization:

Organization	Number of interviewees
Bank A	12
Bank B	16
Government Department A	17
Government Department B	22
Police	18
Fire Service	7
Total	92

Table 8: Number of interviewees in each organization

Ninety-two is a large number of interviewees, compared to previous qualitative research in this area. In the study by Woods and Lucas (1993), the number of interviewees totalled seventy. Shallenberger (2001) interviewed a total of twelve gay men, whilst Humphrey interviewed thirteen lesbians and ten gay men (see Table 5 for more information). Clearly, quantitative studies have had much larger populations, and whilst the aim of qualitative studies is not necessarily to cover large

sample populations or to be representative, the sample size in this project demonstrates that it is a significant study.

6.3.4 Profile of interviewees

I was not interested in the actual sexual practices of the individuals but I was interested in the communication of sexual identity. In this sense, this research project follows the precedent of others such as Woods and Lucas, where they suggest that anyone who considers themselves gay must face the identity issues that they wanted to study, (Woods & Lucas, 1993: 255). I therefore asked each of the interviewees to describe their sexual identity in their own words. I used the phrase sexual identity rather than sexual orientation as the former is more inclusive of transsexuals and the latter less so. Most of the men described themselves as "gay" or "gay man", though some used the term "homosexual". Most of the women used the term "lesbian", and a few used the term "gay woman". Two men and one woman in the study described themselves as bisexual, and two women were male-to-female transsexuals. The following table gives a breakdown of the interviewees by sexual identity in each organization:

Organization	Gay men	Lesbians	Bisexual men	Bisexual women	Transsexuals	Total
Bank A	9	3	0	0	0	12
Bank B	13	1	0	0	2	16
Gov. Dept. A	11	6	0	0	0	17
Gov. Dept. B	12	8	1	1	0	22
Police	15	2	1	0	0	18
Fire Service	6	1	0	0	0	7
Total	66	21	2	1	2	92

Table 9: Number of interviewees by sexual identity and organization

The interviewees lived with more identities than just their sexual one. Of the usual diversity 'categories', three participants described themselves as Black, and two

described themselves as Disabled. The ages of the interviewees ranged from twenty-one to fifty-three, with 38% of interviewees in their thirties.

6.3.5 Structure of the interviews

The interviews were semi-structured; previous researchers have recommended less structure in interviews which aim to elicit narrative, giving greater control to respondents, (Riessman, 1993: 55). I had prepared a list of prompt questions to help the interviewee begin talking about their experiences, and to help them out if they faltered. Many of the interviewees needed some structure to help them identify and remember their own stories. Beyond this loose structure, however, they decided on the content, the stories and how they would unfold. Please see Appendix C for the list of prompt questions used in the interviews.

6.4 DATA COLLECTION – THE FOCUS GROUPS

One of, if not the major complication in carrying out research into sexual minorities in organizations is how to gather data when silence surrounds them. Silence because it is an under-researched area, but silence also because it is difficult to get people talking about the subject at all. A key challenge of this research was to create an approach and research method that could break and explore this silence.

This approach aimed to resolve the tension between the individual and organizational level of analysis and to access not only what can be very private experiences of sexuality in organizations, but also to surface 'discourse' itself.

Individual stories were not enough. In order to explore the production of sexual identity with relation to discourse within the organization, the research needed to go beyond individual narrative to capturing group processes, and encouraging discussion on a topic which is often left unspoken, and where data would therefore take a long time to collect through observation or other methods. The stories that were collected through individual interviews in each organization were then taken to focus groups in the same organization, to get people talking about issues relating to sexual minorities, and how they, as members of the organization reacted to these stories told by their colleagues. Did they recognize the stories? How did they feel about the issues raised? Did they recognize the issues as valid?

The term focus group is a generic term referring to group discussions exploring a specific set of issues, (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999: 4), using some kind of collective activity. They are also invaluable in exploring how linguistic exchanges operate within given contexts, (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999: 5). They offer great potential as a research method, especially when combined with another exploratory, qualitative approach such as the story-telling approach expounded thus far. However, they are open to careless or inappropriate use, (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999: 2), and careful consideration was given to a number of different factors which are explored the following sections.

6.4.1 Recruiting the groups and sampling methods

This section describes the approach to setting up the focus groups and the considerations involved regarding size and make-up. Data regarding the actual make-up of the focus groups is also given in this section and gives a breakdown of numbers of participants, gender and grade or rank in the organization.

Recruitment of the right people has been described by researchers as the most underestimated aspect of organizing focus groups, (Krueger, 1994: 74), and this study was no exception in presenting certain challenges. Statistical representation is not the aim of most focus group research, and often qualitative sampling is used, (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999: 7). In this study, no effort was made to have any statistically valid breakdown of categories in the group, since it would not have been appropriate to the study; it was not the intention to control for sexuality in the focus groups and anyway, it would be a fallacy to assume that any one individual can speak for their group, be it gender, race or sexuality, (Krueger, 1994: 77).

I, as the researcher, had almost complete control over the organization of the individual interviews with lesbian and gay employees but I recognized that focus group work often involved increased dependency on 'gatekeepers', (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999: 10). The risk in relying more heavily on managers in the organization to organize the focus groups was that the focus groups may have been made up in a particular way, or particularly critical views may have been prevented from surfacing. However, I am confident that the selection of groups was not deliberately skewed in any particular way. For example, the Fire Service was keen to select different Watches who were known to have different group characteristics, some more co-operative and others more negative towards the organization, to give a selection of

different views. The Police did not tell Divisional Commanders, or any recruit to the focus groups, the topic of discussion, precisely to avoid this problem.

The make up of the groups was structured differently in each organization, as in all cases the organization took a lead role in organizing the focus groups. There was a mix of volunteer and selected groups. The other organizations openly and honestly asked for volunteers, and to my knowledge there was no effort to control the membership of the groups. Where the organization selected groups, as in the case of the Fire Service, they did so precisely to get a mix of positive and negative views.

No focus groups were carried out in Bank A. In this first organization, I contacted the lesbian and gay network first, carried out the interviews, and then approached the organization for access to carry out the focus groups. I was unsuccessful. This was therefore a lesson to me that since I was carrying out an 'organizational' study, I had to gain access officially through the organization. This had an impact on how I negotiated access with the other five organizations. Since this was a major learning point in the project, and since I had gathered some interesting self-narratives from sexual minorities, I considered this to be a 'pre-pilot' study, carried out before the research method could be piloted in its entirety.

The Pilot Study was carried out in the Government Department A. Here the focus groups were recruited by the Equality and Diversity Directorate, who sent a memo to each Director requesting the participation of their Directorate, and giving the dates and times when the groups would be carried out in their areas. The notice was made public in each directorate and volunteers then came to the groups. Clearly, the disadvantage with this approach is that only interested parties, or people who are already engaged with the topic, are likely to attend.

Bank B's focus groups were organized by a manager in the Equality and Diversity department in three different ways. The first of these was a 'Piggyback Focus Group', (Krueger, 1994: 83), where the focus group was added to an already existing meeting; it was arranged for the researcher to go into a management meeting of sales managers and a two-hour slot in the agenda was devoted to the focus group discussion. Another was 'on location', (Krueger, 1994: 83), and organized by visiting one of the Bank's Call Centres; the manager released a number of people from their duties to attend the discussion. These two groups were therefore made up of selected people, not volunteers. Finally, two groups were carried out by asking for volunteers in the Head Office.

Government Department B arranged for focus groups to take place in a number of different locations around the country. The groups were then advertised on the Intranet, and volunteers were sought to take part. All participants were volunteers in this organization. Again this approach has the danger of only attracting interested volunteers.

In the Shire Fire Service, the Equalities Officer arranged for me to travel around the county to different Fire Stations, and join different Watches. These groups were unusual as they were neither selected nor volunteer groups; instead they were normal groupings of fire-fighters at work. In addition, two further groups were carried out at Head Office, which were made up of volunteers. All the groups were therefore carried out 'on location', (Krueger, 1994: 83).

In the Rural Police Constabulary, an order was sent out to Divisional Commanders by the Assistant Chief Inspector to select and make available a number of people from their region. These were to be a mix of Sworn Staff (police officers), Support Staff and Traffic Wardens. None of the attendees in these focus groups were volunteers, and all but one of the groups took place 'on location', (Krueger, 1994: 83). One of the focus groups was a 'Piggyback Focus Group' (Krueger, 1994: 83) with a shift of front-line police officers, and the focus group took place during the briefing session at the beginning of their shift.

No incentives, apart from the usual coffee and biscuits, were given. Groups took place during working hours and, where appropriate participants were paid travelling expenses by the organization. It is perhaps worthy of note that these groups could not have taken place without the interviews first taking place with sexual minorities; these latter interviewees gave up their own time in lunch-breaks, evenings and weekends to speak to me, and paid for their own travelling expenses to do so.

6.4.2 The size and make-up of each group

A total of thirty-four focus groups were carried out across five organizations, with a total number of two hundred and forty-six participants. A breakdown of the make-up of the focus groups in each organization is given in the sub-sections below.

One orthodoxy which has emerged from the market research literature on the running of focus groups is that the ideal size of groups is somewhere between eight and twelve people, (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999: 8). In the Rural Police Constabulary,

the groups were of this size. I had made this known when preparing for the groups, and the Assistant Chief Constable had ordered for this number of people to be selected. However, it was quite difficult to control the size of the groups in this study for various different reasons. In the Fire Service, for instance, the size of the Watch varied, and it was felt that it was more conducive to effective group dynamics to work with the Watch as a group, irrespective of their number. This was the case also for the managers' meeting in the Bank where the advantage of going into a routine sales meeting to discuss issues of sexuality outweighed the disadvantage of having too many people in the group. Finally, the Government Departments tried to manage the number of volunteers in the groups by keeping a booking system, but this proved to be unreliable as people either did not turn up, or too many people came and no-one was turned away.

Sexuality was not controlled for; the aim was to recruit a number of different people across the organization, and not to create a 'straight' or heterosexual focus group. Neither was it the intention to create a 'gay' focus group as a large amount of data had already been collected on sexual minorities from the individual interviews. A brief analysis of the make-up of the focus groups is now given, with greater detail on the grades of participants in Appendix D.

A. GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT A

In Government Department A, a total of six focus groups were held in four different locations around the country, with a total number of 40 participants. There were 25 women (or 62.5 % of the total) and 15 men (37.5% of the total). By far the greatest participation, twenty people, was at Executive Officer (EO) grade, a relatively junior grade. The most senior grade was Grade 7, with five people taking part; at this grade people would be managing departments. No-one from the Senior Civil Service took part.

B. GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT B

In Government Department B, a total of nine focus groups were held in eight different locations around the country, with a total number of 73 participants. There were 42 women (or 58 % of the total) and 31 men (42% of the total). The most common grade to take part was Grade D, equivalent to EO grade in other parts of the Civil Service. There was greater participation at senior grades with two members of the

Senior Civil Service took part, and eleven people at B1 and B2 grades (equivalent to Grade 7).

C. BANK B

In Bank B, a total of four focus groups were held in three different locations around the country, with a total number of 31participants. There were 14 women (or 45% of the total) and 17 men (55% of the total). Although there was no participation at senior executive level (SX Grade), there was a good level of participation at the two next most senior grades, with eight people from Grade 6 and Grade 7 attending.

D. POLICE

In the Police, a total of eight focus groups were held in five different locations around the region, one location being the HQ, with a total number of 59 participants. There were 27 women (or 46% of the total) and 32 men (54% of the total). Support staff formed the largest sub-grouping and, of the thirty-one support staff to attend the focus groups, ten came from the HR Department. Of the Sworn Staff there were twenty Constables, both uniformed and plain-clothed, three Sergeants and two Inspectors. No senior Sworn Staff attended.

E. FIRE SERVICE

In the Fire Service, a total of seven focus groups were held in five different locations around the county, one of which was the HQ, with a total number of 43 participants. There were 5 women (or 12% of the total) and 38 men (88% of the total). All the fire-fighters who took part were male and represented 35 (or 81% of the participants). 8 other members of staff took part in the HQ (of whom 5 were the women participants), with a range of grades represented in the HQ from clerical grades to Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

6.4.3 Ethical issues in focus group research

The discussion of ethical issues is very relevant to the discussion of focus group research, (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999: 17). Issues include getting the informed consent of participants; this was not possible in some cases. For example, in the Police, employees did not know in advance what they were coming to, and were therefore unable to give their informed consent. Another ethical issue is confidentiality. I warned all focus group participants that these groups were not

confidential in the sense that I would be feeding back their views to the organization and then using their views in my research. However, they would be used anonymously and I would not, at any point, link any one particular view to a participant. That said, focus groups, by their very nature, involve different members of the organization who could have talked and gossiped outside the group about views expressed inside it. For that reason, I followed the advice of focus groups researchers to set ground rules prior to the running the group, (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999: 17) which everyone agreed to.

These focus groups were dealing with sensitive topics, and although they did not have the aim of encouraging personal disclosure from the participants in any way, they did, nevertheless involve the discussion of individuals' personal stories and the open discussion of taboo topics. Some researchers have even suggested that this can even introduce a certain thrill into the proceedings, (Farquhar, 1999: 47).

6.5 IDENTITY OF THE RESEARCHER

The identity of the researcher is important in a number of ways; first it influences the selection of the research topic, it affects data collection, especially the way that interviews are carried out, (Taylor, 2001: 17). The identity of the researcher might not only affect the way that questions are asked, but also the answers that are given, and finally the identity of the researcher will affect the way that the data is interpreted and analysed, (Taylor, 2001: 18).

Kitzinger (1999: 14) asserts that minority researchers are often more sensitive to the way in which the identity of the researcher is presented. Being gay myself, I cannot say whether I am more or less sensitive than anyone else to the way in which my identity was presented during this research project, but I was certainly aware of it. I decided that, as a member of a minority group, I had a unique opportunity to seek people's honest views about that minority group without inhibiting them in anyway by informing them of my sexual orientation. The criticism might be levelled at this approach that it is not ethical and is, in fact, dishonest. In actual fact, it merely reflects and mirrors day-to-day practice in organizations where organizational members feel free to speak freely because of the invisibility of homosexuality (see section 4).

6.5.1 Carrying out the interviews

As previously mentioned, my identity as an out gay man enabled me to get privileged access to a population which is hard to identify. However, during the interviews themselves, I carefully managed what I said about myself. For instance, I introduced the research project, and assured the interviewees of anonymity, and I offered them the opportunity to ask me any questions they wished either about the project or about me. I thought this only fair since I was asking some searching questions about aspects of their life which, to many, are seen as private. However, I suggested that their questions should come at the end of the interview so that whatever I said would not be seen to influence the interviewee in any way. I did not systematically tell interviewees that I was gay, since in some cases they had been informed prior to the interview, in others it was obvious from the location of the interview, and some just assumed. Where it was unclear, the interviewee asked whether I was gay myself, which I confirmed. Their knowledge of my sexual orientation was useful; this helped to build up trust, but it also facilitated the research in another way. It meant that the interviewees were able to take conversational shortcuts, using gay slang or referring to pubs and clubs without the need to explain the details to me.

Sharing the same sexual orientation as the interviewees also affected my own behaviour. I have an insight into this because I was confident and unaware almost of my reactions with all of my lesbian, gay and bisexual interviewees. However, two people that I interviewed were transsexual. With them, I felt I was slightly uneasy; not because I was uncomfortable with gender reassignment as such, but because I felt, as a non-transsexual, I was putting them under scrutiny in some way. I was also unsure of my reactions and felt I was ignorant of how I should react. For example, one of the male to female transsexuals began the interview as follows:

> *"I haven't always looked like this as you've probably gathered".*

There is then a pause in the conversation which I felt was an embarrassed silence. Despite her gender reassignment, she was making reference to the very strong masculine features which she had retained, and I did not know whether to agree or not. I chose to remain silent. She continued, *"I'm TS."*

This demonstrated a couple of salient of points to me; the first was that the minority status of the researcher does indeed matter, as I was very comfortable with lesbian and gay interviewees and less so with transsexual interviewees. The second point

was that despite my efforts to be inclusive, it was demonstrated that transsexuals have quite a different identity.

6.5.2 After the interviews

On many occasions, I had feedback that the interviewees had enjoyed the experience and for many of them it had been therapeutic. Indeed, on more than one occasion I was told that they "felt much better". Clearly, the interview was not a neutral encounter between two people, and I am aware that as a researcher I have had an impact on the people I have met. For those people that felt better as a result of telling their story, it was an opportunity, perhaps for the first time to recount their experiences at work as a whole and to try to make sense of them.

6.5.3 Carrying out the focus groups

The groups of course are classified as 'sensitive' not only because of the topic under discussion, but also because of the potential for research in this area to raise strong feelings and opinions, or even to pose a threat to those involved, either researcher or participant, (Lee, 1993; Farquhar, 1999: 48 - 49). To illustrate this point, I am going to relate a story of my own, as researcher, feeling threatened as a result of carrying out the focus groups. The following story from the Police demonstrates that focus groups dealing with sensitive topics, also have sensitive moments:

"This first focus group had not been the liveliest group I had facilitated during this research project (the police was the sixth and last out of six organizations to take part in the research). For this reason there was some time left over at the end of the session, and I decided to use one story which I had held in reserve. The story had been told to me by a lesbian personnel officer, who had interviewed two members of The Alpha Group, an evangelical Christian group, who wanted to use police premises for their meetings. One of the questions she asked them was whether lesbians and gay men would be welcome at their meetings. They replied that they would be welcome, but would be left under no illusion that they were an abomination. The story then went on to detail how she dealt with this by reporting it to her superior, and to the Force Chaplain. Shortly after I had handed out this story, a woman in the focus group said, *"It's me. The story is about me! What's more, it's not true."* On hearing this I called the focus group to a close, saying that it would not be appropriate to discuss a story which made specific reference to an individual in the

room. The group filed out, somewhat dejected, and I began to pack my things away. Minutes later, the door burst open and the woman's manager came in saying that she was in tears, very upset and I was to give an assurance that I would not use the story any more that week. I said that I could not give an immediate assurance, as I needed time to think. Within minutes, the incident had been escalated to the Deputy Chief Constable, who delegated the matter to a Chief Superintendent. The latter was extremely sympathetic towards me, describing a similar incident which had occurred to him recently, but at the same time requesting me not to use the story any more, as the police had some issues with the Alpha Group and they did not want anything to exacerbate the situation. I agreed. However, I felt under such pressure that I felt that I could no longer stay on police premises, as I did not feel safe. I checked into a local Bed & Breakfast. The Alpha Group members wanted my contact details and the Force Diversity Manager handed them over. This, in itself, made me feel unsafe in my own home, and I took the precaution of backing up all my research material and hiding it in a safe environment away from home. As a post-script to this story, I can say, with some relief, that I have received no further harassment, although at the time, it seemed richly ironic that life was imitating art: the story, which later proved to be true, was imitated in the research process as members of a religious minority set out to persecute a sexual minority; in the story, a lesbian personnel officer working for the police, in the research process, a gay male researcher, researching minority sexual identity in the police."

This personal experience from the research process is particularly appropriate in illustrating the tension which can exist between two minorities in an organization and helps to describe how difficult it can be to reach a compromise which members of both minorities are happy with.

6.6 DATA ANALYSIS

6.6.1 Recording and transcribing the output

Tape-recording provides richer data than just note-taking (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999: 15), and consequently all the interviews and focus groups were recorded. At the start of each interview or focus group, participants were asked whether anyone had any objections. No-one did. They were also assured that their views would be reported anonymously, and no-one from their organization would have access to the tapes.

Interestingly, Government Department B, when negotiating the contract for access, asked for ownership and copyright of all the material used in and output from interviews and focus groups. This was refused on the ethical grounds that the identities of the participants had to be protected and, even if the organization had never exercised their rights, they would technically have had the right to see transcripts and listen to the tapes. They relented and I maintained ownership and copyright of the research output.

All the interviews and focus groups were transcribed verbatim; after all, "crunching text requires text to first be put in crunchable form," (Van Maanen, 1988: 131). On average, it took six to eight hours to transcribe each two-hour session whether interview or focus group. 92 interviews and 34 focus groups were carried out, involving between 756 and 1,008 hours (or between 94 and 126 days) of transcription. In the transcripts, speakers were not identified by name, but the transcript indicated when each new speaker began speaking. In addition to the tapes, notes were also made by the researcher during the focus groups, especially to note anything that would not be picked up by the tape recorder; for example, body language, the way people were dressed or non-verbal signals between participants.

6.6.2 Classifying the data

Basic to the process of looking to see if there are trends in the data, is some kind of categorizing, often referred to as coding, (Taylor, 2001: 39). For this project, a software package called QSR NVivo was used, to facilitate the process of sorting the data into categories. The package was used to analyse two types of data. First, stories were identified from the individual interviews, and then sorted into subject matter; second, I used NVivo to codify the focus group data, and to identify common trends within it.

6.6.3 Plot analysis

Categorizing the stories helps to analyse them; indeed, one of the activities of the storytelling researcher is to create a typology, although the purpose in the case of this thesis is to analyse themes coming from the data, rather than concentrate on a structuralist technique of analysis. From his research into 404 organizational stories, Gabriel (2000) proposes four main types of stories, based on Aristotle's classic typology of plots:

- Epic stories: deal with achievements, contest and trials and almost always have a happy ending;

- Comic stories: which generate laughter, amusement and levity, with mishaps, 'cock-ups', breakdowns in communication, frequently aimed at a target, or butt;

- Tragic stories: generate pity or sorrow, dealing with themes that leave lasting scars on their victims;

- Romantic stories: have a lighter theme and deal with love, romance and gratitude.

The types of stories suggested by Gabriel were a useful starting point for analysing the stories, and used the typology to classify the stories. Interestingly, it was found that most of the stories fell into one category. Further elements, themes and qualities in the stories were identified, which would be useful in developing an understanding of the data. Therefore, after an initial typology analysis, further sub-genres were developed and these are discussed in section 10.1 on page 228.

6.6.4 Presentation and analysis of the data

Not all the stories which were used in the focus groups are presented; in common with other qualitative approaches it is not possible to repeat everything that was heard, (Sims, 2003: 1198), interesting though it was. As previously mentioned, the stories collected from Bank A were not used in the focus groups, as this was a pre-pilot; they are nevertheless presented here, as their exclusion from the data would have meant excluding a whole organization. The criteria I used for selecting the stories included whether I considered it to be a good story, especially if there was a plot with a twist; whether it would be likely to generate discussion; whether the topic was an interesting one for discussion; whether it gave an insight to organizational life; and whether the stories gave a good insight into gay experience in organizations.

A. PRESENTATION OF THE STORIES

The presentation of the stories, and the presentation of the group discourse, or focus group data are not linked, in the sense that a story about coming out in the Fire Service actually prompted more discussion about the work context, and the fact that fire-fighters have to shower together, than about the dynamics of coming out. I have not, retrospectively, reclassified the story, that is to say I have still presented it as a

coming out story, but the discussion which it generated has been presented in the later section on response.

One of the first steps in the analysis of the stories was to sort them into categories and themes. Broadly, there were three very strong themes, which are shown in Table 10:

	Coming out	Silence	Difference
Bank A	6. Coming out again and again 5. Coming out on the trading floor	14. The Diversity email	18. The recruitment event Stonewall Dinner
Bank B	3. Come and meet your team leader	10. The leaflet drop	19. Challenging Behaviour 15. The Joint Cheque Account
Fire Service	1. The Showers Mr Gay UK	9. Finding out you're not alone	16. When the Watch isn't happy 21. The Betting Book 25. Missing out on promotion
Police	2. Coming out to the whole shift 4. No choice		24. Challenging appropriately 26. The Training School
Gov Dept A		11. Private lives 13. Section 28 12. Location, location, location	
Gov Dept B		8. A fresh start	20. The Wedding 17. Accommodating prejudice 22. When being gay helps

Table 10: Stories by theme and organization

Thirty stories from the six different organizations are presented here. There are five from Bank A, six from Bank B, four from Government Department A, five from Government Department B, six from the Fire Service and four from the Police. The main criterion for selecting them for analysis here is that they were used in the focus groups. There were other stories which were very interesting, but could not be used for various different reasons, not least, as previously mentioned that it is not possible in a qualitative study to reproduce everything. In addition, some of the police stories

could not be used because they would identify the individuals concerned within the organization. Still others were just not very good stories.

B. THE DISCOURSE ANALYTIC LENSES

Neither Foucault's approach to discourse, nor Derrida's deconstruction, are methods as such, but the idea of having a number of steps to follow, drawn from Foucault and Derrida is not without precedence, (Boje, 2001: 21; Carabine, 2001: 281; Fairclough, 2001b: 236). Indeed, Kilduff and Kelemen (2004) suggest that deconstruction is merely the scaffolding which enables the critic to transform the text, and the reader is likely to ask 'where is the deconstruction?', since all that is apparent is the commentary on the text, (Kilduff & Keleman, 2004: 261). Table 11 therefore proposes a number of lenses for a discourse analytic approach, not to be followed in any prescriptive or ideological way, but in order to approach the data analysis systematically. Although the idea of these steps and guidelines are based on Boje (2001) and Carabine (2001), the content is adapted and developed, particularly with reference to the theory development in section 2 of this thesis. Table 11 also shows the theoretical tradition from which the steps are taken. Boje suggested a similar approach with the particular aim of story deconstruction, but here the approach has been used for deconstructing both the stories and the examples of discourse from the focus groups:

Theoretical basis	Discourse Analytic Lens	Explanation
Derrida – concepts of *différance*, absent presence and deconstruction	Identify self-deconstruction	Stories can be self-deconstructing, (Boje, 2001: 18; Czarniawska, 2004: vii). There are always multiple ways of reading stories or texts and one way is to first identify the way that the text self-deconstructs
	Identify the hierarchy	Identify binary oppositions. Reinterpret the hierarchy: a story or text is one interpretation or hierarchy of an event from one point of view. It usually has some form of hierarchical thinking, and expresses Derrida's ideas of logocentrism and privileges one half of the binary opposition

	Identify the absent presence	Absent presence: read the story between the lines – trace where people resist by being silent. Silencing groups of people may take on a multitude of forms (Clair, 1998: 67) ... it can be achieved through coercion or through hegemony
Foucault – especially the concepts of power relations and resistance from individuals.	Identify silent voices	Voices that do not get included in a given telling of a story – have voices been silenced?
	Identify rules	Foucault's rules? State the rule in a way that makes it seem extreme or absurd.
	Dividing practices	Foucault referred to dividing practices at the macro, societal level, for example mental institutions, but are there any practices which exclude, deny or isolate at the organizational level?
	Identify power relations	Identify how power is expressed, both in talk and action. Look at where resistance occurs
	Identify hegemonic discourse	Identify 'common sense' aspects of discourse – dominant and dominated discourse types
	Identify how subject is constituted	What is the subject position which is created by discourse?
Concept of performativity as developed by Judith Butler	Identify performativity	Is there anything about the way that the subject or subject position is created which would suggest the performative nature of identity?

Table 11: Steps for analysing stories and extracts of discourse (adapted from Boje, 2001)

Barbara Czarniawska suggests that there are different ways of reading stories; semantic, where one looks simply for the reading of a text, and semiotic, where one reads more critically and the aim is to discover how the text can do what it does, (Czarniawska, 2004: vii). The analysis of these stories, and the extracts of discourse aimed to do both.

Each story or text was analysed using one or more of the discourse analytic lenses identified in the table above. The process is described in Figure 6 below.

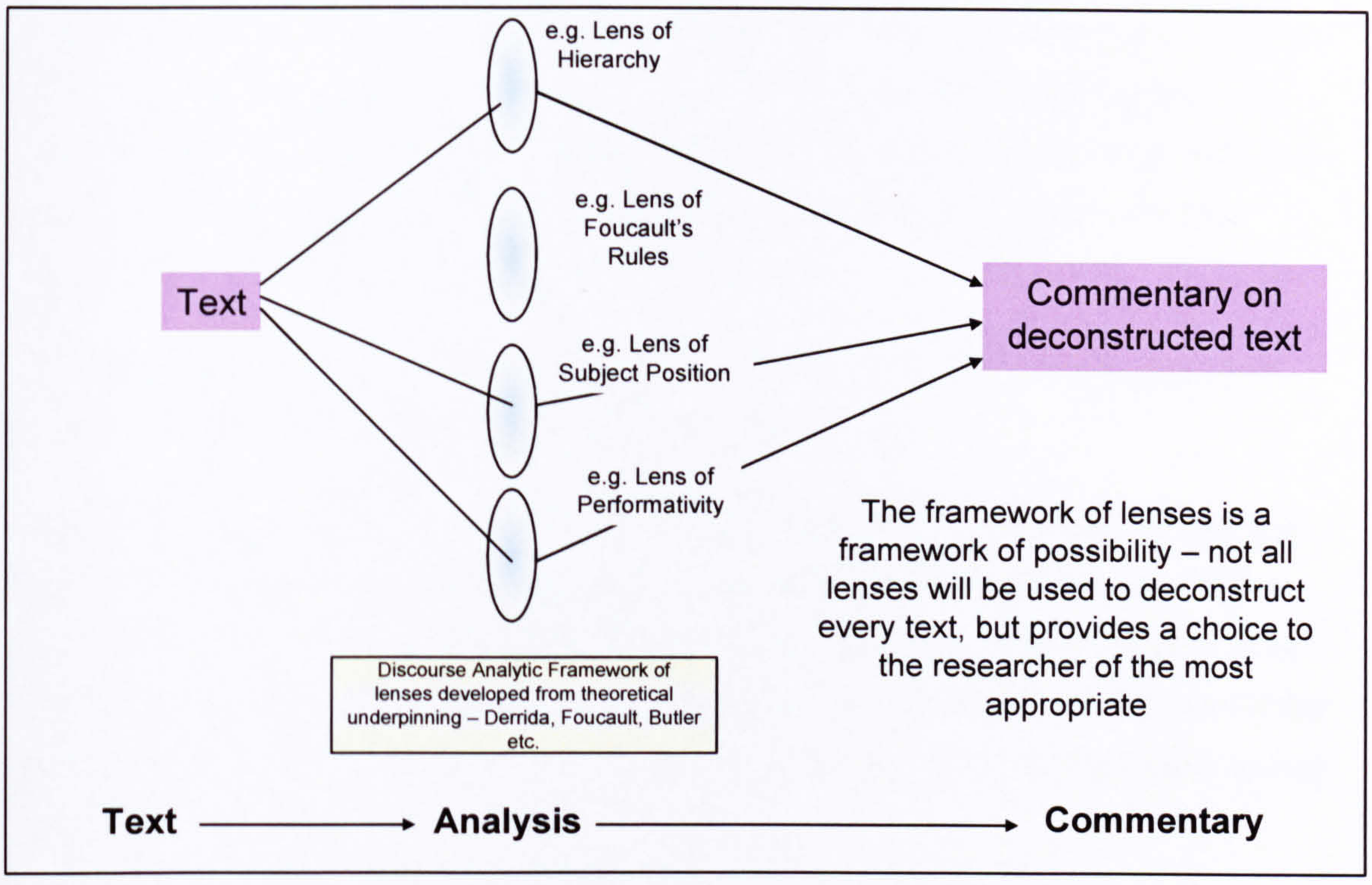


Figure 6: The discourse analytic process

It should be noted that although the process was systematic and each lens was considered, only the most appropriate lens and resulting analysis is reported in the following chapters.

6.7 SUMMARY

This section has presented and discussed details of the research method, data collection and data analysis.

One of the significant contributions of this project is the two-tier narrative method of data collection; this was developed to facilitate an approach, which did not concentrate solely on the experience of minorities within the organization. Although focusing on the individual gives an essential insight into the experience of minorities, which forms an important part of this thesis, the additional 'tier' in the method gave an insight into the wider discourse in operation. In other words, this method facilitated a move away from the study of "the homosexual", as such, to a study, which was more inclusive of the organizational discursive dynamics.

This section also reviewed the literature in the area of storytelling as a way of accessing individual identity, developing an approach which suggests that people in organizations do not just tell stories, they enact an account of themselves, emplot themselves in their stories, allowing the narrative to become, at least in part, the performance of their identity. This was developed by referring to the literature on storytelling in organizations, suggesting that stories in organizations are a means of sense-making for the individual and meaning-making in organizations, which is consistent in the definition developed in section 2.2.

A short summary of the six organizations, which took part in this research project, was presented, with some high-level characteristics.

The section then went on to describe the data collection in more detail, including a reflexive analysis of what the process was like from the researcher's point of view, and how the researcher interacted with the research process. In particular, a story from the research process itself was presented as an example of how the researcher can become embedded in the process, and also how the topic itself can raise strong emotions.

Finally, in this section, data analysis was discussed, with two key points. The first was summarizing the three main themes to come out of these stories, which are:

- Coming Out;
- Silence;
- Difference.

These three themes are not only the major themes for the presentation and analysis of the data, but they also form the three building blocks of the coming out model presented in the next section. The second was to summarize the theoretical framework for the discourse analytic approach. Building on the major theorists reviewed in the literature reviewed in sections 2 and 3, the framework presents in summary form a number of 'lenses' for viewing and analyzing the data. These are not steps in the discourse analytic process, since this would imply that the analysis would report on the way that every lens had been used for every story or text; instead the analysis of each story or text will only identify the most appropriate, useful lenses to have been used.

7. *COMING OUT*

Coming out is an act of self-disclosure, specifically the act of disclosing previously undisclosed minority sexual identity, and one which has received much attention in the literature on sexual minorities in the workplace, as discussed in section 4 in general and section 4.2.2 in particular. It is a subject which continues to command interest and attention; Sedgwick (1991) asserts that "gay uncovering seems if anything heightened in surprise and delectability, rather than staled, by the increasingly intense atmosphere of public articulations", (Sedgwick, 1991: 67). And yet, the issue here is not just about the disclosing of information that was previously withheld. Coming out is a process with a number of different aspects to it that have resonance for the individual. In many cases, the individual makes a choice to come out, perhaps considered over a long time, even years, choosing the time and the place as well as the person to tell. Sometimes the individual has no choice at all and is outed. In any case, coming out is a reiterated act and one characterized by the continual performance of out identity.

Coming out means gradually making the choice to come out; this involves choosing the moment to come out, as well as choosing the person to tell. Sometimes, it is not always a considered act; it can be an impulsive act in response to teasing. The question of agency in the performative act of coming out is an interesting one; in Butler's account of performativity, the individual is conditioned by discourse and does not allow for agency or free will on the part of the individual, (Butler, 1993: 15). The stories in this section do, in fact, to a greater or lesser extent, help to illustrate the point that agency resides less with the individual than might be thought intuitively. In one story, the gay person is put in an invidious position where they have to come out as an act of resistance; in Butler's words, "the injurious effects of discourse become the painful resources by which a resignifying practice is wrought", (Butler, 1993: 224). While the decision to come out may be fraught with difficulty, the moment may be thrust upon individuals, and they can even be 'outed' by their colleagues. Story no. 7 looks at a situation where the individual had no choice at all.

Coming out is a repeated act. The concentration on the first time a person comes out suggests a single undifferentiated act; this is misleading for two reasons. First, coming out is something, because of the constant presumption of heterosexuality, which the lesbian or gay man, has to do in every new work situation. Second, once 'out' they constantly have to manage information about themselves that is potentially

discrediting, (Goffman, 1963b). Coming out is partially a process of something that has previously been hidden, but it is more than that; it is part of fashioning a lesbian or gay self that did not exist before coming out began, (Stein, 2003: 132). In other words, being gay or lesbian is not a truth that is discovered, it is a performance which is enacted.

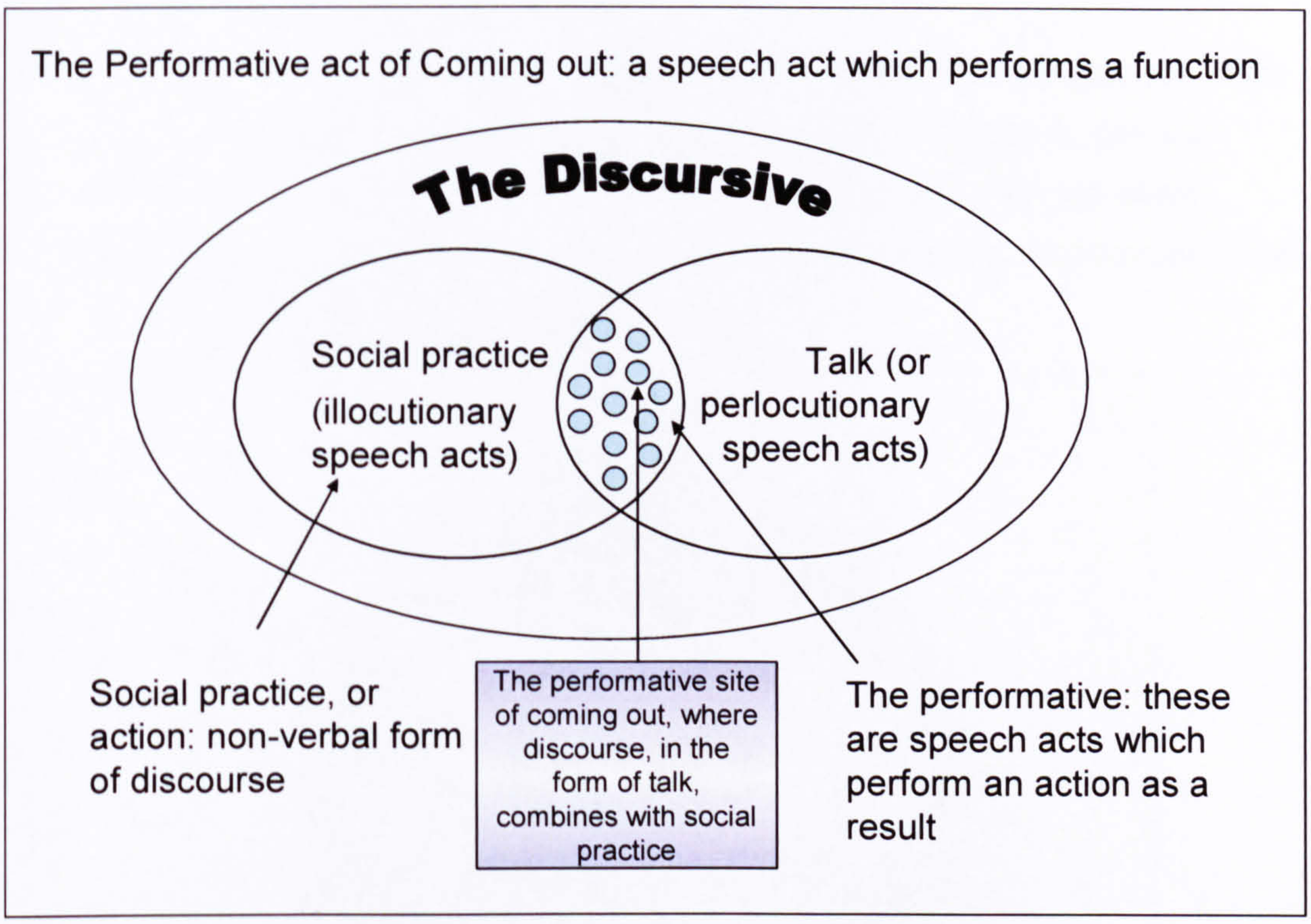


Figure 7: The performative act

In order to explore the coming out process, discourse has been considered in two specific ways: talk and social practice. In the adjacent model, we have referred to talk as 'Perlocutionary' speech acts, a term used by Austin, and taken up by Butler to mean speech acts which produce certain effects as their consequence, (Butler, 1997: 3). We can understand perlocutionary speech acts as those reactions of passive or active acts of hostility or acceptance. Social Practice is presented in this model as having a similar dynamic; it is an act which produces certain effects as their consequence. For example, in this research, the social practice of fire-fighters showering together encouraged the gay fire-fighter to remain in the closet. However, the act of coming out actually brings these two elements together in what has been termed an 'Illocutionary' speech act, again a term coined by Austin and taken up by Butler to mean 'speech acts which do what they say, at the same time as saying it', (Butler, 1997: 3).

