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**WOMEN, POWER, GENDER AND SELF:
A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS APPROACH**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in Psychology at
Massey University

Karen P. Anderson.

1994

ABSTRACT.

Previous research that has provided information about the concepts of power and self has come largely from the traditional empiricist paradigm. This research generally reflects the notion that there are different kinds of power which are equated with masculinity and femininity. In general, power based settings and women are viewed as incompatible. Sense of self has been traditionally presented in the research as something identifiable and consistent. Gender is a thread that runs through the research and the literature on both power and identity, and it is a constructive part of our understanding of them.

This study uses a qualitative approach to look at the accounts of ten women in terms of power and how this relates to their sense of self. Potter and Wetherell's (1987) model of discourse analysis has been used in analysing the research interviews. The results of the study tend to support Potter and Wetherell's contention that "self" will be constructed in various ways depending upon context. It also appears that these constructions are inextricably linked with power and gender. Trait and role discourses are used by the women and described in the study. The function of each enables the women to talk about different presentations of "self" that do not contravene the dominant discourses when discussing themselves and power.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the cooperation and generosity of the ten women who took part in this study. Their accounts provided a rich source of material for exploring the concepts of power and self.

Special acknowledgement and thanks are due to Mandy Morgan, who has, encouraged, challenged, and guided me through the minefield of discourse analysis.

Thanks are also due to Keith Tuffin for his support and valuable criticism at important points in the study.

For help with the final draft revision, publication, and continued support along the way my special thanks to Barnaby Perkins.

Also, thanks to Kaye Kirkpatrick and Patrick Coyle for reviewing and proof reading the final draft.

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The topic selected for this thesis is a study of women's constructions of power, and what this means in terms of their sense of their identity or sense of themselves. The women who participated in the study are in middle management positions within structured settings which traditionally accord power to men (Kanter 1977).

My particular interest in this as a research topic has evolved out of observing and talking with women who have taken up management positions. They have legitimate power as a consequence of holding their particular positions. (French and Raven 1959). However, their own expressed concern about participation in organisational life, and my observations of their relationships with other staff (superiors and subordinates) has indicated some difficulties. At times, their relationships have appeared to be inadequate and/or inappropriate, particularly in reaction to difficult situations. The resulting response of subordinates has been ambivalence, with a reluctance to respond to the authority held by the women, and at worst a covert undermining of her position.

Some of these women in management positions have also expressed concern about their effectiveness in the eyes of others; an evaluation of the reactions of others to a particular strategy.

This step involves not so much questioning their own effectiveness as questioning subjective reactions - asking, 'what will others think of me'?

The kind of information we have available to us about power and power styles has come largely from research conducted under the traditional empiricist paradigm. Our expectations about leadership and management, and who should hold decision making positions is reflected in the literature with the underlying assumption that "male is normal" and most leaders are not only male but quite masculine (Harriman 1985). Conversely, women who adopt traditional feminine roles (as nurturing, cooperative and dependent) are regarded as normal, healthy women; women who adopt non-traditional roles may be seen as competent (and powerful) but are also regarded as unfeminine and deviant (Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz and Vogel 1970; Harriman 1985).

Women appear to have different experiences to men in relation to power. Power behaviours that are evaluated as appropriate for men are not appropriate for women (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson and Rosenkrantz (1972). The opportunities for power use that are routinely available to men are often lacking for women, and Kanter (1977) suggests this is because women are "few" in number in organisations and tend to be isolated. It thus becomes difficult for them to gain control of critical activities or to successfully establish essential alliances to enact their role.

Women and men also differ in their use of power styles. Both masculine and feminine styles may be effectively used by men but masculine styles are not effective when used by women. (Wiley and Eskilson 1982).

For women in managerial positions then, the incongruity between femininity and power represents a dilemma. Those that use a power style considered masculine risk being perceived as less effective and may suffer interpersonal costs. On the other hand, if a woman adopts a style that is in accordance with the stereotypical female, she will be seen as less powerful and less effective than a man. (Wiley and Eskilson 1982). Either way, the traditional research indicates that power based settings and women are incompatible, unless the woman is in a position of no power.

A woman in a management position also has heightened visibility, and is more vulnerable to critical scrutiny than is her male counterpart (Kanter 1977, Marshall 1984). This suggests that the potential for a woman to be effective as a manager may lie in the way she is seen and treated, rather than in any personal characteristics she brings to the position.

Thus, the research would suggest that the way a woman functions in a management position may well be confounded by the expectations of others within an organisation, and their injunction that men are the standard by which a woman's behaviour shall be judged.

Miller (1976) notes that when women enter employment, they breach traditional expectations if they cross the invisible barrier between public and private, that is they are expected to be always on the boundary's private side.

This notion of "public" and "private" as dichotomous spheres, each appropriate to the different sexes, has developed with industrial capitalism, and resulted in the prevailing ideology that -

"...men would govern the society and women the homes within it. The result was a model of social life that separated the 'private' domestic sphere from the 'public' sphere..." (McDowell and Pringle 1992, p.15)

Thus, a woman speaking, or writing, in public represents an inherent contradiction in that she has both crossed into the public sphere and broken the silence that patriarchal order expects of women. These principles and expectations are inculcated into our everyday system of meaning and become represented in the dominant discourses. The breaching of the barrier presents a dilemma, even for those of us who are arguably aware of the dichotomous relationship.

If women breach this "invisible" barrier, by undertaking roles traditionally regarded as male, then they risk becoming marginalised.

Much of the traditional research has explored beliefs about power, its organisation, who has it, and the characteristics associated with it. My concern in this study is less with organisational principles or the characteristics of power, but more with the womens' own accounts of their experience and understanding of power: What does it mean to be in a position of power or authority, and what do the women's accounts reveal about their relationship with power? These questions will be explored in the interview process with the participants of this research.

The focus then, is on the language used by the women to talk about power, rather than explicating particular beliefs or characteristics. This is where discourse analysis offers an alternative way of exploring our understanding of power. It works from the assumption that people have a range of discourses available to them, and language is the medium for action in revealing the discourses used (Potter and Wetherell 1987).

A further area of interest which arises out of this is what it means for women in terms of their own sense of themselves, when they enter and take part in this "public stage" as a manager.

Sense of self or identity is an area which has generated much controversy and a vast literature aimed at identifying and describing the self.

Various and competing theories have been advanced to describe the individual. For example, the trait theory argues for a "stable" self in terms of response predisposition; a varied response pattern depending on situational determinants is suggested in role theory (Mischel 1968).

More recent work in social psychology suggests that there is not

"one self waiting to be discovered or uncovered, but a multitude of selves found in the different kinds of linguistic practices articulated..." (Potter and Wetherell 1987, 102).

This approach argues for a "discursive model of the self" (Potter and Wetherell 1987, 102). That is, a person may at any moment construct themselves using one or more of the models available. In this way the definition of identity or sense of self can be specific or general depending on the context. The women's talk will reveal their particular and different constructions of self as they describe themselves and their experiences in relation to power.

Traditional research has tended to assume that the characteristics of power are gendered, in the sense that some characteristics are associated with males and others with females. Even though there has been a growing awareness over the past 20 - 30 years that women have been under-represented in research and that psychological knowledge about women has been androcentric (male centred), the dominant explanatory frameworks have continued to prevail (Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990, Unger and Crawford 1992).

For women then, who are in positions of authority or power, they face a dilemma. They can conform to appropriate gendered expectations (of nurturance, dependence etc.) and risk being regarded as ineffective; they can adopt the masculine stance (which research shows is appropriate for males in positions of power) and risk being marginalised, or some combination of the two. Whatever their choice, which may vary from situation to situation, their sense of self will likely be affected by and have an effect on any conflict they experience.

I am interested in how the women respond to the experience of holding a position of authority and how they see themselves. For example, do women in these situations describe themselves in trait terms, or in terms of their role, or both? Do they experience any conflict with this or these selves, and if so how is this accounted for or understood? How do women talk about power, and do they see themselves as "having it"?

This present study sets out to explore women's own talk in terms of power and sense of self. It focuses on the women's language and how this is organised as they construct accounts of their experiences. The study does not seek to lend support or otherwise for previous research that has been conducted on power or sense of self. Rather, it seeks to explicate the strategies used by women to account for their experiences in particular settings, and the specific discourses they identify within their accounts.

Chapter 1 describes the particular perspective of the research approach selected for this study, and my reasoning for moving away from empirically based quantitative research. Chapter 2 develops the theoretical background relating to gender and sense of self, and Chapter 3 backgrounds gender and power. Both these chapters present traditionally based research which provides a basis from which to explore the issues of gender, self and power.

In Chapter 4, the methodology for this study is described. An open-ended interview was used to document the accounts of ten women in relation to their experiences and constructions of power and identity. Also included here is the method of analysis of the transcribed interviews, plus discussion of ethical concerns.

The analysis and discussion are presented in chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 deals with those extractions from the transcripts that relate to issues of self and identity. The women employed several different means of discussing and describing the self. Chapter 6 focuses on power, and this section highlights the inconsistencies apparent in the women's accounts when attempting to coherently construct notions of power and their relationship with it. Gender is a thread that permeates these two chapters, and much of the inconsistency and variation in the women's accounts can be justified by the gender discourse. Chapter 7 offers some discussion and concluding comments.

THE RESEARCH APPROACH - DISCOURSE ANALYSIS.

My interest in Discourse Analysis came about initially through a desire to conduct qualitative rather than quantitative research. As a student, I have enjoyed the empirical approach using statistical data analysis. It provides rigorous and tempting support (or otherwise) for a particular area of research. Results can be regarded as conclusive or not, and one can feel confident that having applied the appropriate formula to the appropriately gathered data, the "objective" results can then be analysed and interpreted.

The empirical approach has focused on objectivity; the methodology has supported the objective nature of research providing a focus on observable behaviour, leading to assumptions about internal processes. At the same time, this approach, because of the objective aims of the researcher, neglects what could be a potentially rich source of subjective understanding.

The object in Psychology, is the individual subject (or group of subjects), but the study of this object is generally achieved by isolating one, or more, variables and measuring how it varies across different conditions. Subjectivity here is disregarded in the desire to achieve an objective outcome.

Subjectivity is a term that has received "poor press" in mainstream psychology (Gavey 1989, Hollway 1989). It has been automatically linked with irrationality, affectivity and lack of objectivity, all of which are poor performers in terms of traditional science.