The model below illustrates the processual nature of coming out, both in terms of the process of disclosure, but also the continual process of coming out involved in performing minority sexual identity. The process of coming out can be considered in three stages, as follows:

1. Silence: undisclosed subjectivity;
2. Coming out: the performative or illocutionary speech act of coming out. This in turn is sub-divided into making an active choice and being forced out;
3. Difference: discourse or perlocutionary speech acts surround the newly disclosed identity and the act of coming out; in other words the reactions from other people to the different identity.

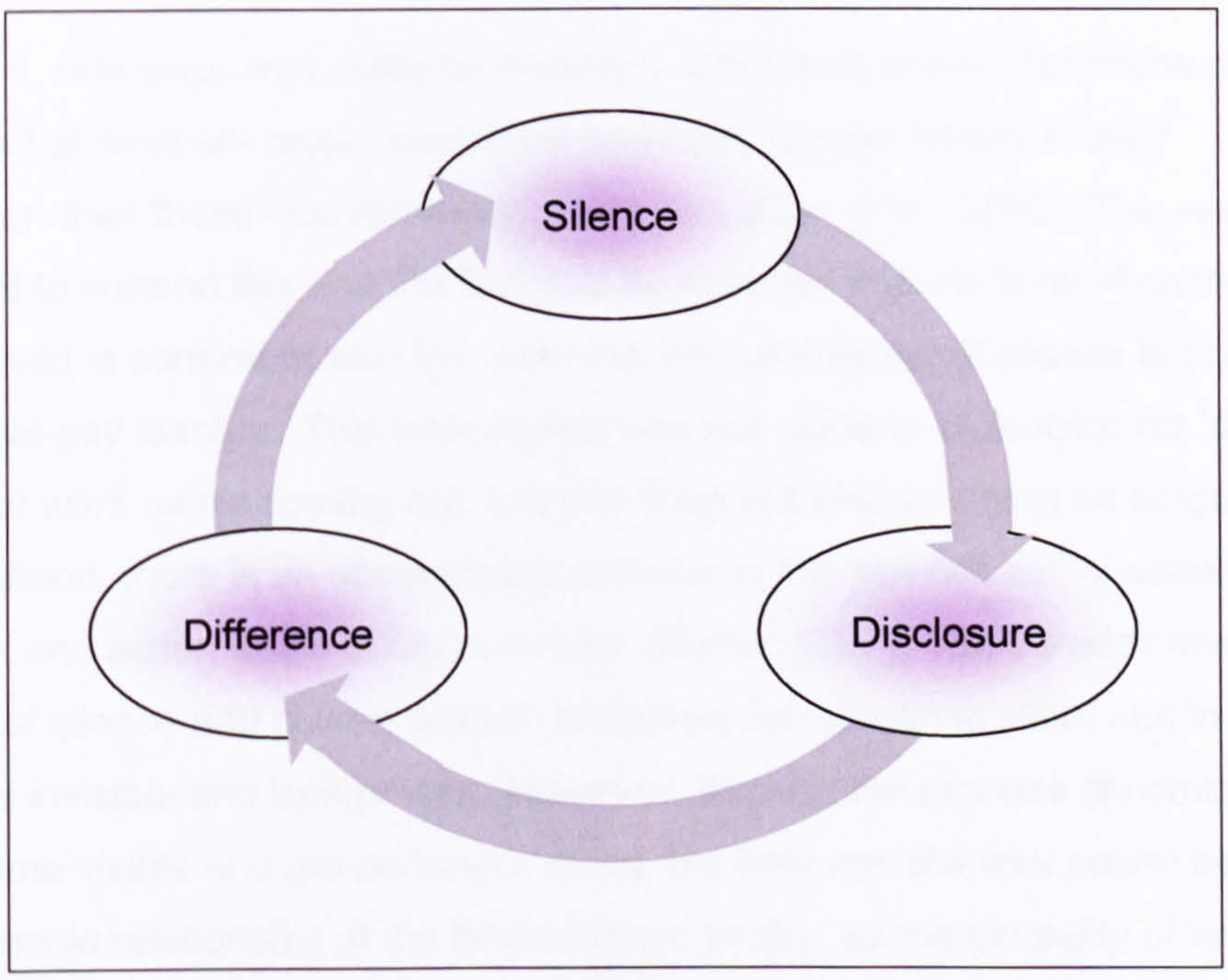


Figure 8: The individual process of coming out

The model suggests that coming out is a process of moving from silence, through disclosure, to the response from other people, as experienced by sexual minorities. The findings show that the stages and act of coming out are important, as well as the reactions and impact of the act. It is therefore essential to remember the perlocutionary aspect, that is to say the discursive response of others to the act of coming out. This response could take the form of social practice. Before coming out there is a dissonance between the self identity, where the individual knows that they have a minority sexuality, and the social identity where the individual chooses not to reveal this to others. We do not suggest that this reintegration is always a positive move, because the eventual impact on social identity is so dependent on the reaction

from others. In other words, coming out may increase individual self-esteem, but the reality is that reactions and context have a major impact on the individual.

During the research process, some themes have recurred and become prominent. One of these was the significance of coming out for the individual and the benefits that they accrued through this process. When asked to describe what it was like coming out, most interviewees described it 'the high point' of their careers. One respondent talked about his coming out in the following way:

> *"My defining moment was, I think, when I was able to come out completely. I brought my partner to the Christmas Party which to me was a completely unheard of, and there were no repercussions of any sort. It gave me enough confidence to really get into my work. To the point where I was one of the best workers in the office and it got me promotion in the end."*

In section 4, reference was made to research, which has shown that those people who are out at work are more committed and have greater loyalty to their organization than those who remain in the closet, (Day et al., 2000). This respondent would tend to support this and the fact that he reported that his level of confidence had improved is consistent with the view that the uncovering of silence is constitutive of a positive gay identity. This interviewee was not alone in describing his 'defining moment' at work as his coming out, but this does not always signal an empowering move. Indeed, there is an unavoidable paradox in the 'speech act' of coming out, where talk and action seem to blur into one, (Butler, 1997). The paradox involves the concepts of silence and power; sexual minorities, by remaining silent and in the closet, are invisible and lack power. However, through the process of coming out, they become visible and are no longer silent, but they can still lack power because of the hegemonic relationship of the homo-hetero binary; as the causality of lack of power is transferred from silence to loss of control over discourse. Foucault refers to this loss of control over language when he suggests that one's life is not reducible to the discourse that one speaks or to the sphere of discourse that animates one's life, (Butler, 1997: 28). However, another interpretation is that creating space for the subject in discourse does not mean that the discourse then belongs to the subject.

The Coming Out stories are now discussed in more detail, analysed using the discourse analytic steps outlined in Table 11.

7.1 COMING OUT STORIES

7.1.1 Undisclosed subjectivity

Undisclosed sexual subjectivity is referred to as the 'Closet' which is a major metaphor for sexual minorities, (Sedgwick, 1991; Woods & Lucas, 1993). In order to come out a gay man or lesbian must say or do something which will disclose that information to others; silence on the subject constitutes an implicit claim to be heterosexual, (Woods & Lucas, 1993: 173). And yet, even if the individual wants to come out, there may be circumstances or elements of the work environment which might discourage them from doing so. The following story is an example of one such environment in the Fire Service where the close living conditions and communal facilities would make it difficult for a gay man to be visible.

The Showers (Fire Service)

While I was at training centre, I didn't want to tell anybody. I'd only known everyone about 10 weeks. I've got enough grief here just trying to get through. Also the male showers were a bit antiquated, just one big tiled wall, with shower heads coming out, so it was very open and exposed. And the changing room was just one big room with benches around. I didn't really need the added grief of people all walking out of the shower because I was in there. So I thought I'd just leave it and if anyone asks, I'd tell them. We then had two weeks training in breathing apparatus, we finished that and started on the final training. At lunchtime I walked into the lockers where all the other lads were sitting and someone started whistling the theme tune from Police Academy, the one they played when they were in a gay bar called the Blue Oyster Club. I walked in, I sat down and they stopped. I thought don't be paranoid, obviously there's a joke going on, you've walked in the middle of it, and you think it's all about you. That Friday, I was in the changing rooms, just cleaning my shoes, and this guy comes in and he's pacing up and down, and I could tell he wanted to say something and he couldn't. He kept trying to talk to me and he couldn't. It became blindingly obvious to me what he wanted to ask me, and it's a bit sad really, but I found it quite funny because he was finding it so difficult; hey, there are only a few perks you get when you come out. So eventually I turned round and said,

'What do you want to ask me?'
'I can't say' so I said,
'The answer's yes.'

Story 1: The Showers (Fire Service)

Social practice and physical arrangements can have an effect on identity, even though they may not be strictly part of the coming out process. The story self-deconstructs in that we can see that the social practice of fire-fighters showering together has an impact on the individual and his lack of readiness to come out at work. The hierarchy of the story elicits embarrassment. As he says, he "didn't really need the added grief of people all walking out of the shower because I was in there". The heterosexual fire-fighters are the ones with the power to walk out of the showers

and create the embarrassment. This scenario is also illustrative of a reverse hierarchy in operation; whilst the power clearly belonged to the group of heterosexual fire-fighters, this was reversed in the coming out scene, where the heterosexual fire-fighter wanted to ask about his sexuality but could not. Although only a small example of resistance, it is nevertheless an example of Foucault's concept of resistance. This story is very illustrative of the performative aspect of the act of coming out. The colleague wanted to ask whether he was gay or not and was pacing up and down because he was too embarrassed to ask. And then, by saying "the answer's yes", this individual had performed the act of coming out. By saying the words, he had also performed the deed; it is also parrhesiastic, (Foucault, 2001), in the sense that it was potentially damaging for him to do so.

Whereas people choose to remain in the Closet and keep their sexual identity hidden from view for a variety of reasons, such as fear of harassment, bullying and physical violence, on this occasion the decision not to reveal his sexuality was driven by the physical environment, that is to say the communal showers, and the perceived fear of what might happen if his colleagues were to find out that he was gay. In a less formal setting, such as a sports centre, for example, the choice might be taken not to shower to avoid potential embarrassment. Given that this is at work, however, and that given the type of work there is the regular need for taking a shower, it is not an option to avoid taking a shower altogether. The only solution for this individual, therefore, is to avoid coming out. There are other aspects of the physical arrangements in Fire Stations which make coming out difficult; rest areas are equipped like dormitories, with beds, made with sheets and blankets. Although these are officially only rest areas, and fire-fighters should be clothed in order to respond in the fastest possible time, it is not uncommon for fire-fighters to treat them as proper dormitories and undress completely. Showering, changing and rest areas are therefore aspects of the physical arrangements which are not only undignified, but can also have a negative impact on sexual minorities.

7.1.2 Choosing the time and place

The act of coming out is a performative act because it involves a performative declaration, (Butler, 1997). The concept of performativity emphasises that much of language consists of performative utterances where discourse becomes social practice, or, in other words, talk becomes action. The issue here is often about gradually making the choice to come out and choosing the moment as well as the person. Where someone makes the choice to come out, it is not always a considered act: sometimes it is in response to teasing, or even bullying. In the story below, the teasing or bullying was of a very serious nature and was beginning to impinge, not only on the individual's quality of work, but also on his wanting to stay in the police altogether.

Coming out to the whole shift (Police)

I didn't take part in the banter that goes on. It's a very macho culture, very bawdy, so you get these guys leering out of the windows of the van, making sexist comments, you know, real Neanderthal, early man type behaviour. Because I didn't take part, it just reinforced the rumour that I must be gay, not making comments about so-and-so's tits. Then things started happening; I had some damage to my locker, some minor damage, some people put some stickers on my locker, abusive stickers. And then you know those forms where you have to present your driver's documents and driver's licence? They're self carbonating and someone had written on it with a pen top or the back end of a pencil or a pen, so the top copy appeared clean. I stopped a motorist and wrote the top copy out, tore it off and there was "dirty faggot" written underneath. That happened a few times. And I had things through the internal despatch, things about AIDS. It got to the point where I was trying to make a decision about whether or not to stay in the Police. I made a decision to speak to my Chief Inspector; the options were either a full investigation, which would be like a witch hunt, or to speak to the team and tell them the rumours were true. The following Thursday, about 3 in the morning, we had a team meeting. I was first on the agenda! And the subject was all the things that had happened to me. There were about forty people there - Inspector, four or five sergeants and about thirty PCs. Everyone had their heads hung quite low. They knew what was going on. It was nerve-wracking. It was absolutely horrendous, to have to justify yourself in front of 45 people. And you're an agenda item! Your sexual orientation is top of the agenda for a team meeting! It is quite bizarre. They were shocked to bits. A couple of people had refused to work with me, on the grounds that they were Catholics, and their religion prohibited it, but they hadn't come to me about it. They went to one of the sergeants and asked for their duties to be changed because they were due to be posted in a vehicle with me. What is even more bizarre is that I happen to be a Catholic as well! So I told the team and then I went up to the canteen to wait; it was horrible, like waiting for an exam or something. Then one by one people came up, the women first, to say it was OK.

Story 2: Coming out to the Whole Shift (Police)

Coming out, as a performative act, should not only be reiterative, but citational and subject to reiterated convention, (Butler, 1997: 33). So, how can the act of coming out be a reiterated convention? What is conventional about it, when the very act of coming out is brought about by unconventional or unusual sexuality? It is suggested that coming out becomes convention because it is often part of another reiterated, conventional act. So, in this example, the reiterated or citational practice is that of

the Team Meeting in the police at the beginning, or during a quiet period, of the shift. The shift is addressed by the officer in charge, the sergeant, or in this case, the Chief Inspector. This scenario was reflected during the research project, when this story was presented to a team of police officers at the beginning of a shift. The police officers themselves identified how ironic it was that whilst the story was about the idea of sexuality being an agenda item in a team briefing, here they were again sitting in a team briefing discussing sexuality.

It is worthy of note that the storyteller subsequently had further difficulties in the police, which made the type of bullying described in this story look very mild indeed. Nevertheless, he has stayed with the organization, and, at the time of writing he has been promoted to the rank of Inspector, and demonstrates perhaps above all else the passionate feelings that some people have for the organizations they work for, (Sims, 2004), which carry them through all types of adversity. Although the protagonist is a victim, the hierarchy is nevertheless reversed when he comes out to the entire shift; they have to sit there and listen with their heads bowed, whilst he talks to them, a clear example of resistance. It is a Tragedy, although one with a resolved ending, of sorts. The ending is a fascinating one; 'one by one people came up, the women first, to say it was OK'. Presumably they came to tell him that it was OK to be gay, and not to apologise for their appalling behaviour, not just for carrying out the bullying, but also for allowing it to go on. The silent voice in this story is that of the bystander, the person who allowed this bullying to go on.

Given that the presence of humour in the workplace is a recognized phenomenon, (Collinson, 2002; Grugulis, 2002), an alternative reading of this story could demonstrate that some of the things that the victim describes could have been, in another setting, seen as practical jokes. For example, putting stickers on someone's locker could have been funny and inclusive, if they had been amusing, not abusive stickers. And the action of writing in his self-carbonating 'fine' book; that too could have been funny if the comment had not been 'dirty faggot' but something more innocent. The dividing line between comedy and tragedy is quite fine in this case.

In the focus groups, the reaction to this story was generally one of disbelief. One focus group participant's suggestion was that the details of the story were a 'magnification' of the truth:

> *"It's a magnification of some aspects of reality; some of the sort of petty snipes that are coming at the individual. I can see that some of those sorts of things, it'd be naïve to say that those sorts of things didn't happen, but I think it's been... I'd like to think it's a magnification."*

Clearly the word they failed to articulate was 'exaggeration', but they chose the word magnification instead. This was not the view of all people, however. A good number of participants actually recognized that these sorts of things went on:

> *"I think to the contrary, rather than being magnified, I think if the full story were told, I think there'd be a lot more; I have been aware of similar incidents".*

One participant suggested that the way that sexual minorities are treated in the police has vastly improved in recent years, as it is now sniping rather than physical attack:

> *"The focus has changed in the last 20 years – as an ex-serviceman we used to deal with gays in a far more physical manner than we do today. It's more sniping today than physical attack and extermination. We used to be quite brutal."*

It is interesting that this individual has used the word extermination for the way in which sexual minorities were treated in the past. On the one hand they were physically attacked, but on the other the aim was to get rid of them altogether. Indeed, one focus group participant suggested that it was grounds to be dismissed from the police force altogether. Another participant suggested that the way that women in the Police are treated has improved enormously as well. For example,

> *"I remember when I started working here there was an incident where there was the initiation of WPCs and they used to be tipped upside down to find out whether they were wearing suspenders or tights and that was quite prevalent back then. Not in relation to homosexuality but still. It's disappearing. You have to go back some time for people to recall incidents of that kind".*

And although the majority of focus group participants have a great deal of sympathy for the suffering that the gay police officer went through, others are less sympathetic and are of the view that this sort of treatment from one's colleagues helps to harden the individual for when they have to go and deal with the public. For example,

> *"My reaction is – what a wimp! How did he manage on the streets if he couldn't take this sort of thing from his colleagues?"*

Many different people suggested that this sort of behaviour used to be commonplace, and even though it is changing and the focus groups maintained that it still exists. A different group maintained that this happened because it was a city force, with the size of the group of police officers have a real impact on their collective behaviour:

> *"The size has a lot to do with it. The culture of a large number of policemen – the culture that they work in produces that. You're relying on someone to protect you when the chips are down. You're relying on someone to be there, not like an office environment where there isn't an element of real danger."*

What is of interest here is that the focus group participant is explaining that these incidents are like tests, to see whether the individual is capable of protecting you in

situations of extreme danger. To that extent, the group hunts out the weakest member and then persecutes them in order to see whether or not they survive.

7.1.3 Being outed through a deliberate act

Of course, the act of coming out is not always one which is desired or intended by the individual concerned; sometimes coming out at work is forced. In other words, someone can be outed, which, in effect, is the performative naming of someone as lesbian or gay, described by Butler as 'the divine power of naming, where to utter is to create the effect uttered', (Butler, 1997: 32). Interestingly, this performative naming does not have to happen with the subject's knowledge. Indeed, as discussed in section 3.3, one can be named or constituted out of earshot, (Butler, 1997: 33).

> ***Come and meet your team leader (Bank B)***
>
> *In my job I have to take people on from induction, and I'll come over to the training room and introduce myself, what my job is, what I do, what their responsibilities are, what my responsibilities are to them, what they can expect of me and what I can expect from them and so on. Normally I'm introduced by name and some basic business information about me. On this one occasion I came into the group, and there were these little sniggers, but I did my piece, introduced myself. There were two gay men in the group who were partners at the time and they were coming into my team. I had a one-to-one with one of them, and the subject of my briefing to the induction group came up, and the guy said to me, "You do realize that before you came into the room the lecturer said "just so that you are all aware he is gay." And I thought, does that have any relevance to my job? I mean would I have introduced anyone as 'this is your team-leader and he's straight?' It's a reminder that although I work in a fairly progressive area of the Bank, there are still those types of people who work here who don't really get it. One of my team was particularly homophobic and as a result of this, he caused all sorts of problems. He kept making comments about 'it repulses me' and 'it makes me feel sick' and I had to manage this person; I wouldn't have had to put up with that if I hadn't been introduced as a gay man.*

Story 3: Come and meet your team leader (Bank B)

This story is apposite because it introduces Butler's idea of being names *in absentia*, and therefore meeting oneself 'with shock', Having taken up one subject position, the individual enters the room and their subject position is in another place entirely, although they do not find out until later. There is therefore a dissonance between the subject position that the individual had believed he had taken up, and the actual way that the others saw him. He identifies the ridiculousness of this type of introduction himself. With a heterosexual manager, there would have been no reference to his sexuality. While difficult to use the Aristotlean classification of Tragedy, the story nevertheless has a strong theme of victim; the protagonist is quite passive, with the outing happening to him without any input from himself. It is interesting that the storyteller believed that they would not have had to put up with abuse if that

introduction had not been made in that way. In actual fact, he may well have done, eventually, and that by remaining in the closet he would just have been putting off the inevitable.

This story also has the theme of warning, and telling others to beware. For whatever reason, the manager running the induction believes that they have to warn the new recruits that their manager is gay, either because he is seen as predatory and therefore a danger to them potentially, or because he is afraid that they might say something and that they have to be warned not to use politically incorrect language. Of course, the focus could have been on them, rather than on the gay manager about to come into the room. If the story were deconstructed by reversing the hierarchy, (Boje, 2001), and retold with a Muslim team leader, or a female team leader, the whole story becomes ridiculous. Another common theme in these stories is that of mistake. In this case it is the manager running the induction programme who has made the mistake, perhaps an honest one, and this story is highlighting their weakness and inconsistency.

Most of the focus group participants took exception to this story, suggesting that the supervisor had not been right to introduce the person as gay before they came into the room. The group also identified that there are different ways of coming out and of outing someone, and the way that this happened, or, at least, the way the story is told, it comes across in a very predatory way. However, another one of the focus groups saw this story in quite a positive light:

- *I believe he was acting in the best of motives, in terms of trying to warn people; it is possible to do the wrong things though from the nicest of motives. That, perhaps, is where education needs to come in;*
- *It's like a colleague of mine is very fat and her manager sometimes warns people before she comes into the room, because they don't want that "Oh my God! She's extremely fat!" reaction;*
- *They need to be prepared.*

The difference, of course, is that if someone is extremely fat it is immediately visible, and the reaction that the person is trying to avoid is a reaction to the visibility of the difference. Sexuality is not immediately visible; the induction manager is perhaps trying to avoid someone saying the wrong thing.

7.1.4 Being outed through circumstances

The following story is of particular note since it is told by a gay member of police support staff about the time that they were arrested for cruising, which is gay slang

and means looking for casual sex partners in a public place (though not necessarily to have sex in public). Gay sex is only partially de-criminalized in the UK and, at the time of writing, seeking out sexual partners in a public place was an illegal activity for gay men. This is not the case for heterosexual couples, for whom only the actual act of sex in public would be illegal. Having been arrested, and working for the police, he was automatically suspended. This, of course, meant that when he returned to the workplace he had to come out to his colleagues.

No choice about coming out (Police)

I had no choice about coming out. I got arrested. For cruising, would you believe it? It was pretty awful at the time and very embarrassing. I went through a difficult time for a couple of months, because I was suspended. I didn't have a Court Case or anything. Looking back, it's done me the biggest favour ever. I wouldn't have wanted to do it that way, and I wouldn't want to do it again. Even though I was a civilian, I was automatically suspended. It took a month and a half in the end. It was a bit like being in prison really. I got a warning, basically, and if I hadn't worked for the police, I wouldn't have got that. I was very fortunate in that sense. It was awful being at home. I didn't tell many people or my friends. My parents didn't know and don't know to this day. I had to report to the police station if I was going out for more than three hours, during work time. I had to go to the police welfare; I went once a week initially. I was very lucky because my boss intervened and said that if I wanted to go back I could. They were very happy to have me back. I started back within a few days of the enquiry ending. The people in the office were fine, but there were reactions from other people. Some people ignored me completely, wouldn't speak to me in the corridor, and some people didn't make any effort. My job involves dealing with police officers and my boss was concerned about the way they would react. But there were positive reactions too. There was one particular guy, older. He was CID at the time. I was on the stairs and he came up to me and shook my hand. He said it was very good that I'd come back and that I was very brave. That was very positive and helped a lot - it boosted my confidence.

Story 4: No choice about coming out (Police)

This story is, of course, a Tragedy, but an unusual one because it has a relatively happy ending. The 'quality' to this story is one of 'misfortune'. There is a victim, and he was still punished, even though the case did not go to Court, although the victim survives and is stronger through it; "looking back it did me the biggest favour ever." This story is an interesting one in the context of the police because the issue of cruising has dominated discussions between the police and the lesbian and gay communities in recent years, (Burke, 1993: 37). One of the ways that this story can be deconstructed is by considering the Rules in the organization, both formal and informal, (Foucault, 1969; Boje, 2001). This story focused on the relationship between the Police and the lesbian and gay communities; research suggests that homosexuals are the social group most disliked by the police, (Burke, 1994; Miller et al., 2003: 360). Many forces organized specialized squads of officers to deal specifically with gay sexual offences in public places, (Burke, 1993), although it is recognized that many forces, including this one have now turned greater attention to the perpetrators of hate crime against gay people. And, yet, what is interesting is

that the term cruising needed to be explained to these focus group participants in the police. Clearly, one would not expect all members of the police force, sworn and unsworn staff, to be aware of all legislation. That would be unrealistic. But given that some gay people's lives have been ruined by over-zealous policing in the past (this was not the only story of being arrested amongst the interviewees in this project), it is ironic that almost no-one in the police focus groups knew what the term was. Boje suggests stating the Rule in a way that seems absurd; one way to do this would be to question whether a straight police officer who had been caught attempting to proposition a woman would have received the same treatment. Absurd though the situation was, however, the police had no choice but to act in this way, because the individual had broken the law.

Another discourse analytic step is to consider the dividing practices in operation; civilians in the police do not get the same protection as police officers, who work under police regulations, and generally speaking they are treated less well than police officers at work. However, in this case he was perhaps treated better than a police officer in that he was allowed to return to work, even though he was automatically suspended, but he believed that he was treated more harshly than an ordinary member of the public because he worked for the police; he received a warning.

The storyteller had to report to the police station if he was going out, and he had to go to Police Welfare; it is an interesting term, since it demonstrates the power relations in operation in the organization. Employees have to be looked after. In addition, the binary opposition to this word is misery, suffering; distress or embarrassment, which may well have described some of the emotions and feelings of the individual. It is also illustrates, since one of the functions of welfare is psychological counselling, that the police may sometimes medicalise sexuality. This tendency is also shown in a later story, "The Training School" in section 9.1.12 on page 212. Again, analyzing the story from the point of view of Foucault's dividing practices, demonstrates the tendency in the police to bureaucratize sex and desire, (Clair, 1998); because the individual was looking for sex, even though he had not committed an act which was disapproved of, he then had to report to the police station if he was going out for more than 3 hours, and report to Police Welfare once a week. The storyteller does not say whether he was happy to go back to work, only that his boss was happy to have him back, putting the power firmly in their hands, and allowing them to express their tolerance of what he has done. The whole story

comes across with him being very passive; there is no bitterness, only gratitude that it was not worse. His description of when he returns to work is an example of the power relations in operation in the organization; silence is used as a means of expressing power, as colleagues would not speak to him.

Few people in the focus groups knew what the term cruising meant. Once it had been explained to them, they confused the term with other forms of sexual behaviour. For example,

- *If it's a recent incident, I think people will be OK about him being gay, but it's the fact that he was soliciting which will cause people to have mixed feelings about his gayness or homosexuality. It's not normal for other sexualities to tout. If you want to, go to a bar like most people;*
- *He had been out looking to score that night, and it's the same – gays cruising for other gays, or someone looking for a prostitute, it's that element of sordidness that people don't like;*
- *It's distasteful. Part of a homosexual lifestyle is this cottaging aspect. It floats some boats and not others.*

It seemed to be a common misapprehension that this man was selling sex; they used the word tout, which means pestering customers for business, soliciting and accosting someone for an immoral purpose. They used a word to describe him more commonly used with prostitutes who are selling sex, and then went on to liken him to someone looking for a prostitute. The third speaker, a senior operational police officer, then confuses the term with cottaging, which specifically refers to having sex in public toilets. Without going into any defence or criticism of any of these practices or behaviours, it is interesting to see how the subject position of the gay man is conflated with sexual behaviours which are considered to be reprehensible. It is interesting that the first speaker said that people will be "OK about him being gay", but it seems that people might have mixed feelings once people are confronted with actual sexual behaviour, thus putting limits on their tolerance, (Fairclough, 1989, 1995).

7.1.5 Coming out by accident

The next story illustrates an outing event, which is altogether more sinister, but at the same time illustrative of the power relations within the Bank. In it, the protagonist of the story is persuaded to put his name on the email circulation list of the lesbian and gay network. He is warned that his name would be visible, but he never imagined that people would deliberately look to see whose names were on the list "for a bit of fun". Agency in this example clearly does not belong to the individual; the example is illustrative of the Foucauldian approach to discourse theory, supported by the critical

school, who reject human agency as a determining influence, and decentre the human subject. Indeed, as Foucault states: "discourse is not life; its time is not yours," (Foucault, 1991: 71). This story also illustrates what Butler describes as power understood as the divine power of naming, (Butler, 1997: 32). Human speech rarely mimes the divine effect because there is usually some recourse to refute that power; in this case, however, the individual has no power to refute the accusation. The performative act of naming him as gay is supported by the evidence of the email list, in front of everyone's eyes.

Coming out on the Trading Floor (Bank A)

There was a colleague of mine, a graduate trainee, who joined Bank A and wanted to join the lesbian and gay network. He was a little bit concerned about the e-mail mailing list that we had within our group, because technically, anyone could just look up the groups name and see who the members of that group are. And we advised him before he put his name on, well, yes, technically, anyone could see who the members of the network were, if they wanted to. We could have made it a secret group, but what message does it send out to everyone else, if the members of the group themselves aren't prepared to be out? And then this person said OK I'll go on the group mailing list. Soon afterwards, he came back to his workplace one afternoon, and realized that his colleagues, and his direct manager, thought that for a bit of fun they would look up to see who was in the gay group at Bank A. He was standing behind them, and they were scrolling down the list of names, and then, all of a sudden, they stumbled on his name. There was an awkward silence and a long pause. Then the ribbing started and there was some dreadful language used to his face. He didn't know what to do – his direct manager was involved with the horseplay, the gestures and the joking-around. He was new to the organization and didn't feel comfortable… ultimately he had to live with the group and didn't want to make a fuss. And so since then, he just let it die a quiet death.

Story 5: Coming Out on the Trading Floor (Bank A)

This story is a good example of the self–deconstruction referred to in Table 11, (Boje, 2001: 18), and this is the first discourse analytic step here. The story reverses the hierarchy, in the sense that his direct manager, the one person who would normally have power over him, abuses his position of power and is demeaned as a result through the retelling of the story. Another discourse analytic step is to identify the absent-presence in the story; here it is the word 'bullying', which is not mentioned. Although this story is told by a gay man, and therefore someone who potentially should be able to understand the dynamics of workplace bullying, the words he actually used were "horseplay, gestures and joking-around". Also absent are the words 'making a formal complaint'. The story-teller stops short saying that he was new and "did not feel comfortable", he then pauses as clearly making a formal complaint would be very serious in their organization. Instead he replaces that word with "making a fuss". There is another 'absent-presence'; the story-teller is not the protagonist, which is unusual in these stories. It is assumed that it is the teller's internalized homophobia which is suggesting a stereotypical view of the gay man as potentially hysterical if he were to make a complaint. Clearly, in this story the silent

voice is the protagonist himself, as this was told on his behalf. A meeting was requested with the individual, but he was unwilling, due to the difficulties he had had to date in the organization to put himself further at risk by taking part in this research project. His fear, therefore maintained his silence. The other people who are silent are the perpetrators of the bullying; it would be interesting to hear their side of the story.

It is interesting to compare the two approaches; making a formal complaint is impersonal, using official channels and suggests someone who is strong and will not put up with bullying. 'Making a fuss' on the other hand suggests someone who is silly, cannot be trusted and prefers not to use official channels. With reference to Foucault's Rules, (Foucault, 1969), there is perhaps an unofficial rule in this Bank that you do not complain. If that is the case, this helped to keep the incident in the private domain, which is ideal for the bullies, (Clair, 1998).

The way that the subject is constituted here is as a figure of fun. Unknowingly they were scrolling down the list of names. In a sense the result would have been similar, though of course less painful for the individual concerned, even if they had not found his name, since the lesbian and gay group was an object of derision for them, and its members were to be laughed at.

7.1.6 Coming out publicly

The story is about a fire-fighter coming out to his shift almost by accident, but very publicly. Although traumatic for the individual at the time, even he thought it was amusing in the retelling.

Mr Gay UK (Fire Service)
I entered Mr Gay UK believe it or not. I hadn't entered it voluntarily; it was done through getting pushed onto a stage one night in a nightclub. So I got onto the stage a little bit drunk, and won the heat, it was straight into the final. And I didn't know, but they filmed it for the television. I was in Barbados for a couple of weeks and when I came back from holiday and I got a phone call to say,
'Do you know you've been on telly?' from a member of my family. I went to work. Nothing was said on the day shifts, and then the night shift, it started to creep out you know with people saying,
'Did you see Passengers (the T. V. programme) the other night?' until someone pulled me to one side and said, 'Oh, by the way, we saw you on telly the other night, Mr Gay UK. I think you'd better start being open to people'.

Story 6: Mr Gay UK (Fire Service)

This story has been classified as a Comedy. There is a victim, a gay man, but even he thinks it is funny in the retelling. The protagonist comes across as a bit of a buffoon, a comic character, almost in the Shakespearian sense (in the tradition of Pistol, Nym and Bardolph in Henry V, providing light relief in a serious play about war, comic stories abound in a serious organization about fighting fires); he entered a contest, though not of his own volition, and he was pushed on stage. He was also drunk. He maintains that he did not know that they had filmed the final of Mr Gay UK for television, although with the television cameras trained on the stage, it is somewhat unlikely that he did not realize, and this element of the story may well be poetic licence, (Gabriel, 2004b, c). Although a comedy in the main, it has somewhat of a sinister twist at the end where one of his colleagues, almost as a threat, says "I think you'd better start being open to people".

The story self-deconstructs in that the power relations are reversed within the story. The protagonist comes across as confident, even if he is naïve; he did after all qualify for the final of Mr Gay UK, and knows he is handsome enough not to be embarrassed by telling the researcher that he had entered a beauty contest. However, at the end of the story, he becomes a victim again, as happens in the majority of these stories by being threatened by a colleague that he has to start being open with people. The implication of this, of course, is that he has kept something secret. Clearly, the irony of the situation is that within the gay community at large, this man has been anything but secretive, even standing on stage and having his physical beauty judged by other gay men, putting himself under their gaze, as it were. He has only been secretive to the extent that he has not advertised his sexuality in the work place.

Fire-fighters are notoriously proud of serving the public and of being a fire-fighter, and yet they also seem proud of their reputation for being physically good-looking, suggesting that, just as in other occupations, (Hancock & Tyler, 2000; McNay, 2003: 245), there may be an aesthetics of Fire Service work, (Adkins, 2002: 21). Nevertheless, an absent voice in this story is the management of the Fire Service; what do they think of one of their fire-fighters entering a beauty contest? Whilst carrying out this research, the Chief Fire Officer told the researcher of a similar incident where a fire-fighter from their service had gone on 'Blind Date' (a well-known television show where men and women who have not previously met are sent on a blind date) and was horrified to think that this may have brought the service into disrepute.

This story adds to our understanding of the performative aspect of coming out. One of the famous examples of performativity is Austin's example of the marriage ceremony; Butler used this and developed the idea in a queer way by talking about the performativity of gender by using the example of drag, (Butler, 1990; 1993: 230). But as Butler says, herself, this example was then taken by some to be exemplary of performativity; even if drag is performative, not all performativity is drag, (Butler, 1993: 230). But it does have some parallels to this example of the Mr Gay UK contest. First, it is subversive, parodying heterosexual beauty contests, just as drag subverts heterosexual gender ideals, (Butler, 1993: 231; Johnson, 2003: 107). It puts the male body in the position of sexual scrutiny. Second, just as in Butler's example, the Mr Gay UK contest represents an embodying, in this case the repeated process of embodying sexuality. Third, the contest and the fact that it was broadcast on television underlines the theatricality of the performative act. Butler warns that the theatricality of performativity need not be conflated with self-display or self-creation, (Butler, 1993: 232), although this is clearly part of it, in this case. But what this example does do, with the individual coming out semi-naked, on television and in a gay beauty contest is to mime and 'render hyperbolic' (Butler, 1993: 232) the discursive convention of the heterosexual fire-fighter that it also reverses.

7.1.7 Coming out is a repeated act

It is in the repetitive nature of coming out that the practice becomes performative. Performativity should not be understood as a singular or deliberate 'act', but rather, as a reiterative and citational practice, (Austin, 1962; Derrida, 1976; Butler, 1993: 2). Indeed, Butler (1991) points out that being out depends to some extent on being in the closet, and being out must reproduce the Closet again and again in order to be out, (Butler, 1991: 16; Fuss, 1991; Sedgwick, 1991).

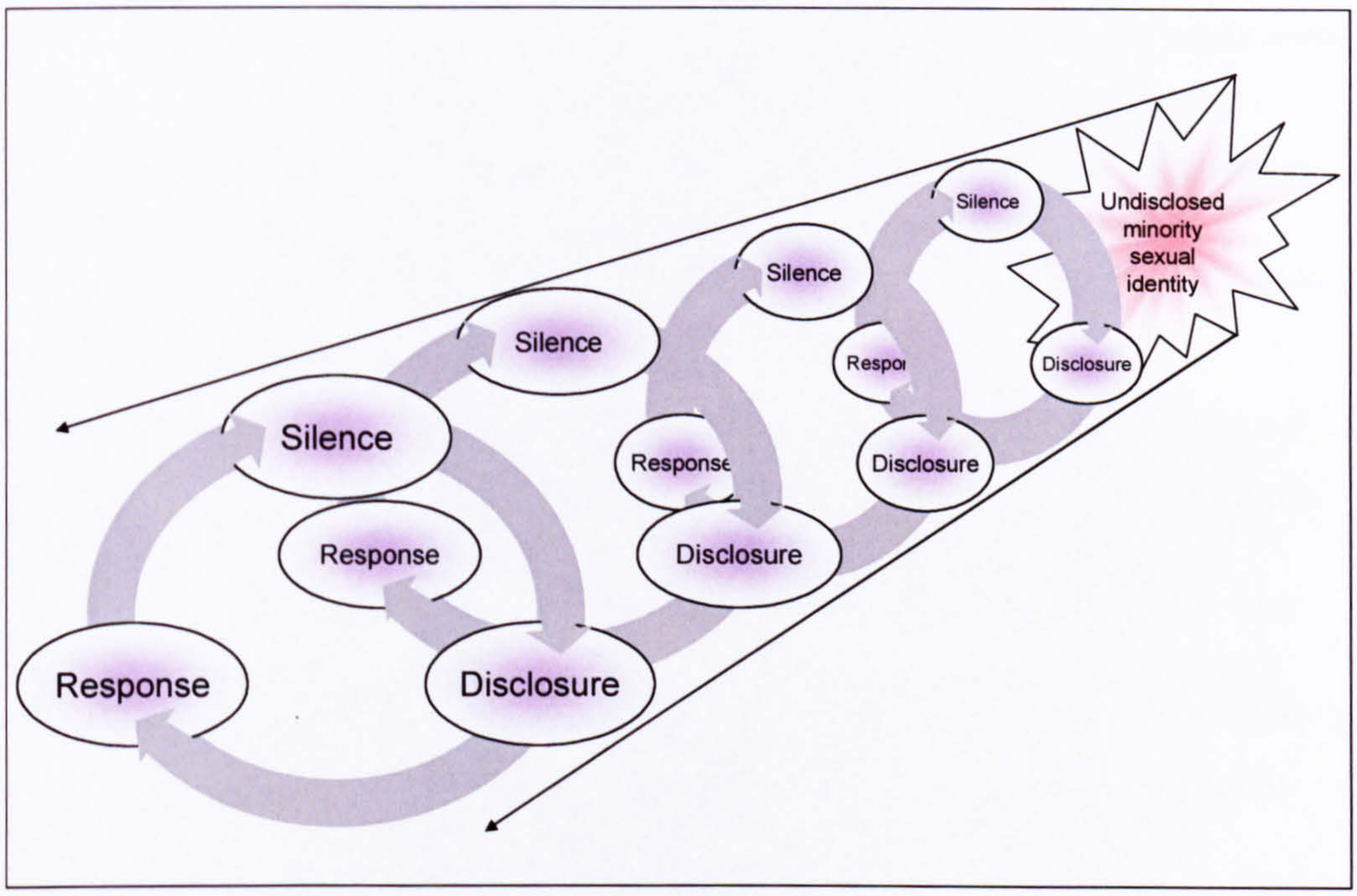


Figure 9: The re-iterated process of coming out

By studying this repetitive action, expressed as social practice, the researcher is able to identify the means through which discourse produces its effects. The adjacent model, shows the repeated nature of coming out. The model shows how, in the process of coming out, the individual moves from undisclosed sexual identity, or being in the closet to a point where they first take the decision to come out. The act of coming out is processual in nature, a continual process of coming out in new situations. This is particularly relevant to the work situation, where the individual is constantly being put in new situations, and the individual is constantly faced with the decision of whether to come out or not. Where news of the individuals sexual identity has gone before them to the new situation, the model demonstrates that they may already have gone through the cycle from silence to disclosure, event though the

decision to go through that process was not their own, but they are still within the cycle because they have to manage the response from other people. It is the process of these discursive reactions, both in terms of talk and social practice, from other people that give meaning to the process of identity work; for example, passive or active hostility, bullying, isolation, as well as passive acceptance and active affirmation.

There may well be a moment of surprise or shock, either for the audience, or for the individual themselves, when the act of coming out is performed as a result of either accident or deliberate force. In the following story, the 'force' is quite gentle, but still the person is put in a situation where he is forced to come out. This story is important, however, because it illustrates the reiterative and citational nature of the performative act. In other words, 'performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate 'act' but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names', (Butler, 1993: 2):

Coming out again and again (Bank A)

I work in a very international atmosphere where I think it is fair to say that for some people it is less of a problem than for others. Some colleagues I detected a distinct cooling off. Others couldn't be warmer; we have a great joke about it. One night, we had a team dinner and a new colleague came along with her husband. There were maybe 8 or 9 of us. I had come out by this point, but, as she was new, she obviously didn't know about me. And again, it's not something I'm going to tell someone about automatically. And I remember her question, well, she said,

"So, I want to know about everyone's personal lives here; we know that John's married and you know Jake's engaged and erm you know Michael, well he's just split up with his girlfriend and then there's Rupert. Well we're not quite sure about Rupert….."

Of course, she meant it in the sense of, I'm not quite sure about Rupert because I don't know whether he's married or not. But immediately, two of my colleagues including my boss immediately got terribly defensive about this on my behalf and said,

'It's just being different, that's all it is', sort of leaping to my defence. In fact, they were being overly sensitive about a comment that was just totally harmless.

Story 7: Coming out again and again (Bank A)

Using the lens of performativity, it can be seen that the subject and his subject position is constituted through the iterability of the performative act of coming out. Once the step of coming out has been taken, it is not something that is done only once, it has to be performed again and again in every new situation. It is suggested that this story should be classified as a Comedy; it generates laughter when it is told. And yet it is not just humour; there is also a heavy element of irony, especially juxtaposed with the "Coming out on the trading floor" story where the man's colleagues actually started bullying him when they realised he was gay. Here, although you expect this to happen, his colleagues actually rush to defend him,

although they do it in quite a clumsy way. The most senior person in this story is a woman, which is an unusual presentation of hierarchy in terms of gender. One of the deconstructive techniques is to reverse the hierarchy; would the story still work if the hierarchy were reversed? It may have seemed an unusual element in the story if a man had asked to know about everyone's personal lives.

7.2 DISCOURSE ON COMING OUT

The following extracts are from the focus groups and are examples of group discourse on the subject of coming out.

7.2.1 Limits on coming out

In the following extract, an exchange between the researcher and a participant in a focus group in the Police is reproduced in full:

Extract 1: The Police

- *If he works for the police, to a certain extent he's representing the police;*
- ***What is acceptable and what is not?***
- *If someone comes in and does a day's work, then there's no reason to…; the Job is a job of this nature - if you go around flaunting anything that's unusual…it isn't so much the people you're working with, but the people on the street pick up things quicker than anyone else. It can become a confrontational issue with members of the public. So you have to hide whatever your views are, you have to become a policeman, you can't show any undue character when you're dealing with people on the street. I can't give you an exact answer to your question…*
- ***Do you have an idea what flaunting means in that context?***
- *I can't give you an example*
- ***What about talking about your partner at work?***
- *That should be OK. So long as you're doing it at work, with members of staff, so long as you don't start talking about it in front of members of the public;*
- ***OK, so that's the dividing line? You can talk about your partner in the canteen, but not to members of the public?***
- *(Silence) Yeah, I suppose so. If you want a quick answer. There's not a quick answer to anything.*
- ***So private life should remain in the canteen?***
- *Members of the public, especially after they've drunk several cans of beer on a Friday night are not so considerate. They're extreme bigots so if you show any sign of… you're asking for trouble and you'll get your colleagues in trouble. At 1 o'clock in the morning they're not so considerate…*
- ***So that's the public divide, is there anything you can't talk about at work in the canteen?***
- *You don't want to be talking about anything at work in the canteen that may upset someone else. If you're in a group of people and someone's going to be upset by it… it's a balance isn't it. We're talking sexually, but it could be religion, it could be anything, and we were all religious, you wouldn't want one person there running down religion, because you're antagonizing aren't you? It doesn't matter whether it's sexuality or anything else, you should just keep your views to yourself or keep them moderate. If you're upsetting someone you shouldn't be saying it – it works two ways: obviously in the first scenario the homosexual was being victimized, but someone who had strong views against that could be upset if too many people were talking about it casually as if, you know, as if everyone accepted it. As a policeman you should be able to judge when you are upsetting people. You have to be able to see with members of the public whether you're upsetting them – use the same principle with your colleagues.*
- ***So is coming out to your colleagues overstepping the mark do you think?***
- ***Yeah, I don't know***

In general, the researcher took a very minimal role in the focus groups, only presenting the stories, and then allowing conversation to happen between the participants. The exchange shown in Extract 1 comes from a focus group where contributions from participants were minimal, and the researcher took more of an active role, asking for greater clarification and examples. The researcher's questions are in bold. Extract 1 is an example of a dominant discourse type, (Fairclough, 1989), as discussed in section 2.3.5. One type of discourse is established as the dominant one in a given social domain, and, at the same time, it establishes certain ideological assumptions as commonsensical, consistent with the view of discourses as rules. Discourse as a vehicle for power can mean the domination of one discourse by another, in an oppositional relationship, (Fairclough, 1989: 91), and the dominated discourse is under pressure to be silenced, suppressed and eliminated. Dominant discourses can also contain oppositional discourses, (Fairclough, 1989), which means that the dominant discourse credits the oppositional one with a certain limited legitimacy and protection. The minority is tolerated and accepted rather than put on an equal footing.

Using the lens of hierarchy, and Derrida's binary oppositions, it is interesting to consider that gay people are tolerated in the police as long as they do not 'flaunt' their sexuality; the opposite of 'flaunt' may indeed be 'silent'. In order to give the dominant discourse credibility, the argument is used that it is nothing to do with the police; instead it is the people on the street. The focus group participant maintains that the public "pick up things much quicker than anyone else". This is a fascinating assertion to make; presumably the police is supposed to be more observant, sharper and better able to interpret signs than the general public. He is in fact creating a limited legitimacy for gay people in the police, and protection, by warning them against being seen by the public. One of the ways in which the gay discourse is dominated is by saying that you have to 'hide' as a policeman, and cannot show any 'undue character'. Clearly it is intended to be understood that being gay is 'undue'; synonyms for undue in this context are excessive or disproportionate. Presumably certain sexualities are seen as excessive whereas others are not. Quite rightly, he identifies members of the public on a Friday night as a threat, one for the police to be wary of and to handle carefully. However, there is a word or phrase which is missing; is this an insult? Is he saying that gay officers should not show any signs of being gay; if this is the case he clearly does not know the correct word to use. Or is he trying to say that gay officers should not show any sign of weakness? In which case he would be stereotyping gay officers by equating them with weakness. He

maintains that gay officers will also bring trouble down on the heads of their colleagues, "you're asking for trouble and you'll get your colleagues in trouble". The gay person is a liability for his or her colleagues. And if trouble rains down on the head of a potentially vulnerable individual, there is no suggestion of protecting them; his suggestion that they are 'asking for trouble' suggests that merely by being gay, they deserve everything they get.

The focus group participant reverses the hierarchy by asserting that the minority should not say anything that would upset the majority, thus putting another limit on the discursive freedom of sexual minorities; he uses the hypothetical example of everyone being religious, with one person denigrating religion. This is a noteworthy comparison, since it indicates that merely by coming out he sees sexual minorities denigrating heterosexuality. It is interesting that this speaker is affronted by the performance of being gay; it is the point at which the individual takes up a specific subject position that causes offence. The speaker also reverses the role of victim; he is concerned that someone with strong views against homosexuality would be upset if everyone was talking about homosexuality as if they accepted it. He is therefore placing someone with strong views, the persecutor in other words, in the role of potential victim if any sympathy is shown towards the real victim. He sees coming out as "talking about it casually" and causing offence upsetting people; this could be the basis for justifying aggression towards sexual minorities in return, as in this case it would be self defence.

Considering how the subject is constituted, here the subject position is created for sexual minorities by the speaker as someone who antagonizes others, and who gets their colleagues into trouble. They are someone who chooses their sexuality, and therefore can choose whether to express their views about it. A gay person is also someone who is put in the position of persecutor and attacks those colleagues who happen to hold strong views on the subject. They are effectively people who need to hide, particularly in terms of the outward signs of their homosexuality. The need for police officers, in particular, to hide themselves when they are dealing with the public is an example of the use of the body in paid work, a physical dependency which is not fully elaborated in language, (Kerfoot, 2000), though still an element of discourse. Kerfoot is referring to managers in their performance at work, but the idea is equally applicable to police officers. By identifying and occupying privileged bodily designations, the mark of a competent police officer is their ability to display the body in a manner that is culturally acceptable to their organization's body code. Most

obviously this relates to dress and physical appearance, (Kerfoot, 2000), which relates to the use of uniform in the Police, and Fire Service, but could just as easily refer, in the case of gay men or lesbians overtly effeminate or masculine behaviour. They are concerned with proving that they are trustworthy and reliable, (Kerfoot, 2000), and much of the examples of 'horseplay' in this research in both the Police and Fire Service has been explained away by the need to establish trust with the individual and to show that in extremis the team could rely on that individual. There is a growing sociological interest in the body in social practice, as well as an interest in the body as a means of expressing sexual identities, (Foucault, 1989; Burkitt, 1999; Casey, 2000; Hassard, Holliday, & Willmott, 2000; Kerfoot, 2000; Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe, & Thomson, 2003), and it is interesting to note that organizations such as the Police and Fire Service use uniform, which moves away from any individual expression of identity. Although the body plays an important part amongst the contemporary theorizing about the self, and outside the workplace we are freer than ever before to construct variable self-identities from a marketplace of commodities, ideas and cultural bric-a-brac, (Casey, 2000), inside work we are still expected to use our bodies to conform, rather than show individuality and to show outward traits of masculinity.

This concept of police officers having to hide when at work is consistent with Goffman's idea of conceptualizing certain types of work as dramaturgy, (see section 3); the work becomes dramatized, because the individual is not only expected to describe their capability in a certain area, but also to demonstrate it through their performance in the workplace, (Goffman, 1969). He also suggests that certain managers appear behind masks during the course of their work; this is a very good simile in this example, and one which has been explored in the literature, (McDowell, 1997). The following extract of group discourse is taken from the Fire Service, and is also about the reaction of the group to someone coming out in the workplace:

- *95% of people in this job don't have a problem with anything… as long as it's not flaunted in front of them, literally flaunted in front of them; I'm on about the actual person. If you get a gay person that goes over the top and winds you up that way, that's when the problem starts. I could take you to quite a few people that you wouldn't know about their sexuality until they actually told you. They are the ones that people don't have a problem with. It's the people that feel they are being victimized and they go out and out to flaunt their sexuality*
- *It's the ones that say 'I was there last night and way-hey!' (laughs). That's flaunting it*
- *You can't deal with the problem, if you don't know where the problem is*

Extract 2: The Fire Service

In this separate discussion in the Fire Service, the concept of coming out as 'flaunting' was brought up, once again demonstrating Fairclough's (1989) idea of dominant discourses containing dominated ones. The same phenomenon of putting the gay person in the role of aggressor, though expressed slightly differently as the gay person is seen as someone who "winds you up that way". It is therefore their fault for causing the problem and aggression. Indeed the person speaking identifies the moment of coming out as the moment when the problem starts; this is a reflection, or perhaps mirror image, in a negative sense, of the performative; it is an illocutionary speech act, an act with consequences. However, since this is the Fire Service and sexuality is known to be a taboo, (HM Fire Service Inspectorate, 1999), it could be described as a parrhesiastic act in that it is a speech act where the speaker has to have courage to come out because they know that there are negative consequences that will follow, (see section 3.4). The main speaker seems quite proud to know people that keep their sexuality to themselves, again justifying the limiting of minority dominated discourses. Another interesting aspect to this extract is that the speaker identifies that it is precisely those people that see themselves in the role of the victim that are the problem, and yet there is a theme running through all the stories of 'victim'. This is discussed in more detail in section 10.2.5.

Another speaker suggests that flaunting is not just coming out; it is also boasting of sexual acts. Clearly, it is impossible to know whether the speaker was referring to a person who actually did boast of sexual acts, or whether this is a hypothetical situation. However, it is again putting limits on a person's freedom, and therefore an expression of the power relations that exist; in reversing the hierarchy in this extract, the question is raised whether heterosexual fire-fighters would cause offence by boasting of heterosexual exploits and sexual acts.

7.2.2 Disclosure

The following extract is taken from a focus group in a call centre in Bank B. The discussion has been created by the story "Come and meet your team leader". The make-up of this group was quite unusual in that there were three gay men in the group, one very vocal, jokey individual, Neil and two other men, though at this point in the discussion, the third man had not yet come out to the group. There was one heterosexual man, and the rest were women.

The text self-deconstructs to an extent; it was observed that a different sort of discussion happens when there are gay people in the room.

Extract 3: Bank B

- *It's a bit out of order, introducing somebody as gay*
- *It's making an assumption – he didn't know did he?*
- *Makes it sound like he's going to come onto you, sort of thing – you know – beware. Whereas if he got to know you it would be different*
- *It's his choice if he wants to tell you*
- *There are different ways of coming out and of outing, but here he's seen as a predator, beware*
- *But even the opposite way, you know, he's gay so don't say anything bad to him, it's ignorant. It's up to the guy to tell them if he wants to*
- *It's like saying this is so and so – she were a purse-snatcher. You wouldn't say that would you*
- *I have mixed feelings about this though, sometimes I think they should know*
- *If you had someone in your team and they were struggling and they were gay, it might be appropriate to introduce them to Neil to have a chat – one-to-one might be appropriate. You know, here's someone you might consider speaking to, and by the way he's gay, but not in front of everyone. It's completely irrelevant. If you're doing sexual orientation and you say – we're going to watch this video and then have a discussion and then say this team leader that's coming in is gay and is proud of it and wants to take questions from you, that's different isn't it*
- *You need to find out how far you can go early on. You know you two if you didn't joke about it first, then no-one else would. But because you two are open about it in the first place. If someone is really serious about it and says, 'I'm gay and not a lot of people know about it', you know that you don't go 'alright you queer', whereas with Neil you could*
- *Before Neil came I was much more of that opinion, I'd lay low, and Neil pushed the boundaries. And it's a question of numbers, once you've got more than a certain number of people, you're no longer a minority.*

This group suggested that introducing someone as gay is 'out of order', but recognized the different intentions of the forced 'outing'. For examples, they suggested that the message might be either 'Predator – beware!', or 'this person is gay so pity him'. They contended that either approach might be offensive for the individual concerned. Nevertheless, when trying to find a similar situation as a comparison, one of the participants suggests that it is like introducing someone as a 'purse-snatcher' or a thief. This is an interesting simile to use, since the binary opposition would be an honest person. Again, as in the previous example from the police, it is suggesting that gay people have something to hide.

Interestingly, in this discussion about coming out, and 'outing', a female participant then 'outs' one of the gay men in the room (she then goes on to out another man as well "you two". There is another gay man in the group but he does not come out until later in the focus group session. He may well have been out to the group, but he was not out to the researcher). In the discussion of the story, they end up replicating the story in front of the researcher, "Here's someone you might consider speaking to, and by the way he's gay". Having said that, it is a particularly thoughtful suggestion; if you replace the gay character with say, a female character, then introducing a new

woman team member to the other woman in the team on a one-to-one basis would be a pleasant way of effecting an introduction.

One of the subject positions created by the group is a gay person who is light-hearted about their sexuality. If someone is serious, you would have to be careful around them, but if someone, like Neil in the discussion treats it as a joke, it is a lot easier for everyone. This can be compared to Extract 2, where the fire-fighter suggests that he dislikes those sexual minorities who present themselves as victimized. In other words, if you are serious as a gay man or lesbian, it is problematic for everyone else; an acceptable subject position for sexual minorities is as a source of humour and banter.

7.2.3 Non-disclosure

The following discussion in the Fire Service is about coming out. The group saw sexual minorities as somehow belonging to a secret society, and as 'making good spies'. They also saw sexual minorities having an advantage over other minorities because they could keep their sexuality a secret.

- *Are we only talking about gay individuals today? Gay groups have got an advantage. They have two ways of going, haven't they? You can be gay, or you can keep it to yourself. The hoo-ha with the Deputy in Manchester; he was dead right. Absolutely dead right. It was easier for him to do what he wants as a gay white male, than as an Asian or a female. The reason they have a harder time with the bigots when they do come out is that they know that there has been a secret that has been kept. Would you trust someone who had kept a secret away from you that had worked with you for 10 years? And suddenly let you in on that secret?*
- *We all have secrets*
- *If I worked with you though and then turned round and said, oh by the way, I'm gay…*
- *It'd be a shock, but at the end of the day what one person wants to keep to himself might not be what another person wants to keep*
- *I know what you say, but if you've known someone for 10 years, it shouldn't affect the friendship*
- *You can't dislike someone 'cos they've kept something from you*
- *I think that's a bit naïve*
- *During that time you could have been asked to be my best man, godfather to my children, and then after all that time you say you're gay…*
- *It's the same principle as a little white lie; and you've got to tell a lot of little white lies*
- *If you are visibly a minority group you're relationship will be maintained – they will either love you or hate you. The problem you have is if you're gay, no-one knows until you want them to know. The problem comes when you make assumptions, and then you admit to not being heterosexual and some people are going to have the reaction – why didn't you tell me before?*
- *Don't you think it's because it's relatively new?*
- *It is, and even if you're happy with them coming out your relationship will change…*
- *…Gays would make great spies because they inhabit a secret world.*

Extract 4: The Fire Service

Foucault's idea of Rules can be used as a lens to analyse this text, (see section 2.3.4). This focus group participant was suggesting that he accepted lesbian and

gay colleagues as long as they kept their minority sexuality secret. They should not talk about their partners, friends and family, nor what they do at the weekend, if it were to imply their sexuality. This respondent also equates those people who are open about their sexual orientation with those who claim to be victimized at work. Another respondent suggested that by coming out, sexual minorities were really just spoiling people's fun. Many of the fire-fighters that took part in the focus groups were at pains to point out that sexuality and gay people in particular were 'not an issue'. But as Fairclough (1995) pointed out, power can control and put limits on alternative discourses, and therefore 'not being an issue' was not without its conditions. Having gay people around was acceptable, as long as they did not remind you that they were gay. For example,

> *'You wouldn't join in with all the gay jokes, the banter, and the next time you heard a gay joke, you'd actually feel offended, because you'd be thinking of your friend.'*

In this way, the respondent is acknowledging the power of resistance within the act of coming out, but feels that this is unfair and it reduces his possibilities of joining in with the gay jokes. Again the idea is expressed that there is only one way of being gay, that is to say, to tell other people about it. It does relate to Butler's idea of performativity and the whole notion of adopting a subject position.

7.3 SUMMARY

This section has highlighted a way of considering the process of coming out. It was suggested that it is a three stage process; Silence, Disclosure and Difference.

The main lens used in this section for analysing the stories and texts was that of performativity. It was suggested that coming out is a reiterative process and also the concept of performativity can add to understanding of both the act and the process of coming out. It was also asserted that coming out is a process in different ways; in terms of the different stages that lead up to coming out, in terms of the performative nature of the act itself, and in terms of the performative nature of living a minority sexual identity. Story 1: The Showers (Fire Service) illustrated the performative, illocutionary act of coming out, whilst Story 2: Coming out to the Whole Shift (Police) showed the performative as part of convention. The discursive construction of identity in absentia was illustrated in Story 3: Come and meet your team leader (Bank B), whilst the performative act of naming was shown in Story 5: Coming Out on the Trading Floor (Bank A). The iterable nature of performativity was demonstrated in Story 7: Coming out again and again (Bank A).

The stories have added to our understanding of subjectivity in coming out. For example, although respondents had described coming out as one of the most significant and important points in their career, very few, if any of the stories suggested that coming out was something that the individual sought out. To a greater or lesser extent all the storytellers described themselves as victims of a system that forced them into it, from the fire-fighter who did not want to come out because of the showers, to the Bank Trader who was discovered to be gay by his colleagues. This is consistent with the Foucauldian view that subjects are not free agents, but act in resistance to existing power relations

The Extracts of discourse have added to our understanding of the sort of subject positions that are created for sexual minorities within organizations, as well as the impact that they have on the discourse that takes place. For example, as a result of these three extracts, it is suggested that in the Police, the subject position created for sexual minorities by the speaker is as someone who antagonises others, and who gets their colleagues into trouble. They are someone who chooses their sexuality, and therefore can choose whether to express their views about it. A gay person is also someone who is put in the position of persecutor and attacks those colleagues who hold strong views on the subject. In Bank B, in the Call Centre, the subject position created for the gay man is one of a joking, light-hearted person who makes people laugh. Interestingly, the Extracts demonstrate that in the Police and Fire Service especially coming out is seen as performative in the sense that people choose to perform their sexuality. Coming out is reiterative which is consistent with Butler's view of performativity and this reiteration is exemplified in the story of the manager in the investment bank who had to come out to a new colleague supports this. This section has also highlighted the difference in work context; there is more interpersonal contact in the Police and the Fire Service than in the other organizations, and it is perhaps harder for people in those organizations to carry on a masquerade of identity. The close personal relations in these organizations also mean that the costs are higher for coming out because of the dangers of potential negative reactions. In government departments and banks, there is less interpersonal interaction, which means that it is easier to be in the closet, but also a reduced risk associated with coming out. Coming out, in terms of disclosing minority sexual identity, means leaving silence behind, and it is to the subject of silence that we turn in the next section.

8. *SILENCE*

Coming out means moving from silence to disclosure, but actually the issue of silence is much more complex; the discourses of, and around, sexual minorities are often silenced, but in different ways. Some organizations actively censor all mention of sexuality, whilst in others informal social practices do not allow lesbians and gay men to have a voice. This raises a number of questions; can identities be formed by language when that very language is absent? How do gay employees frame their sense of who they are, when faced with silence? What does silence look like? This section aims to answer these questions by asserting that silence can be conceptualized as negative space within discourse; that is to say it is a key element of discourse, and its changing shape is a key component in shaping the audible discourse around it. This research project has identified different aspects of silence such as silence as it affects the individual, for example, leaving silence behind, silence in its relation to language, for example the blank response, and then silence as a device within the organization, such as censorship or repression. Finally, in this section the impact of silence on the research process is considered. Throughout this section, the dynamics of power and knowledge are considered in terms of the way that power relations shape social practices and set new social practices into play through language, and in particular when that very language is absent.

8.1 SILENCE IS A NEGATIVE SPACE WITHIN DISCOURSE

Derrida's concept of différance explains silence by considering absent words, (see section 2.3.2), but of course différance implies much more than words when it considers absence. Silence, as an example of absence, and the shape it takes, may be constructed by the discourse which exists around it; gaps in discourse, contingent on the organization, can play as powerful a role as speech itself, even becoming part of the organization's discursive practices. If silence is an integral part of discourse, constructed by the discourse that surrounds it, it is suggested that silence, existing as it does in binary opposition to discourse, constructs discourse in return. In order to capture this concept, a term has been borrowed from the vocabulary of two-dimensional visual language in practical art: *negative space*. Positive space is the space occupied by the drawing object and negative space is the space behind the object or between two objects, (Hoddinott, 2003: 64). In practical art, it is often the practice not only to draw the composition, but also to draw the negative spaces which force an awareness of the composition as a whole, (Rodwell, 2002: 23). In the same

way, it is suggested that a focus on, and deconstruction of, the negative space of silence forces an awareness of the positive space of discourse. Another brief example may help to explain this concept: when drawing, for example, a leaf, concentration on the leaf alone would lead us to draw what we know to be a leaf, rather than what we see. We know what a leaf looks like, so why bother to check that we have drawn it correctly? However, because we have no preconceived notion about the shape of a space, by focussing on the negative space which surrounds the leaf, it becomes necessary to look very carefully at what we are drawing, (Rodwell, 2002: 23). In the same way, when deconstructing discourse we may be tempted to understand what we know to be the meaning rather than what we hear in spoken discourse or read in written discourse, or text. By focussing on silence, or the negative space which exists between talk, it forces us to have an awareness of the discourse as a whole.

8.2 STORIES ON SILENCE

Silence emerged as a significant factor and underlying theme in a number of different guises. The issue of silence is not a new one for sexual minorities; homosexuality has been known, after all, as the 'love that dare not speak its name', (Sedgwick, 1991), and there is a burgeoning literature on silence in organization studies, (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Bowen & Blackmon, 2003; Creed, 2003; Milliken & Morrison, 2003). But the data from this research suggests that the area is more complex than simply the silencing of talk. Indeed, this thesis posits the notion that silence is characterized in a number of different ways.

Silence was identified as a theme during the pilot study in Government Department A. There can be no doubt that, compared to less positive organizations, the Department is a very good place to work for sexual minorities; there is little overt discrimination, efforts are made to limit covert discrimination, such as third-party reviewing of annual appraisals, the employee network for lesbian and gay employees is very high profile, and personal accounts abound with positive stories. The organization appeared to be a positive place for lesbians and gay men. However, a pattern of "silence as absence" started to build up, both the research approach, as well as emerging from the data. This pattern of silence continued to be a feature coming from stories from the other organizations as well as from the Extracts of discourse.

8.2.1 The silence of undisclosed sexual identity

The following story illustrates the phenomenon of undisclosed self-identity, in other words, the closet. This is a story told by a gay man working in the civil service, who used to work in a small regional office. He felt, in fact, that he could not come out, and the story is concerned with his creating a new identity for himself:

A Fresh Start (Government Department B):

I desperately wanted to be straight, and then I realized that there was no way that that was going to happen. So, I thought if I can't be straight and I don't want to be gay, then I'll just be nothing. I'll just go to work, go home, watch telly, go to bed, just do nothing and that went on for many years. But then, bizarrely, I saw a report on telly about a gay man in Manchester who'd been murdered and thrown into the canal, and they showed some newsreel footage about the inside of a gay club, and it wasn't even a Manchester club, though it was about a Manchester murder. When I saw this footage of people dancing in a club, I thought I'd like, just once in my life, to go and see that. Not to make a habit, but just to see it once. And so I did, one day, and then I thought it was brilliant, it was the best night of my life, I must go again. And I did, and then by the time I went a 3rd time, I thought I had to be openly gay. I thought I want to be like these people, I don't want to be hiding and ashamed and feeling wrong, and bad, and evil. I want to be happy and positive and enjoy life and find friends and find someone to love, and participate in real life. So I made a plan to become openly gay, but in those days I was working in a small office in a small town, unlike now, where I'm in a very large office in a city. I'd worked with some of those people for 20 years, and I felt I can't tell these people, I can't face having lied to you for all these years. Some of them knew and guessed, but it hadn't been discussed. I thought the only way I can do it is to move, change jobs, move to a new office and a new town and a new city. Move home and change my name and completely come up with a brand new life. A new identity, and that way I knew I could be openly gay, but it had to be from a fresh start. I severed all connections with my previous life. About two years after my decision, it took a long time to organize it all, but I finally got my transfer to the Manchester office which was more of a gay environment, there was the gay village, there was somewhere I could go. I started in the new office and I wasn't going to let it slide again, I wasn't going to go back into this cocoon again of being straight, or letting people think I was straight. I decided I must let people know as soon as possible that I was gay. Yes, I changed my name. The name I have now is not my original name. But it was part of the process that I needed to go through to become the person that I wanted to be. I didn't want any connection with the old person, because the old life was miserable and I wanted to cut that off completely.

Story 8: A Fresh Start (Government Department B)

It is interesting to note that the story-teller came to the interview wearing various different insignia of being gay; of particular note the red AIDS ribbon and Stonewall's rainbow ribbon for gay equality. These are effectively 'stigma symbols', (Goffman, 1963b: 59) signs which draw attention to a potentially debasing identity discrepancy, breaking up a coherent overall picture, (Goffman, 1963b: 59). In this case the initial picture was of an office worker coming straight from work, wearing a navy blazer with grey trousers, with the gay insignia breaking up this coherent whole. The wearing of gay insignia contrasts with the 'prestige symbols' of the heterosexual male in the workplace, such as wedding rings, (Goffman, 1963b: 59). The place of meeting was also a gay symbol, Canal Street in Manchester, which in retrospect was quite a poignant place to meet given the story about the gay murder there. In addition,

meeting in gay bars was by no means a regular choice meeting place for all interviewees; some people even chose their place of work. With this individual, it was as though he was still going through the process of announcing who he was to the outside world. This together with the badges were symbols, but they sought to break up the social identity created by the suit of clothes and the outward appearance of the office worker as a 'disidentifier', (Goffman, 1963b: 60), a move in a positive direction by the individual who wants to throw doubts on the virtual identity, (Goffman, 1963b: 59).

This story has been classified as a Tragedy; in fact, it is a double-tragedy because someone died in order for the 'victim' of the story to become aware of the means to free himself from his oppression. It is a double-tragedy in another sense also; he is the victim of his own oppression. He was not in the closet because he feared persecution if he came out to his colleagues; instead, he was in the closet because he had worked with them for such a long time he could not face telling them, even though he suspected that some of them knew anyway. The text does self deconstruct to an extent, with the protagonist moving from what he defines as 'nothing' to 'something' which he defines as being gay. In the process of developing an identity, he actually changes his name. Naming is an important part of the constitution of the subject. Indeed Goffman identifies two aspects to personal identity; the personal history that becomes attached to the individual, and identity pegs which is a unique positive mark which identifies the individual, (Goffman, 1963b: 74). People under the burden of an unwanted identity often want to acquire a different personal identity to disengage themselves from the one that was originally theirs. More extreme examples involve scarring the fingers to alter fingerprints, destroying birth certificates, or more commonly, as in this example, changing one's name, (Goffman, 1963b: 76). The fact that he changed his name had a real impact on participants in focus groups. One person said,

> *"One of the sad things in there is wanting to change name and location, because he obviously feels guilty he's been lying to people. But why should he feel guilty – at the end of the day – it's his sexuality."*

Apart from this, however, there is very little sign of resistance. In fact, he is remarkably passive; he only took action after 20 years when he realized that his existence was so miserable that he could not stand it any more.

There are silent voices in this story; the voices of his colleagues, the ones that he left behind in the small-town office and the colleagues in his present office. It would be

interesting to consider whether his colleagues in the first office knew he was gay anyway. This is reminiscent of Althusser's idea of naming and whether it is possible for the subject to be constituted without being named first in discourse. And yet, in this case, the subject had not been named and still came out as gay. What did they think of his moving away? Did they not think it was weird that he disappeared without trace? It would have been interesting to talk to his new colleagues to find out whether they thought he was out, how he expressed his sexuality, and how he announced it to them when he arrived.

The focus groups readily identified the working environment as having an impact on the silence of this individual. They drew out of the story the move from a small office to a big office. Government Department B is quite fragmented in nature and, although it does have a number of very large offices, it is made up of a national network of very small offices. To work in one of the latter can be very challenging; one of the reasons given was that people are more set in their ways in smaller offices,

> *"It's like a lot of smaller offices; people have more set ways than in a bigger environment"*

In addition, it was suggested that people will gossip more:

> *"I work in a smaller office, as well, and the fact of the matter is that no matter what you say, people will gossip."*

One of the reasons given was that smaller offices tend to be in smaller communities, with less exposure to different kinds of people. In one focus group, which took place in a small community in rural Scotland, one participant said,

> *"It's very difficult to get a transfer to a small office; when I put to come here I was told that I would have to wait until someone died. They have great difficulty accepting you if you're somebody else, never mind your sexuality. It's very cliquish."*

In addition to the working environment, other focus group participants highlighted the effect on the individual,

> *"It's a very good opener to this session because it illustrates that a lot of people are in denial, or feel that they have to be in denial. People live in denial about different parts of their life."*

It is an interesting comment that people live in denial about different parts of their lives. This highlights the issue that although the focus of this thesis is on minority sexual identity, many of the aspects raised by this issue will be relevant to other areas of life. Other ways in which not coming out at work was seen to impact the individual included the desire for anonymity:

> *"To me it felt totally expected; I went to work in London in the 80s an I can imagine a lot of people will have gone to work in big cities to seek the anonymity; probably if you're gay there*

are going to be more opportunities in big cities in clubs and places to go. It doesn't surprise me."