Further, the positivistic approach purportedly separating objectivity from subjectivity, and logic from feelings, presents a myth of 'hygienic' research by suggesting that the researcher has no more involvement than by simply being there. Positivism suggests that the researcher can be remote, neutral and dispassionate from the object of study and the analysis of data. (Stanley and Wise 1983)

Shotter (1984), Sampson (1989), and Hare-Mustin and Marecek (1990) contest the theoretical orientation dominant in psychology which works from the "third person" position, that of the detached, objective observer in which

"the nature of ones object of study remains fixed, unchanged by the methods used to study it; with all data relevant to its understanding being gained from the position of an external observer" (Shotter 1984, p 35)

He is thus arguing that psychologists, in working from this standpoint, are imposing the theory and neglecting the person's subjective reality.

However, this subjective account is a reality constituting practice, and the language used in any account provides a version of events, recollections etc.

As part of my acknowledgement of my subjective reality influencing the process of this study as the researcher, many of my comments and discussion will be presented from the first person position, rather than that of the objective observer.

Discourse analysis explores the functions served by the language used, together with their implications. Thus, this approach while concerned with the **content** of speech and/or texts, is also concerned with its **construction, variation and function.**

"Language is not the conveyor of social life, it is an essential constructive feature. Language is not a medium which neutrally transmits and reflects processes taking place elsewhere; it is vitally constitutive of social and psychological processes"
Marshall and Wetherell (1989, p. 108-109)

Discourse Analysis offers a radically different way of exploring beliefs and meaning, and looks at how these meanings are represented in language, rather than seeking a single meaning or a single truth. If meaning is discursively constituted, an individual's account of power and self will be constituted as a function of the different discourses available to them. This is in contrast to the positivist rationale of, for example, identity as an object based on fixed categories such as extraversion/introversion; masculine/feminine. The way a person talks about their sense of self may reveal contradictions and inconsistencies that underlie different identity representations. Thus, a person may construct different versions of their psychological state within different contexts.

A person's construction will be dependent upon the discourses that are available to them. The discourses available to the women in this study will be represented in their accounts.

It is worth noting that if we take language as a social representation in its own right, then issues of power and ideology become of concern (Thompson 1984).

It is suggested that some discourses are sufficiently powerful that they appear as "common sense" (Gavey 1989), and act as "a structuring principle of society" (Weedon 1987, p.41). Many gender representations appeal to common sense, for example, women are more emotional than men; women are nurturing and passive and men are dominating and active; men have power and authority and women are subordinate; men are leaders and women are followers (Unger and Crawford 1992; Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990). The dominance of the common sense understandings are the means by which gender operates as a differentiating function in society. These common sense discourses support and perpetuate existing power relations through the subjective positioning taken up by individuals (Hollway 1989). Women, for example, may identify with and accept traditional gendered views about femininity, rather than risk becoming marginalised by resisting them.

It was through the process of discussing ideas with others, reflecting on my own limitations regarding an approach to research, and reading the literature on discourse analysis, that my thinking was challenged and I began to see some clarification in terms of the approach to the research.

In keeping with my move to explore options apart from quantitative research, and with a desire to find the best means to explore and understand the concepts of power and identity, I believe the discourse analysis approach offers a viable option for understanding women's experience of these concepts.

Discourse analysis accepts individual accounts of reality as essentially constructive features in their own right, unlike the dominant positivist empiricism which accepts subjective accounts only to the extent that they can be used for the development of general rules concerning human behaviour.

Discourse analysis asserts that realities are created rather than discovered; that several different definitions can validly operate simultaneously in a particular setting, and that different realities can be present amongst different respondents within the same setting. This approach thus focuses on fragmentation, diversity and flexibility as characteristic of peoples discourses, and rejects consistency, and one correct outcome.

Language structures one's own experience of reality. Rather than a single truth or meaning of reality (objectivity), there are as many truths and meanings as there are individuals to express them (subjectivity), and as many differing contexts within which they can be found (Venn 1984; Potter and Wetherell 1987; Squire 1989; Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990; Edwards and Potter 1992).

There are a number of different approaches and consequently different meanings in the use of the term discourse. The approach I have chosen is that used by Potter and Wetherell (Potter and Wetherell 1987, Potter, Wetherell, Gill and Edwards 1990). It is therefore appropriate to outline some overarching concepts which provide the basis of their rationale for discourse analysis. (Potter and Wetherell 1987, Potter et.al. 1990; Wetherell and Potter 1988). Four primary concepts developed by Potter and Wetherell are Function, Construction, Variation and Interpretive Repertoires. These are briefly defined below -

Function - This term is used to emphasize the notion that people "do things" in their talk which is action and outcome oriented and serves a purpose. A goal of discourse analysis is to determine the different functions performed by a person's accounts. These may be specific or global, direct or rhetorical.

Construction - Potter and Wetherell use this term to describe the assumption that people "manufacture discourse out of pre-existing linguistic resources" (Potter et.al. 1990, p.207). Different constructions are actively chosen from a range of available possibilities. The resulting accounts construct a particular reality, and often serve specific functions.

Variation - This third concept follows on from the previous two with the assumption that variation in the construction of accounts is to be expected depending on its function. Potter et.al (1990) note that "variability is central for analysis because of its close connection to functional orientation" (p.20)

Interpretive Repertoire - This refers to a set of words or a term used as a metaphor to achieve a particular effect. For example, Potter and Wetherell (1987) cite the example of research conducted by Gilbert and Mulkey (1984) to reveal the interpretive resources used by scientists. The analysis of the interviews revealed, amongst other things, that two main repertoires were used to achieve particular functions. The scientists used an empiricist repertoire to warrant their beliefs via the use of empirical/experimental evidence, and a contingent repertoire to characterise personal or social factors which influenced belief.

Both repertoires could appear within the same account; both being used to construct very different versions of beliefs and to account for error. They were deployed to construct different versions of scientists' accounts of theoretical choice.

The interpretive repertoire shares characteristics with the notion of discourse as used by Parker (1989) and the terms "discourse" and "interpretive repertoire" are used interchangeably throughout this piece of work, as descriptive of the process of producing accounts.

The above concepts argue for the potency of focusing on the content of language and its purpose. Previous research using this approach has explored ideological issues centred around such concerns as gender, identity, race and career (Marshall and Wetherell 1989, Wetherell, Steven and Potter 1987, Wetherell and Potter 1989). The use of discourse analysis avoids the reduction of the complexity of language and its meaning to underlying psychological processes and explanation. It enables language to be viewed as a constructive process which varies from individual to individual, rather than being a descriptive resource to be fitted within a particular psychological construct.

Not only is the language used by my respondents important in this study. In the interview process, my own orientation, and the discourses I access as the researcher are as important as those used by the participants. Further, the process of transcription, the analyses and reporting of this study are indicative of my positioning as the researcher. All become an integral and constructive part of the process.

Much of my shift toward the use of discourse analysis, and the acknowledgement of the value of subjectivity, arises out of my awareness and acknowledgement that women are under-represented in psychological research. I have no intention that this thesis focus specifically on gender differences, but it is important to note that psychology has tended to promulgate the notion that gender differences are acquired attributes residing with individuals. These differences have been used to categorise, organise and define human experience. Rather than pursue female-oriented concerns within the traditional psychological approaches, discourse analysis offers a means of elaborating and analyzing language within specific contextual constructions. It enables a shift of focus away from asking how women fit into existing beliefs or models about power and self.

Instead it encourages the exploration of the constructive dimension of women's meaning making in regard to these two concepts. Their accounts will give some indication of the discourses that are available to women as they make sense of themselves in relation to power and self.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH - SENSE OF SELF AND POWER

This chapter will explore the concepts of sense of self and power, how they have emerged through traditional research methods, and how these methods have helped to define normative behaviours.

First of all I will look at the relationship between the discipline of psychology, its research background and how it has contributed to the construction of gender as a socially defining principle. Next I will consider the psychological construct of identity, and the ways traditional work has contributed to the understanding of self, and the relationship to gender. The contemporary literature will be overviewed, and the focus will shift from identity, or sense of self, as an object, to the way people use language to constitute a sense of themselves. In the final section, the relationship between power and gender will be outlined, and how contemporary literature regards power as being embedded in our use of language that constructs and perpetuates the dominant discourses.

In traditional research identity and power have been considered separately. However, more recent approaches in social psychology which draw on the work of Michel Foucault (for example), see them as interlinked in such a way that

"power becomes a central relational attribute of any inquiry directed to self knowledge" (Parker 1989, 67.)

Another construct which has become inextricably linked with identity and power is gender. It is a thread which runs through the research on these topics and is a constructive part of our understanding of them.

i) Gender.

The socially prescribed attribute of gender relates to both power and identity. Gender offers "common sense" discourses regarding the acceptable characteristics and behaviours for male and female (Gavey 1989). Gender as a means of categorisation has become one of the significant ways we structure our social reality (Weedon 1987).

The findings of conventional research (about men and women) tell us little of the historical and social context within which the research has been conducted, and nothing about the processes by which power and identity are constructed (Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990). Further, the discipline of psychology has contributed greatly to the meaning of gender in the daily lives of men and women, and therein to beliefs about the constructs of power and identity (Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990, Hollway 1989, Scott 1988, Unger and Crawford 1992, Weedon 1987). It is also the case that gender has influenced the practice of psychology. Not only has psychology contributed to the meaning of gender, but its practices have been affected by cultural meanings about gender.

Hollway (1989) notes that the modern ideas of rationality and science are inseparable, and that these concepts

"emerged interdependently within the same historical conditions, as did the modern concept of masculinity" (Hollway 1989, p.110).

Further, she quotes from Simmel (1923) who, she argues

"articulated what was normally assumed when he wrote

.....correctness in practical judgements and objectivity in theoretical knowledge ... belong as it were in their form and their claims to humanity in general, but in their actual configuration they are masculine throughout"
(Simmel 1923, cited in Hollway 1989, p.110).

She suggests then, that modern science emerged "already gendered" (p.110) and this was the forerunner to the later concepts of masculinity and femininity (Hollway 1989).

Psychology and the social sciences have been able to inform society of those behaviours and social practices that are normative. They have been able to do this because of several widely held beliefs. Firstly, the methods of inquiry used in psychology (as a science) are believed to be free from contaminating influences of self-interest and subjectivity; thus supporting the positivist tradition of objectivity. Secondly, psychologists tend to be viewed as experts who conduct research and yield results (based on 1 above) that provide an account of our social reality, and lastly, the standards applied to inquiry are regarded as value-free, and do not reflect any particular moral or ethical stance (Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990).

However, in traditional psychology, women have been under-represented as the objects of inquiry, and the results of studies of male subjects

"were often generalized to formulate universal laws of human (that is, male and female) behaviour" (Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990, p.7).