8.2.2 Coming out means leaving silence behind

Because minority sexuality is such a taboo in the UK Fire Service, sexual minorities are invisible, both to the heterosexual majority, but also to other lesbians and gay men. One of the effects of this invisibility is a sense of isolation, which is recounted in the following story from a gay fire-fighter:

> ***Finding out you're not alone (The Fire Service)***
>
> *I think as a gay man the high point for me was when I'd been there for under a year and I saw the Union banner at the London Lesbian and Gay Pride march; I walked up and found out that there were other gay fire-fighters. I really did think I was the only gay fire-fighter. That was the high point knowing that there were other gay people in the Fire Service. I don't know whether I thought I was going to be carrying the torch on my own. As far as I was concerned I didn't know anybody.*

Story 9: Finding Out You're not Alone (The Fire Service)

Socialization into an organization, can take various forms, including wearing the same uniform, (Holliday, 1999), socializing or joining in with banter, (Woods and Lucas, 1993). Interesting that it was through the uniform that the gay fire-fighter realized that he was not on his own. One significant symbol which has attracted a lot of attention in recent years and not a little controversy is the uniform. Most of the debate about whether the Fire Service should wear a uniform or not has centred around the need for discipline in the service and the need for a physical expression of rank. The uniform is a symbol of the disciplined nature of the service, as well as being a symbol of its history and its links with the armed forces. Much of the debate about uniform has arisen as opinion is divided over whether the Fire Service should break this link, and therefore do away with the uniform.

There has been little acknowledgement of the role that uniform in the Fire Service has played for sexual minorities, even though dressing is intricately linked to queer employment, (Holliday, 1999: 477). Uniforms can be a mask, positively or negatively, (Holliday, 1999: 477) thereby hiding sexual orientation, and certain uniforms, such as the fire-fighter's, have a certain affectionate place in lesbian, gay and bisexual culture, (McDowell, 1997; Holliday, 1999: 477). Uniforms do not only hide sexual orientation, they also hide prejudiced views. In Shire Fire Service we regularly heard the view expressed that:

"You can believe what you want to, but you have to behave in a certain way when you're wearing the uniform."

This view has arisen because of the focus on behavioural change in equality and diversity initiatives, that is to say, behaviour in the workplace, and not a focus on "hearts and minds".

8.2.3 Silence as an absence of language

The response to sexual orientation in organizations can take many forms, and often this takes the form of silence. This itself can take many forms; in this example the response is one which does not involve language, but is simply an action, though one which is as powerful in its significance for those that are targeted. In the story, the teller tells of how the lesbian and gay network publicized their launch event by distributing leaflets around the organization:

> ***The leaflet drop (Bank B)***
>
> *When we launched Spectrum (the Lesbian and Gay Network), there was a mini campaign with leaflets, which were put on everyone's desk. We know that it could have been difficult for someone to be seen reading it, but we felt that the only way of advertising the launch was to put posters up, distribute leaflets, and put it on the Intranet. In my (open-plan) office, someone - they weren't sure who it was - had gathered up all the leaflets and put them all on one person's desk. It wasn't an isolated incident either; in other offices, there were other gay people who came into work and found 15 or 20 leaflets on their desk.*

Story 10: The Leaflet Drop (Bank B)

It would be problematic to classify this story as a tragedy; nevertheless, it does have a victim, although an unknown one; it is therefore a rather unsatisfying tragedy, because it is left unresolved and the reader is unaware of what then happens to the victim. In addition, not only is the victim unknown, but so is the perpetrator, and we are only led to believe that this is an unfortunate incident for some individual by inference from the storyteller. One silent voice is the person who received the 15 or 20 leaflets; it would be interesting to know whether they were offended by it. Clearly the other silent voices are the perpetrators and, one would expect them to remain forever silent, for it would not be possible to get people to admit to carrying out bullying in the workplace. Nevertheless, while carrying out the focus groups, one person admitted that he had been in a group who thought it would be a good joke to do this, although he said that the group actually decided not to move the leaflets,

"We were quite impressed that the Bank had organized an event like this; there was a bit of discussion about whether we should pile them all up on somebody's desk, to make light of it, but then the majority said – hang on that's not actually that funny."

Using Foucault's Dividing Practices as a lens, one possible way of analysing the action of piling the leaflets on someone's desk is the idea that anything about sexual orientation cannot be for heterosexuals, like the idea that issues of gender concern women only, (Martin, 1990, 1992). In fact, the leaflets were for anyone in the organization who was supportive of sexual minorities. In this example, power relations are expressed through action and with the absence of language. It is also worthy of note that this action was replicated throughout the Bank as if it were a concerted, coordinated effort, although it was not; clearly the placing of the leaflets by the lesbian and gay network was a coordinated effort in the first place, but the reaction to it was an uncoordinated response that happened simultaneously in many different departments in the Bank. The Bank chose to do nothing about this response.

This story leads the reader to assume that the constitution of the subject, following the most benign interpretation of piling leaflets on someone's desk, that the leaflets were intended for them and not the 'heterosexuals' in the office, is about gay people needing help in some way, needing to be the recipient of leaflets when they are distributed around the organization. Another interpretation might be that the subject position is that all gay people are interested with gay issues at work, which, of course, is not the case. The distributing of these leaflets raised the visibility of sexual minorities in the Bank and therefore although the response reported in this story represented an absence of language, the action of distributing leaflets in the Bank also created discourse about sexual minorities. Some examples were quoted during the focus groups. For example, the leaflet also offered participants at the launch access to the Bank's corporate rates at local hotels; this caused comments such as,

> *"Somebody said that because we were offering them reduced rates to stay in a hotel, we were encouraging them to have sex. That's rubbish! I think that's insulting."*

Amongst the young group of call centre operatives, the launch was seen as non-controversial, *"It's a social thing isn't it?"*, although they actually had not heard about the launch themselves.

8.2.4 Reactive silence and the blank response

Coming out was often met with silence from others in the organization. People in the Department reacted with disinterest to the fact that their colleagues were gay, which is a recognized way of keeping minority sexuality closeted, hidden and silent, (Harris,

2001). The following account is from someone who was once married and then came out as a gay man. He compares the two experiences as follows:

> ***Private lives (Government Department A)***
>
> The reaction to my coming out was no reaction. I didn't encounter any hostility. There was gossip about it but not to my face. The big difference I noticed in the way colleagues treat me is the degree of interest they show in my life outside work. When I was married, it was a two-way process; there was mutual interest in the mundane things in life, what we did at the weekend, kids, pets, even the trip to the supermarket. That way of communicating is now closed off to me, to some extent. I've noticed that I can be asking people about what they do, but as soon as I start talking about what I'm doing they shut down, because they're not prepared to hear, even thought it's tedious and boring. Some people will talk about their children ad nauseum and what they did at the weekend, but then if I say what my partner and I did at the weekend, it's 'oh well back to work, got lots of e-mails!' I regard the relationship I'm in now as equally valid to the one I had when I was married. This isn't the case with the people I work closely with so much, but is especially obvious with people I don't know particularly well.

Story 11: Private Lives (Government Department A)

The story suggests a Tragedy once again, where the protagonist has moved from being married to a woman, to having a gay relationship, and then feels that his second relationship is not recognized as valid by his colleagues at work. Again, the storyteller is taking a very passive stance; he is allowing other people either to condone his relationship by allowing him to join in, or condemning it by responding with silence. Using the lens of hierarchy to deconstruct the story, it is possible to see that the storyteller is operating a false binary; the opposite of married should be single, and yet the way he has described people at work treating him, it is as though the opposite of married is gay. It would be interesting to hear from the silent voices in this story, which might be heterosexual, but single people, to see whether they are treated in the same way. Of course we only have the storyteller's point of view here, and every story has at least two sides to it. It may be that what he is telling them is, in fact, really tedious and boring and they do not want to hear it, just because of that.

Nevertheless, the lack of talk and interest in his private life made him feel different, abnormal and excluded. The way that language achieves closeness and intimacy between people through informal communication was referred to as 'phatic communion' by the anthropologist Malinowski in 1923, which can be a means of defusing the potential hostility of silence in situations where speech is conventionally anticipated (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999). The scenario described above suggests that by "shutting down" and avoiding this social communication, the respondent's colleagues, consciously or unconsciously, are using silence as a tool of hostility. Butler (1997) concurs, and although injurious language depends on the use of names, it can take the form of silence, (Butler, 1997: 28). Work colleagues create

social reality for gay people in the workplace, through the absence of what might be said, and what is left unsaid. It could also be said to be constitutive of social identity and the way that he is seen by this colleagues, (Hardy et al., 2000). Of course, it is not only sexual minorities who suffer from the blank response; Sims (2003) discusses the issue in terms of middle managers who may suffer senior managers showing total disdain for the narrative of their lives, walking roughshod over the story they are creating, (Sims, 2003: 1196). This reminds us that many different discourses are in operation in organizations and the narratives of sexual minorities represent just one genre of discourse.

It important to recognize that, whilst we have interpreted this lack of reaction in a negative way, with possibilities ranging from disinterest to hostility, there are many more potential explanations. The reaction of the focus groups to this issue suggests that people may fear two things; one is the fear of offending, so it is easier to say nothing, and maintain the silence. The second is the fear of finding out too much. The gay man or lesbian is seen as lascivious and sexually charged, (Hall, 1989). Using Derrida's concept of 'différance' as a lens, the absent, oppositional response may have been that of showing interest in their life outside work, but this would have meant involvement in a conversation of which the details might be unwelcome. We had an insight into what form this absent discourse might be when there was a reaction to this situation from one of the focus groups:

> *"There is a limit (to what you want to know about a gay person), but you can't control it – the only thing is to walk away"*

Interestingly, the focus group compares the potential embarrassment of talking to a gay man about this weekend with the embarrassment felt by work colleagues when an employee comes back to work after a death in the family. This is discussed in more detail in section 7.2.1. Another respondent felt aggrieved, because work social events are peppered with heterosexual couplings, which then go on to form the subjects of office gossip, but in his case, did not:

> *"There's a long tradition in the Civil Service of going off for a couple of days and staying in some hotel, and having these huge 'getting-to-know-you' sessions. … And one occasion, quite a long time ago, I got off with somebody basically, very publicly - oh yeah, it was very public. I don't think it came as any great shock, maybe the incident came as a shock, but the basics of it didn't. I mean it wasn't anything I did deliberately. Since then nobody ever said a word to me about it. It was almost like it didn't happen."*

This particular event, by its unusual nature, being a homosexual and not a heterosexual coupling at an office party, was perhaps more likely to be talked about. Yet as far as the respondent was concerned, it was totally ignored by colleagues and

other employees. Given that deconstruction represents an attempt to demonstrate the absent-presence of the oppositional Other, (Hancock & Tyler, 2001: 26) what people say is not simply expressive of what is present, but also of what is absent. In that sense, in this example, what is present is a lack of acknowledgement of an alternative sexual relationship. And this social practice which would inform discourse, paradoxically unless fed by discourse, will disappear from the collective memory. By not being talked about, events are starved of the oxygen which would breathe life into them and give them meaning. By ignoring alternative sexualities, by refusing them the currency of social discourse the organization makes it more difficult for sexual minorities to construct an 'out' social identity, as the subject positions are not created and are therefore not there for people to take up. But importantly, what is absent in this scenario is any sort of naming, an important form of social acknowledgement, as has been discussed previously.

Gay people may be discriminated against at work because they fail to appear in accordance with accepted gendered norms, (Butler, 1999) in this case the respondent failed to appear in accordance with accepted the heterosexual performance of coming to a social engagement with an opposite sex partner. Since heterosexual performance is itself constructed, this, ironically, is not a copy of an original but a copy of a copy, (Butler, 1999: 41).

8.2.5 Silence as a means of suppression

In the previous examples, silence was the manifestation of a refusal by the majority to engage in discussions of sexuality. But silence does not always mean the same in different contexts. Silence can also be a means of suppressing social reality; by not allowing certain things to be talked about. One comment of complaint from the focus groups was why we should be talking about lesbians and gay men at all. Heterosexuals were not singled out for special treatment so why should homosexuals be? For example,

> *"They have a right to exist in the working environment, but my sexuality is of no interest to anybody else. I don't have a website, and I don't have my picture in (the magazine). I just think they should be treated like everyone else in the Department. What are we doing for single mothers?"*

The issue of 'special treatment' is one which is contested across a number of diversity areas; race, gender, marital status as well, and as shown above, attempts to promote more visibility for one group can cause resentment by members of others. There is not always solidarity amongst members of the targeted group over such

actions, nor support from those of other disadvantaged groups. But the alternative is the suppression and silencing of discourse, which renders them invisible, (Kirsch, 2000) and makes it harder for them to develop confidence and power through shared identity. Silencing discourse around sexual minorities is a very effective way of suppressing their identity. This may even go as far as denying that they even exist. In Government Department A, this was most noticeable in the following story which did the rounds of the organization,

> ***Location, location, location (Government Department A)***
>
> *They have an Equal Opportunities Conference every year, and someone gave a testimony about what it was like to work in that particular office. At one of these conferences, someone said it's not an issue in Darlington because they haven't got any (gays). That's gone down in history as the Darlington incident. The story goes round and round the department. It just showed how people there were frightened. As you move north it got more difficult for people.*

Story 12: Location, Location, Location (Government Department A)

It is difficult to categorize this as a story because it is so short; it is more of an anecdote than a story. It was included here because it had been repeated so often by different people during the research, first by a gay member of the Department, and then subsequently used in the focus groups; it seemed to be well known by the people who participated.

> *"This story about Darlington is trotted out at every conference".*

Of course, the strength and effect that the story has in the organization starts to get lost when it is repeated so much. The following participant gave the background to the story. The comment was made at a diversity workshop by people who worked in Darlington, who maintained that there are not any gay people there. Nevertheless, as this participant notes, it is only because they do not know who they are:

> *"People in the Darlington workshop said that there weren't any gay people there so it wasn't an issue, but I could name at least 5 people on the Darlington site, except they're all in the closet – and why do you think they're all in the closet? Why do you think it takes somebody from London to facilitate a workshop of this nature in Darlington?"*

It was generally treated as an amusing anecdote by those who heard it, even if it is difficult to classify as a Comedy per se. Nevertheless, the following focus group participant identified that there is a darker side to this humour:

> *I as actually at the conference and heard that statement, and it's very easy to laugh and say 'how funny'. What's more worrying is that there is still that statement a year on, or two years on, and we're still smiling. It's a bit worrying that we haven't moved off there.*

Another focus group participant maintained that the story was not funny, in fact it was evidence of a much darker emotion, fear:

> *I think it's evidence of something that's very worrying – evidence of fear. I'm a gay man and I worked in Darlington, and I wouldn't have contemplated coming out in Darlington. To be fair to London, it took me a further 25 years to come out in London, because I didn't think I'd get a fair hearing from colleagues in London. I was completely wrong I have to say. I encountered overwhelming support and a sense of belonging that helped me through the period. We often look on this as a north south divide and it isn't – it's a big city thing.*

Clearly the implication of the story was that it was harder for gay people 'up north', whereas this participant maintained that it was not an issue of north or south, actually it was a an issue of whether the office was located in a big city or not. One incident in one of the focus groups demonstrates silencing as an act of suppression; one of the focus group participants, who was black, female and gay, was arguing in favour of positive action. One of the other participants, who was clearly respected by some of his colleagues, and who was male, white and middle-aged, raised his eyes towards the ceiling and sighed audibly. Immediately, the group's attention was moved away from the first participant, whose argument was now lost.

8.2.6 Silence can be a symptom of censorship at work

One of the issues in using story-telling as a data-collection method was the loss of power over content. In telling their story, the interviewee has the power to surprise, disclose or even shock. They can also choose not to reveal important elements of the story. The first level of censorship is therefore in the gift of the individual storyteller. However, censorship does not remain at this level. Once told, the story can still struggle to be heard, as the organization attempts to censor and silence. The difference with suppression is that censorship is an expression of official power, rather than unofficial suppression. The researcher also becomes implacably involved, as censorship is an active process following the act of uncovering. The next story shows how, through legislation, the oppositional terms of heterosexual and homosexual have continued to be hierarchically constructed; the two terms are in a constant state of interdependence, as in order to be prioritized and shown to be superior, the 'Other' or homosexual has to be debased. 'Section 28' in the story refers to the common name for Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1986. This was a piece of legislation which prohibited local authorities in England and Wales, with an equivalent piece of legislation in Scotland, from "promoting" homosexuality, and labelled gay family relationships as "pretend". It has now been repealed. The

story comes from a central government policy department when the government first started talking about its repeal.

> ***Section 28 (Government Department A)***
>
> *I was dealing with the whole area of HIV, drugs and health. There was a lot of very positive stuff that went on there. I was right in the midst of that. There were lots of strong personalities; lots of them with their own personal agendas and a propensity to go to the press and leak things. The first two or three years went very well. Lots of successes, lots of firsts. But, of course, in the midst of all of this we have the spectre of the repeal of Section 28. Things were getting increasingly difficult with the Minister and his then Political Advisers. There were lots of unhappy, edgy ministers. I'd taken a hell of a lot of that stuff, and it all went pear-shaped at the last minute. The churches got involved, who, of course, are not slow at turning things to their agenda; they thought it was totally inappropriate for a gay man to have such a strong say in the repeal of Section 28. I was then moved from my job and the story hit the newspapers. I was left to face a barrage of reporters on his own, with little support from the Department.*

Story 13: Section 28 (Government Department A)

The then Secretary of State and senior civil servants in Government Department A made the assumption that a gay man could not give impartial advice on an area dealing with homosexual issues. It is interesting to view this story with the hierarchy lens and as Boje (2001) suggests, reinterpreting the story, using a different kind of hierarchy; the story is retold below but with a woman in the role of the protagonist:

> ***Retelling Section 28with a different hierarchy***
>
> *I was dealing with the whole area of women's issues. There was a lot of very positive stuff that went on there. I was right in the midst of that. There were lots of strong personalities; lots of them with their own personal agendas and a propensity to go to the press and leak things. The first two or three years went very well. Lots of successes, lots of firsts. But, of course, in the midst of all of this we have the spectre of the amendments to the Equal Pay Act. Things were getting increasingly difficult with the Minister and his then Political Advisers. There were lots of unhappy, edgy ministers. I'd taken a hell of a lot of that stuff, and it all went pear-shaped at the last minute. The churches got involved, who, of course, are not slow at turning things to their agenda; they thought it was totally inappropriate for a woman to have such a strong say in the development of Equal Pay legislation. I was then moved from my job and the story hit the newspapers. I was left to face a barrage of reporters on his own, with little support from the Department.*

A number of additional issues can be identified in this story when the hierarchy is replaced. First, it seems really strange to describe the amendments to the Equal Pay Act in terms of a 'spectre'. Why would a woman describe legislation, which everyone should agree is a good thing, as a spectre, a haunting presentiment of something terrible? It is entirely probable that she might use this word with a note of sarcasm to indicate the threat that is perceived by others, and it may have been with this tone that the original storyteller intended. Another element of the story that jumps out is the idea that the ministers, though obliged to push through this legislation, are not very keen at all. In this version of the story, the reader is tempted to ask why the

churches' involvement? What is their agenda? And why would they object to a woman taking part in the legislative process? The power relations in this story also become much more apparent when the Minister, a man, moves the woman from her job, where she is an expert, allowing the story of a woman having input to the Equal Pay legislation and the ensuing scandal to hit the papers. It is likely that a different argument would have been used; instead of impartiality, advocacy would have been preferred, including women to ensure valuable access to their experience on the issue. This would lead to a very different conclusion; rather than being illegitimate, counting a woman as one of its members would have been seen as a prerequisite. Conflating diversity issues can create problems, but the reinterpretation of this story, using a different hierarchy, and putting a woman in the role of the protagonist does demonstrate that different norms may be applied; where one working party on an issue seeks impartiality another seeks the representation, advocacy or experience of the disadvantaged group. The focus group participants identified the same inconsistency of approach saying,

> *The Department doesn't have a problem with someone with a disability being involved with disability policy, but I think they do have a problem when it comes to the press asking 'are these people fit to set teacher policy'. And I think the Department does have a problem with someone who is open about their sexuality appearing in the press.*

The first example of silencing encountered in this research in relation to this story came in the next few seconds after the telling, as the researcher was asked to switch off the tape recorder. The then Secretary of State was, allegedly, notoriously homophobic. Recording examples of his homophobia was too frightening for the respondent, and repeating them here might be legally inadvisable (it is interesting to note that even in the act of discussing this area of censorship, the researcher felt it advisable to censor material for their own protection from litigation). The second instance of this story being silenced came soon afterwards, when asked by the organization not to use the story during the focus groups. But the story would not go quietly; it surfaced in every single one of the focus groups carried out. The third time that this story was silenced, and actually censored, was in the final report presented to the organization. Given the fact that everyone had talked about it, it would have been misleading not to mention it in the final report; the researcher outlined the story and people's reactions to it in the briefest of ways. The organization asked for it to be deleted completely before the report was submitted. The story told by the gay man who was removed from his job because of his sexuality demonstrates censorship in various different ways. What better way to eliminate a minority discourse, and assert the power of the dominant discourse (Fairclough, 1989) than to

remove the person responsible for the minority discourse. This is consistent with Foucault's view of silence protecting the majority, "Silence protects power," (Foucault, 1976). But, of course, the removal has its place in a meta-discourse; homosexuals have since the 18th century been seen as dishonest, lascivious people, (Schuyf, 2000).

8.2.7 Silence as a mechanism of protection

The next story comes from Bank A, and concerns an email that was sent around to all staff in preparation for a series of focus groups that would take place to support the Bank's diversity initiatives.

> ***The Diversity E-mail (Bank A)***
>
> *This year, because of the merger, Bank A was doing focus groups on various aspects of diversity, and they sent out this big e-mail with all these buttons to click on if you wanted to attend all these various forums; one for gender issues, one for race issues, then they had this narrative at the bottom where they said if you are interested in sexual orientation issues please contact this separate phone number. Now what they were trying to do was give someone with sexual orientation issues a confidential route, but what they didn't do was give gay employees a button, like they gave everyone else. There was a follow-up meeting and a focus group was created.*

Story 14: The Diversity E-mail (Bank A)

This story has been classified as a Comedy, but with a strong ironic element to it. It generates laughter every time it is told, and its irony is important to its analysis; it is transformative in that it decentres the traditional victim, and unexpectedly puts the representatives of the organization in its place. Initially, sexual minorities are seen as the victims of the story because they were not given a voting button; but then the alternative, a separate phone number, was so ridiculous, that the story turns the victims into unwitting heroes and the Human Resources department, ironically, becomes the butt of the story, even though their protective action caused the situation in the first place. The central becomes marginal and the marginal becomes central.

It is also a story of mixed messages; one the one hand, the organization can be justifiably proud of initiating these focus groups and taking the brave step to raise these issues, but then the actual action is ambiguous. As can be seen by the other stories, a common theme in these stories is often a mistake, or a story of someone 'putting their foot in it'.

It is possible to analyse this story with the lens of Foucault's Dividing Practices. For example, another theme in this story is 'keeping something hidden'; a covert message hidden within an overt one. Because many heterosexuals believe that homosexuality should remain hidden, they prefer sexual minorities not to talk about their sexuality openly. This is often because they are often frightened of offending an individual by asking them to be open about an area of their lives that they believe should remain in the private domain. In this story, though, Bank A's sexual minorities were encouraged to keep their sexuality in the private domain by not being given a focus group; instead, they were given a Helpline number, as if there were in need of some kind of help or protection. Treating sexual orientation as something to be hidden and silenced keeps it in the private domain, unlike other areas of diversity. There are a number of silent voices in this story. The Human Resources department, for example, do not have the opportunity to give their side of the story. In addition, it is entirely possible that the story-teller is a confident gay man; the voice of the closeted gay employee is not heard in this story. It may be that they would appreciate the extra protection afforded by the Helpline number, and not be offended by it. Sexual orientation is often treated as a special case in organizations, and this is one example, where there is a confidential Helpline number, acting as a Dividing Practice, (Foucault, 1976), and keeping sexual minorities separate. It is unthinkable that, for example, women or black employees are given a confidential number. Indeed, it would be nonsensical since their diversity is visible.

Using the lens of subjectivity, the identity of gay men and lesbians are constituted in this story as people who have to be helped, with an alternative interpretation being that homosexuality is something shameful and therefore has to be dealt with confidentially. This is true to some extent with all the diversity categories, since the organization is putting together focus groups for people to talk about the issues that affect them, but no other category is actually given a Helpline.

8.2.8 Silence as self-protection and resistance

A crucial feature of Foucault's analysis is the concept of 'reverse discourse', (Spargo, 1999), where minorities are not only created, but also hostile discourse creates the opportunity for resistance, (see section 2.3.8). Silence can be used as a means of resistance in two principal ways. Firstly, by remaining in the closet and remaining silent, sexual minorities can refuse to collaborate with the heteronormative discourses of the majority. They also control their own discourse; control is lost to an

extent once silence is left behind. Identity may then become one of fragmentation and splitting into public façade and private view. This splitting can be notoriously difficult to research unless there is some leakage from the private into the public arena, for example where the interview becomes seen as a private confessional enabling some of the public façade to slip. Silence in this sense then becomes a form of passive resistance. It is much harder to do battle with something which is not tangibly present. Whereas silence in many contexts is associated with lack of power, the withholding of knowledge which may otherwise provide others with words which can be used as 'evidence' or for 'persecution' can be empowering, and can also provide access into a world of talk that may otherwise be denied to someone. For example the silent person on their sexual orientation may overhear opinions which disclosure would send underground.

8.2.9 Voices that can be silenced: the researcher and the respondent

Silence was a theme which became apparent in the research process. There were two main issues; one was a question of voice, that is to say how much the researcher's own voice would silence those that had previously been silenced. The second was a question of discomfort around uncovering silence which had previously protected the sexual minorities.

During these interviews and focus groups, the researcher was very conscious of his own voice, agenda and viewpoint. Being a gay man, with experience of working in a variety of corporate environments, was, from a reflexive point of view, important in gaining access to respondents and building up the necessary trust with them to carry out the interview, (see section 6.5). Also in using a critical approach, having an agenda is essential, and therefore it is arguable whether the researcher's voice could, or should, be silenced. Initially, it was decided not to allow this voice to come across in either the interviews or the focus groups, but the problem does not rest there. After analysis of the data, is it possible for people to speak in their own voices, (Czarniawska, 1999)?

There are a number of other metaphors that usefully illuminate the role of the researcher in articulating previously silenced voices. One is as a ventriloquist; as a researcher one can hope to be the spokesperson for others, but the goal of political representation jostles with the awareness that the researcher is "performing an act of ventriloquism", (Czarniawska, 1999). Another is the 'parrot' where one hopes to

avoid a crude, loud parody of what can be an inexplicably complex array of experiences and emotions. Feminist researchers have discussed the problems of articulating silence, (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Winstanley, 2001), referring to a variety of ways of knowing; the power and lack of power in silence, the power to listen and to hear others' stories, and the use of others to advocate or articulate one's own narrative.

Potentially, most harm is done, when interpretations are imposed on what the researcher claims to be authentic voices from the field. If rendering these voices to a wide audience were to be the goal, then it would be better to silence the researcher's voice, and to create speaking platforms for those not heard, (Czarniawska, 1999). However, the desire was to analyse, using a critical perspective, the way in which multiple silences are articulated and construct the identity of sexual minorities in organizations. In doing this, it would be difficult to avoid using one's own voice, both in analysing and in presenting the data. It is recognized also that the reader of this thesis may take a different view, (Czarniawska, 1999).

8.2.10 The discomfort of uncovering silence

Not all of the respondents were 'out' at work, which suggests the researcher being involved in the process which Derrida has described as the 'third level of violence', (Derrida, 1976, 1978; Johnson, 1997). This is not the visible and palpable violence of an aggression perpetrated by one person on another, but empirical violence, in an anthropological sense, the uncovering of what has been covered over. Giving a voice to those who were silent in the organization is not a comfortable process, and maintaining anonymity suddenly became problematic. It brought private issues from the realm of the individual to the public arena for public scrutiny, not just in terms of sexuality. One respondent told of the death of his partner, and how the organization had dealt with it. This issue had been covered over, and uncovering it resulted in an out-pouring of emotion. This could not be ignored, for the issue and the way in which the organization had responded was particularly relevant to the research. Nevertheless, this did not make the researcher's actions any less intrusive, or make the researcher feel any less of an intruder.

8.3 DISCOURSE ON SILENCE

Silence was also a feature of the focus groups. On the one hand, groups were silent often when the make-up of the group stopped people from making a full contribution.

For example, in one group of young police officers and new recruits, the Sergeant stayed in the room. He treated the focus group very much like a 'teach-in', where he took the opportunity to give his views, or the party line, on every topic. On the other hand the minority was, occasionally in a majority position. One focus group in London in Government Department A had, if not a majority, certainly a large percentage, of lesbians and gay men and the homophobic minority either did not exist, or had chosen to stay away, or were silenced by the more vocal supporters of sexual minority. Foucault identifies silence as "the obstacle, the starting point of resistance and opposition," (Foucault, 1976). In this case, sexual minorities were using the very same tools of silencing to maintain power as the heterosexual majority; the difference was that their access to this tool was rare.

8.3.1 Silence is a fear of speaking out

This fear of speaking, though, came through in focus groups in the Police, even when there was not a senior officer present. For example, in the following example, the group is discussing the story "Challenging Appropriately", which is a story about a support officer being dismissed for using inappropriate language, whereas a police officer expressing fairly brutal opinions about sexual minorities was not.

- *Bit severe that he was sacked and lost his job over a comment like that;*
- *(long pause)*
- *The fact that he mentioned it to a high-ranking officer at his interview board meant that it was going to be dealt with severely. The guy in the canteen was probably spoken to by a Sergeant who dealt with it at the time*
- ***Any comments?***
- *No*
- *I think we're all hypersensitive about what we say these days, even in here, you're worried about what you're saying*
- *You wonder whether he was just setting an example about what should and shouldn't be said and he was dealt with very severely*
- ***How should it have been dealt with?***
- *Just reprimanded*
- *In this day and age you just don't voice your opinions – it's as simple as that. In a way he got what he deserved. It's a simple as that. You've got rules, you step outside them and you've got what's coming to you*

Extract 5: Police

This text can be analysed using Foucault's approach to power relations. The initial unwillingness to speak was evidenced by a literal silence, or 'long pause' in the text. This came after someone had challenged the organization over its sacking of the individual. No-one wanted to come forward and support that view. The discussion was so poor that the facilitator intervened and asked whether there were any comments, to which the answer was "No". What was behind the silence? Was it a

general unwillingness to speak? Were people embarrassed? Did they resent having to come to a focus group on a topic they did not like discussing? All of these are potential, credible explanations, of course. A female member of the group then volunteered a suggestion to relieve the embarrassment of the silence; that they are all hypersensitive about what they say. What is not said, of course, is that they are hypersensitive, not because they are suddenly all concerned about their minority colleagues, but they are concerned about potential repercussions. This demonstrates the Foucauldian view of power relations; that power does not disappear, it merely reappears in another form of expression, (Foucault, 1976). This particular Force has demonstrated that bullying of sexual minorities is no longer acceptable, but has replaced one kind of oppression with another, that of not being able to speak freely.

In fact, silence has become an unwritten 'rule' of this organization; one police officer said, "In this organization you do not voice your opinions". One person saw getting the sack as getting what you deserved for voicing your opinions. It is perhaps unsurprising that an organization whose purpose is about following rules and ensuring that punishment is metered out to those who do not obey the rules, should have people within it who support such a harsh approach. It is interesting though that in the story, the man who lost his job was a support officer who was sacked for suggesting that you had to be black or gay to be successful in getting into the police. In the same story, a police officer, who said that a gay man who was murdered deserved his death just for being gay, did not get the sack. Nevertheless, the question remains: what are these opinions that they cannot be voiced? Do they agree with the opinions expressed in the story? They do not say, but one can assume so.

8.3.2 Silence is the limit of wanting to know

The following discussion was recorded in response to Story 10 ("Private Lives"), where a gay man recounted how when he was married people wanted to hear about his private life.

- *The reason they clam up is that they assume that he is going to tell them exactly what he got up to that weekend, and they don't want to know. That would be their ignorance – he does do boring things, but because they've never met a gay person before they think he puts his pink spandex trousers on. I would assume it's something they've never encountered before and so don't know how to treat it. It's like when someone comes back to work after a death in the family – you don't know what to say to people – you don't know how to treat them. You don't want to ask if they're alright because you don't want to upset them, but you don't want to not ask if they're OK because you might think they don't care. And people in that office are thinking – if I ask him this he might think I'm prying;*
- *We've got a girl on our section who's been going out with a bloke for a long time and they went away this weekend to a hotel, and I said when they got back – did you see any daylight – you haven' got a tan! But you wouldn't say that to a bloke who had taken his boyfriend away;*
- *It's something we're still getting used to;*
- *You don't know what's appropriate and what's not appropriate and you're afraid of putting your foot in it. You're my colleague and my friend and I don't want to say anything to upset you. I could quite easily in all innocence and you'd never want to speak to me again or I'd feel uncomfortable in your company. It's not that people don't want to talk to you it's that they don't want to upset you and they don't know what the right thing to say is;*
- *It does say in the account it's not with his close working colleagues. When you work with people you build up a relationship slowly;*
- *If I was a lesbian, I'd want to make people around me aware that it was OK. I remember coming back off holiday one year with a really good tan – there was nothing else to do in the resort other than get drunk and lie on the beach. We don't have a lot of ethnic minorities here, but there was this Indian girl and she came downstairs and said – God! You're browner than me! She said that not me. I didn't say I've got a better tan than you. Then it was OK.*

Extract 6: Government Department A

The comparison the speaker makes of speaking to a gay man is with speaking to someone who has had a death in the family. On the face of it, the latter only happens once, whereas one is confronted with a colleagues' sexuality on a daily basis. The idea that gay people have a sexuality whereas straight people do not is again demonstrated in this Extract; so, for example, you can joke about a woman going away for the weekend with her boyfriend and not seeing the light of day, without it being an overly-sexualized comment. But, as the focus group participant said, you would not say that to a gay man, because the context then becomes too sexual. There is a popular notion that although impersonal contacts between strangers are particularly subject to stereotypical responses, as people become more familiar with each other this categorical approach recedes and gradually sympathy understanding and a realistic assessment of personal qualities takes place, (Goffman, 1963b: 68). People with disabilities may develop special techniques for

moving past the initial distance they initially experience, a technique called 'breaking through', (Goffman, 1963b: 69). The Indian girl, to whom the focus group participant referred, has developed her own method of breaking through, by making a connection between the participant's summer tan and her own darker skin colour. Goffman makes a recommendation for people with a stigma in their dealing with 'Normals', that is to say those people who do not have a stigma, or in this case heterosexuals:

> "Normals really mean no harm; when they do, it is because they don't know better. They should therefore be tactfully helped to act nicely. Slights, snubs and untactful remarks should not be answered in kind... When the stigmatized person finds that Normals have difficulty in ignoring his failing, he should try to help them and the social situation by conscious efforts to reduce tension" (Goffman, 1963b: 141).

Goffman then goes on to recount the story of a man who would always, on entering a room, whip out a packet of cigarettes and light a cigarette ostentatiously. After a short while, when he knew people would be amazed at what he could do with no hands, he would say out loud, 'at least I never have to worry about burning my fingers!' (Goffman, 1963b: 142). In the same way, responsibility is placed on the shoulders of the sexual minorities for lightening the atmosphere, joking or using banter to put the heterosexual majority at their ease.

8.3.3 Silence in the research process

There is some discourse, banter that the researcher could not pick up easily; this research method goes some way to addressing the problem, but when attendance is voluntary as it was in the two government departments, what of those people who chose not to attend? In the following extract, the reported banter is from a group of men who did not come to the focus group but worked with someone who did. They were a particularly jokey group, and their banter is reported by the focus group participant as follows:

- There's jibing that goes with a guy wearing a kilt – it's a particularly jokey kind of group. They get on well and nobody's offended. I'm mostly a bystander and it's the men. I couldn't be offended by that. It's anything, the team they support, it's the banter; if it got a little bit more personal, then they would start to offend people;
- It's how far it goes;
- Take this (focus group) for example! Do you want to know why I came to this? Because I was getting fed up with the jokes about what kind of focus group this was going to be. If we get one more email asking us to go to this, and I have to listen to this any more, I'm going to go to this and put a stop to it, I'm going to volunteer. I can't remember specifics, just the general laughter, about sexuality, where the gays are breeding in Edinburgh, just nonsense. To me it's like cover up.

What you're describing isn't just confined to your peer group, though. There are quite some senior people who engage in some homophobic banter. The particularly macho investigation managers are the worst. I don't think it's a thing about this organization, though. There is prejudice against gay people in society, in general.

Extract 7: Government Department B

Clearly, good-natured banter could be picked up by this technique, but it would be difficult for a researcher to collect examples of homophobic banter. Indeed, once the topic of the research is known, it actively silences this sort of conversation, which is an example of the research process having an effect on the organization. The focus group participant is a woman, who also takes the role of the bystander in the office. The men are the ones who are powerful in this group and are responsible for the banter. The role of the bystander is an interesting one, see section 7.1.2, and there has been a significant amount of literature on the subject. The dictionary definition of bystander is as 'spectator', which indicates a passive, powerless role, but they are often in a position to do something to bring the situation to an end, as this woman had done by coming to the focus group. It could be considered to be an act of resistance, with the passive bystander deciding to do something to stop the banter, to move from the position of merely observing to doing. It is interesting to compare this with the role of the researcher in the research process; the researcher is not merely a bystander themselves. The fact that they have undertaken research actually causes some change in the organization.

Silence also suggests the idea of a 'cover up'. Although the following extract is not from a focus group, it is an interesting text, nonetheless. I had submitted my report to Government Department B, where there was a reference to a Director saying that he would never promote gay men or Asian women. They requested me to take out the reference to a Director. I received an email from the organization after I had submitted the report as follows:

The item concerned is the quote from a member of staff as follows:
"Just recently I was speaking to a Director who had the gall to say that he wasn't very keen on promoting Asian Women or Gay Men".
(We) are extremely concerned about sharing the report with the Board or other senior officers whilst this comment specifically mentions a Director. There is the potential for a Conduct and Discipline issue for the Director concerned (not that we're going to ask who the quote was made by or about). (We) would feel a lot more comfortable however, if the word 'Director' was taken out of this quote and the words 'senior manager' inserted. (We) wouldn't feel quite so reluctant to give the report a slightly wider circulation if this quote was amended. I realise this puts you in a very difficult position as it is someone else's words that I'm asking you to amend. How do you feel about this? I don't think using the term 'senior manager' lessens the impact of this particular quote or the report as a whole. If we don't change it, however I think some of the impact of the report may be lost as the degree of circulation will be limited.