For example, Lawrence Kohlberg's early research on cognitive development suggested that once a stable gender identity is achieved, children will socialize themselves into appropriate gender roles because they are motivated to be typical boys or girls. For example girls, in order to be motivated to be feminine, must first identify with femininity as an appropriate role. They may prefer the masculine role for a period, but they will eventually find the feminine role as the attractive and appropriate option (Kohlberg 1966). Kohlberg fails to explain why females choose and identify with such roles. What is important to know is that the research data was gathered from male participants, and the outcome was generalized to both male and female development.

Kohlberg also explored cognitive development and moral thinking, and concluded that boys and men tended to achieve a more mature and more developed sense of morality than did girls and women (Santrock and Bartlett 1986).

However the conclusions from this research have also been criticised because the moral dilemmas posed frequently had men as the principle player and this could have provided a setting that was easier for males to relate to. Also, the hypothetical dilemmas may reveal little about real-life situations involving moral behaviour (Gilligan 1982).

Carol Gilligan has argued that, for the above reasons, Kohlberg's theory may be an inadequate map of female development. She conducted her own research concluding that moral development in women follows a different, but equally valid approach, where the ethics of care and responsibility take precedence over what Kohlberg demonstrated is an ethic of rights. Hare-Mustin and Marecek (1990), and Tronto (1987) suggest that this tendency by women toward care and responsibility may be a reflection of women's subordinate social position and lack of power.

Although Carol Gilligan's work has also been critiqued on a number of grounds, (Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990, Tronto 1987), the important point here is the way that gender has influenced both Kohlberg's and Gilligan's work, and how significant it has been in the practice of research. The issue here is not whether Gilligan was right and Kohlberg was wrong, but that both have used gender in their research, but have used it differently. Their own gender was important in the research they examined.

Moreover, women have been under-represented in the discipline itself. Thus, many of the concepts in psychology have been systematically defined from the point of view of male presence and experience (for example ego, identity, autonomy and so on). These concepts have contributed to the accumulated knowledge about individual differences, and one of the major differences that has been focused on, has been male/female (Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990, Unger and Crawford 1990).

Women are regarded as the repository of non-male traits and as being different from and inferior to men. They are regarded as biologically restricted beings whose behaviour is a function of their biological nature, whereas men are seen as rational beings who operate from free will (Unger and Crawford 1992).

Unger (1990) Hare-Mustin and Marecek (1990) have suggested that the way psychology has investigated problems has contributed to the construction of gender differences.

Experimental research in psychology has allowed and supported the disentanglement of personality differences, skills, and so on that arguably differentiate male and female. It has also minimized within sex differences. This has contributed to the social processes that see the sexes as being treated separately under the explanatory heading of gender.

Gender is constructed and maintained by social interactions (Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990, Unger 1990).

i) Sense of self and Gender.

In this section I shall look at the psychological construct of identity or what it means to have a sense of self. The attempts that have been made to define and understand it will be described, and how current thinking has begun to move the debate on identity towards how people describe and construct themselves and others.

The sense of what it means to be a person is sometimes talked about as identity and sometimes talked about as self. For the purposes of this study, identity and sense of self are used interchangeably, because there are discourses available to construct both. That is, they are both available resources for understanding what it means to be a person.

Identity and gender are closely linked. I have already mentioned how gender is involved in scientific practice which is one of the ways identity has been investigated. They are also linked in the attempts to provide evidence for identity as an enduring and consistent state of being. Psychologists have tended to think in terms of individuals and their inner processes.

To psychologists, what it means to be a person or have an identity, has been regarded as something that exists within the individual as part of personality or a set of cognitions and we all have the potential for it. It is regarded as natural and unaffected by interpretations or scientific construction.

Potter and Wetherell (1987) note that the underlying assumption behind all the traditional models of the "self" is that it is

"an entity and, like any other entity or natural physical object, it can be described definitively, once and for all. In other words, it is assumed that the self has one true nature or set of characteristics waiting to be discovered and once discovered a correct description of these characteristics will follow."
(p.95)

Thus, self is traditionally considered an enduring, consistent, readily identifiable state. It is fixed and singular (Harre 1991).

The search for understanding of self or identity is pervasive; the nature of self can be regarded as a philosophical question, but psychology has gathered a considerable amount of empirical data in attempting to name and define those aspects of a person's being that could be regarded as contributing to the construct of identity, or the sense of self.

The quest for self-knowledge has ranged from the scientifically based to the occult, from finding ones "roots" to the use of psychedelic drugs to help promote insight; from the use of empirically derived questionnaires that determine type or trait, to genealogical charts. The importance of the quest for self knowledge, is reflected in the range of methods that are used to find an answer.

The term identity is used in a variety of ways to explain an assortment of phenomena, and can be described by psychological theory (for example "identity crisis" , "self actualization", "extraversion"), or by common parlance (e.g. "knowing who you are") and so on. The construct in all its possible versions may be operationalised by an inventory, the results of which may establish it as a trait or type for example (e.g. Myers Briggs Type Indicator 1985, Cattell's 16P.F. 1973).

One of the ways in which identity has been used is in relation to gender. Somewhere in the first few years of life, virtually everyone develops a stable gender identity, a psychological sense of oneself as male or female. Psychology constructs gender development and gender perception as an effect of the pressure of gender role conformity (Unger and Crawford 1992).

Although personality theorists have attempted to explicate traits and behaviours that are enduring, they have tended to focus on male development, taking men as the norm. As I have noted earlier, the results of studies with male subjects have been generalised to formulate universal laws of human behaviour. Historically, the construct of identity is based on the experience of white, educated males (Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990).

Freud (1966), Erikson (1968) and Kohlberg (1966) have all argued for clear psychological differences between males and females. Generalisations about both male and female development and identity have been extrapolated from research about which males formed the basis, and which generally regards females as psychologically and biologically inferior.

All these approaches see gender development as occurring primarily in childhood, and with the view that gender identity is completed with the internalization of the ideal dominant man and the yielding nurturing woman (Unger and Crawford 1992).

Thus, traditional psychological models reinforce the belief that behaviour characteristics come in two genders. Even attempts to blend masculine and feminine characteristics in the form of androgyny have scales that label some characteristics as masculine and some as feminine (Lott 1981)

The psychological theories have argued for an autonomous independent, self-reliant adult, for example 'Identity Achieved' as described by Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1980). These characteristics have been associated with males; the female's part has been regarded as dependent and undifferentiated (Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990).

Even the humanist approach to the sense of self, or identity, with the potentiality as a unique individual through fulfillment and self actualisation (Maslow 1968), includes gender constructions. According to these theories, up until the 1950's and early 1960's womens' proper fulfillment/self actualisation lay in being housewives and mothers. Following this period, and with the increasing awareness of feminism this belief has been challenged (Margolis 1984).

Various theoretical models of identity have been advanced to describe and explain the self. For example role theory offers an explanation for development of a sense of self or identity. It describes the relationship between a persons self expression (a trait) and societal expectations. Potter and Wetherell (1987) note

"roles are defined as sets of activities, qualities and styles of behaviour that are associated with social positions" (p.98)

The theory suggests that people will conform to roles because of social expectation, and by virtue of their place in society, people will "acquire a form of self-expression". (p.98). Further, these forms of self-expression can be many and varied depending on the roles the person is required to fulfil in society. The role labels assigned to a person prescribe the behaviours that are expected, the effects of which are suggested to be especially strong when the role labels are permanent (Mischel 1968). For example, the development of "relatively stable sex roles and fairly enduring concepts about one's masculine or feminine attributes" (Mischel 1968, p.285).

Further, roles provide "discursive resources" that can be drawn on to account for particular sorts of actions that allow the individual to be "distanced" from motivation; thus action is distinguished from motivation (Edwards and Potter 1992). For example, accounts given to Marshall and Wetherell (1989) by students training as Lawyers, included -

"I suppose the latter is very much adopting a lawyers way of doing things rather than being yourself, so I'd probably be myself at the beginning. I'd like to think that I'd be myself, its not nice imagining being a hard-nosed but maybe you'd get it knocked out of you in a few months". (Marshall and Wetherell, 1989, 116).

In this case the potential for "not being oneself" or for changing oneself, is attributed to one aspect of the constructed role of a lawyer, and the representation in this case is of an undesirable "hard-nose". Any future change to self is thus mitigated by one of the perceived necessary functions of being a successful lawyer.

Trait theory assumes the sense of self is made up of certain definite attributes or traits (Mischel 1968). There is also an assumption that particular traits are common to many people, can vary in amount, and can be inferred by measurement on some behaviour indicator (e.g.Cattell's 16PF 1973).

However, traditional research on this theoretical model, in the form of questionnaires or inventories to explicate and definitively describe an entity, has shown weaknesses and limitations. For example, Mischel (1968) has noted that trait theory, which regards a person as the sum of their measurable personality traits, abilities and attributes, fails to predict behaviour.

He argues the empirical assumptions made of trait and state theory do not hold out in the non-test settings and **"the concept of personality traits as broad response predispositions is thus untenable"** (Mischel 1968, p.146)

However, empirical research notwithstanding, trait/type explanations are used by individuals in talk. For example, in the following account, a woman described her attitude toward conflict in which her personal self confidence played a significant part in the process of negotiation. She described herself as

**..always having plenty of confidence - always.
Probably too much. I was told on my 7th form
report that I should accept correction more easily.
(Court, 1989, 136)**

Potter and Wetherell (1987) note the limitations of trait theory; people may be more or less one or more of the identified traits; the context and the individuals perception of a situation may prescribe a pattern of behaviour that indicates inconsistency.

Traits and roles offer two alternative means of making up the self. Roles offer an alternative and useful contrast to traits for the purpose of accomplishing different causal accounts, such that **"the person is always separable from the various roles they take up"** (Davies and Harre 1990). Language becomes the medium for self-construction and reflects how we account for our beliefs and experiences.

Social Learning theory offers another explanation for the development of identity, or the sense of self. It is grounded in behaviourism and draws its principles from experimental research. It is a theory of social influence, and the research has supported the explanation for identity development as a result of day to day interactions between the developing child, her primary caregivers and immediate social contacts (Bandura and Walters 1963). It differs from trait theory in its conceptualisation of the determinants of behaviour; trait theory looks for response patterns resulting from inherent characteristics; social learning sees the response patterns are learned via reinforcement, punishment, observation and imitation. The theory has been developed along the lines of gender influences on personality and identity (Mischel 1968) and has tended to view women positively (rather than as being inherently inferior). The gentle, nurturing behaviours associated with women are valued within this theory.

Whatever the empirical status of the different models in accounting for the sense of self, Potter and Wetherell (1987) suggest that these models offer different ways for people to make sense of themselves in different contexts.

"there is not 'one' self waiting to be discovered or uncovered but a multitude of selves found in the different kinds of linguistic practices articulated now, in the past, historically and cross-culturally"
(Potter and Wetherell 1987, 102).