Extract 8: Government Department B (Email to the Researcher following submission of the final report to the organization)

Using the lens of self-deconstruction, this text demonstrates that senior people may be in contravention of something that the Department openly supports is one that cannot be discussed openly. First, because it would have to be treated so seriously that there would have to be an investigation and possible disciplining of the individual concerned. Clearly, even equal opportunities staff have one eye on their own jobs, which would be at risk if they instigated an investigation of this sort. The other reason that it cannot be discussed openly is the idea of the organization having two faces; one, which it presents to the outside world, and the other with its quasi-private views which is inward-looking. The altering of this report is a clear example of the silencing as censoring which goes on in organizations which belies the idea that it is only those lower down the organization who engage in discriminatory behaviour or banter. The text also shows that no matter what organization you put in place (for example an equal opportunities organization in the case of this government department), there are other forces at play, which mitigate the ability to challenge. This supports Foucault's ideas of power relations; they do not go away, they just get redefined.

8.4 SUMMARY

The research had the aim of looking at the construction of minority sexual identity in organizations through discourse, and found empirically that silence is an integral part of that discourse which is evident in a number of different ways.

The literature on discourse has identified silence as a discursive practice (Foucault, 1976), which contributes to the identity construction of sexual minorities in

organizations, as well as being a feature of the power relationship between the homosexual minority and the heterosexual majority (Butler, 1997). Previous research suggests that silence is a powerful discursive element, variously taking the form of the absence of language, the absence of noise, the absence of discursive practices themselves. This section posits the notion that silence can also be conceived, however, as 'negative space'; an integral, constantly changing part of discourse. The Derridean notion of the 'absent presence' emphasizes the importance of absorbing all aspects of discourse in exploring sexual identity and discourse, because the absence of talk on minority sexual identity is as meaningful as the presence of talk on majority sexual identity. This section has demonstrated the importance of viewing silence as being part of discourse, and of considering its different forms.

The exploration of silence has shown that it can take on multiple meanings and roles. There is the idea that undisclosed minority sexual identity is silent subjectivity; 'coming out' and taking up subject positions means leaving silence behind, which enables the adopted subject position to be more congruent with subjectivity. The findings also showed that silence can be reactive and that there can be an absence of language or an absence of a response altogether. Silencing can be used by a group as an active means of suppressing the 'Other', in this case minority sexualities. Silence can also be an example of censorship in the organization demonstrating Foucault's view that silence can be an agent of power in its own right. In addition, silence can be used as a means of self-protection, either by not coming out and thereby refusing the heteronormative agenda, which exists in organizations or when, paradoxically, sexual minorities are in the majority, they can, themselves, use silence as a means of resistance. Finally, the research acknowledged the importance of silence in the research process and the dynamic of silencing, which can face the researcher themselves.

Assuming that silence is at least as constitutive of social reality for, and the identity of, sexual minorities in organizations, as other elements of discourse, and building on the idea that silence takes different forms, then these different forms may be constitutive of social reality and identity for sexual minorities in organizations in different ways. The intention of this section has been to identify these multiple forms of silence, and the discussion has shown how they play out in an organizational context with regard to the construction of minority sexual identity in work organizations.

9. *DIFFERENCE*

The third stage of the coming out process and the third findings section is on difference. This section is about two different dynamics of difference; one is the difference, which is identified by the sexual minorities themselves, and the response they experience from others in the organization, which is identified as part of the coming out model. They have incorporated this as part of their self-narrative. As such, these incidents are part of the discursive formation of their subjectivity. The other response to difference is expressed by extracts of discourse, which focus on the way that the organization and its employees have reacted to sexual minorities. This section goes on to explore these two different dynamics of difference, highlighting in particular inclusion and exclusion in the workplace, positive responses, rites and rituals, humour, tokenism and working environments.

9.1 STORIES ON DIFFERENCE AND THE RESPONSE TO DIFFERENCE

9.1.1 Inclusion and exclusion in the workplace

The ultimate exclusion for an employee is to be excluded altogether, and sadly there have been numerous instances of lesbian and gay people losing their jobs. In Humphrey's study, of the 23 lesbians and gay men interviewed, three had been discharged from the military on the grounds of homosexuality, three had been outed in the national tabloids which had resulted in their retirement from work, one lesbian had voluntarily transferred due to homophobia in the workplace, one gay man had been dismissed due to fears about AIDS, and others suspected they had not been offered jobs in the first place, (Humphrey, 1999: 136). Although a number of the interviewees in this research project had received equally harsh treatment, including several who had been outed or attacked by the national tabloid press, inclusion and exclusion in organizations is often much more subtle.

9.1.2 Excluding customers with rules

The following story is about a customer of Bank B who went into a branch to open up a joint cheque account with his same-sex partner. The application was refused by the personal banker, because she believed, wrongly, that it was not possible to have a joint cheque account with a same sex partner.

The Joint Cheque Account (Bank B)

I've heard stuff where people speak to a male and assume their partner is female and make assumptions. But after all, it was only a year ago that the Bank's policy stated that you had to be married to have a joint staff account. That was changed after a piece of work carried out by the Sexual Orientation Task Force. Now anyone can have a cheque account with their partner. I don't think that ever applied to our customers; even so, there was a customer who recently rang up a Personal Banker in a branch in the south-east and said that he wanted to come into the branch to put his partner onto his account as a joint account holder. She said "Fine, no problem we can do that for you." He told the Personal Banker his partner's name, and she said "is that you Father?", and he replied, "No, no it's my Partner." And her whole attitude changed. And she said, "Oh no, you can't do that it's got to be a family member, or a member of the opposite sex." It's factually incorrect, but this story made me think, if we're saying things like that to our customers, what are we like to our colleagues?

Story 15: The Joint Cheque-Account (Bank B)

Considering that it was the bank's policy only a year ago that staff should be married in order to qualify for a joint staff account, it is perhaps not surprising that the Personal Banker misunderstood the regulations. Participants in the focus groups commented that this "*Sounds very familiar*". It was not clear whether this was because they had heard the story before or whether they had heard of similar things happening. What is interesting is the suggestion by the focus group participants that this scenario took place because of adherence to the Bank's rules, or at least what the personal banker believed the rules to be:

> *"I think if the personal banker believed that that was the Bank's rule they wouldn't challenge it; they're just thinking "That's the rules" and that's what they stick to."*

Another participant said,

> *"I think there is something in here about Bank rules. I think the language is interesting 'You can't do that'. Nothing to do with me – it's the organization."*

Using the lens of Foucault's Rules, this story highlights the fact that organizations are worlds of formal rules and procedures, (Gabriel, 2000: 24), although in this case it turns out that this rule was incorrectly applied and outdated, if it had ever existed. It may be that the rule was an excuse, and that the Personal Banker was relying on the rules as an excuse to justify her own actions, (Gabriel, 2000: 30), saving herself the trouble of having to defend an unfair decision.

9.1.3 Exclusion by the group

The following story is about a fire-fighter who wanted to further his career by training to use the unit which carries the heavy lifting and cutting gear. To do this he had to change stations, and Watch.

> ***When the Watch isn't happy (The Fire Service)***
>
> *They moved the Fire Rescue Unit, which carried all the heavy lifting and cutting gear from Station 'A' up to Station 'B'. I'd put in to transfer to 'B' and do a course to drive the FRU. Nothing came of it and I was told that there weren't any vacancies. But then the person in charge of the FRU approached the training staff for some advice because he had a problem. And the problem is that there is a gay guy who wants to transfer to train up on the Rescue Unit, and the guys on the Watch aren't happy about it - so how does he handle it? I've spoken to my Governor, but I want to work it out myself. The best thing to do is to work it all out, because either I won't get there, or I will get there and I'll have to work with them.*

Story 16: When the Watch isn't Happy (The Fire Service)

The problem is that the Watch finds out, or hears a rumour that the individual is gay, and as a group they refuse to work with him. The story is a Tragedy in the sense that there is a victim, and he has lost out without any satisfactory resolution to the problem. Using the lens of hierarchy, it seems that heterosexuality is seen as a key qualification for being able to work on the Fire Rescue Unit. The group in charge, presumably all heterosexuals themselves, have said that they are not happy working with a gay fire-fighter. And yet, this is an important area for the individual to train in, in order to develop his career. It is interesting also that the manager in charge of the Watch does not know what to do with his Watch; the group is, in effect, in charge. They have told him what they will and what they will not do. It is also interesting that he went to the training department for advice since it is a disciplinary issue and only his senior officers would have been able to offer a solution. When discussing this with a Watch, as part of the focus group research, participants said,

> *"They're entitled to their views as well."*

They expressed the view that on the one hand they were encouraged to be open and honest in their discussions with the Fire Service management. And yet, with this one issue they would not be able to be open and honest, because they would not be able to go to the Chief Fire Officer and tell him that they did not want a gay man on the Watch. Another Watch identified this scenario as 'unacceptable' as follows:

> *"It's just unacceptable to discriminate against somebody just because he's gay."*

However, they went on to say that this sort of behaviour is not reserved for sexual minorities; people are always objecting to working with one another for one reason or another,

> *"People are always saying I don't want to work with him, or her, and it's a case of I'm sorry you'll do what you're told. That's the way that we've always dealt with it here. If you've got a problem it's your problem not anyone else's and you'll have to sort it out or leave."*

Nevertheless, the group recognized that although that is the way that problems of this nature are dealt with in their particular Brigade, it was not necessarily the same in every other Brigade and especially at junior management level there is inconsistency with the way that these sorts of problems are resolved. There is a very similar scenario from Government Department B in the story that follows:

Accommodating Prejudice (Government Department B)

There have been negative experiences. The main one was when I was promoted from E1 to D; I was given instructions to join one particular team, and then I was moved to another one without being consulted. I didn't think much about it at the time, but when I joined this other team, one of the people in that team said that the team leader had made some comment that I was joining, and he said I hope that no-one in this team has got a problem with that. I thought he was just paving the way a little bit. And then at Christmas time, my former B2 approached me, and he explained to me about the move. In the team I was originally posted to, three male members of the team said that they were not prepared to work with me. The team leader, instead of challenging them, went to the B1, put forward the case that these three guys had put forward. The B1, who was a staunch Catholic, then facilitated my move to another team.

I did think it was strange that at the time that not only did I move, but so did the work that I was doing. It was only when my manager came to see me at Christmas and explained that these were the machinations behind it all, that I realised what had gone on. And to cap it all, at that time I was the trade union rep! But the moment had passed, I had been promoted, and there was an element of goodwill on my part – I didn't want to make waves. When it settled in, I do regret not making a complaint - after all being the TU rep, if I can't make a complaint, who can? I was disappointed in myself for not following it through, but definitely disappointed in my senior officers for just accommodating this prejudice.

Story 17: Accommodating Prejudice (Government Department B)

In a similar vein to the story above, this is a Tragedy with a victim at the centre. In this case, it is of note that the issue was passed through two different layers of management, neither of which questioned or challenged the view of the group that they did not want to work with a gay man. The gay man has introduced religious prejudice of his own, by saying that the B1 (a senior grade in this organization) was a staunch Catholic. Although the gay man who told the story sees this as discrimination against him, at least he received his promotion, he was just sent to a different department, whereas the fire-fighter in the previous story did not get his transfer at all. The story is probably indicative of the Department's inability to deal

with groups than any institutionalized homophobia. This point of view is expounded by one focus group participant as follows:

> *"If I was going to compile a book of Department stories, then this one would be the first one in the book. This isn't just applicable to a gay person. This happens time and time again to anyone who happens to be in a minority, or happens to be a victim. Unfortunately, we have a classic remedy. If there is a problem, and the problem is to do with prejudice – don't tackle the prejudice, move the victim. This is applicable to the whole of Government Department B."*

Indeed, so widespread is this phenomenon in the Department that this particular story caused a cascade of other stories in a similar vein in the focus groups. One such true story, though a little risqué, is about an employee in Government Department B who used to masturbate in an open plan office. Obviously there were quite a few complaints and finally management were forced to act. Instead of sacking him, which everyone expected, they solved the problem by offering him an office on his own. This was normally reserved as a reward for promotion. Many of the comments in the other focus groups were in a similar vein:

> *"There is a general attitude of avoiding trouble – putting people on long term sick rather than dismissing people. The organization is terrified of going to an employment tribunal. People who are problems, we will just put up with them. It's the easiest way out."*

9.1.4 Inclusion through recruitment

The following story is a generally positive one, about the way that inclusion can be expressed via official events. In this case, it is a recruitment event,

> ***The recruitment event (Bank A)***
>
> *The lesbian and gay network recently organized a recruitment event for gay and lesbian graduates who were considering a career in investment banking but were scared that it may represent a step back into the closet having enjoyed a relatively liberal time at their college. There was a panel session and Angela Mason, the Chairman of Stonewall, the London-based gay and lesbian lobby group, attended. It was well attended with 100 plus students from all over the country, on a Friday night in the pouring rain. In the end, though it was a great success; a lot of graduates came, some of whom were out to shock, purple fingernails and outrageous dress and that kind of thing. It's quite interesting that there were a lot of senior guys who came along to support the initiative and I felt there was no tension. I was very impressed. I just thought the banking world can switch off. There were some negative comments too; some senior people asked 'what the fuck's going on?' Other people looked at our posters and said, 'what a waste of time!' I guess they were finally being honest about what they thought, which was a bit of a disappointment. They didn't have to do anything, they weren't asked to support it, make a stand or express their opinion, their reflex was to be negative. At a minimum, you should be able to expect people to say, not my issue, I'm not interested, but if that's what you're into, get on with it and all the best.*

Story 18: The Recruitment Event (Bank A)

If Aristotle's classification is to be applied, this story would be classified as an Epic, in the sense that there is a sense of achievement, the lesbian and gay network having finally succeeded in getting a gay-focused event. However, it is becoming more apparent through the presentation and analysis of these stories that the notion of the typologies needs to be redefined; this will be discussed further in section 10.1 and a new typology of sub-genres proposed. The event still manages to attract an amount of criticism, nevertheless, and so the theme of victim still plays on. In fact, it is difficult to call it a story. It is more of an account than a story because there is no conclusion, or causal event, but it is interesting because it is about trying to attract sexual minorities into the organization and the reaction from other members of the organization. Using hierarchy as a lens to analyze this story, there appears to be two sets; there are the senior managers at the event who are supportive of the whole recruitment exercise, and then there are the senior managers who are not at the event but are against it. The latter are a silent voice; interestingly they are the ones who are not heard by the students. After all, they would have come to the event to find out what it is really like being gay and working in an investment bank. Because these voices have been silenced, they may get the wrong idea.

9.1.5 A positive response from the organization

The following story is about the way that an individual felt included in the organization, through the actions of his boss after a rather unpleasant homophobic attack.

Challenging inappropriate behaviour (Bank B)

One positive thing which came on the back of a very, very bad experience I had was when I went to a works' party, about two years ago. I was beaten up because I was gay. The guy who did it was very lairy to everyone all night, and I was with a girl about to go home; he was really mouthy to her and I turned round and said 'don't talk to her like that because she's a woman' and he said 'so are you', more or less. So I thought 'here we go'. I said "I'm not getting into this right now." Then he started, "I've never liked you since you started, you shout your mouth off, you order me around," and he started smacking me one. (I'd been promoted out of the help desk, but I was in charge of procedures and processes so indirectly still had an impact on their environment and had to ask them to do things for me). The police were called and I phoned in the next day to explain what had happened to my boss. He was fantastic and told me to take a couple of days off, not to come in, and to wait until my face had calmed down, so that I didn't have to face people at work. The guy who did it was actually an agency guy. My boss spoke to the other girl and then phoned the agency and said that the guy wasn't welcome back if he was going to take that attitude at a works' party. Although it was outside work, it was a works' party and the same rules apply and he was asked to leave. They did everything they could to make sure I was OK - did I need more time off? Did I need a counsellor? That was a really positive experience.*

**a slang term meaning 'loud and obnoxious'*

Story 19: Challenging inappropriate Behaviour (Bank B)

Whilst the attack took place at a party, and therefore not in the workplace, it was a party almost exclusively for members of the Bank and the gay employee's boss deemed it to be a work event.

Using the lens of self-deconstruction, we see the teller inviting us to believe that this is a story about a homophobic attack. However, although the attacker accused the individual of being a woman, he never appeared to accuse him of being gay, and his 'crimes' seemed to consist of criticisms about his management style rather than his sexuality. The plot of the story seems to qualify as a Tragedy and though the gay man comes out as the winner, it is at the very least a Pyrrhic victory, since he was injured in the process, and can be said to be a sense of inclusion gained at great cost. As in previous stories, sexual minorities express their own prejudices about other groups of employees. In the story "Accommodating Prejudice", the gay employee suggested that the problem had occurred because his manager was a

staunch Catholic. Here, the gay storyteller had, potentially sexist, ideas about how women should be spoken to.

It is also interesting that this story is a negative story about an agency worker. During the research at Bank B I was never made to feel particularly welcome in the organization. As a researcher I was even introduced as an 'outsider' on more than one occasion. It is interesting from an organizational point of view that the villain of the piece is an outsider. There were no other stories about agency workers from any other organizations.

The individual felt that the experience in the end was a positive one because the organization had an opportunity to show that he was included, and that he should take enough time to recover from the experience. Of course, a different interpretation might have been that by taking time off working and staying at home, the organization is again keeping sexual orientation in the private domain. By coming into work, he would have had physical proof for the organization that there is a problem with the way that the organization treats its sexual minorities.

9.1.6 Rites and rituals in the organization

Every organization has its rites and rituals; amongst these are those occasions which are celebrations, such as birthdays, weddings or leaving-dos, where colleagues want to get together to show that they are pleased for the individual. Of course, the wedding has, until now at least (there may be a change in the law allowing same-sex partnerships) been the epitome of heterosexual celebration. The following story is about a couple of women who, although they were not strictly getting married, as the law does not yet allow it, were having a blessing ceremony. This is how they were treated by their colleagues:

The Wedding (Government Department B)

My partner and I had a blessing ceremony; it was talked about quite a bit, you know. Someone did ask,

- *Are you both going to be wearing dresses? and,*
- *Are you both going to be wearing suits?*

It was talked about quite a lot, though. I had cards and presents. My senior manager came in and did a proper presentation in front of everybody. I don't think everybody knew I was marrying a woman, but a heck of a lot of them did. They had a collection and bought me a present and a lovely card. I don't know how comfortable people were with it, but they seemed comfortable, so that's fine.

Story 20: The Wedding (Government Department B)

The plot of this story is a difficult one to classify; it represents achievement, in one way, and a comedy in another, in the sense that people did not know what to ask, and it was told in an amusing way. It is quite possible that the questions were repeated by the storyteller in order to be amusing. If those comments had been really hurtful they would either have been kept secret or would have been told in a different way. As it was, the story was told in quite a light-hearted, self-deprecating way and the whole context was one of positive reactions from colleagues.

The story is ironic in the sense that the storyteller had been married, had grown up children and was now getting 'married' again to someone of the same sex, thereby destabilizing notions of marriage and heterosexuality. Compared to Story 10 'Private Lives', for example, where the individual had been included in office banter when he had been married, but had met a wall of silence since coming out as gay. This story, by contrast, is a joyful one of inclusion and positive interest in the individual's life outside work. Note the emphasis on '*It was talked about quite a bit*', which is

mentioned twice. Just as the subject position of the previous story fails to get created due to the lack of discourse, this situation is quite different. It is talked about a lot, but in a positive way, and the usual office ritual of passing round a card and collection takes place. This is a very positive story and is recognized as such by the focus groups,

> *"The organization didn't have to do that – that speaks volumes in terms of people moving forward."*

The groups did not necessarily see the question about whether they both wore dresses as a particularly negative question. For example,

> *"Heterosexuals don't always get married in a white wedding dress. All the weddings I've been to, the woman wears a nice suit and so does the man – so what does that mean? If you took the 'both' away it would totally change the question, but it's no different you'd ask anyone else."*

This is one of the rare stories with a theme of celebration, where there is an achievement on the part of the minorities which, although not epic, is a good news story. This quality or ingredient may also exist in other stories, of course, but in this one it is a key element. These stories also present the idea of a dilemma: these are stories where the organization has the choice of two or more options, for example, to stand up for treating people the same (as in equal opportunities) or treating people differently (as in diversity management). Often there is no one easy choice, the actor can be caught between two stools, and there is therefore an element of perplexity involved.

9.1.7 Humour and Banter

The following story is not much more of an anecdote, but tells of the way in which a lesbian fire-fighter was treated when she first joined the Watch. One of the ways that new recruits become socialized within the Watch is by going through some kind of initiation ceremony; in this case, the lesbian fire-fighter described what the socialization process was like for her, which included the other fire-fighters betting on who, from within the Watch could sleep with her first, and change her sexual orientation:

> ***The Betting Book (The Fire Service)***
>
> *They actually ran a book, a betting book, to see who the first guy would be who could get off with me, and change me, or my orientation. I only found out about a year after it had been running, and they were like, "we've given up now!" And I was like, "I wish you'd have told me if there was any money involved, it might just have done it. We could have shared, come on!"*

Story 21: The Betting Book (Fire Service)

This short story or anecdote is a Comedy. There is a victim, of course, but the victim, ironically, has the last laugh. She finds out that they have been running a betting book, and then calls their bluff by saying that had she known, she would have let someone win and they could have shared the money. This short scenario gives an insight into the rites and rituals that take place in the Fire Service. Fire-fighters relate that these are nothing compared to what they used to be, but often fire-fighters are still 'tested' by their colleagues when they first join the service, in what can be referred to as a 'rite of passage', (Gabriel, 2000: 17). In this case the initiation ceremony would have been for the new recruit to have sex with one of the male fire-fighters. This testing is, in fact, a second selection system, but one which is every bit as important as the official one, (Gabriel, 2000: 17). There is an unspoken assumption amongst the male fire-fighters that sexual orientation is nothing more than an attitude of mind and that this can be changed almost at will. The story also shows how the individual can increase the likelihood of being accepted by the group by using humour and turning the tables on them. Once they realized that they would not be able to sleep with her, they began betting on when her period was due. Humour and banter play a special part in the Fire Service, and making fun of each other plays a large part in this. As one focus group participant said,

> *"You could get ribbed if you have an allotment".*

Nevertheless, some of the personal attacks have a darker side, and it would be hard to describe the following anecdote as funny:

> *"When I joined as a whole-time fire-fighter, there was a character on my Watch who was very outspoken. My name's O'Toole and the first thing he said to me was 'you IRA bastard' – in a joking way. And basically he went on with this and then the whole Watch started to say I was a member of the IRA, Gerry Adams' brother and then when they bombed Warrington it was like I WAS the IRA. This was a joke, and if I had objected he would have pushed it and it would have become oppressive intimidation."*

It is hard to believe that the person who recounted this can have still thought that this was a joke. There were different explanations given as to why people indulge in this sort of banter. Some said it was because fire-fighters saw such terrible things that they had to indulge in humour and banter to deal with these situations. But by tolerating certain types of employee humour, the Fire Service runs the risk of reproducing an oppressive working environment, (Collinson, 2002: 281). Others maintained that it was a way of testing new recruits,

> *"It's just a bit of banter that every new person gets. It's not malicious. The old hands put people through it to see their strengths and weaknesses. At some point you're going to have to put your life in their hands. You want to know what limits you can go to."*

Still other explanations were that the job was so boring that there had to be some light relief, illustrating the importance of the work context. It should be noted that much of the fire-fighter's job is spent 'hanging around' waiting for an emergency to happen. For example,

> *"It makes it enjoyable to come to work, otherwise it would be boring; if you come to work and you're not allowed to speak to anyone for fear of offending them you'd be bored witless and the organization wouldn't get the best out of people. If you don't enjoy it... it's down to them, where the line's drawn."*

It is interesting that once again, the responsibility is given to the individual to indicate where people have gone too far. Occupying fire-fighters during this downtime can be a challenge, and Fire Stations are well equipped with pool tables, televisions and video recorders, kitchen facilities and, of course, the brew table where the Watch congregates. At night time, fire-fighters have rest areas, but because fires do not occur with the same frequency as during the day, most fire-fighters treat these areas as dormitories. There is a growing recognition within organization studies of the significance of joking in the workplace, (Collinson, 2002: 269), and the idea that humour can actually be used to transmit serious messages. In the police it was suggested that joking around was a tool used to test whether people were to be relied upon in extreme situations. There were also many other examples in this research project in the Fire Service of humour, joking around and initiation ceremonies that had more sinister undertones; buckets of water above doors, bed-

rigging, and water fights. Name calling was also prevalent; one respondent reported that one colleague's nick-name was 'Noodles' because he collected the lids off Pot Noodles, and had actually appeared in the company magazine of the manufacturers.

9.1.8 Tokenism

Groups that are numerically scarce in organizations face a particular predicament; they find that they become tokens and are treated as representatives of their category, as symbols rather than individuals. They become community spokespeople, being asked to give the gay perspective on all sorts of issues, (Woods & Lucas, 1993: 214). This is a story which comes from Government D, and concerns a humorous situation brought about by a tax worker approaching an out gay colleague for his presumed specialist knowledge of male prostitutes. Apart from the issue of gay people as token, this story also demonstrates a situation in which humour might be used; in organizations, the funny stories that are told might just be unrelated humour, or they might be humour to do with specific aspects of the job:

> ***When being gay helps (Government Department B)***
>
> *When I was a case worker, I worked in inheritance tax, and there was somebody who had a £50K debt for 'various entertainment'. So my colleague, the case worker, challenged this and asked what it was for. His sister explained that he had died of HIV, and towards the end of his life, he had had lots of drugs and lots of male prostitutes. We had to decide whether that £50K was a reasonable sum or not; my colleague approached me and asked,*
> - *What's the going rate for a male prostitute then?*
>
> *There was just a lot of humour around the office. I probably was the obvious choice in the office for information about the gay scene. So I said,*
> - *Well, it depends what service you're getting, what it is, how long it is and so on*
>
> *And then he went back to this chap's sister and said,*
>
> *In order to agree a figure for this, we need a few more bits of information...*

Story 22: When being gay helps (Government Department B)

The plot of this story has been classified as a Comedy, though a black comedy, nevertheless, because it involves the tragic death of a gay man who died of AIDS (the story-teller describes the illness as HIV, although more correctly this should be AIDS). The unexpected twist, however, is that one expects someone dying of a terminal illness to be some sort of passive character, awaiting their death silently. This person, however, obviously had a good time, spending his money on drugs and prostitutes. The temptation is to be righteously outraged on behalf of the story-teller, which was the reaction in all of the focus groups. Since they have come to him, as a gay man, for information on the cost of prostitutes; how should he know? Even

though this story had been told as a humorous story, it caused more offence amongst the focus groups:

> *"I think this story is nastier than the others and there is a nastiness in the way that it could be played out."*

They assumed that the case worker was making stereotypical assumptions about gay men:

> *"It also assumes that because that person was dealing with the case they know all about male prostitution and it's lumping all gays into one big box, therefore you must know about whatever."*

Another focus group participant asked whether heterosexuals would necessarily know the going rate for a prostitute, as follows:

> *"It's like all heterosexuals can tell you the going rate for a prostitute."*

Another person said,

> *"I think if that had happened to me I would have said, excuse me, what are you implying?"*

Of course, the storyteller takes the wind out of the sails of that particular line of interpretation by saying "I probably was the obvious choice". It was also an opportunity for him to throw the humour back at his colleague by saying "It depends on what you're getting", inviting his colleague to go into unwanted, perhaps embarrassing, details. The focus groups were surprised that the story-teller had not reacted in a different way,

> *"What sounds strange about this story is how passive the gay person sounded. He didn't sound offended, they went along with the jape in the office. He answered the question and co-operated. He was almost semi-conforming with the stereotype. Because even if you're out, you've still got to defend yourself."*

9.1.9 Official and unofficial responses

The following story tells of the lesbian and gay network at Bank A successfully persuading the organization to provide sponsorship to Stonewall, the lobbying group for lesbian and gay equality:

The Stonewall Dinner (Bank A)

"In 1999, GLEAM, the gay and lesbian network, approached the Bank and asked if they would sponsor the Stonewall Equality Dinner. Stonewall is the lobby group for gay and lesbian equality. It was small fry compared to other corporate sponsorship that Bank A would have done for other corporate events. The Bank agreed although initially nobody wanted to discuss the thing or have anything to do with this. There were other large companies who took part, and the Bank had two main justifications for taking part; one was to make corporate business and private banking contacts and the other was to support the Bank's gay and lesbian employees. Some eyebrows that were raised by some people, but Private Banking was told to come along and be supportive, which they did, with a certain amount of grace, as well, and a very good time was had... Bit of a conflict with a famous client of the Bank. Apparently it went very well. Although some of the businesses weren't that keen on going. There was a big article in the FT, a lot of press coverage at the time. I don't know what impact it did have on actual business coming in, but it was all good PR.. Because this is all new territory, the fact that it happened at all, was noteworthy. Certainly, there were things that could have been improved upon, but it was a small but significant step."

Story 23: The Stonewall Dinner (Bank A)

The analysis of this story suggests that it is an achievement, in the sense of a 'small but significant step', although it has none of the other characteristics of an epic, in terms of its length or heroics, again demonstrating the need for a sub-genre. The Bank agreed to the dinner, although initially no-one wanted anything to do with it. This raises the idea of sponsorship, which is invisible; this is contrary to the normal approach in sponsorship, where the idea is not only to raise money but to raise the profile of the organization. Visibility also means that you have to engage with people in different ways. For instance, the question is raised of how you deal with important customers, who are in disagreement with the organization's stance (or maybe in ignorance, but would be in disagreement if they found out). Visibility also means that dissenters in the organization may raise their voices; people are going to find out what is being done and then agree or disagree. This means that the Bank then as an organization has to take a stance on what they are doing. Using the lens of silent voices, one of the reactions to this, which is not reported in the story is a senior manager of the Bank apparently said when he hear about the dinner,

> *"In my country we burn these people",*

referring to gay men and lesbians. Although much of the literature has focussed on the disclosure decision taken by the individual, there is less research on the response from others in the organization to sexual difference. In Humphrey's study twenty-three lesbian and gay individuals were interviewed, and some of them recounted the reactions from other people when they came out at work, including avoidance and lack of acceptance, (Humphrey, 1999: 139). Of course, with actual discrimination being common, and the fear of potential discrimination epidemic (Woods and Lucas, 1993), it is easy to think that the response to difference is always a negative one, and although the responses in this section mostly are, in previous sections both negative and positive reactions to difference are reported.

9.1.10 Different dynamics in different parts of the organization

In the Police, there are numerous examples of where inappropriate behaviour and language has been the response to someone's coming out in the workplace. In this following story, there are two examples of inappropriate language; one from a civilian who was applying to join the police and the other from a police officer:

Challenging appropriately (The Police)

There's a real culture of challenging inappropriate behaviour. There was a detention officer, who applied to join the regulars, but he failed the fitness test, and if you fail the fitness test you're out straight away. It was alleged that he said, in the changing rooms to one of the other recruits,
"To get into this police force you've either got to be queer or a spade."
It wasn't reported back at the time, but this other recruit used it as evidence when he was interviewed for the police. He was asked when he had ever challenged inappropriate behaviour. He said,
"Funnily enough, in the gym the other day, one of your employees said '.....', and I challenged it."
Anyway, they followed it up and ended up sacking this guy for saying it, which I thought was probably going too far the other way. There is a danger that they get too hypersensitive. On another occasion, a gay man had been given a beating by some squaddies, just because he was gay, or appeared to be gay, and the investigation was taken very seriously. There had been a gay murder in Plymouth shortly before that and it was dealt with very well. But one of the guys investigating this beating was in the canteen and someone was asking him about the incident, and someone said,
"Serves him right for being a pouf."
That was dealt with by somebody saying to him,
"Don't be silly."

In the first example, the detention officer was sacked for a much less serious offence, but he was support staff. In the second example, he was a regular police officer, which just goes to show there is a real "two-employee" culture.

Story 24: Challenging Appropriately (the Police)

Using the lens of hierarchy, the point of the story here is the two-employee culture, and the power expressed as binary oppositions. In focus groups where there were

sworn staff present, people denied that there was a two-employee culture. Where there were focus groups exclusively of support staff there were quite vociferous in their support of the idea that they were treated less well and they cited examples from getting paid less, to having fewer opportunities to being treated differently in a disciplining situation as above. Indeed, since police officers are protected by police regulations, and support staff are not, it is, in fact disingenuous to suggest that they are not treated differently. The discussion that was generated by this story was the fear of speaking out that pervaded the police and is actually discussed in more detail in section 8.3.1.

9.1.11 Discrimination in promotion

Sexual information is also used to make tacit judgements about people in the workplace, (Woods & Lucas, 1993), especially at more senior levels where technical qualifications become less important, and the way that the individual is viewed by their peers and superiors is the benchmark by which they gain promotion. Trust inevitably has a sexual dimension, as was described in the case study of the lesbian car-repair workshop, (Weston & Rofel, 1997), highlighting the importance of emotion in organizations. People want to build trust with others through, amongst other ways, finding common personal ground, for example talking about the wife, the kids, their schools and so on. Lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transsexuals can be perceived as untrustworthy at worst, and, at best, lacking the necessary fit to reach the senior levels of the organization. There is, of course, the phenomenon of 'homosocial reproduction', (Kanter, 1977), where managers promote (or reproduce themselves) in their own image.

This concept has important implications for equality and diversity, in general, and sexual minorities in particular, where those further up the organization are openly heterosexual, and surround themselves with people who exhibit the same sexual signs.

Missing out on promotion (The Fire Service)

I was just coming up for a promotion, and I didn't get it. It sounds bitter and twisted, but I felt I didn't get the promotion because of one of the senior officers' attitude towards me. I didn't challenge it because it would have been a very difficult thing to prove. I decided instead to move on and to prove to myself and to him that I was capable. I put in for a promotion in another Brigade. That was a lot harder to get because I was the outsider, against seven other people. I got it. It was nice to be able to say I'm leaving because you didn't give me the promotion I deserved, but I got it somewhere else. It was the best thing I ever did. I've got a whole new life now. The Brigade's a lot bigger and a lot busier. It was hard because it was like going back to being a new boy again.

Funnily enough, some time later, I spoke to one of the officers who was on the interview board who used to work for my Brigade. I didn't know at the time, but he was aware that I was gay. Subsequently, I found out that when they offered me the job, this senior officer from my old brigade found out and rang him up and said,

- *You do realise he's queer?*

And apparently this senior officer who'd just offered me the job, said,

Yes I was aware of that, it's not a problem and he was the best one on the day.

Story 25: Missing Out on Promotion (The Fire Service)

Although the hero of this story succeeds, and there is a strong sense of achievement, he is nonetheless a victim of discrimination along the way. Demonstrating Foucault's resistance, (Foucault, 1976), he refuses to be cowed by this setback and applies to a different Brigade. The views of the focus group participants ranged from suggesting that they would have a hard time proving that he had been discriminated against to suggesting that the senior officer should have kept his views to himself, as follows:

> *"He's got a problem hasn't he and he likes telling people he's got a problem instead of keeping it to himself."*

The focus groups were clearly of the opinion that the discrimination that had gone on was unfair, but recognized that prejudice at quite a senior level was not uncommon,

> *"For him to ring up another senior officer – in any organization you're always going to get people like that."*

9.1.12 Dividing practices

The following story is interesting because it reports on the way that sexuality is dealt with at training school. The police have a special duty to ensure that their younger constables and those who are less experienced are appropriately trained to deal with

the mass of diversity that they will encounter during the course of their daily duties, (Burke, 1993: 26). And yet, despite the significant amount of diversity training now carried out in the UK, it is still focused on race, and remarkably little on sexuality. Using the lens of Dividing Practices to view the following story, it is interesting that, at one training school, where there is no formal training input on minority sexualities, sexual minorities are set apart and divided through the carrying out of 'gay' scenarios, in order to be able to deal with gay members of the public. So for instance, in the following story, a gay domestic argument was portrayed in order to prepare the officers for dealing with two gay men having an argument:

The Training School (The Police)

When I was at Training School, I was walking past the place where police officers and trainers act out scenarios, for example an RTA or a domestic. There was an unsupervised scenario of two gay men having an argument. I couldn't believe what I was seeing and hearing. It was a case of (puts on very camp accent),
"Get out of my house you naughty boy, you've gone and slept with another man!" It was pure Julian Clary, it was so camp. I challenged them on it, saying,
"Why are you acting so stereotypically?" And they said,
"What's it to you?" I replied,
"The reason I'm saying that is that I don't think most gay men act like that on the whole, though I'm sure some do." They asked,
"How do you know?" so I replied,
"Well I'm gay! And I'm a bit offended by it."
One of them thought I was joking, and told me where I could put the banana I happened to have in my hand. I was prepared to leave it there, but they went and spoke to their trainer about it, the one who had sent them up to do this gay scenario. The staff trainer calls my staff trainer and I get called in to explain what had happened. He offered me all sorts of counselling. He asked if I would like to speak to a gay officer – he said that they had one in South Wales. I persisted and said that I was most dissatisfied that the trainer would send recruits to practise a gay scenario. I asked if they would do a black scenario? They said no, so I said,
Well don't do a gay scenario, then."

You can't blame the boys who are doing it, because the diversity training in Cwmbran, although very good quality and extensive, is all to do with ethnic minority issues. Not one minute is spent on lesbian and gay issues. In rural areas like South Wales, Gwent, Avon and Somerset, and Devon & Cornwall, a very small percentage of the population is from ethnic minorities. And yet, in Torquay, there is a huge population of lesbian and gay people. If we say 10% of the population is bisexual, lesbian, gay or transgender, to have no training on it is appalling.

Story 26: The Training School (The Police)

Using the hierarchy lens, the story could be retold with the hierarchy reinterpreted, for example, with a woman in the role of the storyteller, what becomes clear is that it is indeed ridiculous to do a gay scenario, just as it would be to do a female scenario, or, as the story-teller pointed out, a black one. The trainer's response also becomes totally inadequate, to offer the complainant counselling, presumably for their sensitivity. This is an example of the medical response to homosexuality in the police that was also demonstrated in "No choice about coming out" in section 7.1.4 on page 150. Clearly, he would not have been offered counselling had it been a

woman in that position, but since the stereotypical view of gay men is that they are sensitive, perhaps the trainer thought that he needed professional help in order to be able to take a joke. Third, the idea that they only have one female police officer in the whole of South Wales is only mildly more amusing than the idea that they only have one gay officer in the whole of South Wales. The immediate reaction seems to be that it was the gay officer's fault and that he needed help. What is clear is that the police are categorizing gay people in a certain way. The subject position in this context that has been created is that of gay man who is oversensitive, perhaps a bit of a trouble-maker, and someone who cannot take a joke. One focus group participant tried to explain why gay scenarios are carried out at Training School:

> *"I'll give you the party-line on it, if you like: the exercises where students are given gay role-plays, are in relation to their attitudes and behaviour. In Cwmbran we don't do black role-plays because there are very few black officers and we wouldn't ask someone to portray somebody who is black. If we do have a black officer we do ask them if they wouldn't mind taking that role, although we are very much aware of the danger of making them a victim. So it's a balancing act. That should never have been an unsupervised role-play. The lads that were sent to do it should have been given a firm briefing about what they were supposed to be doing."*

It is suggested therefore that the role play is to test the attitudes of the majority of the students. And yet, the participant admits that they would not do black role-plays for fear of offending, nor would they ask someone who was black to take that role. Most focus group respondents thought that the story-teller should just have ignored the role play. For example,

> *"I think he should just have ignored it. Perhaps these trainees have not come across many gay people and they associate gay people with Julian Clary, and people in the public eye".*

This last comment provoked a conversation about how people do not generally know gay people and that when they get to know them you find out that they are quite similar to you:

> *"Having said that we've got someone senior in the Force who's quite open and it's the first time I've had to confront it. When you get to know them you find out they're quite similar to you."*

9.2 DISCOURSE ON THE RESPONSE TO DIFFERENCE

This section discusses the different excerpts of group discourse about the organization's response to difference.

9.2.1 Response driven by the business case

This extract was in response to an anecdote, not reproduced in this thesis, about a gay bank manager, and the benefits that this may bring to the organization.

- *The view of this story is that it helps bring in more business – I certainly agree with that; I know the pink economy is huge and traditionally I don't think the Bank has tapped into that. When I go round to the various gay prides around the country you always see MBNA, but you never see us. To me that is such a huge waste. One of our competitors has realized it and they are getting the business. We should never turn away business; as a shareholder as well I want to make as much money as possible. Also I want my profit sharing to be as big as possible. The problem is that people have a very staid image of us*
- *We're still very conservative. When I was a relationship manager, I was one of very, very few female relationship managers at the time, and I think it helped. I had 10 colleagues who were all male, and I deliberately went out to find female accountants and solicitors and things like this to try and get across the fact that there are female customers. And as for 'you don't need a gay bank manager' no you don't if people are open and honest, but it must be quite nice to sit down in front of somebody whom you feel can relate to you;*
- *Or at least that the organization has that diversity in it. I think that's what's really key. You wouldn't care if yours is, but you'd like to feel that the organization has a whole variety of people;*
- *This is what I meant earlier – if it's all white middle-age men those are the sort of customers you're going to attract;*
- *They will also recruit in their like, so if you're not careful you just end of perpetuating;*
- *What about the type of business you've got here – a gay gym?*
- *I wish there was more of them. I know that when we recruited retail businesses in the past we wouldn't recruit anything in the sex trade, be it gay, straight or whatever; we are now recruiting some but we would use the same risk criteria as any other kind of business. We don't want a brothel, but so what if a shop is selling whatever;*
- *I think that we should deal with its customers in the same way that it deals with its staff. We have a set of behaviours, and if that's how we choose to engage, then that's how we should engage and if the customers don't like it then they can go elsewhere; you can tell them what the terms and conditions are but they don't have to agree with absolutely everything their bank does, just as we don't have to agree with everything that our customers do;*
- *Just as when as customer says I don't want that cashier serving me because they are black – you wouldn't want that customer;*
- *(Female) I used to wheel a messenger out when I was a manager in the Network. They wouldn't talk to me, but they would talk to the messenger. About 7 years ago, I was a relationship manager and one other (male) relationship manager said to me 'he's a shirtlifter' and I'm convinced we lost that business because that customer heard that comment. I felt very uncomfortable; I didn't know where to put myself. I knew it wasn't the right thing to do, but I was a junior manager and I found it difficult to challenge. I don't think the population has changed that much*

Extract 9: Bank B

What is interesting about this excerpt is that the argument for equal treatment is very definitely based on the business case, rather than it being the right thing to do. The

first speaker talks about the power of the pink pound, and the fact that their competitors are being much more aggressive about going after this section of the market, for example having a presence at the gay pride events.

The next speaker then goes on to make the comparison with what she used to do as a female relationship manager. She went out to attract female customers, and she believed that this was a successful course of action. She also recognizes that you do not need a gay bank manager, but suggests that it must be quite nice to sit down with a gay bank manager if you are gay yourself, just as her female customers must have appreciated being able to sit down with her.

The focus group participants were open with the way that they believed the Bank had lost business in the past. For example, the female relationship manager recounted how she had to get a messenger to speak to customers because they would listen to him because he was a man. And only seven years ago, she believed that they lost business because a senior colleague of hers referred to a customer as a 'shirt-lifter'. Apart from the Banks, the other organizations in this study were all public sector ones, and so it perhaps no surprise that these organizations were the ones which referred to their customers most as well as the profit imperative. The next Extract is also from Bank B and looks at another aspect of interacting with customers.

9.2.2 Call centres affect the dynamics of dealing with sexual minority customers

This Extract, which comes from a call centre in Bank B, was produced as a result of showing the group a story about a transsexual person joining the Bank. The story has not been reproduced in this thesis, but the discussion which ensued is a fascinating insight into the way that call centre technology interacts with minority identities:

- *When I worked in Manchester, I worked with a pre-op tran, and she had to live as a woman for two years before the operation; Bank B will provide you with a user card, so that you can have a female name on it and when you're going out as a woman you can use your female card;*
- *As long as you're the authorized user of that card you can have any name you want on it;*
- *I don't know though – would they put a very obviously transgender person on the counter? They wouldn't. They still have an image and image still matters. They could be laughed at by the public or they could say – what are you dressed up like that for, do you know what I mean? I think they're good to embrace them, but in terms of where they place them after employment ..... there's still an image isn't there?*
- *You wouldn't put them with the Malton bunch would you?*
- *You might not live in Malton though would you? You wouldn't want to live all the way out there.*
- *...*
- *I know a couple of people who have had a sex change and they sound alright, they don't' sound any different – so if you're talking to somebody on the phone, you'll think 'that's a normal person', but if you see them face to face and you're thinking, she's had a sex change, she's a bit funny. If you're on the phone you can't see them;*
- *If you sound like a man, the customer's just going to think they're talking to a man.*
- *Do you think we possibly treat people slightly differently? If you've got a lady's account, it's Mrs and you have somebody who has a very deep voice, you can't help it ...*
- *Yeah ... 'is this your account?'*
- *It's happened to me. People across the floor have said 'Jen I don't know if this is the right person. It's happened to me twice, where the person on the other end of the phone has said I've had a sex change, and you're like (sharp intake of breath) what do I do now?*
- *You've got to challenge it;*
- *If someone says they're a girl, but they sound like a man, you can't assume, oh alright then. When you hear the reason, there's no problem at all;*
- *You could put a note in;*
- *We log things like Braille or partially sighted customers, but we don't log situations like that, on an account, which is probably the most obvious way of avoiding problems;*
- *Would it make any difference?*
- *Imagine if you get every time you ring up "are you a man?" Every single time ...*
- *I'm sure that if there was a note on the system, they'd be so happy with that. You'd ask them – do you want me to make a note of it – I'm sure they'd be happy with it;*
- *People who have Braille statements, they don't mind the information being stored – it's the same thing essentially. They've just got different needs, haven't they?*

Extract 10: Bank B

The most striking element of this Extract is the very easy way that this group of young people talk about transsexuals. It is also interesting that it is quite a common occurrence to get a telephone call in a call centre from a transsexual, illustrating

again the importance of the work context. This also demonstrates how technology can change the way that the Bank interacts with its customers. Before the use of call centres, a transsexual would have had to go into their local branch, and they would have been seen as a rarity, perhaps even as an oddity. Now, however, the use of call centres means that Bank operatives cannot see their customers and have to rely on the voice that they hear as the only interaction with the customer. An additional security check is to ensure that a man is ringing about a man's account and a woman, about a woman's, which is very difficult for transsexual customers as a low voice is very hard to disguise for male to female transsexuals. In addition, the Bank's customers' enquiries are centred on one call centre, and therefore people can be calling in from all over the country. This means that in the one organization the incidence of having transsexual customers can be much higher. Indeed in this focus group, as can be seen in the Extract, one female operative said that it had happened twice to her where someone had rung up and said that they had had a sex change.

9.2.3 Inclusivity is affected by the physical arrangements

This section highlights the importance of context in the Fire Service; it is an organization which has many signs and symbols. Examples of symbols include the uniform, representing the semi-disciplined service; the sirens and Fire engines representing the emergency response aspect of the service; the clearly visible Fire Stations represent the high public profile that the service enjoys. In the case study of the media company by Wilson, sex was a significant 'symbol' in the organization, (Wilson, 2000). Sex is not an explicit symbol in the Fire Service but the different symbols which exist do have an impact on minority sexual identity. In this following section, we briefly discuss two symbols: the Showers and the Fire Bell and their impact on ways of experiencing minority sexual identity. The work environment also creates situations in which heterosexuals can show how uncomfortable they feel around homosexuals. The following extract is from a focus group in the fire service.

The group was discussing Story 4 "The Showers":

- *Something that's interesting for me, that takes it away from the emotional side, is the physical arrangements, the shower blocks and things. You have separate showers for males and females because there's the potential for physical relationships, so shouldn't there be similar arrangements for lesbians and gay men? It's a potential environment for mutual attraction;*
- *You'd be worried about showering with him, because he'd be watching your arse. You'd feel a bit uncomfortable with it;*
- *The same potential is there if you are showering males and females together, so therefore there should be some kind of sensible control measure in place that protects the privacy of the individuals. Same for the gay man; the group hasn't said that they're gay;*
- *Couldn't have separate facilities for gay men through, could you, because you'd have to have separate facilities for every gay man*
- *If we have to do it, we have to do it, same with sleeping accommodation. We are one of the only services that do that. In the forces they have separate accommodation. It's about personal space isn't it?*

Extract 11: The Fire Service

The next comment suggests that the issue is not so much about straight men feeling that they are under the gaze of gay men, but it is about temptation and mutual attraction. Because there are separate showering facilities for men and women, and that one of the reasons is to prevent mutual attraction, one respondent thought the same principle should be applied to mutual attraction between men:

> *"You have separate showers for males and females because there's a potential for physical relationship, so shouldn't there be similar arrangements for lesbians and gay men? It's a potential environment for mutual attraction."*

Fire-fighters themselves recognized that the specific working environment of the Fire Service not only changed their behaviour, but made it more difficult for them:

> *"It's more difficult for us in the Fire Service, because you are in a very closed environment – you're sleeping together in the same environment, shower, wash, cook and eat. In most working environments you sit at your desk and then you go."*

Some respondents identified difficulties with addressing this issue. One problem was around how many different facilities you need. For example, should there be a third set of showers and changing rooms for gay men? Should there be individual facilities for lesbians and gay men? Or should everyone have the right to privacy when showering and changing? In addition, another issue was around the number of people who have to get showered and changed, making individual facilities difficult to implement. However, many respondents felt that the real issue was about privacy and personal dignity at work for everyone, and that no-one should have to change and shower in public if it makes them feel uncomfortable. For example,

> *"I think it's more a female thing – women don't, and some men don't and I think the reality is that if you're a sexuality minority or not, do people feel comfortable getting changed in a communal changing room? The issues are that if we feel that people don't feel comfortable, then we should change the facilities for everybody."*

> *"If we have to do it, we have to do it; same with sleeping accommodation. We are one of the only services that do that. In the forces they have separate accommodation. It's about personal space isn't it?"*

The question that this discussion raises is – what does it matter? What are the implications? Is it just about personal dignity, or does it have further implications for the effectiveness of the Fire Service. Some respondents thought that there were further implications and the following quotation describes how these facilities might be a barrier to men and women joining,

> *"It's things about propriety and personal dignity that are barriers to men, women and any sexuality joining the services like the Fire Service, because they know they are going to be put in an uncomfortable position, they are not going to like it, and they are not going to join. It is only those people who don't care who are going to join anyway, irrespective of their gender or sexuality."*

There is often a difference between the way that fire-fighters behave on the fire-ground and that way they behave as a Watch when they are back at the Station. There is a physical sign or symbol, which represents the barrier: the Fire Bell. As soon as the Fire Bells ring, the fire-fighters are focussed on getting to the scene of the incident. Only when the incident is over, and they receive the instruction to return to the Station, do they return to the banter, ribbing and horseplay, which is a feature of life on a Watch. Derrida's neologism 'différance' is a useful concept to help in understanding this practice, (Collins & Mayblin, 2000: 75); there is a binary opposition of the action outside, and the passive waiting inside, which is separated in both time and space. This is particularly linked to the passive waiting for something to happen, as opposed to the active service when there is an incident or an emergency; symbols are needed to highlight the transition.

The following quotation from a respondent here explains this:

- *People from minority groups use these policies and procedures for their own gain; they know that when they come to places like this. If the wrong thing is said, they have a big stick in the back pocket. Females, I think, one or two of them will have had a rough ride, but others have definitely taken advantage;*
- *There's still banter on an incident;*
- *There are two different areas of work – there's in here and then there's when the bells god own; that's when you really got to work. You don't know where you're going or what you're going to. When you get there you decide what the level of severity it is, somebody dying or injured for example, and there's never any consideration as to gender or race, not from my point of view. And I've never heard it from anybody, not in my service. And then you come back here, although you're working here you're also working together that's when the problems start, when you're on your stand down period. You would speak to your friends differently than you would to your wife, if you're married, or your mother; some men don't swear in front of their wife, but they swear in front of their friends. Especially on nights, you live, rather than work together;*
- *I find your question an interesting one; you sometimes see on TV a fire where someone's died and you'll see a policeman or a fire-fighter having a laugh and a joke, and it's a shame but that's just how we deal with it*

Extract 12: The Fire Service

The response to difference is therefore at variance in the two different 'spaces'. In the Fire Station, which is not necessarily viewed as a workplace per se by fire-fighters, there is a lot of 'hanging around' as fire-fighters wait for an incident to happen. The response to difference in this 'space' is potentially hostile, and is made up of banter and horseplay. If bullying is going to happen, this is when and where it is assumed it is going to happen. The Fire Bell then moves people from the casual, informal banter time to a different 'space', where the focus is on performance, where all differences are put aside, and getting the job done overrides all else. The Fire Bell is therefore a way of regulating time and space and interaction. The experience of being gay is different in each zone. The Fire Bell is the link between the passive waiting which typifies much of the job of the fire-fighter and the active role of responding to an incident. The active 'space' is one, which typifies inclusion and teamwork; there is no distinction between fire-fighters, as they are all focussed on getting the job done. However, in the 'passive' space, there are many opportunities for exclusion, which is felt particularly by sexual minorities. The passive space is a time for social activities of various sorts; playing pool, basketball and, of course, eating. In the following example, a gay fire-fighter tells of stories he has heard of lesbians and gay men being excluded from eating together:

> *I do know of cases where people have been totally and utterly excluded. From silly things like eating facilities - people would refuse to eat with individuals - they would order food from a Chinese restaurant or Indian and the gay man or lesbian wouldn't be asked to order anything. There would be social activities that the person wouldn't be included in; all those things lead to massive exclusion and massive psychological damage with the individual involved. You might*

be strong-willed enough not to let it bother you, probably have your own life when you go home anyway. But that working environment gets to you eventually.

Sharing a laugh and a joke is an important survival mechanism for those in mundane jobs, (Gabriel et al., 2000: 188), and, ironically, the job of a fire-fighter is mundane a lot of the time. The Fire Service has traditionally been a semi-disciplined service with restrictions on the freedom that fire-fighters have to do or say what they want; in this context, humour allows them the licence to say things that otherwise could not be said, (Gabriel et al., 2000: 189).

Usually, 'respecting difference' is understood as meaning respecting minorities. However, we found that, in the Fire Service in particular, this can also mean respecting those who are prejudiced or homophobic. There was a widely held view amongst the fire-fighters in our focus groups that prejudice should be accommodated. That is not to say prejudice in the sense of discriminatory behaviour; their views were quite firm that this should be dealt with firmly. The kind of prejudice that fire-fighters believe should be accommodated is where a fire-fighter has a problem working with a gay person. An example of this view is as follows,

'The management have got a duty to keep everybody happy; if someone's got a problem with a gay person, they can go to their boss and say 'I'm not happy with this, can I transfer to another watch?' I think the manager has a duty to try and accommodate that person;'

One view went so far as to suggest that when people are appointed to work on a particular station, they should be made aware if there are any out gay people there, so that the new recruit can refuse if they do not find working with gay people acceptable.

'You have to make people coming in that there is a gay person on the station; If someone's overtly gay, you could be putting someone in who doesn't like gay's but has been put in under false pretences;'

Above all, if someone holds homophobic views and refuses to work with lesbian and gay colleagues, they should not be made to feel embarrassed about holding these views,

'If he can't work with them because they're gay and it's upsetting him, he should ask for a transfer, but he shouldn't be made to feel embarrassed about it because that's his personal view;'

These views are contentious, and yet paradoxical. On the one hand, minorities are seen as needing protection from the majority's actions and reactions, and ultimately legislative solutions are seen as being a clear route to achieving this. However, even laws cannot counteract hostile feelings, only hostile acts, (Sullivan, 1995: 158). These views are paradoxical because they express the liberal 'problem', which is that

by giving freedom for some to express their minority sexual identity, others are given less freedom to express or even hold views hostile to that particular identity. Of course, part of the problem of seeing these opinions as innately wrong is that sexual minorities are then constantly cast in the role of victim, and puts the responsibility for change on the shoulders of others, (Sullivan, 1995: 166). This raises the question of whether tolerance should indeed go both ways.

9.2.4 Abuse from colleagues toughens you up for the outside world

This extract is from the police, and is in reaction to Story 6: 'Coming Out to the Whole Shift'.

- *It depends how you deal with it as an individual – if you're strong enough*
- *If you're the type of person who takes offence it gets on top of you and it gets worse because you become a victim*
- *My reaction is – what a wimp! How did he manage on the streets if he couldn't take this sort of thing from his colleagues? I'm an ex-police officer and I served for 8 years in the 80s (WPC), this is behaviour that went on, but you just laughed it off, because it's policemen's humour. We see some awful things, but there has to be a valve to let it off. I know it's not politically correct any more, but you give as good as you get and I think he's making a big fuss about nothing. Making himself into a martyr because he's labelled 'gay'. I've been a WPC – I know what it's like to be a victim, both from members of the public and fellow colleagues. You give as good as you get*
- *Some people can't though can they?*
- *Shouldn't be in the Job then. How can they go out there?*
- *Probably get worse from members of the public, the difference is that out there they mean it...*
- *Yeah*

Extract 13: The Police

This is making the bullying that goes on out to be mere joking, and preparation for the outside world. Using the discursive construction of subjectivity and subject positions as a lens, it is possible to see that it is making a gay person out to be weak; the language that is used includes 'victim', 'wimp', 'couldn't take this sort of thing', 'making a big fuss about nothing'. Interestingly, the main person speaking is a woman who suffered similar types of abuse when she was a WPC in the 1980s, although, she only served for eight years, and she does not say why she stopped. Could it be that she could not take the treatment she was receiving any more? Why is she defending the continuing poor treatment of people at work? There is an element to this text, which is a self-fulfilling prophecy; if gay people are seen as weak and sensitive, and if they react to bullying and complain, they are seen even more as weak.

The focus group describes the concept that bullying of gay people is a valve to let off steam; of course, just as a valve is a device to allow movement in one direction only,

resistance is not welcome; and you are supposed, as a lesbian or gay police officer, sponge-like, to soak up the stress of your heterosexual colleagues. Using the power relations lens, it is possible to see that there is an assumption when they say that this 'horseplay' is to relieve the stress from seeing terrible things that it is only the heterosexual majority who see terrible things and that the gay minority do not. Focus group participants maintained that things are getting better in the police and the type of bullying that was described in the story could have happened ten years ago, but not now. And yet this discursive exchange demonstrates that the attitudes which create this situation are still alive and well.

9.2.5 The political context of the civil service

The following exchange was brought about by the story 'Times are changing', which is more of a report, and therefore not reproduced in this thesis. The story concerns the carrying of a banner at the gay pride march, which initiated a conversation about how they sought permission to do this; it also makes reference to Story 13: Section 28 (Government Department A).

- *We had to get the Permanent Secretary's permission just to make the banner, and carry it. We did tone down the wording! Although we were very proud of this it didn't get any publicity. I come from the team which had the very famous story of the team leader who was moved, because of a political feeling that it wasn't right to have an out gay man in charge of the department's policy on issues of sexuality. The story was refreshed in my mind last Friday because there is a chance I will be given the job, and the person who is acting DM said 'Do you have any fears about being an out gay man heading that team in the light of what happened last time there was a gay man'. I said that if there was any doubt in his mind that I didn't have the ability to lead that team, he should say what those doubts were. He said that he would have to clear it with the Director, with this short term succession plan. I was prepared to come to the focus group saying lots of positive things about the things that the Department's done for me over the years, but it looks like I fell at the last hurdle;*
- *There is a ministerial aspect to this which we have to be aware of. The problems in advertising the group is not what we think, but what this does to the ministerial profile. You have this kind of publicity and it puts ministers on the defensive, and they hate it. I was one of the authors of the tripartite statement and it took 6 months to persuade the Minister for it to be released, even though we kept saying, sorry you don't have a choice. You are not in charge of this Department – it's the Permanent Secretary and you don't make that sort of decision. Finally we got past him. We were quite clear that we were getting past a homophobic attitude...*
- *My personal view was that it was the Department's political adviser who advised the Secretary of State that it wasn't the right thing to do. But with our new Secretary of State, it's a very different agenda;*
- *The relationship between the Minister and the Department is a sort of feudal situation, depending on their personality. When I first started my first manager was a gay man, and you couldn't be open, and it's changed a lot, but I've only worked in London and the HQ tends to be a different environment. You have a high-grade mix here as well. But when something is deemed to be against the Minister's personal preference, the Department won't stand up for itself or its employees;*
- *But that's a cultural thing; the Department doesn't stand up for its employees in lots of ways.*

Extract 14: Government Department A

This extract is interesting because it highlights a number of points. The Extract highlights the role of the Minister and the political influence and interference in the internal workings of the Civil Service, an organization which is supposed to operate independently of its political masters, at the same time illustrating again the importance of work context. The way that gay people are treated in the Department actually comes down to the personal preference of the Minister or Secretary of State. Second, in this extract, the first person to speak is an out gay man, who referred to the 'Section 28' story. Despite repeated attempts to censor this story, it would not go away. This is one example where a focus group participant brought it up. Interestingly he maintains that the Department is in danger of repeating the situation again. His line manager was still going to have to go to the Director to ask whether it was alright to put a gay man in charge of an area which dealt with policy on sexuality.

9.2.6 Raising visibility – issues for the majority

The exchange in this extract deals with two main themes; first how the heterosexual majority feel about having diversity initiatives go on in the organization. Second the prioritization of the categories of gender and race over sexuality.

- It seems to be that you can't upset *them.* I don't want to sound negative, but it all boils down to normal people. Like in that example of the man that didn't want to go away with a gay chap – that's his right. Because the gay chap's upset, it then becomes a problem. It wasn't a problem before that. Of course, he's going to go to his mates – 'I'm not going with him like because I know what you lot are like – you're going to take the Mick'. So that was his priority. It was alright till the gay person found out and then he was upset and it became a big thing. How about your normal person – how about if he'd been upset? It seems to be that everyone gets uptight when these minorities are upset. I was always brought up to think I'm a normal person. I've lived here all my life. I'm not anti-gay, I get on with anybody, me. But ever since I've grown up I feel I'm treading on egg-shells and you can't say things and I think why should I tread on egg-shells for everybody? Why should I have to change my life? We go on all these diversity courses – why should I have to change my way of thinking? If someone is anti-gay, so what? Why should they have to find out what these people are thinking and feeling? They've got things against us normal white folk and nobody says anything. That doesn't seem to matter. You can upset us and it doesn't matter, unless you're black or gay and you upset them and you've had it. There's a coloured person at work who can talk to me how she wants and it's not classed as racism and I retaliate and I've had it. They don't see themselves as racist. It's always the white...
- It's about treating people with respect. I don't agree that you have to walk on egg-shells
- I agree with what the Department's doing, but the way they're doing it is alienating people and making the issue bigger. The only group that seems to be left out is the majority group
- In the 12 years I have been in the Civil Service, this is the first time *ever* I've seen anything on sexual orientation, apart from the bland mission statement. This is the first positive move I have seen the organization make towards gay, bisexual and trans-gendered people. If you look at the statistics, we know how many women, how many part-timers and how many disabled people we have – it's broken down by grade and their age group. The one thing we have never seen is how many gay people we have in this organization. (Everyone talks at once)

Extract 15: Government Department B

The lens of hierarchy highlights that the first speaker is a woman, and splits the world in 'normal' people and 'minorities'. Presumably women come into the 'normal' category, with black and gay people in the minority category. She focuses on the issue of getting upset. She feels aggrieved that action is taken when minorities get upset. Again, in a similar way to previous extracts she seeks to put the blame for upsetting the majority white heterosexual community on the minorities. The importance of identity construction comes out in this piece; she asks why she has to walk on egg-shells, but of course identities are delicate things, and if you care about the identities of the people you are working with you have to treat them carefully. She turns it around and objects to having to change herself. She objects to the idea that she might have to change her own identity or personality. This highlights the importance of recognizing that the identity of those in the majority are sensitive as well, and that heterosexuals may have difficulty in negotiating, not only the area of sexuality, but also the complex area of identity construction and re-construction.

In response to the idea that it is only the majority group that gets left out, an out gay man in the group then speaks up to say that this is the first thing that he has ever known the Department do for sexual minorities. He raises the issue of visibility; the Department knows how many women, part-timers and disabled people they have, but they still do not know how many gay people they have. This again reflects the idea that the researcher has an impact on the organizations they are researching; by carrying out this research, the organization has been seen as carrying out something positive for lesbian and gay employees.

9.3 SUMMARY

This section has highlighted two different types of difference; the first is the difference experienced by sexual minorities and in managing their disclosed identity the response that they see coming from other people in the organizations. They have incorporated this as part of their self-narrative, identified as part of the coming out model, and are part of the discursive formation of their subjectivity. The second type of difference is the response to difference, which is expressed by extracts of discourse, collected in the focus groups, which demonstrate the ways in which the organization and its employees react to sexual minorities and issues of minority sexuality in the workplace.

The responses to difference which the lesbian and gay respondents identified themselves include the issue of inclusion and exclusion in the workplace. The

ultimate exclusion for an employee is to be excluded altogether; sadly there have been numerous instances of lesbian and gay people losing their jobs, but inclusion and exclusion in organizations is often much more subtle. The stories described instances of exclusion such as customers being excluded with rules and exclusion by a group of other employees. There were also more positive examples of inclusion, such as a recruitment event for sexual minorities, (see Story 18: The Recruitment Event (Bank A) on page 200), a presentation for the blessing of a same-sex couple, (see Story 20: The Wedding (Government Department B), on page 203) and inclusion through humour, (see Story 21: The Betting Book (Fire Service), on page 205 and Story 22: When being gay helps (Government Department B), on page 207). There were also stories to do with the response through official policies and procedures, such as the treatment of sexual minorities at Training School, (see Story 26: The Training School (The Police), on page 213) and discrimination through selection and promotion, (see Story 17: Accommodating Prejudice (Government Department B), on page 198 and Story 25: Missing Out on Promotion (The Fire Service), on page 212).

This section also highlighted some of the different ways that the organizations, which took part in this research project respond to difference, and the importance of the work context. For example, the Banks involved had a response, which was driven by the business case, making reference to the ways in which organizations had an imperative to treat sexual minority customers in the right way, (see Extract 9 on page 215). They also had a response driven by technology as call centres affect the dynamics of dealing with sexual minority customers, in particular dealing with transsexual customers who no longer seem such a rarity as many more customers are dealt with in one location, (see Extract 10 on page 217). In the Fire Service, inclusivity is affected by the physical arrangements, as well as having two radically different work environments which have an effect on the way that people are treated in both environments, (see Extract 11on page 219 and Extract 12 on page 221). The issue of banter and humour was highlighted as one of the ways that people act differently in one of those spaces. In the Police, some rather unusual responses were expressed, such as the idea that abuse from colleagues toughens you up for the outside world, (see Extract 13 on page 223). Finally, in the civil service, the focus groups highlight the political context in which these Government Departments work, (see Extract 14 on page 224).

10. DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings of the research in more detail, making reference back to the research questions which were identified in section 5. First, the ways in which minority sexuality is discursively constructed in organizations is discussed, including the role that silence plays within organizational discourse, particularly with reference to sexual minorities. In addition, the concept of performativity has helped to develop our understanding of the coming out process in the work environment. A model is presented, which highlights six different manifestations of discourse in the work environment; Language, Dividing Practices, Response to Difference, Rules, Physical Arrangements and Signs and Symbols. Second, the different identities that are constituted, both in terms of subjectivity and subject positions, are also discussed; the types of stories collected have made a contribution in terms of understanding the different facets of sexual identity in organizations. Although the traditional Aristotlean classification of stories was used, this was found to be insufficient; further elements were derived including the symbol of victimhood, the role of irony and the role of cautionary stories, enabling the development of a classification of sub-genres. Finally, the idea that work context is important for sexual minorities is discussed.

10.1 WAYS OF DISCURSIVELY CONSISTUTING MINORITY SEXUAL IDENTITY

10.1.1 Silence is an important element of organizational discourse

Silence has been an under-researched area in the field of organizational studies, with recent articles showing a growing interest in the area. Whilst it is an integral part of discourse, this thesis has highlighted the different ways in which silence manifests itself. The research has shown that 'silence' in certain work contexts may mean that there may be a lack of congruence between self sexual identity or sexual subjectivity and social sexual identity, or the subject positions that subjects adopt in work organizations. The silence which enables this splitting to take place can be evident in a number of different ways. Even in those organizations in the study which were more forward-looking, taking care to give lesbians and gay men a voice, it was surprising to find there were many examples of where silence was a recurrent theme. It was perhaps less surprising to find examples of silence in the less progressive organizations such as the police and the Fire Service.

From the research process itself there were interesting incidences of silencing, not least the "Section 28" story with the attempted censoring taking place. It is suggested that there is a further element of silencing in the research process, however. Either in the Stories, or the Extracts, the talk was mostly of gay men, with lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals being silenced. Every effort had been taken in the research process to avoid this happening; stories were chosen for use in the focus groups on the basis of their quality as a story and their potential for generating discussion, irrespective of what their focus of minority sexuality was.

The literature on discourse has identified silence as a discursive practice (Foucault, 1976), which contributes to the identity construction of sexual minorities in organizations, as well as being a feature of the power relationship between the homosexual minority and the heterosexual majority (Butler, 1997). Extract 5 from the Rural Police Constabulary (on page 188) demonstrates that silence has become a way of life in the organization. They are hypersensitive, not because they are suddenly all concerned about their minority colleagues, but they are concerned about potential repercussions. This demonstrates the Foucauldian view of power relations; that power does not disappear, it merely reappears in another form of expression, (Foucault, 1976). This particular Force has demonstrated that bullying of sexual minorities is no longer acceptable, but has replaced one kind of oppression with another, that of not being able to speak freely.

Previous research would suggest that silence, whilst still a powerful discursive element, is often conceptualized as the absence of language, noise and verbal discursive practices; silence in its different forms is often under-theorized. The notion of the 'absent presence' emphasizes the importance of absorbing all aspects of discourse in exploring sexual identity, because the absence of talk on minority sexual identity is as meaningful as the presence of talk on majority sexual identity. The importance of viewing silence as being part of discourse has been demonstrated; the notion of 'negative space' highlights the interconnectedness of the positive 'talk' and negative 'space' which together constitute discursive meaning. In conceiving of silence, in a metaphorical sense, as negative space, it has been suggested that our understanding of discourse can be potentially increased by focusing on the silence, which exists in and around it. Whilst considering silence as a means of understanding discourse, the notion is posited that thinking of silence metaphorically as negative space helps us to understand that silence can take different forms itself. The exploration of silence has shown that it can take on multiple meanings and roles.

First, there is the idea that undisclosed minority sexual identity is a silent identity, and that 'coming out' means leaving that silence behind, and enabling social identity to be more congruent with self identity. The findings also showed that silence can be reactive and that whilst there is an absence of a response, silence itself can be a very powerful presence. Silencing can be used by a group as an active means of suppressing the 'Other', in this case minority sexualities. It has also been demonstrated how silence can be an example of censorship in the organization demonstrating Foucault's view that silence can be an agent of power in its own right. In addition, silence can be used as a means of self-protection, either by not coming out and thereby refusing the heteronormative agenda which exists in organizations or when, paradoxically, sexual minorities are in the majority, they can, themselves, use silence as a means of resistance. Finally, the research has acknowledged the importance of silence in the research process and the dynamic of silencing which can face the researcher themselves. Given this diversity of forms of silence, the metaphor of negative space can help our understanding; silence can change its shape, form and nature depending on the discourse around it, and depending on the intention, either purposeful or inadvertent, behind it. Assuming that silence is at least as constitutive of social reality for, and the identity of, sexual minorities in organizations, as other elements of discourse, and building on the idea that silence is, as suggested, negative space which takes different forms, then these different forms may be constitutive of social reality and identity for sexual minorities in organizations in different ways.

The intention has been to identify these multiple forms of silence; how they play out in an organizational context with regard to the construction of minority sexual identity in work organizations as well as the impact of the negative space of silence on the construction of other identities and its interplay with power relations.

10.1.2 Performativity helps our understanding of the coming out process in the work environment

This thesis has highlighted a discursive approach to considering the process of coming out, and has suggested that coming out is a reiterative process. The concept of performativity can add to our understanding of both the act and the process of coming out. Coming out is a process in terms of the different stages that lead up to coming out, it is a process in terms of the performative nature of the act itself, and it is a process in terms of the performative nature of living a minority sexual identity. Coming out is performative in the sense that it is reiterative which is consistent with

Butler's view of performativity and borne out by the findings; Story 7: Coming out again and again (Bank A) on page 159 supports this.

Coming out is performative because the individual, in saying that they are gay, is also doing what they say, that is to say coming out at the same time. It is therefore an illocutionary speech act, or a speech act with consequences. But the findings show that it is not just the stages and act of coming out that are important, but also the reactions and impact. It is therefore essential to remember the perlocutionary aspect, that is to say the discursive response of others to the act of coming out. Before coming out there is a dissonance between self identity, or subjectivity, where the individual knows that they have a minority sexuality, and social identity where the individual chooses not to reveal this to others, or has not yet taken up that particular subject position. It is not suggested that this reintegration is always a positive move, because the eventual impact on social identity is so dependent on the reaction from others. In other words, coming out may increase individual self-esteem, but the reality is that reactions and context have a major impact on the individual.

It is suggested therefore, that in terms of the drama of performativity, it is important not just to focus on the actors, and what they say and do, but also to describe the stage and set. This is covered in more detail in the next section.