Thus, the different models discussed become different possible methods of self-making.

In some contemporary social psychological literature, the discussion of identity (or sense of self) has shifted from the traditional viewpoint, that identity is consistent, continuous, and differentiated (that is, distinct from others). The discussion has moved more to the question of how language is used to enable a person to position themselves in a context in the process of establishing a personal and gender appropriate identity (Potter and Wetherell 1987, Edwards and Potter 1992).

The self has, in the past, been seen as something that has been revealed through research. The contemporary research is suggesting that the language people use acts as a discursive resource that legitimates particular positions taken in terms of self.

For example the use of "role" discourse allows representation of particular activities or actions that can be attributed to the role. Thus the person effectively separates self and motivation from the action demanded by the role. The use of trait discourse enables an essential enduring self to be constructed. The social learning discourse allows for self construction in terms of learned behaviours, and what has been learned can be unlearned.

Thus, as Edwards and Potter (1992) note, the focus for the understanding of identity or self, has moved from

"a traditional realist understanding of self discourse, as a more or less adequate description of inner entities, to considering what activities particular forms of self discourse make possible, and how a subject may be *constituted* on any particular occasion in talk or writing" (p.128).

I am interested to examine the linguistic resources the women in this study use to construct their identity and sense of themselves. How this relates to gender, the different roles they identify they fill, and their experience of and construction of power will also be of interest.

These women are positioned within a structural setting in which the dominant discourse of gender is embedded. Their constructions of self and its relationship to power could be expected to constitute them in such ways that do not contradict the "common sense" discourse (which would suggest they are subordinate). This proposition gives rise to a number of questions.

Do the women draw on discourses that have become common sense accounts of our everyday living? The women have access to the way psychologists talk about power, identity and gender. Has this talk become part of the common sense accounting about their everyday positioning?

What are the possibilities and the constraints that are presented in the constructed versions of self, that is, is there one constructed version of self that is valued more than another. Does this relate to an "essentialist" model of gender? (Marshall and Wetherell 1989, Potter and Wetherell 1987).

Is a gender appropriate discourse used and valued in one context (for example in the construction of self as represented by traits), but devalued in another context (for example in the work role) where it is associated with power? Is there a particular self construction (for example trait, role) that is used within a particular context, and for what purpose? What function does it serve?

iii) Power and Gender.

This section will explore the concepts of power and gender. As with other concepts in psychology, power has emerged from theory based on the male experience. As gender differences were accounted for in theory, so too was gender emphasised in terms of men's and women's particular capacities and characteristics. The term gender itself "illustrates the power of linguistic categories to determine what we know of the world" (Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990, 29).

Gender differences have conveyed the knowledge of differences between the sexes, and much of the work on power in psychology has supported the belief that men display characteristics that are associated with the "business" of power, while women display those characteristics that are associated with the "business" of caring, nurturing, subordinate behaviours.

"There is little doubt that a major variable that distinguishes the adult lives of most women and men in our society is power - that is, access to, and control of, resources" (Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990, p.76).

Further, **"gender is not simply related to social power, it is constitutive of power relations and is a stable component in social hierarchies of power" (Morawski 1987, 58, quoted in Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990, 76).**

Gender works to shape the relations between women and men, and its influence is pervasive along many dimensions. Tasks and activities that occur in society can be labelled as 'mens work' or 'womens work', the latter usually being seen as less desirable and less important than the former (Unger and Crawford 1992). Gender can thus be regarded as a system which has an influence on access to power and resources.

Historically, certain people or figures are routinely described as powerful, for example the Judeo-Christian image of a God (all powerful, is everywhere, knows all {even our innermost thoughts!}). Power becomes vested in the agents of this image (for example Priests) and they derive influence from this perception. Society tends to describe as powerful, those who hold and/or control vast resources, for example political leaders (Lips 1981, Unger and Crawford 1992).

The point here is, that most of these who are endowed with power of this type are male.

From the point of view of traditional psychological method, it is possible to see how the research has contributed to contemporary constructs of gender and power. For example, research which looks at what characteristics are typically identified as desirable for male and female, explicate traits and/or characteristics that tend to support the notion that categorisation based on gender is one of the significant ways we tend to structure our social reality. Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson and Rosenkrantz (1972) and Ruble (1983) have shown that respondents, when given a choice of variables, will identify affective, nurturing and communal characteristics as belonging to females, and instrumental characteristics that are linked with power and influence for males. Other work which attempted to eliminate some methodological deficiencies (for example forced choice on narrow descriptive terms which support traditional stereotyping), has confirmed the characteristics described above (Deaux and Lewis 1984).

Thus, when an attempt is made to eliminate the constraints on choice (by removing polar opposites and allowing respondents to list all characteristics they believed pertinent to each sex), male and female are seen to have contrasting qualities that appear on two dimensions.

The traits that are valued as positive tend to belong with males and are related to achievement and competence; the traits belonging to females are related to warmth and expressiveness and are less valued.

Even when the behaviour of males and females is presented in a way that is apparently identical (using objective here as it is presented under a traditional approach), it is not evaluated in the same way. For example, Paludi and Strayer (1985) found a pro-male evaluation bias, when students were asked to evaluate an academic article in various fields that had been signed with a male name, a female name or a sexually ambiguous name.

John and Sussman (1985) demonstrated that when sex is not available as a category, people will invent it. They presented respondents with a script where two individuals (identified only as Gray buttons or Brown buttons) were involved in a dialogue where conversational dominance shifted. As this dominance shifted, the respondents moved back and forth between identifying the individuals as male or female, according to the conversational dominance to males.

Thus, people will make assumptions about a wide variety of traits and behaviours on the basis of sex, and will make assumptions about sex on the basis of particular behaviours.

Sex differences as social realities are constructed by the linguistic categories available, and the definition of appropriate roles for males and females is part of the structural aspect of gender (Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990).

Other work that has explored the perceptions of gender, status and power, has tended to show that interpersonal processes help maintain a pattern of male dominance.—This in turn has led to the construction and perpetuation of traits and behaviours that are related to, and regarded as, gender appropriate.

Women tend to have less interpersonal influence than men. If women's relative lack of power is a result of who they are they will continue to lack power even when situated in a "male" role. Sex as an ascribed characteristic tends to convey status and power, and maleness is associated with greater power, social value and prestige than is femaleness (Lockheed and Hall 1976, Unger 1976).

Non-verbal behaviours reflect the expectations about sex, performance, status and power. Women tend to receive fewer non-verbal signals to participate and are interrupted more than men (Spender 1988, Eakins and Eakins 1978). In situations where visual dominance (the ratio of looking while speaking, to looking while listening) was explored in mixed sex interaction, women displayed low dominance as compared with men (Dovido, Ellyson, Keating, Heltman and Brown 1988).

In group settings, women tend to lean away from the group and smile significantly more than do men. They also tend to listen more (Kennedy and Camden 1983). Since studies have shown that group leadership perceptions are influenced by the quantity of talking done in groups, then this non-verbal behaviour decreases the likelihood that women will be seen as potential leaders (Marshall 1984, Stein and Heller 1979 cited in Lips 1981).

Women are chosen as leaders of groups far less often than are men, and generally both men and women regard men as being more deserving of a position of authority or power (Dion 1985, Wood and Karten 1986, Carli 1990). Both sexes tend to agree that men are more competent in groups (Pugh and Wahrman 1983). There is also an association between effective leadership and authoritarian style which is inconsistent with stereotypes prescribing femininity (Linimon, Barron, and Falbo 1984).

People use gender to make inferences about status and roles. Roles conferring power and authority are played by men while women fill subordinate positions. Eagly and Wood (1982) showed that when status was not given, students inferred that males held higher status jobs than women (when other conditions were similar). Only when job titles were given (which denoted status) did the respondents use status rather than gender cues to predict success on a task involving influence.

Research also supports the construction (at least in western culture), of the image of the powerful person and the image of the leader being the same and masculine (Lips 1981, Eagly 1983, Craig and Sherif 1986). Thus, even if a woman is competent, she may still not meet "leadership" requirements because she is not male.

Kanter (1977) has described how women are defined and treated in executive positions, where they are numerically in a minority, and are therefore more visible. They are likely to be defined in stereotypical terms, and regarded both by themselves and by others as representing women's issues and interests rather than those of the wider organisational group. Also Marshall (1984) cites work by Schein in 1976 which has elicited stereotypes of women and of managers, and assessed the fit between them. Both male and female managers described characteristics which they associated with female managers, with male managers and with either male or female. The results showed many similarities between the characteristics for male managers, and managers, but little, or no, overlap between the characteristics for female managers and managers.

In its broadest sense then, gender may be regarded as a categorisation system that shapes the relations among men and women. Social interaction serves to construct and maintain gender.

Different social roles are prescribed and perpetuated by socially desirable and self-consistent behaviour. The dominant discourses appear "natural" and gain their authority by appealing to common sense (Gavey 1989). Some of my respondents, talking about the enactment of power, use terms such as "the womans way" or "a male model" (for example), each of these terms offering a "common sense" principle of understanding. These clearly delineate two forms of behaviour, which are presumed to be automatically understood by others, in this case me, the researcher. In other words, gender is being used here to construct the meanings of particular behaviours (at this stage not stated but assumed or taken for granted as "common sense" knowledge). Gender is embedded in the discourse, and becomes salient in its meaning and its shaping of understanding, as too, does peoples' understanding help shape the discourse.

If we accept language as being a complex social practice in its own right (Marshall and Wetherell 1989), that is, an essential constructive feature of our social reality, then those discourses that appear as common sense, are powerful in the extent to which they are seen as natural, and are taken for granted.

Socialization guides the way we learn to behave as society expects us to, and power differences produce differential socialization (Hare Mustin and Marecek 1990).

Differences in power are perpetuated and reinforced by the results of this differential learning and the discourses support the existing power relations. To reject or challenge them is to invite the possibility of being marginalised.

That these beliefs exist in the workplace is not surprising. Womens position in the workplace is enacted and constructed as people make decisions about work that are influenced by gender.

Parameters and norms have been constructed regarding the traits and behaviours that are linked to gender, and as has been illustrated, these are closely tied to conceptions of power and status.

Traditional research methods (as cited here) are useful as a means of providing illustrations, and act as a step off point in exploring the questions about the linguistic resources available to talk about power and self. However, I am not presenting these in an attempt to validate any claims of truth or accuracy related to difference.

The focus of the cited research also makes it harder to see differences within groups of women. Psychology, being traditionally highly individualistic in nature has contributed to the beliefs about gender appropriate traits and behaviours by highlighting the differences between the sexes rather than within them. . It has also provided a firm grounding for the common sense discourses of gender.