10.1.3 Different aspects of organizational discourse

Such is the importance of organizational discourse that the model below was developed in order to develop in more detail what is actually meant by the term, as well as what is covered by it. This model was developed from two different sources; first the literature review of previous research looking at the experiences of lesbians and gay men and minority sexuality in organizations, which was presented in Section 4. Second the data collected as part of this research project and the main themes were added to the themes from the literature review. Language and discourse pervade the model and has only been highlighted as a separate aspect in terms of talk; in a sense all the aspects highlighted are discursive elements. The three aspects of identity work are maintained at the centre of the model. These are silence, disclosure and difference. Finally, there are six aspects of organizational discourse. One is talk, or language, of course. The others are Rules, Physical Arrangements, Signs and Symbols, Dividing Practices, and the Response to Difference. There are two different types of response to difference; one is the response which is identified by the sexual minorities themselves, and which is identified as part of the coming out

model, incorporated as part of the self-narrative. The other response to difference is expressed by extracts of discourse which focus on the way that the organization and its employees have reacted to sexual minorities and contribute to the construction of their subject positions, subjectivity and therefore overall identity:

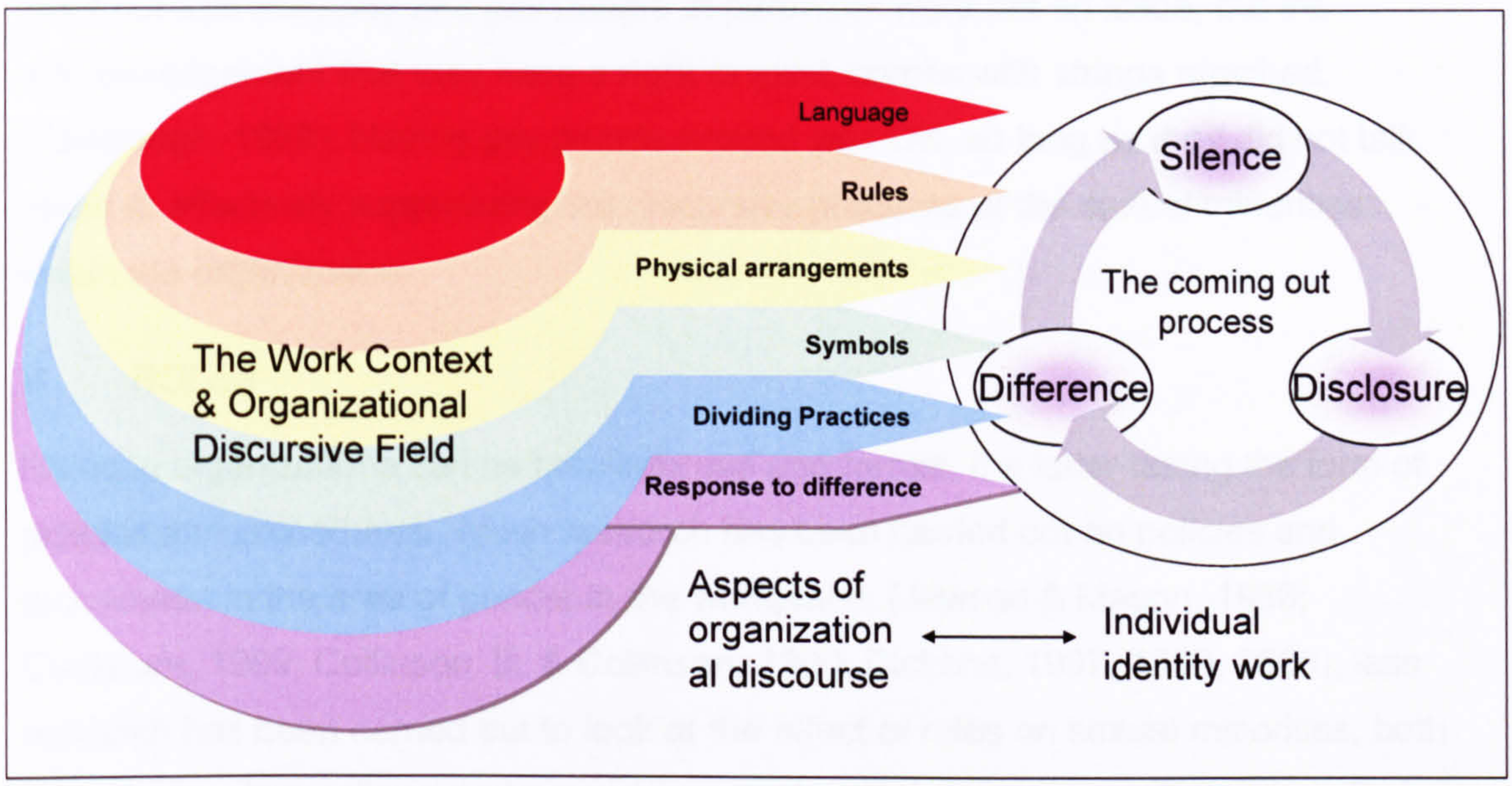


Figure 10: Aspects of Organizational Discourse

A. LANGUAGE

Discourse is not simply as a linguistic device, but is central to the 'social construction of reality' (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Hardy et al, 2000: 1231). It is both socially constituted and socially constitutive as it produces objects of knowledge, social identities and relationships between people, (Foucault, 1976; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Hardy et al., 2000; Howarth, 2000; Oswick et al., 2000). As a vehicle for power, it can mean the domination of one group by another, in an oppositional relationship, (Fairclough, 1989: 91), and the dominated discourse is under pressure to be silenced, suppressed and eliminated. In this research project, it was found that discourse, or talk or the language used, was aimed, at times, at suppressing the minority. Interestingly, though, what was actually allowed depended on the visibility of the minorities at the time. One officer in the Fire Service, who was known to be gay, arrived at a Station and as soon as he arrived "*(someone) grabbed something from the notice board, and screwed it up and threw it in the bin*". He was visible as an officer because of his uniform, and because of the previous knowledge his colleagues had about him, also as a gay man, (Goffman, 1963b). He retrieved the offending article from the bin, and it turned out to be a "*gay joke, taking the mickey out of someone, putting their picture on the cover of Gay Times.*"

One of the ways in which power is expressed in organizations is the seen as the power to sustain particular discursive practices with particular ideological investments in dominance over other alternative (including oppositional) practices, (Fairclough, 1995: 2). Many of the fire-fighters that took part in the focus groups were at pains to point out that sexuality and gay people in particular were not an issue, but the acknowledgement that they have a right to exist, comes with strings attached, (Fairclough, 1989). Having gay people around was OK, so long as they did not talk about it, effectively suppressing the discursive practices of the sexual minorities within the organization.

B. RULES

Rules in organizations can be both informal and formal, the latter taking the form of policies and procedures. Much research has been carried out on policies and procedures in the area of gender in the workplace, (Jewson & Mason, 1986; Cockburn, 1989; Collinson, D, & Collinson, 1990; Dickens, 1997, 1999, 2000); less research has been carried out to look at the effect of rules on sexual minorities, both formal rules, like policies and procedures, and more informal, unwritten rules. For example, Clair (1998) argues that such rules help to silence sexual harassment stories, keeping them part of the private domain. In the bureaucratization of sexual harassment, the rules are that it is not harassment unless you say no, keep a record and report it. Denying rules expose some interesting stereotypes; for example, the requirement of documentation perpetuates the stereotype that women lack credibility. This research has shown that there may not be policies and procedures for guidance on recruitment, job moves and promotion, or decisions may be made in the absence of clear guidance or even if policies and procedures exist, sexual minorities themselves may feel unwilling, or unable to make a complaint.

A gay officer in the Fire Service recounted the time he went for promotion, and failed, see Story 25: Missing Out on Promotion (The Fire Service), on page 212. This example demonstrates that being out at work also creates the possibility for discrimination as well as creating greater commitment to the organization as research suggests. It is interesting to note that although the discrimination that the individual experienced encouraged him to join another Brigade, he did not challenge it. Nevertheless, even though he was sure that he had suffered from the senior manager's attitude towards him, it was not possible for him to go back into the Closet, either at his current place of work, where everyone knew he was gay, or at his future one, where the news travelled faster than he did.

Another example of a blocked job move is the story from a gay fire-fighter who wanted to transfer to get additional training to develop and improve his job knowledge and responsibilities, but could not because he was gay, (see Story 16: When the Watch isn't Happy (The Fire Service) on page 197). He was turned down for the transfer because the Watch, to which he was to transfer, did not want to work with a gay man. Interestingly, instead of challenging the watch for their homophobic attitudes, the officer on the watch approached the training department to ask what he should do. Although they did not know the individual concerned, the fact that he was gay, was enough for the Watch to express their unhappiness as a group to the officer-in-charge of the FRU. The difficulty in this situation may be created by the lack of policies. As a result the officer-in-charge has to ask for advice on how he should deal with the situation. This situation impacts on the way the individual fire-fighter experiences being gay at work; firstly he is put into a position because of his sexuality, and secondly he is left, at his own request, to resolve the situation himself.

Of course, it is not only in the Fire Service that Policies and Procedures have an impact on sexual minorities. Consider the story "Accommodating Prejudice" which is a very similar incident, which took place in Government Department B. The group that the gay individual was going to go and manage did not want to have a gay man as a manager. Instead of challenging the views of the group, the organization decided to move the gay man instead. In this case the individual felt that he could not make an official complaint. In Bank A also, in the story "Coming out on the Trading Floor", the individual "did not feel comfortable" with making a complaint. There is perhaps an unofficial rule in this Bank that you do not complain. If that is the case, this helped to keep the incident in the private domain, which is ideal for the bullies.

Policies and procedures, whilst they can protect minorities, can also be used as an excuse by those who wish to discriminate. For example in Story 15: The Joint Cheque-Account (Bank B), on page 196, the Personal Banker refused to open a join cheque account for same sex partners, blaming it on the 'rules'. Organizations are worlds of formal rules and procedures, (Gabriel, 2000: 24), although in this case it turns out that this rule was incorrectly applied and outdated, if it had ever existed, and she was probably saving herself the trouble of having to defend an unfair decision.

C. PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENTS

Previous research has highlighted the impact of the workplace environment on individuals, (McDowell, 1997: 36). Indeed, just because this is a discourse analytic study does not mean it is possible to ignore the physical environment. On the contrary, discourse analysis requires researchers to attend to aspects of bounded space, the landscape in which discourse is conducted, (Keenoy & Oswick, 2003: 139). Clearly, the immediate physical locale in which a discursive episode is located may be important, (Keenoy & Oswick, 2003: 139 - 140). They are not simply a backdrop to text, they are actually embedded within it: the text actually forms part of the context and vice versa, (Keenoy & Oswick, 2003: 140).

Fire Stations do not look or feel like a place of work. There are two pieces of furniture that are common to most stations – the pool table and the brew table. A lot of the fire-fighters' time is spent 'hanging around' waiting for an incident to happen, and so some facilities are provided, such as the pool table, to help them pass the time. The brew table is a large table around which the whole Watch sits to eat, talk and drink tea, hence the name. Other forms of entertainment are readily on view, for example, television and video. Toilet and changing facilities are, by and large, very basic. In most stations, the rest areas are tucked away from view, although in some they are visible to the casual visitor; they are equipped like dormitories, with beds, made with sheets and blankets. The fact that the changing and showering facilities are often open and communal for the same gender can affect the identity of gay employees, and their choice of whether or not to come out in the workplace, as can be seen from Story 1: The Showers (Fire Service), on page 144. Whereas people choose to remain in the Closet and keep their sexual identity hidden from view for a variety of reasons, such as fear of harassment, bullying and physical violence, on this occasion the decision not to reveal his sexuality was driven by the physical environment, that is to say the communal showers, and the perceived fear of what might happen if his colleagues were to find out that he was gay.

D. SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

This Fire Service is an organization, which has many signs and symbols. Even the public's view of this organization is full of symbols, as demonstrated by soap-operas like "London's Burning". Examples of symbols include the uniform, representing the semi-disciplined service; the sirens and Fire engines representing the emergency response aspect of the service; the clearly visible Fire Stations represent the high public profile that the service enjoys. Sex is not an explicit symbol in the Fire

Service, as it was in the media company in the study by Wilson (2000), but the different symbols, which do exist, have an impact on minority sexual identity. In this following section, we briefly discuss two symbols: the Fire Bell and Uniforms and their impact on the three ways we have highlighted of experiencing minority sexual identity.

One significant symbol, which has attracted a lot of attention in recent years and not a little controversy is the uniform. The role of uniform is also important for minorities, as it gives the organization a sign of their rank, and a reminder of the respect that is due to them in a semi-disciplined service, respect which might otherwise be missing as fire-fighters see the minority sexual identity before they see anything else. One gay officer told me that his white shirt (a sign of officer status in his Brigade) was of help in making his sexual identity of secondary concern. It also changed people's behaviour around him, for example:

> *"I remember going to a Station a few months ago, and I was aware that as soon as I arrived, someone grabbed something from the notice board, and screwed it up and threw it in the bin."*

Uniform also underscores the idea of inclusion, membership and cohesion and imposes a uniformity, which in a way undermines difference. It is about membership and belonging. Although in a way this subsumes individual identities and difference, it can also be used for resistance and affirmation of alternative identities by taking it to a different context such as a Gay Pride march. In the following quotation, one gay fire-fighter explained how he used the uniform, and the affection that surrounds it, as a positive symbol at the London lesbian and gay pride march, explicitly advertising the link between the Fire Service, uniform and sexual identity:

> *"I attended the Gay Pride march in uniform, raising the profile of gay men in the Fire Service, and looking to recruit more gay men."*

Most of the debate about whether the Fire Service should wear a uniform or not has centred around the need for discipline in the service and the need for a physical expression of rank. The uniform is a symbol of the disciplined nature of the service, as well as being a symbol of its history and its links with the armed forces. There is a often a difference between the way that fire-fighters behave on the fire-ground and the way they behave as a Watch when they are back at the Station. There is a physical sign or symbol, which represents the barrier: the Fire Bell. As soon as the Fire Bells ring, the fire-fighters are focussed on getting to the scene of the incident. Only when the incident is over, and they receive the instruction to return to the Station, do they return to the banter, ribbing and horseplay, which is a feature of life

on a Watch. Derrida's neologism 'différance' is a useful concept to help in understanding this practice, (Collins & Mayblin, 2000: 75); there is a binary opposition of the action outside, and the passive waiting inside, which is separated in both time and space. This is particularly linked to the passive waiting for something to happen, as opposed to the active service when there is an incident or an emergency; symbols are needed to highlight the transition.

The Fire Bell is the link between the passive waiting, which typifies much of the job of the fire-fighter, and the active role of responding to an incident. The active 'space' is one, which typifies inclusion and teamwork; there is no distinction between fire-fighters, as they are all focussed on getting the job done. However, in the 'passive' space, there are many opportunities for exclusion, which is felt particularly by sexual minorities. The passive space is a time for social activities of various sorts; playing pool, basketball and, of course, eating.

In the office environment, for example, in the Civil Service, signs and symbols may be less obvious, but they are still there. Again, Derrida's concept of différance helps to deconstruct the marginalization being enacted upon the expression of minority sexuality when it is considered that displays of heterosexual sexuality are constantly evident in the work environment, such as wedding rings, talk of husbands and wives and pictures of children. This contradiction can lead some to feel that minority sexuality is of no interest to other people, rather than sexuality in general, (for example see Story 11: Private Lives (Government Department A) on page 177). There is the acknowledgement that they have a right to exist, although this right comes with strings attached, (Fairclough, 1989); as long as they suppress their own identity. But identity is constituted, in this instance, in another way; through performance. Heterosexual couplings at work social events may be described as a performance; in certain circumstances it is almost ritualistic. Performativity, and in this case performativity of heteronormativity, is a repetition and a ritual which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body and culturally accepted norms, (Butler, 1999).

E. DIVIDING PRACTICES

Sexual orientation, unlike other areas of diversity, is invisible; in organizations where few people feel able to come out, this means that the individual experiences an intense feeling of isolation. This might be the case in any organization, but in the Fire Service, discussion of sexuality is still a real taboo, coupled with the prevalent

assumption that gay and lesbian fire-fighters just do not exist. This story is not an isolated one, as other gay fire-fighters describe similar experiences: "I always thought I was the only gay Fire-fighter in the UK, and I was told by many people or asked the question - would you be sacked if your employers found out?" Socialization into an organization, can take various forms, including wearing the same uniform, (Holliday, 1999), socializing or joining in with banter, (Woods and Lucas, 1993). One of the ways that new recruits become socialized within the Watch is by going through some kind of initiation ceremony, such as Story 21: The Betting Book (Fire Service) on page 205.

There are various stories of inclusion, among them Story 18: The Recruitment Event (Bank A), on page 200. Although it is an example of the way that the organization attempts to include sexual minorities, the event still manages to attract an amount of criticism, nevertheless; there are the senior managers who are not at the event but are against it. The latter are a silent voice; interestingly they are the ones who are not heard by the students. After all, they would have come to the event to find out what it is really like being gay and working in an investment bank.

One aspect of exclusion which arose was the exclusion in the research process. The only story about an agency worker came from Bank B, on page 201. During my research at Bank B I was never made to feel particularly welcome in the organization. As a researcher, I was even introduced as an 'outsider' on more than one occasion. It is interesting from an organizational point of view that the villain of the piece is an outsider.

The research also raised other issues of exclusion, which were not directly to do with sexuality. For example, Story 24: Challenging Appropriately (the Police) on page 210, raises the issue of the two-employee culture in the police. In focus groups where there were sworn staff present, people denied that there was a two-employee culture, but where there were focus groups exclusively of support staff there were quite vociferous in their support of the idea that they were treated less well and they cited examples from getting paid less, to having fewer opportunities to being treated differently in a disciplining situation as above.

F. RESPONSE TO DIFFERENCE

The police is associated with men and masculinity, (Miller et al., 2003); this was borne out from the stories which were told by individual officers, as well as in the extracts of discourse. Gay people are seen as unreliable, (Weeks, 1977; Schuyf,

2000; Seidman, 2003), and as police work is seen as inextricably linked with the body and its performance, it is assumed that gay people cannot express outwardly the physical signs of being a police officer. Officers need to perform masculinity in order to be taken seriously, by both fellow police officers and the public. They are sometimes able, but equally sometimes unable to acquire the cultural markers associated with the attributes that are valued in the workplace, (McDowell, 1997: 35).

The response to difference is similar in the Fire Service, but characterised by there being the two different 'spaces'. In the Fire Station, which is not necessarily viewed as a workplace per se by fire-fighters, there is a lot of 'hanging around' as fire-fighters wait for an incident to happen. The response to difference in this 'space' is potentially hostile, and is potentially made up of banter and horseplay. The Fire Bell then moves people from the casual, informal banter time to a different 'space', where the focus is on performance, where all differences are put aside, and getting the job done overrides all else. The Fire Bell is therefore a way of regulating time and space and interaction. The experience of being gay is different in each zone. In the Civil Service, response to difference can be expressed through resistance on behalf of, or by, the minority themselves. For example in Extract 7, (on page 192), from Government Department B a female member of staff comes to the focus group as a participant in order to stop negative banter about sexual minorities by the men in the office, who are the ones who are powerful. She is a bystander, and therefore mostly passive, but in this case she tried to bring the situation to an end by coming to the focus group. In Government Department A, there was the only example of gay people being in the majority in a focus group, and it is assumed that the lesbian and gay network used the focus groups as a site of their own resistance.

10.2 SEXUAL MINORITY SUBJECTIVITIES AND SUBJECT POSITIONS

The types of stories that people tell help us to understand the way that they narratively construct their own self-identity or subjectivity, as well as the subject positions that they and other create in the organizations in which they work. The stories that have been used in this thesis were first classified according to their plot using the original Aristotlean basis, (Gabriel, 2000), and this is shown in the following table:

Comic	Epic	Tragic	Romantic
Amusement, mirth, disparagement. Jokes & humorous stories	*Struggle, achievement & victory. Emotional qualities of admiration, approval & pride*	*Misfortune – generates fear and pity for the victim.*	*Unsolicited kindness and the triumph of love & humanity over other forces*
• Coming out again and again • Mr Gay UK • The Diversity email • The Betting Book • The Wedding • Location… • When being gay helps	• The recruitment event • The Stonewall dinner	• Coming out on the Trading floor • Come & meet your team leader • The Showers • Coming out to the whole shift • No choice • The leaflet drop • Private lives • Section 28 • A fresh start • Challenging behaviour • The Joint Cheque account • When the Watch isn't happy • Accommodating Prejudice • Finding out you're not alone • The Pink Watch • Missing out on promotion • Challenging appropriately • The training school	

Table 12: Classification of stories using classical Aristotlean definitions (adapted from Gabriel, 2000)

Ironically perhaps there are no romantic stories; one would expect intuitively when researching sexual identity that there would have been at least some stories of romance. Perhaps the nearest is 'The Wedding', although that was classified as a Comedy because that was the vein in which the story was told. And yet it is an important finding that the majority of stories fall within one category, according to the Aristotlean typology. This may be because when researching into potential areas of discrimination, one is going to hear stories of discrimination. It may be because the storytellers have told stories that they think the researcher wants to hear. It may also be because the most shocking stories are also the most interesting.

Nevertheless, in order to use such a typology analytically, the types or 'genres' were split into 'subgenres', (Keen, 2003: 143). The Aristotlean typology, whilst important, does not neatly fit these stories; for example, the Epic suggests a saga, a long narrative with events that continue over a long period of time. In addition, the difficulty with this type of analysis is that individual stories possess a combination of themes, and there is therefore a difficulty in developing a number of subgenres, (Keen, 2003: 143), and, without implying any lowly status, they are able to describe general themes and qualities to the stories. It is natural to want to know where a narrative fits in a taxonomy, (Keen, 2003: 144), and, it was necessary to develop some categorization to elicit the most important themes in these narratives. Table 13 shows how the stories fit into the taxonomy of subgenres.

As the stories were classified into sub-genres, some of them changed their overall classification of typology; this is not surprising since the intention is not to find a method of boxing each story into a particular typology. In addition, each story typically has more than one quality or theme, so they easily change classification as more detail is put around the category.

Aristotle's Plot Types	Comic		Tragic			Epic
Sub-genres	**Irony**	**Banter**	**Mistakes & Misfortune**	**The Cautionary Tale**	**Victimhood**	**Achievement**
Stories	Coming out again & again Mr Gay UK The Diversity e-mail Location…	When being gay helps The Betting Book Private lives The Training school	Coming out on the trading floor No choice Missing out on promotion The Joint Cheque Account	Section 28 The Showers The leaflet drop Challenging Behaviour Accommodating prejudice	Come and meet your team leader Coming out to the whole shift When the Watch isn't happy Challenging appropriately	The recruitment event The Stonewall Dinner Finding out you're not alone The Wedding A fresh start

Table 13: Stories classified into sub-genres

10.2.1 Irony as a device in creating alternative subject positions

Elements of the stories, although not necessarily qualifying as different categories of plots, help to create subject positions for sexual minorities. Humour, and irony in particular, is an important device in creating identity. Irony is a device used in humorous stories, but can be found elsewhere, such as in tragic stories, (Skoldberg, 2002: 74). It is where something which was intended to have a particular result has the opposite or a very different result, (Skoldberg, 2002: 3). The ironic device in the story is often presented as a mistake, or a mixed message. In "the Diversity e-mail", the HR department made a mistake in separating out sexuality. In "Coming out on the Trading Floor" the traders mistakenly stumbled across their colleague's name. "Coming Out Again..." depended on the protagonist not knowing about her colleague's sexuality and putting her foot in it. Mistakes are a regular feature of stories, but the key is whether the mistake is seen as motivated or not; it is this feature which makes the "Closet on the Trading Floor" different to the other stories where the mistake is an unintentional blunder; in this story, the initial intent is a cruel one.

Irony is also used to describe the difference between characters' perspectives (situational) showing that one view is far from the truth or indeed between their limited perspective and the reader's greater awareness looking down upon everything (dramatic). It can refer to a comment where something is said with an intended underlying meaning contrary to the face value of the statement, and where the underlying meaning is meant to be apprehended by the audience. It is important to recognize that irony can be an element in a story as much as a genre in its own right. Even the telling of a story can be in an ironic style. Its aim, however, is different to that of humour, and therefore worthy of a separate label: it is a sophisticated and subtle strategy, which allows us to enjoy the gap between what is expected and what things are really like, (Oswick, Keenoy, & Grant, 2002; Oswick, Putnam, & Keenoy, 2004: 107), and "so to critique as well as laugh", (Wisker, 2001: 17). Taking the example of the Diversity Email, the ironic twist in the story is that the organization's HR department actually become the victim of the story through its retelling.

It is not the intention here to introduce a major discussion on the function of the ironic perspective on the human condition, an area which has been previously explored in

great detail in the context of postmodernism, (Derrida, 1978; Rorty, 1989). However, ironic discourse can provide a destabilizing influence on seemingly fixed, heteronormative arrangements, just as it can on gender arrangements, (Gherardi, 1995: 145). Susan Sontag described the victory of irony over tragedy as camp, (Sontag, 1999: 64). The story of Mr Gay UK (Fire Service) on page 155 has an element of irony, or 'campness', in that the protagonist had a fairly limited view of the consequences of entering the beauty parade, and yet the reader of this story has much greater awareness of what might happen. His coming out was an unintended consequence of being pushed on stage. It is also camp in its irony, in so far as there is an incongruous contrast between the gay fire-fighter as individual and the context of the male beauty contest, (Babuscio, 1999: 119; Cleto, 1999; Johnson, 2003), in the same way that calendars of semi-naked fire-fighters become the object of the male gaze in the context of a very masculine and male-dominated world. Further irony is played out in the threat of the gay fire-fighter's colleague who tells him that he had better start being open with people; how more open can you be than declare your sexuality on television?

Irony insinuates doubt in two ways; there is the binary doubt of knowing and not knowing, (Sedgwick, 1991: 94), and there is the doubt that the world can be understood in very different terms, but it does not propose these other terms as alternative, better or more correct. This dissonance could be linguistic or, as in this example of the gay beauty contest, situational, (Oswick et al., 2004: 119). Also known as the irony of events (Booth, 1974 in Oswick et al, 2004: 119), this form of irony creates dissonance by comparing events to the logic of the situation, (Oswick et al., 2004: 119). It is also a processual invitation to consider how things can be redefined, how common sense, or hegemonic discourses can be problematized, (Gherardi, 1995: 145). Indeed, the problematization or destabilization of the hegemonic discourse of heteronormativity is an area, demonstrated through this research project, as being rich in situational irony, an area which is under-represented in organizational research, (Oswick et al., 2004: 121). The ironist is someone who has lost their innocence and is no longer able to believe in Truth and the Real. Every discourse allows some possibilities and disallows others; the ironic stresses the possibility of switching from one discourse to another and of casting doubt on the rules which govern discourse, (Gherardi, 1995: 146). One story, or anecdote, which was told in an ironic sense was Story 12: Location, Location, Location (Government Department A) on page 180, where a staff member from the Darlington site, in Government Department A, suggested that there were no gay

people in Darlington. Of course, its telling was meant to insinuate doubt, and create the intended reaction from focus group participants, which was of course to insist that there were.

Irony can also be a means of resistance, through which sexual minorities can start to construct a more positive sense of identity, (Goffman, 1969; Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999; Collinson, 2003: 539), though of course, it is not the only one. Collinson (2003) suggests that while strikes are more visible and receive more attention, other forms of resistance can be more subversive such as indifference, foot-dragging and whistleblowing, (Collinson, 2003: 539).

10.2.2 Banter

Humour has been theorized in terms of resistance but also in subtly undermining others. Banter and joke-telling is an essential part of Fire Service life; relieving tension in this way serves many purposes, reducing the boredom which occurs from time to time in the job, as well as reducing the stressful aspect of a job in which individuals have to see some unpleasant things. It is recognized that banter can serve a useful purpose, and here two reasons are specifically referred to. First, there is the idea that in dangerous situations fire-fighters have to rely on each other and, before entering a life-threatening situation with a colleague, it is important to 'test' them. The other reason is around relieving the boredom of a job that involves a lot of 'hanging around'. This functional approach to humour in organizations has been criticized by researchers, however, precisely because it fails to explain the power asymmetries and inequalities in organizations, (Collinson, 2002: 271). Sometimes the banter can backfire; one gay fire-fighter recounted the time that he and other members of his Watch gave each other Christmas presents. As a joke, *"he'd got a present lined up - a copy of The Pink Paper and Boyz all wrapped up. He wanted to see my face when I opened it, but he'd done this before he knew I was gay."* In the meantime, the fire-fighter came out, so the joke backfired.

In Discourse Extract 3 (on page 165) the subject position created by the group is a gay person who is light-hearted about their sexuality. This can be compared to Extract 2, where the fire-fighter suggests that he dislikes those sexual minorities who present themselves as victimized. In other words, if you are serious as a gay man or lesbian, it is problematic for everyone else; an acceptable subject position for sexual minorities is a source of humour and banter.

10.2.3 Mistakes and misfortune

The stories also help us understand how subject positions are created in organizations through mistakes and misfortunes, (Gabriel, 2000: 90). Mistakes are a common feature of organizational stories, and misfortune clearly a theme; in particular in Story 4: No choice about coming out (Police), on page 151, misfortune surrounded the individual's coming out at work, given that he was caught cruising and arrested. For example, in "Coming out on the Trading Floor" in section 7.1.5 on page 153, the individual's name was found by mistake, and the story demonstrates that lesbian and gay employees can be constituted as figures of fun; although the individual did not have any choice, he was forced to adopt the subject position of someone who was being ridiculed when they found his name on the list. The mistake can also be made by someone not carrying out their job properly, either knowingly or unknowingly, as in the case of Story 15: The Joint Cheque-Account (Bank B) on page 196 where the Bank clerk wrongly informed the customer that they could not open a Joint Cheque account with someone of the same gender.

10.2.4 The Cautionary Tale and the function of warnings in organizations

Despite the best efforts of organizations to control situations, and even censor information, alternative, unmanaged spaces are still created in organizations. One of the functions of stories seems to be in the creation of these spaces; these spaces then function didactically (e.g. Tangherlini, 1998: xxvi) or to give warnings. This is referred to here as the 'cautionary tale'. It is a tale or fable where there is an unexpected event which presents a moral, a learning opportunity or a message which warns the reader to beware, either because of unexpected outcomes or hidden agendas. This is a device to make the authorial intention irresistible and influence the reader's own thinking. It might be suggested that of all the important functions of organizational stories, giving a warning is one of the most important. They give an informal, unwritten, but no less effective guide to the rules of the organization.

Some of the stories were actually about warnings, for example Story 3: Come and meet your team leader (Bank B) on page 149. This story also has the theme of warning, and telling others to beware. For whatever reason, the manager running the induction believes that they have to warn the new recruits that their manager is gay.

One of the most impressive Cautionary Tales in this collection of stories about sexual minorities is Story 13: Section 28 (Government Department A) on page 182. It is clear that, despite the best efforts of the organization, the story is well known by a large number of people. In addition, one of the participants in the focus groups admitted that he had planned to come along and be positive about the organization, but his boss had only just questioned his ability to lead the department because of his sexuality. 'Section 28' as a cautionary tale had sensitized him to the possibility of this type of discrimination. The warning is to other gay people who aspire to have a career that while the rhetoric of the organization says that there is no discrimination, there is a certain amount of distrust at the senior levels of the organization about the ability of gay people to operate in senior positions. Other stories which warn on the same theme include "When the Watch isn't happy",, "Accommodating Prejudice" and "Missing out on Promotion".

In all of the organizations that took part in this study there was rhetoric about diversity management which encouraged people to be out at work and to celebrate their minority sexuality. As a result, although examples existed of overt discrimination and hostility, there were also examples of where people were publicly accepting of sexual minorities, but would then covertly carry out acts of hostility. Examples of this in the stories include "The Leaflet Drop", on page 175, and "Come and Meet you Team Leader", on page 149. In the first story, the Bank was publicly supporting the efforts of the lesbian and gay network, but there was a widespread covert reaction from employees of the Bank, where the was a series of unconnected, but similar, incidents where people collected the leaflets and piled them all the desk of the one person in the department that they suspected of being gay. In the second story, the warning is about how other people might misuse the information of being gay, and the need to manage information about oneself in the workplace. This brings in Goffman's idea, about moving from the management of information to the management of an identity, (Goffman, 1969).

10.2.5 Subjectivity as victimhood

What is immediately apparent from the basic plot analysis in Table 12 of the thirty stories presented here is that three-quarters of them are Tragic stories, in the sense that there is a victim at the centre of the story, usually the teller of the story, and the aim of the story is to generate some sense of pity, or even horror, in the mind of the listener, or reader. One of the reasons for this may be that the interviewees were

looking to tell a particular kind of story and had assumed that there was a certain fixed research agenda. Indeed, more than one interviewee had commented that they were not particularly good research subjects because nothing bad had happened to them. In general, most of the stories shout "Victim", not just the tragic ones, but the comic ones too. Ironically, though it is the heterosexual colleagues who become victims as they fulfil the role of the villain in the story. Indeed it is not uncommon for storytellers to portray themselves as higher moral character than their antagonists, (Robinson, 1981: 64; Tangherlini, 1998: xxvi). As Tangherlini (1998) explains, this is not to be disparaged, as it is merely a device to further one's self esteem. This the gay storytellers do by portraying themselves as passive recipients of the aggression or thoughtlessness of their heterosexual colleagues. For instance, 'The Diversity Email' is a story that generates laughter every time it is told, and therefore has been classified as a comic story, but it is important to note that the story still has a victim at its heart, the sexual minorities who were denied a focus group in the same way as the other diversity categories. The stories are often gripes with occasional jocular elements, which can be compared to Rose Coser's work on stories that patients tell about doctors, waking patients up to give them a sleeping pill, (Coser, 1979). Occasionally, there are traces of defiance, and although there are not any truly 'Epic' stories, there are a few stories of gradually winning.

Tragic stories, as well as epics, normally have a hero associated with them. Just like heroes, victims carry potent cultural symbolism, (Gabriel, 2000: 48). Victims of natural or man-made disasters are at the forefront of the media and epitomize one aspect of the experience of the individual faced with a force over which they have no power, (Gabriel, 2000: 48). What is clear is that many organizational stories of this nature cannot be seen to be entertaining in the folkloric model, (Gabriel, 2000: 49). And yet the theme of victim is played out in different ways, sometimes the victim is left feeling powerless, as in "Coming out on the Trading Floor", but in other stories the victim turns to survivor, or even victor in the "The Stonewall Dinner". Stories can tell us about the organizational climate more broadly.

Of course, it is not just sexual minorities that are put in a subjugated role; recent research has argued that identity regulation is a central feature of organizational control, (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Collinson, 2003: 536). Collinson (2003) suggests that those individuals who are subordinated at work may wish to distance themselves form the organization and escape into a private world outside work, (Collinson, 2003: 537), a concept not unknown to sexual minorities who may have

practised such a survival technique before they came out, see section 4.2.1 on page 91. The cumulative effect of reading and hearing these stories does not however leave one feeling that gays and lesbians are predominantly victims in this organization, instead this is balanced with resistance, celebration and a sense of a positive social identity.

10.2.6 Achievement and the 'Survivor'

When the theme turns to victims, resistance cannot be far away, and, indeed, resistance seems to be particularly important in sexual storytelling, and achievement can represent a means of coping with misfortune, (Gabriel, 2000: 90 - 91). Clearly, one would expect stories from sexual minorities to form part of the resistance (Foucault, 1976) to the compulsive heterosexuality (Butler, 1990) which is found in most organizations, but it does surface here as a very clear theme. For example, the struggle to get support for sponsorship in "The Stonewall Dinner". In all these stories, there is an element of struggle on the part of the minority against the organization, and, interestingly, in most of the stories, the minority wins the day, constituting a subject position as 'survivor'. There is also resistance in telling us the story, which otherwise would remain hidden within the organization. However, in showing resistance, it is important to note that in some of these stories, at least, (for example, "the Diversity e-mail", "Coming out on the Trading Floor") heterosexuals are placed in a position of power over their lesbian and gay colleagues.

Of, course the story of Achievement is a positive one; it may also highlight areas which intuitively seem to be problems, but may not necessarily be so. They might warn lesbian or gay individuals at work not to be defensive about their sexuality. One of the most difficult aspects of being an invisible minority is the isolation and the perception that you are the only one in the organization. This seems to be exacerbated in organizations which are predominantly male, like the Fire Service where over 98% of fire-fighters are male. Therefore, Story 9: Finding Out You're not Alone (The Fire Service), on page 174, acts as a good news story, and, as it is told and retold in the organization other people who may have been, or who are, in a similar situation will be able to see that they are not alone. Other more positive stories include "The Wedding", "The Betting Book", "The Stonewall Dinner" and "The Recruitment Event". These stories may also fulfil a function of psychological survival for the sexual minorities who hear them, (Gabriel, 2000: 91).

10.2.7 The silent identity

One of the interesting findings in the Police (Extract 1: The Police on page 160) was the way that the subject positions of both the police officer and the sexual minorities were about hiding, and in hiding the body was a key discursive element. By identifying and occupying privileged bodily designations, the mark of a competent police officer is their ability to display the body in a manner that is culturally acceptable to their organization's body code. Most obviously this relates to dress and physical appearance, (Kerfoot, 2000), which relates to the use of uniform in the Police, and Fire Service, but could just as easily refer, in the case of gay men or lesbians overtly effeminate or masculine behaviour.

10.2.8 The performed identity

One of the stories that highlights the performative aspect of coming out is Story 6: Mr Gay UK (Fire Service) on page 155, by contrasting one of the famous examples of performativity, Austin's example of the marriage ceremony, with a male beauty contest. This story is subversive, in parodying heterosexual beauty contests, just as drag subverts heterosexual gender ideals, (Butler, 1993: 231). It also underlines the theatricality of the performative act, reversing the discursive convention of the fire-fighter. Previous discussions of coming out in the organizational literature (Boatwright, Gilbert, Forrest, & Ketzenberger, 1996; Day & Schoenrade, 1997, 2000; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001), have been highlighted, in particular where the literature has covered levels of coming out, and the types of performance prior to coming out, for example passing and covering, (Croteau, 1996). It is suggested that our understanding can be enhanced by building on the existing literature by considering the reiterative nature of performing a minority sexual identity, leading to a concept of minority sexual identity in the workplace as a site of identity work and continued performance.

10.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORK CONTEXT

Another way in which this thesis has made a contribution is the unprecedented levels of access to organizations which are part of our daily lives. Both the government departments are well known, one being a policy department and the other a very large operational one. The Police and the Fire Service go without saying. The two banks are both very well known, with the one which took a full part in the study, Bank B being a household name and a major player in the UK Finance industry. From the data it has been interesting to educe the extent to which work context has impacted on the development of sexual subjectivity and subject positions. The model that was previously developed, therefore of the process of identity work is now put in the context of the work organization in which the identity work takes place.