Generally, the relative positioning of male and female in management is in accord with the dominant discourses that define the appropriate roles for male and female. The representation of women as inferior in terms of perceived traits, and their status in relation to these traits, is an expression of bias and has major consequences for how women construct themselves and how they are constructed by others in discourse. This self construction, as manifest in language, enables the reproduction of gender relations.

It is of interest to me to explore the constructions of traits and behaviours that are linked to gender and power, and to see how these are expressed by the women I interviewed for this study. These women are participants at levels in a management structure that has traditionally been regarded as appropriate for men (Harriman 1985). The womens texts will be analysed to see how they explain their experiences in positions that are so closely linked with power and status and how they construct themselves in relation to these experiences.

Do these women position themselves as holding power, and if so how do they define power? Do the women redefine power to fit a "common sense" gender discourse?

How do the women deal with what a "common sense" discourse would tell them is an inappropriate role for them? Do the women construct an account that indicates the authority vested in their role as wife/mother is not something that can be executed in their work setting?

Do the women experience a conflict between what is perceived as feminine and acceptable and what is perceived as masculine and unacceptable.

These questions act as a focus for the following analysis.

METHOD

This section introduces the methods and procedures that were used in this study. The participants and the sites are described, and the strategies used to conduct the interviews are detailed. Transcription and interview analysis details are also provided.

Ethical considerations arising from the research process and precautions taken to ensure protection of identity are outlined.

1. The Context of this study***i) The Sites.***

Work for this study began in May 1993, when approval was first obtained from an Area Health Board in one of the provinces to conduct interviews with staff members on a voluntary and an individual basis. I assumed I would have no difficulty in reaching my intended number of 10 participants. However, by the end of June 1993, I had confirmed responses from only five women. I then sought and gained approval from the polytechnic in that province to approach women within that institution. Data collection continued in this additional setting until March 1994.

The context was therefore unexpectedly enriched by the inclusion of two similarly operated institutions, in which a significant percentage of the workforce in each is female. Women have only recently begun to move significantly into more senior management positions within both these institutions.

While the two institutions are entirely separate and differ in their objectives (one focuses on health; the other focuses on education and training), there are similarities in their structures.

Both institutions are service industries where women tend to be represented strongly. In the hospital board, women are represented in considerably larger numbers than men. Both also have a predominantly male executive.

Both institutions have an hierarchical structure as set out below. Each has a Board below which is a male Chief Executive Officer with management levels below this. At the time of the interviews, the institutions had the following management structure -

(i) the polytechnic had four associate directors all of whom were male, under which were 9 Department Heads of whom three were female. Below this level were Programme Managers/Course Supervisors within each Department, and under this, the Tutorial staff.

The total equivalent full-time staff including administration and other allied services, was approximately 350. Approximately 47% of total staff were female, with most at Programme Manager level and below, and amongst the allied services.

ii) The hospital had eleven Managers of whom five were female, below the Chief Executive Officer. At the next level, were Unit Managers (for example people in charge of Wards) and below this, nursing staff, laboratory staff, and other allied services. The total equivalent full time staff (including all services) was 1400. Approximately 70% of total staff were female, most at Unit Manager level and below.

Both organisations have been subject to restructuring. The hospital has been undergoing changes over the past few years from an Area Health Board to a Crown Health Enterprise as from July 1993. There have been other structural changes during the past three years, beginning with the introduction of a General Manager. He replaced a manager who, together with a medical officer and a matron, was predominantly responsible for the running of the hospital, and who was answerable to the Board. The latest structure now has a politically appointed board and a Chief Executive Officer at the top.

Three of the interviews with hospital staff were conducted shortly before the July 1993 restructuring. Two were conducted afterwards.

The Polytechnic has, over the past five years, developed a "corporate" image. A major structural change was begun in December 1993. The changed structure has a male Chief Executive Officer, under which are three male Directors. Below this are five Heads of Faculty of whom two are female. At the next level are Programme Managers or Heads of Department. These positions were still to be confirmed at the time of writing.

Three of the Polytechnic women were interviewed before the restructuring was proposed; the remaining two were interviewed during it.

Both organisations have a commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity and have recently increased their female management staff.

Both organisations are within the same province, and sited within a city of approximately 40,000. Both are regarded as major employers, the hospital being the largest employer in the province. Both service an urban and rural population.

ii) The Participants

I decided to focus on women in middle to upper management level because of their longer-term perspective on work at that level. Hopefully they would have a clearer sense of and understanding of the effect of power and its relationship to their sense of self, than their more junior colleagues might have.

My initial approach was to the Hospital in May 1993. The Human Resources Manager notified all Service and Unit Managers of the study and its purpose, and that volunteers were sought. I received five confirmed responses, two from Service Managers, one from a Unit Manager and two from allied health staff members.

By the end of June 1993, I had not received any further confirmed responses although I had been contacted by a number of women who expressed an interest.

Interviews were not conducted with this latter group of women for one of two reasons. Either I considered they were not suitable for participation in the study because the position they held within the institution did not afford them the responsibility of being in a role of authority over other staff, or they decided not to participate following discussion about the research topic.

One woman expressed concern that, much as she accepted my assurance of confidentiality, she felt vulnerable at this time, and did not feel secure enough to risk any possibility of being identified.

This feeling of vulnerability was also expressed by a number of the other women, both prior to the interview and within the interview process itself. Discussion about some topics within the interview caused concern about the availability of the content of the tapes to others.

I then sought approval from the Chief Executive Officer of the Polytechnic to seek subjects from within that organisation. Approval was granted on 21 June 1993 (See appendix I).

I then approached women at the Programme Manager level by telephone, and received confirmation from five of their willingness to participate.

This selection procedure varied from that used at the hospital where a notice was circulated within the institution by the Human Resources manager and the staff contacted me if they were interested in taking part.

All subjects were asked for their permission to be quoted.

Code names are used in this report, and actual names or other identifying characteristics do not appear on any transcript material. Subjects were assured of absolute confidentiality. (See appendix II)

Any quotations or information which might reveal the identity of any participant have been excluded from the study.

I personally knew two of the hospital staff; I had worked with one some years previously in a different setting and had had a continuing but lessening connection with the other over a period of around twenty years.

Although I am employed by the polytechnic, I have little direct contact with the polytechnic women who were subjects. I work on a different campus site and the occasional if fleeting connections occur at staff functions or union meetings.

It was important the participants felt freely able to self-disclose, and following discussion about the topic, I took their agreement to be interviewed as an indication of their willingness to do this.

Another important aspect of the interview process was my hope that the participants would find the experience personally useful.

It could be argued that when research is participant centred, then the participants can gain self understanding and increased awareness within their lives.

This last point has been important for me, as the researcher, as the principle of self reflection throughout the process has impacted on my thoughts. The exploration of discourse analysis, the conversations with the women, and and-reviewing the transcribed material, has added to my self understanding and increased my awareness on a number of levels. My thoughts about, and reactions to, the implications of language and its constructive nature has been highlighted. The other point that the process of this study has alerted me to, is the reciprocal nature of research, and that it is not value free. In the interview process, my questioning is not passive, and becomes as much a constructive and active part of the interview as does the responses of participants (Oakley 1981).

As discussions about the topic involved both myself and the women, my own position/s need to be identified. I am white, female, heterosexual, and still becoming educated. I am married, and have occasional, and diminishing, responsibility for my husband's children. I am employed within one of the institutions used in this study. In terms of my theoretical position, I am a little less clear; a year or so ago I would have called myself a positivist empiricist but have been moving away from this as I have been exploring the topic and the research process for this study.

I find I am alternately, excited by and confused by the movement of which discourse analysis is a part. I am excited by the broadening of possibilities and the challenging of the dominant knowledges; confused by the challenges to meanings I have internalized from my training and experiences, and the challenges to my perception of myself as an independent agent.

This has been a process which has provided an alternative view that I believe I will not be able to step back from in the future.

2. Interview Procedure

All interviews took place in a setting selected by the participants. Two were interviewed in their homes, two came to my work place, and the remainder were interviewed at their work place. All interviews were private and uninterrupted ranging from approximately 35 minutes to one and one half hours.

All interviews were tape recorded with the knowledge and permission of the participants. Tapes of interviews were transcribed showing both my questioning and comments and the participants responses. At the time of the interview, all respondents were offered a transcribed copy once completed; two respondents indicated they would like a copy.

The interviews were unstructured and open ended, but focussed on particular issues such as the women's experiences and understanding of power, and their sense of themselves in relation to this.

During these interviews I had two major concerns, the first to gather information that related to the study, and the second to enable each participant to feel comfortable throughout the interview process. The atmosphere for each interview was informal and conversational, and some 10 to 15 minutes were spent prior to taping in achieving rapport and introducing the topic. This period also enabled each respondent to have an opportunity to clarify any points of concern before the questions relating to the research began.

Almost all participants expressed embarrassment or discomfort at the outset of the interview because of the tape recorder, although all had readily agreed to be taped. After the tape recorder was switched on, it probably took some 5 minutes or so for respondents to become less conscious of the machine.

At the completion of the interview, each participant was asked about their feeling of satisfaction with the interview process. For example, was there anything else they may have wanted to include/say/express that had not been covered in the interview process.

One of the women at this stage asked for a section of the recorded account to be wiped, and this was done after the interview.

Another, following the interview, telephoned to say she was sending me a brief note giving further details which, on reflection, she felt I needed to have.

3. Interview questions

Although Potter and Wetherell (1987) recommend constructing

"a detailed schedule which sets out the questions to be asked, and specifies the probes and follow-up questions which should be produced if particular responses are offered" (p.165)

I used the questions as a guide only, and where possible attempted to use all questions (or variations of) at some point in the interview. Differing responses required different probes, and variations of questions were needed for different respondents. I decided on this course since I wanted the interview process to be as flexible as possible, but remain within the confines of the topics of power and sense of self. I also attempted to keep the process more conversational rather than adopting an interview style.

The interview guide is set out in Appendix IV.

4. Method of Analysis

i) Interview Transcription.

Transcriptions were made from the audiotaped interviews and include both mine and respondents questions and comments. The number of pages transcribed from each interview range from 17 pages to 38 pages.

Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Edwards and Potter (1992) have been referred to as a guide for transcription features used throughout the interviews. Their notation includes such features as stress, vowel extension indication, pauses to nearest tenth of a second, overlaps, and stress highlights.

I found as I read through the transcriptions, that the readability was more important than the particular details related to stress and pronunciation. Timing and pauses are included in the transcripts. Appendix V contains information on the notations used.

ii) Coding

Potter and Wetherell (1987) note that the process of coding is quite separate from the analysis itself. Coding is vitally important in relating the interview responses to the research questions of interest.

My first step was to extract from the transcripts, those words or phrases which related to power or authority, and sense of self or identity.

The next step was to "cut up" a copy of each interview transcript, bringing together sections that related to the same topic. In this way I hoped to work toward developing patterns that would become clearer. I worked directly from the transcripts on a computer, shifting blocks of transcripts that related to the areas in question placing them together under various headings. This process kept me in touch directly with the material, and allowed coherent and compact print-outs. The next step was to read and re-read these extracts which began to reveal particular themes. These are the themes that provided the headings under the analysis section. These themes included the varied ways the women use to talk about themselves, and their relationship with power. In many instances, different topic areas would contain the same account/s. Patterns that emerged in this process also shifted as I worked through it.

Reading and rereading of the material helped in the analysis development, something which was constantly changing as I worked through the material. Potter and Wetherell (1987) provided somewhat reassuring commentary, as I worked through this process.

"Just as with bike riding, it is not easy to convey the analytic process in abstract. Words fail us at this point, it is not a case of stating, first you do this and then you do that. The skills required [in the analysis of discourse] are developed as one tries to make sense of transcript and identify the organisational features of documents.....Often it is only after long hours struggling with the data and many false starts that a systematic patterning emerges. False starts occur as patterns appear, excitement grows, only to find that the pattern postulated leaves too much unaccounted, or results in an equally large file of exceptions." (p.168)

As (apparently) clear patterns emerged, confirmation of the relevance and construction of these was discussed with others. Variations within and between the accounts were noticeable, and this contributed to the richness of the material. A pattern that was becoming more noticeable, as I worked through their transcripts was that almost all the women experienced considerable ambivalence, when talking about themselves and their relationship with power. Their responses indicated discomfort with the word power, and considerable difficulty in attempting to define it or talk about their relationship to it.

5. Ethical Concerns

It was important for the protection of those involved in this research, that all participants were assured of absolute confidentiality. All participants were asked to give their written informed consent (Appendix III) and were assured by me both verbally and in writing that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time (Appendix II). They were advised that the tape recorder could be turned off at any stage of the interview process.

During the course of some interviews, the tape recorder was turned off for varying periods by me or the participants. This enabled the participants to have control over what was being recorded, particularly as some had expressed concern at the vulnerability they felt when discussing a particular issue.

Participants were given a pseudonym to be used where any direct quotations were made from the recorded material. Also any information which might give clues to the identity of any of the participants is excluded.

ANALYSIS: WOMEN AND THEIR SELF DESCRIPTIONS

This chapter focusses on the way the women talk about their sense of self, and the range of resources they use in accounting for self. It is divided into four sections as follows.

The first section describes the women's **accounting for self via a Trait or Type discourse**. The second section looks at their **construction of selves as perceived by others**; the third at their **construction of learned behaviours**; the fourth and last section looks at the various **roles that are constructed** by the women.

1) The Women's essential self:

In an attempt to define themselves, the women drew on a trait or type repertoire. The women in this context speak about particular characteristics that define self as the "essential me" which is assumed to be enduring and constant over time, and is consistent with trait theories. These characteristics were generally produced in answer to a question asking the woman to describe their sense of themselves. The following extracts from the transcripts indicate the trait/type repertoire -

I'm a bit of a reflector I'm terribly honest which is always the bottom line (Jane p.3)

I'm very, I guess you could call it ah ..conscientious and ah ... I have a strong belief in self efficacy ah how effective a person sees themselves in relation to the world... (Claire p.13)

These self-descriptions indicate the women perceive themselves as particular and individual. Implicit in their accounts is an assumption that the self presented in this way is an authentic essential self, and that their presentation and disposition would be entirely synonymous with their self descriptions.

The trait characteristics occurred throughout their accounts, as if they provided evidence of the women's authenticity.

I find if I make snap judgements they're usually wrong. When things are foisted on me I feel as if I have no control, so ah yes .. I 'm a person who needs time to think about things.
(Jane p.3)

The authentic self, produced through trait talk, will always shine through, "I'm always me". This is even amidst a stated openness to external influence.

I'm fairly much an open an open book. Um I don't have any hidden agendas. I'm always me. (Elizabeth p.16)

Other expressions construct a singularly personal self which is consistent, continuous and enduring.

I'm aware that I have different views that don't go away I'd like to hang on to that and be different.
(Julia p.25)

I don't like being told what to do ... ah ... I've always been independent
(Nellie p.7)

This self is also fundamental, authentic and essential.

How I see myself is basically a fairly quiet person ... but quietly assertive.
(Bethney p.6)

I'm always me
(Elizabeth p.16)

Whatever I said or did I had to be honest ... I have to be able to live with myself.
(Josephine.p10)

The effect here is to construct their distinctiveness and confirm their idiosyncratic personal being.

The following account presents another dimension of the trait repertoire. Kerri talks of a characteristic, confidence, which has only now, come into awareness in the context of the interview.

I mean you have to have it right in here about ah about who you are in order to um.. well its only when I'm talking to you that I realise that I have this confidence,..I've always had it. (Kerri p.21)

So, this part of her personal being always exists but has only just been identified. This provides a clear example of the trait discourse being used in the process of articulating the self. Kerri constructs herself as a confident person.

The trait discourse enables a self construction that

1. is a strongly individualistic means of making sense of self; and
2. presents the self as consistent and authentic.

As I was reading through these responses, it occurred to me that none of the characteristics were identified as feminine, when the women were asked to describe themselves.

However, when we talked about power and elsewhere, the women used more gendered trait characteristics. The implications of this difference in the use of trait repertoires will be discussed later.

2. The Women's self perceived by others:

For many of the women, their sense of essential self as described above, was not only important from their point of view, but was important as a means by which others' perceptions could confirm their authenticity.

I've personally ah I've got this thing where I need to know that ah that others see me as authentic.. you know... ah thats important to me. (Claire p.13)

I've always had a quiet confidence in myself ... for years it mattered that other people didn't see that ... um ... I guess for years it was important to me how other people saw me ... and I was I was ah.. invisible.. ah it still matters a bit (Bethney p.9)

When describing their essential self, the women constructed this as an a priori state of being, and social context did not mediate this self. For example, in Julia's account which follows, she constructs herself as the "same person" in her different work roles.

*One thing I really hang on to is ah .. is me .. that its me and I know that ah in the classroom or ah with staff um ... I'm the same. I can really do things the way I am, you know .. which may well be quite different to the way others ah....the way other people see things and I'm comfortable with that so um ... I don't try to pretend when I'm ah here that I'm any different ... I think others see that I hope so (laughter)
(Julia p.13)*

Within these contexts the trait discourse enabled the women to construct themselves as consistent.

In some of the accounts, there is a tension between the trait discourse which identified permanent and enduring characteristics, and the possibility that the women may be seen by others as inconsistent with this self. For example,

I like to think I'm not seen as that cold-hearted person outside of work. (Maggy p.5)

Added to this anxiety about inconsistency was the, at times, implicit concern that they might actually have changed, for example,

"I don't feel any different ah you'd have to ask the others whether I am in fact different" (Patricia p.19)

In this case it is important that others are able to confirm that the trait construction remains consistent, i.e. whether "*in fact*" she is different.

The concern about consistency became particularly apparent in discussion about other women who had filled management positions. Some of the participants suggested that these other women were adopting a style which was inconsistent with what they described as the "women's way".

What appeared to be happening here was an attempt to dissociate themselves from other women who are seen as inconsistent. For example,

I I'm ah really trying ah I've tried really hard to make sure that I ... that I don't adopt the same style {as other women she has seen} but people on the outside might say differently.... ahh .. one person said they thought I that I hadn't actually gone down that track...that I'd still stayed the way I was before I became {the position she holds}... ah their perception was that I was still the ah the same person, and to me thats really important (Josephine p.4)

There is another discourse entering the womens' accounts which is exemplified by Josephine where she is concerned not to adopt the same "style" as that adopted by other women in management positions. The use of the word "style" here suggests an overlay on top of the traits; other women may not be authentic in their self presentation when attaining a particular position. Josephine for example, hopes not to be seen as inauthentic, but needs the verification of others. There is a suggestion here that this inauthenticity becomes a possibility when taking up a management position.

Thus, while the essential trait self is regarded as having an enduring quality (at least in an internal sense) and as being unchangeable, the women construct the possibility that the "inauthentic" traits may be present in some contexts.

3. Women and self - learned behaviours

Six of the women described a tension between their work role and the outward expression of their essential self. In their attempts to explain this tension, a conditioning or socialization type of repertoire becomes apparent. The following extract indicates this tension -

I had ah .. quite a struggle .. coming to terms with being with having two children, and I think we all ah probably do .. we raise our ... we parent in the same way that we were parented .. and I came from a solid middle class family my mother never worked and was always with .. always had the time after school for us and I had great difficulty in coming to terms with not being available to them {her children} (Patricia p.4)

In this extract a tension is articulated between the experience as a parent and as a manager, and the conflict that exists between them. There is also a tension between Patricia's mother's modelling of parenting and Patricia not being available for her children in the same way.

In the following extracts the women also made use of a conditioning or socialization repertoire -

Its, it's embarrassing, I mean .. and I mean we've all been brought up not to ever say anything nice about us, good about ourselves (Elizabeth p.28)

I feel the guilt thing and I feel that someones accusing me of.... of not managing well ... [and] part of that could be baggage and my conditioning and growing up and that ah thats what happens to women growing up and living in our society. We carry this guilt thing because its .. its ah ... its so ingrained in us when we were little (Julia p.24)

The discourses of socialisation and conditioning offer a construction of the self as something that has been learned. This "learned" self sometimes gets in the way of the trait characteristics being able to "come through".

I think its actually harder for women to come out and be open .. and say yes I am proud of myself, I have done well. .. Yes I think I think we are conditioned to .. to keep low key and to just quietly go about our work without making a fuss (Josephine p.22).

I find it very hard in this environment to actually speak up and .. how hard . ah hard to actually get listened to because I feel .. I feel that maybe just because I'm a woman rather than .. ah .. rather than what someone's actually doing to me ... I feel the guilt thing and I guess yes .. I feel the guilt thing
(Julia p.23)

and

we carry this guilt thing because its .. its ah ... its so ingrained in us when we were little .. I envy women who are able to speak out well .. you know ... make their point .. to speak up well (Julia p.24/25)

In these accounts, the women are describing what is appropriate, not only for them as a person, but for them as women. These two descriptions are often in conflict. On the one hand, as a person a woman ought to be proud, assertive, responsible and take care of herself, and on the other, as a woman she ought to be available for children, not make a fuss, be low key and not speak up for herself.