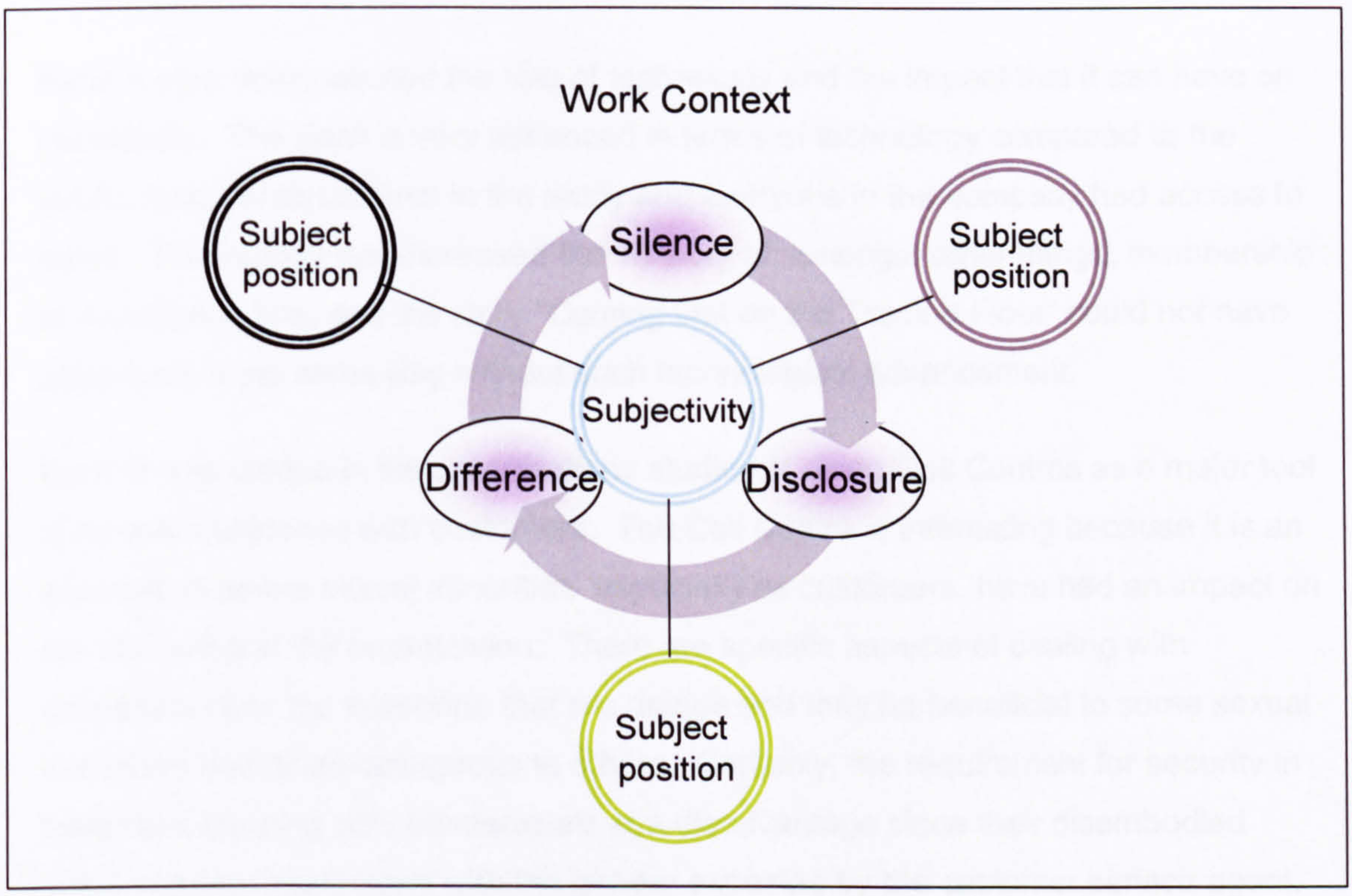


Figure 11: Different subject positions are available depending on the work context

The model in Figure 11 above shows how, depending on the work context, individuals take up different subject positions at each stage of the coming out process. Previous research in this area suggest that organizational discourse and material arrangements in organizations affect identity construction (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003: 1187), and the data presented in the previous sections suggests that work context, its discourse and physical arrangements have an important impact on sexual minorities. This is an important finding since there has been very little

research on the workplace experience of sexual minorities carried out in specific organizations (see section 4.3 on page 97), and very little or no previous research which compares different organizations in the same research project. It is disappointing of course that the organizations concerned would not allow their names to be used, but using an organizational pseudonym is not unusual in this type of research. This section on work context has been further divided into Banks, Emergency Services and the Civil Service.

10.3.1 Banks

The banks involved in this study were the only private sector organizations to take part, but the discussion of the business case justification for improving the situation for sexual minorities was far more prevalent than in the other organizations.

Bank A also demonstrated the role of technology and the impact that it can have on individuals. The Bank is very advanced in terms of technology compared to the public sector organizations in the study and everyone in the company had access to email. Technology had increased the visibility of, amongst other things, membership of distribution lists, and the story "Coming Out on the Trading Floor" could not have happened in the same way without such technological advancement.

Bank B was unique in the organizations studied in using Call Centres as a major tool in its communication with customers. The Call Centre is interesting because it is an example of where sexual minorities, especially as customers, have had an impact on the discourse in the organization. There are specific aspects of dealing with customers over the telephone that are unique and may be beneficial to some sexual minorities and disadvantageous to others. Certainly, the requirement for security in telephone banking puts transsexuals at a disadvantage since their disembodied voice may be inconsistent with the gender expected by the customer service agent.

10.3.2 The Emergency Services

The Fire Service is unique in having a work environment which conflates work and home life; there is such a significant amount of downtime, while fire-fighters wait for an incident, that there are many opportunities for interaction with colleagues, whilst shift patterns, different to the other emergency services mean that long night shifts with rest periods are spent the Fire Station. This may lead to the significant amount

of joking around and humour that is present in their working environment. Of course, anyone may be subject to the effects of banter and joking, but sexual minorities are particularly vulnerable because being gay is considered to be such a taboo in the Fire Service.

There is a real split during the working day, or night, when the fire-fighters respond to an emergency, when they are working and they feel as if they are doing something, and when they are at work, but waiting for an emergency to happen. This means that, unlike other organizations, there is no consideration of sexuality with the 'customers' of the Fire Service; focus groups were adamant that everyone received the same treatment irrespective of who they were. In addition, when responding to an emergency, fire-fighters only cared about whether their fellow team members were capable of helping them out in a crisis. Their sexuality only came to the fore when they returned to the station.

In addition, the physical arrangements of the Fire Service are quite different to other organizations; fire-fighters live, as well as work, on the Fire Station. Not only do they cook and eat together, but they also sleep in dormitories and shower in open facilities that leave the individual with very little privacy. These physical arrangements, dealt with in more detail below can have a real impact on sexual minorities.

In the Police there seems to be a real concern about image, and about the performance of being a police officer. Does the officer concerned portray the physical attributes required of him or her? How does the police officer come over to members of the public? Visibility then becomes a real issue in the police as does issues of how the body plays out its role in the organization. This is clearly comparable to other emergency services; for example Tangherlini (1998) recounts how paramedics are viewed by members of the public. They are expected to run everywhere, because that is how they are portrayed on television, even though in real life this may not be the safest course of action, or they may be carrying heavy equipment, (Tangherlini, 1998: xix). In addition, one of the unusual aspects of the Police is how many lesbian, gay and bisexual people maintain 'double-double' lives, (Goffman, 1963b; Burke, 1993: 85; 1994); the animosity between the police and the lesbian and gay communities is such that they pass, or cover, at work and at play.

Also in the Police there seems to be a reaction which medicalises sexuality, and a tendency to bureaucratize sex and desire, shown in Story 4: No choice about coming

out (Police), on page 151, and Story 26: The Training School (The Police), on page 213.

There is more interpersonal contact in the Police and the Fire Service than the other organizations, and it is perhaps harder for people in those organizations to carry on a masquerade of identity, (McDowell, 1997). The close personal relations in these organizations also mean that the costs are higher for coming out because of the dangers of potential negative reactions.

10.3.3 The Civil Service

The Civil Service, perhaps axiomatically, was concerned with the political element and the impact of sexual minorities coming out on the Minister.

In addition, although all the organizations which took part in the project were fragmented to some degree, in Government Department B it was particularly noticeable and it was in this context that people talked about the disadvantages of working in a small office. It is perhaps because in the other organizations, Banks or the Fire Service, for example, the smaller units were an inevitable part of the organization. If you join the Fire Service, you have to work on a Watch, for instance, and if you work for a Bank, inevitably they have small branches. In Government Department B, the only reason for having a large number of small offices is historical, and has no real bearing on the business they carry out. In government departments and banks, being bureaucratic organizations, there is less interpersonal interaction, (Greenberg & Bystryn, 1996: 95), which may mean that it is easier to be in the closet, though debatable whether there would be a reduced risk associated with coming out.

10.4 SUMMARY

This section has discussed the findings of the research project by referring back to the three major research questions. The section has presented the ways in which minority sexual identity is discursively constructed, the different subjectivities and subject positions that are produced, both narratively by individuals and discursively by employees within organizations, and finally the ways in which work context is an important variable in the construction of minority sexual identity.

11. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The thesis began with an exposition of the theoretical basis for this project, namely social constructionism and discourse theory. The next section looked at the ways in which the sexual subject can be conceptualized within this framework; it was suggested that there are two aspects to identity, self and social identity. Sexual identity was also described as a process, with an individual's sexual subjectivity developed through self-narratives, and their subject positions realized through the on-going performance of their sexual identity. As workplaces are often heterosexual, and the assumption is very often that the individual is heterosexual, sexual minorities go through the performative process of coming out in order to reduce the dissonance between their self and social identity.

In reviewing the academic literature of sexual orientation in the workplace, a gap was identified; the majority of previous research projects have concentrated on the lesbian or gay individual at work, irrespective of the organization. This project has addressed this gap by researching minority sexual identity and the processes of its construction in six case-study organizations: two banks, two government departments, the Police and the Fire Service.

11.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE USE OF DISCOURSE IN EMPIRICAL STUDIES

There is a relative dearth of data-rich discourse analytic studies, (Mumby, 2004: 251). Critical researchers spend a lot of time theorizing about organizational discourse, but with a few notable exceptions, there has been little time spent analysing discursive processes in organizations close up, (Mumby, 2004: 251). This thesis has attempted to address that gap by reporting on a discourse analytic study of organizations, which is rich in data.

When it came to designing the research methodology, one half was relatively straightforward; storytelling within organizational contexts provides access to narratives of sexual identity that allow for greater understanding of the processes at large in this area, it is a method which is consistent with the theoretical basis of discourse theory, and the researcher has a real interest in stories and personal narratives. However, this method alone was not going to address the issue of finding out the nature of organizational discourse on the subject of sexual minorities. Even hanging around the organization with a tape recorder would not necessarily have yielded this sort of information. A two-tier narrative technique was therefore devised,

which was a novel approach and represents one of the contributions of this thesis. Individual stories from sexual minorities in the organizations were presented to focus groups in the relevant organizations and the reaction and discussions that resulted from these focus groups were captured as examples of micro-discourse on minority sexuality. This thesis has therefore developed a different way of collecting organizational discourse. It is not, of course, unusual to be in a position of 'creating' discourse as a researcher, and this is done frequently in the form of interviews or focus groups. But with a particularly difficult and sensitive area of study such as this, it was necessary to develop an approach which not only accessed self-narratives, which would give an insight into the subjectivity of sexual minorities in organizations, but also an approach which would allow the researcher to listen to ordinary members of the organization discussing sexuality, in both positive and negative ways. The results from using this research methodology have been rich in data, and this is therefore a potentially useful research method of data collection which can be replicated in other discourse studies, and be added to the burgeoning literature on methods in discourse analysis, (Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001). In addition, the framework of discourse analytic lenses is a useful addition to the growing body of analytic methods, (Boje, 2001), offering some structure to future researchers in an area which is often criticized for having a lot of theory and little in the way of method, (Titscher et al., 2000; van Dijk, 2001; Wetherell, 2001).

Another way in which this thesis has made a contribution is the unprecedented levels of access to organizations, which are part of our daily lives. From the data it has been interesting to educe the extent to which work context has impacted on the development of sexual subjectivity and subject positions. Intuitively, one would expect different organizations to afford different environments and experiences for the sexual minorities who work for them, but there has only been very limited research in order to demonstrate this empirically, (Badgett & King, 1997; Woog, 2001), and therefore the findings of this project have developed our understanding in this area by demonstrating the ways in which the different organizational contexts influenced the sexual minorities who worked within them. For example, the Banks in the study used call centres, and this technology was seen to have a real impact on identity construction, (see section 10.3.1). The Fire Service showed how the conflation of work and home could have a negative impact on sexual minorities, and the importance of identity performance was discussed in the Police, (see section 10.3.2). Finally, the political aspect was particularly relevant in the civil service, (see section 10.3.3).

11.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY IN THE WORKPLACE

This thesis has contributed to our understanding of the concept sexual identity. It has discussed the ways in which the organizational setting, the discourse around certain incidents and the reactions of individuals all impact social identity formation, as expressed through individual narrative. Crucial to the social identity of sexual minorities is the choice of individuals to display sexual identity or keep it hidden, although we have shown that in some circumstances 'coming out' is forced upon those who are only partially 'out'. For sexual minorities, their social identity is subject to change repeatedly, as 'coming out' is a continuous process, and is open to judgement and evaluation by others who either accept or castigate them. Sexual minorities often have to face identity incongruence; either through differences in how their identity is portrayed internally or to customers, or alternatively through the incongruence of their self and social identity, which can place stress on the individual.

Identity is not natural, but social, (Knights & Willmott, 1999: 163), with our sense of self constantly changing through our discursive relations with others. Following on from the work of discourse theorists who have maintained that discourse is not just comprised of talk, but a number of other aspects, (Foucault, 1976; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Howarth, 2000; Oswick et al., 2000) a model was constructed from both the literature review and the findings to show the different aspects of discourse which have an impact on identity work and development, both in terms of subjectivity and in terms of the subject positions that people adopt in different work contexts. This was not an attempt to put a boundary around organizational discourse, but it demonstrates the talk and non-talk aspects of discourse, which were in operation in the organizations during this research project. The different elements of discourse included language, policies and procedures, physical arrangements, signs and symbols, inclusion and exclusion and the organizational response to difference. Whilst the idea that discourse constructs and develops identity is not new, nor that discourse is made up of a number of different elements, it is suggested that this project has brought a number of insights on the way that these elements interact with sexual minorities in the workplace.

This thesis has highlighted a discursive approach to considering the process of coming out, and has suggested that coming out is a reiterative, performative process. The concept of performativity can add to our understanding of both the act and the

process of coming out. Coming out is a process in terms of the different stages that lead up to coming out, it is a process in terms of the performative nature of the act itself, and it is a process in terms of the performative nature of living a minority sexual identity. Coming out is performative in the sense that it is reiterative which is consistent with Butler's view of performativity and borne out by the findings. Of particular interest is the way in which this data has demonstrated that performativity can be discussed using examples other than the heterosexual marriage ceremony, (Austin, 1962), or Butler's example of drag, (Butler, 1990). One of the best examples was Story 6: Mr Gay UK (Fire Service), where the story presented a subversive parody of the discursive convention of the heterosexual fire-fighter.

11.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR POWER RELATIONS AND IDENTITY

The exercise of power in organizations has, in the past, been conceptualized as being gendered, (Martin, 1990; Knights & Willmott, 1999; Linstead & Thomas, 2002), but this research project adds to our understanding of power relations in organizations, by suggesting that they can also be conceptualized through sexual orientation. For example, the section on silence (section 8) develops our understanding of the different ways that silence can be used as an expression of power, in the different ways in which it impacts on sexual minorities. It is conceptualized as a vital element of discourse, but one which changes its shape. Understanding the shape of the silence in operation helps us to understand the talk which surrounds it. The different shapes of silence and the different ways in which power is expressed through silence include the absence of language, the blank response, suppression and censorship at work, and resistance and self-protection. This demonstrates that power relations have positive and negative aspects, and that power flows both ways in power relations, not just from the powerful to the less powerful.

Power relations have also been explored through the response to difference, and the discourse which was created as a result of the focus groups listening to the individual stories. For example, the research showed the ways in which sexual minorities could be included, or excluded, in organizations, and the ways in which in the organizations studied, prejudice and exclusion was allowed to thrive with very little in the way of sanction; indeed, it was suggested in one organization that where discrimination occurred, it was always the victim who was moved, 9.1.3. Other areas which demonstrated power relations around sexual minorities were humour, tokenism and discrimination in promotion. Of particular interest was the way in which these

dynamics demonstrated different discursive elements such as Binary Oppositions, (Derrida, 1976, 1978), for example in Story 13: Section 28 (Government Department A), where by reinterpreting the hierarchy of the story, it was possible to critically analyse the exclusion of the gay man from policy making. Story 26: The Training School (The Police), demonstrated the way in which Dividing Practices, (Foucault, 1976), set sexual minorities apart and encouraged students at the Training School to carry out gay scenarios. Foucault's Rules, (Foucault, 1969) were demonstrated in various different stories and discourse extracts, such as Story 15: The Joint Cheque-Account (Bank B) and Extract 9, where one respondent suggested that the Bank had lost business because there were no rules, formal or informal, about dealing with sexual minority customers, and Extract 10 where it was suggested that rules were needed for dealing with transsexual customers in call centres.

11.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

At the beginning of this thesis, the idea was posited that of all diversity categories, there remains one that continues to be under-researched by organizational researchers, and struggles to be a recognized element of the diversity agenda within organizations, (see section 1.1). There were various reasons for this; one was the lack of a legal imperative in the past meant that organizations and researchers of organizations showed scant interest in minority sexuality. Another was the invisibility which was a key feature of the experience of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals in organizations. One of the implications of this research has been that the invisibility and silence has been lifted in those organizations that took part, demonstrating that even approaches which attempt to minimize the impact on the organization cannot help but have an effect on the organization being studied. In addition, this work adds to the growing interest in this area by academic researchers demonstrated by articles in management journals, for example Personnel Review, Journal of Management Studies, Human Relations and Culture and Organization, (Day & Schoenrade, 2000; Bowen & Blackmon, 2003; Ward & Winstanley, 2003, 2004).

11.5 POTENTIAL AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The project has also raised a number of questions and interesting areas for further work. This project was, quite deliberately, carried out in a UK context, even though some of the organizations involved had an international presence. Whilst some work in a non-Anglo-Saxon European context has been carried out, particularly in the area of union activism and sexual minorities, (Holzhacker, 1999; Rayside, 1999), it would

be useful from an organizational cultural perspective to consider whether the dynamics of minority sexuality in organizations are different in different national cultures.

The field work for this project, whilst carried out recently, was nevertheless prior to the introduction of the Employment Equality Regulations (Sexual Orientation) 2003, which was the first time that legal protection against discrimination had been offered to sexual minorities in the workplace. Although research has already begun in this area, (Skidmore, 2004), in time, it may be appropriate to conduct further qualitative work, to establish whether the legal framework has had any effect on the lived experiences of sexual minorities in the workplace.

It is also suggested that the impact of silence on the construction of other identities and its interplay with power relations, is a fruitful area for further research, as it is not just silence, but also the construction of identity itself which may have power over others. The idea of queer resistance as a concept in managers' identity construction is an interesting one for further work; the idea of queering management has already been introduced in the literature, (Parker, 2001, 2002), but there is further scope in bringing key concepts from queer theorists such as performativity, (Butler, 1990), fluid identities, (Seidman, 1996, 1997), and the contradictions of identity construction, (Fuss, 1991; Sedgwick, 1991), to the area of organization studies. Indeed, although gendered resistance at the level of identity construction has been explored, (Linstead & Thomas, 2002), this could usefully be developed with more of a focus in the organizational studies literature on the queer dynamics of organizations and the identity construction of sexual minorities within them. It is also recognized that organizations have different competing discourses, and different identities of which only minority sexuality is only one. It is suggested that the two-tier narrative method could be applied to the study of different types of identity, different performances and different types of identity work in the workplace, and there is evidence that this work is already beginning to be developed, (Cornelius, Gleadle, Winstanley, & Ward, 2004).

11.6 A REFLEXIVE NOTE

My final comment is a reflexive one. Carrying out this research has not only addressed a gap in the organizational literature. It has also had an impact on the organizations where the case studies were carried out, as well, and perhaps more importantly, as having an impact on the sexual minorities who were interviewed.

Indeed, in some cases it was clear from their comments that being interviewed and asked for their stories helped them sort their lives into a comprehensible narrative. Finally, this research, and writing this thesis, has had an impact on me; it has been an integral part of my identity work in the workplace and my own continual, reiterated part of coming out, since I would talk about it at every opportunity, and its subject matter would leave my interlocutor in no doubt as to my own sexuality. It has also changed me, and helped me make sense of my own life's narrative in the workplace.

APPENDIX A: SEXUAL ORIENTATION – GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following glossary of terms was developed during the research project with one of the client organizations to help managers with their reading of the final report. It is not intended to be an academic classification of terms, but it is included here to serve the same purpose in helping the reader with specialized terminology:

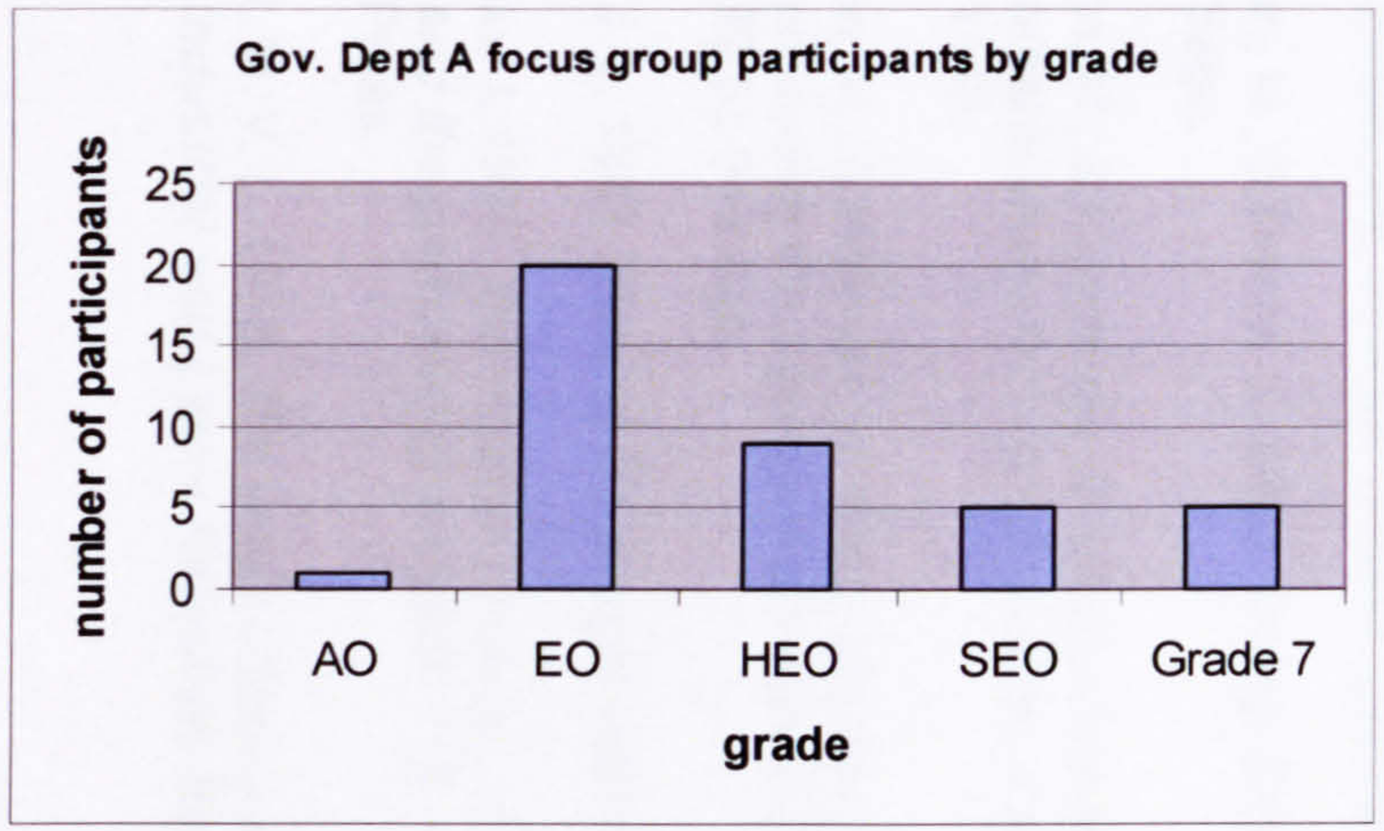
Term	Definition
Sexual orientation	Refers to the sexual attraction to persons of the same or opposite gender
Sexual minorities	An umbrella term for the purposes of this report referring to people who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
Sexuality	For the purposes of this report, sexuality refers to sexual orientation and sexual identity; it includes homosexuality, bisexuality, heterosexuality and transsexuality.
Gender Identity	Self perception and identification as male or female
Closet	Disclosure of one's sexual and gender identity is a major issue for sexual minorities; the Closet is a major metaphor (once a slang term, now in common parlance) representing non-disclosure.
Coming Out	Makes reference to the 'Closet' and means the disclosure either voluntarily or otherwise of one's sexual and gender identity
Out	The state of being open about one's sexuality and / or gender identity
Heterosexual	Sexually orientated towards people of the opposite gender
Homosexual	Sexually orientated towards people of the same gender. This word is no longer acceptable as it is seen as being demeaning
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
Lesbian	Women sexually orientated towards other women
Gay	Men or women sexually orientated towards people of the same sex
Bisexual	Men or women sexually orientated towards people of both sexes
Straight	A slang term for heterosexuality
Transgender	People who have gender-identity disorder. However, this is an umbrella term including transsexuals and intersexuals. It has also been adopted to cover transvestites.
Transsexual	People who have gender-identity disorder and have a strong psychological desire or need to change their gender
Transitioning	The process of changing from one gender to another
Real-life test	A period of up to two years, during which a transsexual man or woman lives in the new gender role on a full-time basis in every aspect of their life. It is usually a pre-requisite of gender-reassignment surgery
Post-operation	The stage after gender-reassignment surgery
Homophobia	The irrational fear of same sex attraction
Transphobia	The irrational fear of transgender people and issues
Biphobia	The irrational fear of people sexually orientated towards people of both sexes

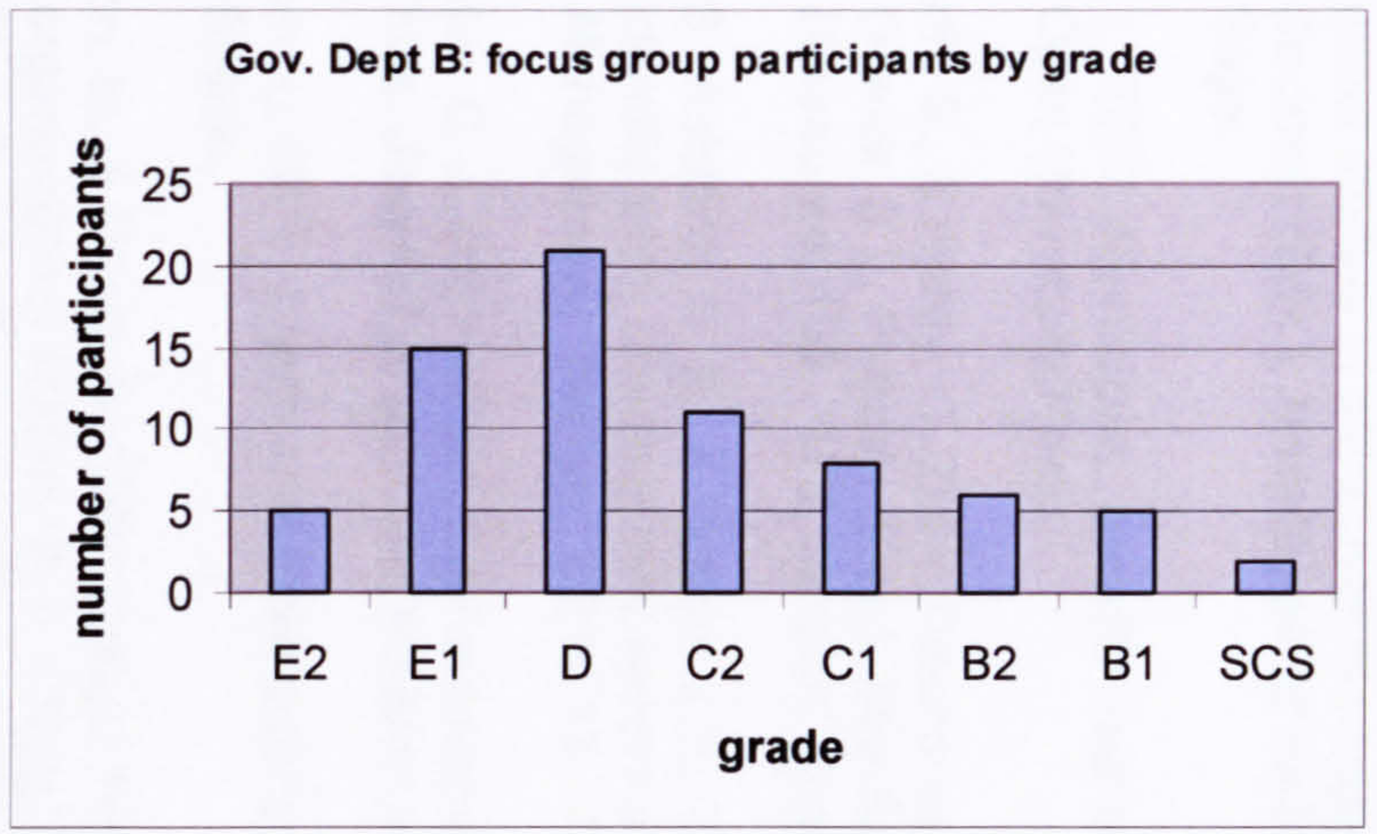
APPENDIX B: QUESTION GUIDE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

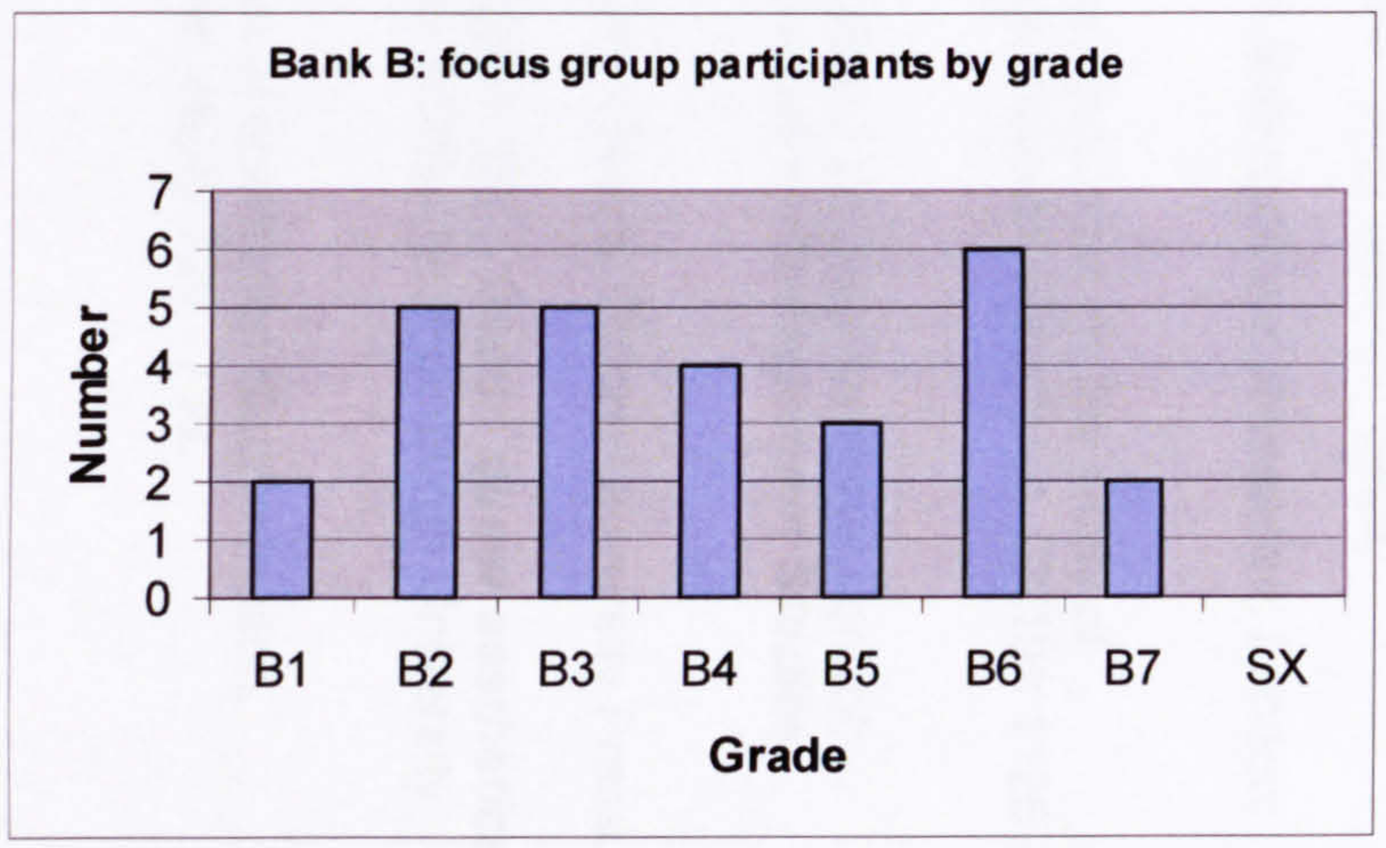
The following is a list of questions which were used as prompts in the individual, semi-structured interviews:

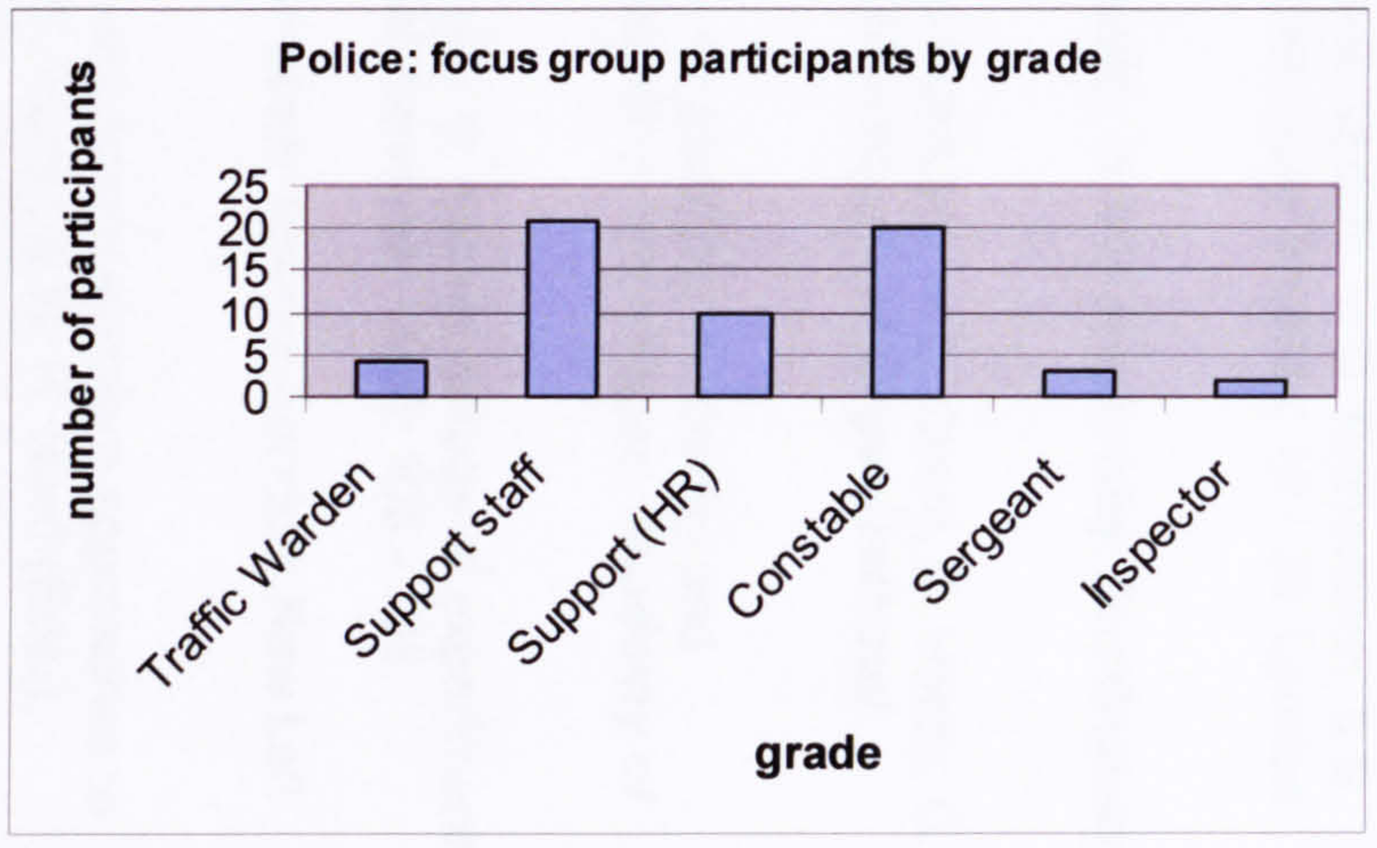
1. How did you come to join the organization?
2. Were you aware of how the organization treats its lesbian and gay employees before joining?
3. Were you out prior to joining the organization?
4. Are you out at work?
5. If so, what was the process of coming out like?
6. What were your colleagues like after this?
7. [If not out] Can you describe any incidents or experiences which demonstrate what it is like being a lesbian/gay man but not being out at work?
8. Were you ever in a situation where you felt excluded from banter?
9. Where is the barrier between work and home - for example, would you take your partner to a work's party?
10. Have you ever had any particularly positive experiences related to your sexuality?
11. Have you ever had any particularly negative experiences related to your sexuality?
12. Can you think of any incidents where being gay may have limited (or helped) your career in any way?
13. How has the organization influenced you as a lesbian / gay man?
14. Has being gay influenced the way that you have done your job, either positively or negatively?
15. How does the organization support your being open with customers / clients / the outside world?
16. What is it, do you believe, about the organization that makes it a positive/negative place to work?

APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP MAKE-UP BY GRADE









APPENDIX D: REFERENCES

Translations of quotations from French to English are by J. H. Ward, the author of this thesis, unless otherwise stated in the bibliography.

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