This learned version of the self is specifically gendered. In the extract below, Nellie uses gender explicitly to identify an appropriate role for her as a youngster, part of which she has worked to change as an adult. In keeping with the "authentic nature" of self, (speaking her mind), she has learned another style of presentation.

"I've really had to ah try and overcome ... hmm .. its a bit tricky but I've worked on heaps of stuff that I ah .. you know.. um.. I've had to learn to become assertive and thats been really hard because I never had to as a child and anyway, if I did speak up my mind my ah.. my father didn't approve.... it was OK for my brothers but not me. (Nellie p. 15)

There is therefore, a version of self that is able to be modified; what has been learned can be unlearned.

4. The Women and their roles

Each of the women has presented a strongly individualistic sense of self framed within a trait or type repertoire, and generally this sense of self was one that was articulated positively.

This section focuses on the tension that is constructed between their working selves, their essential selves, and their learned selves. Here, the women use discourse about roles as a resource to explain the conflicts they experience as they juggle the competing activities of their work, attitudes of others toward them, the expectations they experience from others and the impact these have on their essential selves.

Discourses of gender appropriateness appear here too, as the roles are constructed as gender specific.

In the following extracts Josephine constructs herself as being in a caretaker role in her dealings with students.

I tend i in my job...I tend to to ah.. to get to deal with the students a lot I think I'm perceived as being the kind gentle woman in the department.

and

I tend to tend to come tend to ah be seen I think as as .. the soft option almost you could say you know um .. Josephine can deal with the students um .. you know um she'll be kind and gentle and if there's problems we'll give them to Josephine. (Josephine p.2-3)

It is important to note that in this account, the role discourse is constructed as originating from the perception of others and it raises questions about her essential self. It seems that Josephine is distancing her essential self from the role self in this account. "The soft option" contains hints of a negative evaluation of how others perceive her, although later she notes,

I mean the structure and the organisation are important ... but .. there is no point in having anything ... unless you've got people . and I so for me personally I put people first .. so you know I I've got some real I have some real problems with some of the perceptions I have about .. power. (p.4)

On one hand (and within the context of the caretaker role), Josephine is constructing herself as a "kind gentle" woman through a discourse about gendered roles, and on the other is saying the way she performs her work role (*putting people first*) is attributable to her authentic self.

Thus, a gender appropriate discourse (the kind gentle woman; the soft option) is being used to account for a conflict constructed in terms of her role self and her essential self.

In the following extracts, the women are describing a conflict they experience within their occupational setting, based on gender.

There are sexual gender things that come up ... or things that come up with work in terms of how I think I appear to other people .. but that I don't feel inside of myself

and

.. and there's a nice girl stereotype and all that sort of stuff . but um . yeah um .. thats their problem .. yeah but it annoys me .. and um I've had some quite difficult times (Claire p.22)

Its difficult sometimes, ah ... I think that ah that there's a belief, and I try .. I try not to fall into this trap.. yes a belief that as a woman I shouldn't be in this role .. its probably from both men and women I think.. (Nellie p.9)

There is a sense here of danger (a "trap") to the essential self posed by the gender specificity of role self for both these women. The women are both resisting. There is an anticipation that the essential self is at risk of being contradicted, or of being transformed by the role self.

Gendered roles are quite explicit in the following two accounts. There is a clear implication of masculine/feminine differences which the women present as taken for granted, or as common sense.

I'm lucky I'm in an organisation that sort of accepts female's roles .. and currently in the management team of nine people .. ah of which four are female...so there's ah some understanding of ah .. of women's roles... and women's needs... (Maggy p.7)

the hierarchy (laughter) is male... so up there on the levels above us its stacked high with males....there's several reasons I guess.. one because they're more career orientedand ah the other that they stay and I think .. I guess that must change now as ah as the hospital has a creche.. (Bethney p.9)

These gender differences are set within the work context and in the first extract there is an assumption that the organisation is masculine in construction but because almost half of the management team are "female" then there is an "understanding of women's roles".

The next three extracts (from two respondents) outline a conflict the women experience, not only about their essential self and their work role, but also about their family role. The idea of "family" was very likely a construction which, although unspoken, played a part in the conflict experienced in the previous two extracts. Here it is explicit.

...there was the stress of having to do the work uum.. as well as coping with the family that ah.. they ah just weren't really understanding the situation I was in. (Julia p.23)

I came from a solid middle class family my mother never worked and was always with .. always had the time after school for us and I had great difficulty in coming to terms with not being available to them {her children}. (Patricia p.4)

I still needed personal challenges and because ah because I couldn't do what I wanted to doah be a career nurse... I felt that um ... decided I couldn't because ah you know, the idea, the nuclear family,... dependent nuclear family with only ourselves to share the load in uh um managing the kids that I um... finally accepted my role I guess... (Patricia p.5)

The family becomes a site of difficulty or struggle for these women. A clear element in the framing of this conflict is the gender specific role expectations associated with their positions as wives and mothers. These are constructed as restricting the expression of the essential self.

In the previous two extracts, a conflict is constructed between gender, family and work by drawing on the "role" repertoire. In the following two extracts, gender, family and work roles are brought together to perform a positive evaluation of women generally.

Women um are good at everything ... they're experts at everything, ah not myself, but women generally because of our roles, our role as the homemaker... right number one, any crisis which develops in the home go to Mum ... our role as a worker as a you know bringing in the ah ... the homemaker the ah homemaker.. the mother the homemaker ah ah ..now combining that role with the one who is employed.....so where do we get our strength.. (Kerri p.15)

I'm always very aware of what .. of what role I'm in. I mean I always say to everybody at home.... I'm multi ah multi-functional and I dont think men are multi-functional ... I think women are amazing.. you know we can be.. you know it really does.. it really interests me. We can be .. working in a high powered position thinking about all sorts of things but .. ah still the little computer is still ticking about at whose got to be where and whats going to be cooked tonight ... (Elizabeth p.25)

These two participants, have both, at some stage in the interview commented that their role as a wife/mother has placed them under considerable stress. Here the roles as wife/mother/homemaker/worker are evaluated as favourable and positive indicators of the broad ability of women generally. Thus, it is clear that gendered specificity of roles is not only used to account for conflict.

However, while evaluating women as "amazing" (within the traditionally gendered roles, and working as well), Elizabeth constructs a different evaluation for those women who move into positions of power. She constructs them as having moved away from their traditional gendered roles. Not only do they go through a personality change, they forget where they were.

You know, many women that I've seen and ah .. I've worked with a lot of women in power is ah . is that that they always have a personality change ... when they get ah when they get ah what I'm calling now is real power

and

.... but I feel very disappointed that ah the way a lot of women do use power and how they dissociate themselves from all other women ... they forget the things they used to share ah .. they forget the things they were involved in.... its like they were never there .. they don't understand their concerns any more. (Elizabeth p.4-5)

When talking about the work role specifically in relation to *real power*, there is a construction of danger to the essential self. What seems to be implicit here is that constructed roles that are gender appropriate do not threaten to change the essential self. However, roles that are gender inappropriate (the work role associated with power) may transform the essential self.

It is necessary to ask the function of the role discourse. As has been seen with the trait discourse, qualities (mostly favourable) are constructed as being essentially within the person, and are enduring and consistent; the role discourse on the other hand situates the motives outside of the essential self. In this sense then, roles are constructed as external forces that the women comply with as part of their duty, as women, to the family and society.

The role discourse allows the construction of the essential self without compromise. In Elizabeth's account above, there is an implication of the essential self being linked to a gender appropriate role for women, (that is the gender appropriate role does not pose a threat to the essential self). This therefore enables the rejection of the inappropriate (and masculine) role, which some other women take up when they get "into real power".

In the two cases where the breadth of women's roles is explicitly commented upon and celebrated (i.e. the ability of women generally to meet the wide myriad of role expectations), the role discourse could be regarded as complementing the trait discourse. In other words the role discourse appears to supplement the trait discourse with gendered characteristics: Women are multi-functional, amazing, experts at everything.

The role discourse is always gendered (this appeared in the accounts about learned behaviours as well as the accounts relating to roles). The trait discourse on the other hand appears to be mostly gender free. In their accounts, the women have, at times, used gender and roles to account for inconsistencies between their "role playing" self and their "essential" self.

The variations among the different discourses the women use to account for and interpret their experience of themselves and their working and family relations presents a complex pattern.

There are variations within and between the women's accounts. Conflicts are explained in terms of learning, roles and an essential self. Gender is used to account for these conflicts.

Sometimes the relationship between gender and self is evaluated as negative as when prescribed 'gender' appropriate roles place a limitation on the 'expression' of the essential self. At times in some accounts the relationship is evaluated as positive.

The trait discourse is used to construct an essential self which is authentic, consistent and enduring.

The learned discourse is used to construct a self with characteristics that can be unlearned without challenging the continuity of the essential self.

The role discourse constructs a gendered self with duties, rights and responsibilities which can be challenged without threatening the authenticity and consistency of the essential self.

ANALYSIS: THE WOMEN AND POWER

When the women described themselves using the trait discourse this was generally in response to a question asking them how they saw themselves. Their trait discourses were not gendered, that is, not one of the women mentioned characteristics that they clearly associated with femininity in this self construction.

However, gender was used with the learning and role discourses, both implicitly and explicitly. Variations were found across and within accounts, but a theme that was emerging was that the role and learning repertoires were used to construct behaviours and characteristics that are appropriate for women.

Generally speaking, the trait repertoires relate to "personhood" and allow the women to evaluate themselves positively. The role and learning repertoires relate to gender appropriate behaviours or characteristics, and allow the women to account for a conflict or struggle they are experiencing. Central to the account of this conflict is gender. What the women are accounting for is the conflict experienced because of their sex, not because of who they are as a person. It is as if they are saying, "this is the conflict I experience because I am a woman, not because of who I am as a person".

This chapter analyses the womens accounts in relation to power and self, and there are several themes that emerge. The women's redefining of power will be dealt with in Section 1. Gender was used in this process to evaluate their definitions as positive or negative. Section 2 details the construction of particular versions of power using trait and role discourses. Section 3 deals with the womens accounts about where power is located, and section 4 explores a self reconstruction that occurs related to the work role.

1. The Women and power defined.

Each respondent was asked to define power. Most of the women expressed discomfort with the word itself and redefined it. They each expressed, in different ways, a negative connotation of the word, and reconstructed it (or *turned it around*).

Various euphemisms occur in this reconstruction for example, *influence, being careful not to be overpowering, responsibility*, and so on.

*I ah how do I perceive my ... ah power um.. I ah ..
I still don't look at power.... I turn that word around
so that it ah I'm comfortable with it .. and um in
doing so I'm empowering others ... (Kerri p.2).*

*I prefer not to use that word ah Its um .. it ah
it means being careful to it means being careful
not to be ... overpowering to others .. and .. to keep
asking not telling (Bethney p.7)*

How would I define power well .. I guess ..
 power is really **manipulation** to a certain extent ..
 to me.. and so thats why I talk about **responsibility**
 ah .. being responsible (Josephine p.7)

I suppose **power's** ah having the ultimate response ah...
 ah.. in my position I'm ah responsible for about twelve
 staff .. I s'pose .. I don't see it as power its ah its
 more one of those sort of line management functions so I
 ah I'm sort of responsible, but ah the position is more
 of **influence**..... I s'pose that would be a better way
 of rationalizing it (Maggy p.2)

This reconstruction enables the women to distance themselves from some meanings of power, in particular power as authority and control.

One of the functions of this distancing, is to dissociate themselves from the "male model", as the following extract shows.

I'm sort of aware of ah of the power that I can use
 sometimes.....I would like to think of it as ah
 as **influence** ... rather than as **power**

Qn: Can you tell me why you can't call it power?

Because power is a really sort of a bad word ... its
 got .. ahhh ... we're {women} not meant to admit we have
 power or that we like to have power ... (Elizabeth p.2)

In the following two extracts, the women construct both a negative and positive evaluation of power.

Power **Power's** Ok because **power's** something
 you can pass on, power's something anybody can have
 it doesn't have to be power over anything, or power ah
 to do something... (Nellie p.4)

it is knowing my power and using myself .. to make
 things happen ... yeah it definitely is it is about
 .. **controlling and influencing** and that kind of stuff..
 this is the bit that bothers me I hate this power over
 things p'raps its more a feeling of freedom than
 power ... (Claire p.20)

In these two accounts, the women present power as negative, "controlling", "influencing" and "power over". Power can also mean "enabling them to choose": "it can be passed on"; "anybody can have it".

In the accounts presented below, two women explicitly dissociate themselves from wanting power. Its potential and use is constructed as part of their role, but not as part of their essential self.

you get some people who abuse power left, right and centre ... and some who use their common sense I said before that I never wanted any power ... um ... I still don't (Jane p.4)

(and later)

ah.. yeah in my position I ah I've had to ah how could you put it.um .. I've had to direct people to do things I haven't liked it.. I don't like being told to do things ... um ... I guess I try everything else and .. like discussion ah.... hmmm not the power in the position...its working together thats important. (Jane p.5)

So, power, how do I see it ... what ah what is power to me? its actually hard when you're in a role ah ... to actually ah to feel what power you actually have.. but I don't actually believe I ah I don't think I have it ... I feel that there are rewards in this job if my ah if my working relationship with people is on a good level .. that they're happy (Julia p. 5)

Whats happening here is the role discourse is being used to construct the work place as the site of power, and the women are distancing their essential self from "wanting" or "having" power.

Both women redefine power as developing good relationships. Good relationships, cooperation and common sense are positively evaluated by these women.

What becomes more apparent when looking at the accounts is that most of the women draw on notions of power that are both positive and negative. Most dissociate themselves from any part of having power, but at other points in their accounts make use of an essential "feminine" discourse to talk about power being acceptable and positive. Thus, what emerges when they discuss power, is a clear use of gender to distinguish the characteristics that are connected with the use of it. On the one hand there is a feminine way of using or being in a position of power that is positive and acceptable. On the other, there is a rejection or condemnation of those characteristics that are construed as masculine.

2. The Women and power - The Womens Way

The women I talked with drew on trait and role discourses to construct particular versions of power. The trait discourse was used in relation to the characteristics of a person in power. The role discourse was used to construct power in relation to the features of the role.

Both the features of the role and the trait characteristics were used to describe and define power.

At times these traits and features were used to construct the desirable "women's way" of being in a position of power/authority/control. For example,

oh yes ... some of the ah I've held some ah I've been put in charge of committees and had quite um... quite a bit of influence... but ah ... I've used it to work .. with others ... you know umm to reach consensus .. (Patricia p. 11)

The women were not consistent as at other times, the same traits or features appeared within the construction of the undesirable "male model", or "not the women's way".

.. you know I talked before about ah .. about the old boy network .. the um the manager was he was he used the position and the influence he had to keep some of us out ... we felt ahhh ... how could you say um we felt ignored and it was mainly women.

i) Trait Characteristics.

All the women used traits to describe the characteristics of power. The traits are listed in Table 1. below under the headings of "The Women's Way" and "NOT the Women's Way".

Table 1: Characteristics of power using traits.

<u>The Women's Way.</u>		<u>NOT the Women's Way.</u>
Strength		Strong.
Power		Power/powerful
Control		Control
Speaking Out	}	Outspoken
Outspoken		
be straight	}	Influence
Influence		
Manipulation		Manipulative
Committed		Committed
Authority		Authority
Responsibility		Responsibility
Persuade		Persuade

Table 1(cont.)

<u>The womens way.</u>	<u>Not the womens way.</u>
Not overly ambitious	Ambitious
Assertive	Aggressive
Supportive	Abusive
Enabled/enabling	Oppressive
Empowered/empowering	Disempower/disempowering
Positive	Negative
Not bossy	Bossy/dominating
Logical	Traditional
Constructive	Threatening
Fair	Vicious
Competent	Corrupt
	Less caring
	Frightening

The first grouping in the table above (in bold print) are synonyms, and they draw attention to the womens use of the same terms to describe both male and female characteristics associated with power.

What we have here then, is a range of traits that appear when discussing power. Those that appear under the rubric "Women's Way" are evaluated as positive and constructed as part of an essential feminine self.

people would do things for her ah .. so that is a certain kind of power and I think it was ah she had she was really quite a soft hearted person .. she won peoples cooperation .. and she was I think quite powerful in doing and successful in the things she wanted.
(Julia p.10)

Those that appear under "Not the Women's Way" are evaluated as negative, and are associated with patterns of behaviour the women constructed as belonging to men or to some women in positions of power.

*but men seem just seem to be more aggressive, more
ah outspoken and ah .. less feeling about whether
people are you know hurting. (Julia p.26)*

*some women get up to management positions and ah ..
even those who would see themselves as feminist....
they seem to adopt a um they can be aggressive and
they can use their position in a threatening way.
(Nellie p.15)*

In the first grouping of traits (**bold print**), the women have identified similar characteristics under both the "women's way" and "not the women's way". There are not necessarily two different groups of women here, but often the same characteristics could be evaluated as desirable and undesirable within the same text, but within different contexts.

*Unfortunately most .. ah .. a lot of my favourites
ah ... there are more people who hold management
positions who tend to use the status .. or the fact
that ah they think they have the authority to do
certain things ah .. they just go ahead and do them
I don't actually see those as being successful .. I
don't see how they can be very happy people .. but I'm
aware that in our society ...somehow ... I don't know
why ... they get ahead they seem to be aggressive
... they are vicious they go for what they want ..
too bad if they tread on people around them ..
(Julia p. 10)*

and later

*If you're looking for power or success ... I don't
think you can really ah .. can really do that without
the cooperation of the people so it um ... it seems to
me that the people really have the power ah the
authority and if I can win that .. can get on side
then that helps me.....I feel my authority is with
others ... yes I feel that ah ... hopefully I'm their
colleague. (Julia p.11)*

In the first extract, "authority" is evaluated as negative and is associated with aggression, being vicious, treading on people etc. This construction shares characteristics identified elsewhere as not the women's way. Julia also dissociates herself from this construction. In the second extract, "authority" is evaluated positively. It is shared with others and it is an aspect of personhood.

Julia also constructs power in two ways as follows -

True power ah ... or true leadership ah in my eyes are the same .. its where people have some kind of personal quality or um ... they're actually communicating with people well ... (Julia p.9)

In the first account, "power" (or true power) is positive and equated with leadership. It is constructed as being within the person. It is part of an essential self, and involves communication with people - "The women's way".

a powerful manipulative woman ... and she used her power to control people ... definitely into power in a funny kind of way ... (Julia p.13)

In this second account, "power" is constructed as negative, is also within the person, and is related to manipulation and control - "not the women's way".

Speaking out, or being outspoken is evaluated in two ways. For Josephine it is evaluated positively, and constructed as part of being comfortable with herself, part of being straight -

if things are happening which I'm not happy about .. I always speak up..... its part of feeling comfortable with yourself. (Josephine p.10)

Jane evaluates being outspoken negatively, and it is associated with lack of caring and not listening.

she was I guess ... she was very outspoken .. she wasn't ah ... she believed she was right and she walked over others.. she didn't listen ... it was as though she ah .. she didn't careshe was less caring.
(Jane p.19/20)

In this case being outspoken is contrasted with being caring and the consequent implication is that speaking out is being unfeminine.

In the next extracts, responsibility is constructed in both positive and negative terms. In a positive sense it is related to a woman and is shared; in a negative sense it is related to a man and is not shared.

I adopted this .. this thing where I wanted everybody to know and everybody to be part of the ah to get everybody to take responsibility for small areastried to share it out.
(Josephine p.8)

Josephine talks about responsibility as being shared, and how in this sharing process the staff responded by working more closely with each other and it produced

a really good team building experience. (p.8).

This is contrasted against the following account

we're in a different situation this year with the new {manager} an an I understand there are budgetry restraints .. but people will never at the moment people don't actually know ... know what the budget is for the year or anything else ... we don't ah get the information.... he won't give us .. won't give the people responsibility... people have to ask for ahhh its a bit like getting things out of his back pocket ...
(Josephine p 8/9)

Keeping responsibility to self is constructed as "not the women's way" in this extract. It is associated with not giving others responsibility, and withholding information and resources.

The trait discourse is not only used to characterise power, but is also used to associate power with self. Power with the traits is associated with persons with traits. The different evaluations of the trait characteristics that the women talk about are associated with gender differences. Those that are evaluated positively are "the women's way"; those that are evaluated negatively violate the "women's way" and are rejected as inappropriate for women - "not the women's way". Apparent inconsistencies within the women's accounts work to enable them to dissociate their selves from any violation of the "women's way".

In the accounts relating to power, the women are affirming the dominant discourse that traditional research has described. This suggests that the relative positioning in the power hierarchy has women in a subordinate role. And this has become a common sense notion for my respondents.

ii) The Role Features.

The women also tended to use role discourses to construct power. As with the traits used to characterize power, underlying this is gender and what is appropriate for women. This is clearly distinguished from what is not appropriate for women.

Table. 2: Features associated with the role.

<u>(The Women's way)</u>	<u>(Not the women's way)</u>
Discuss	Chatting up.
Respresenting Others/advocacy	Prevent growth/play games
People first.	Tread on people
Team building	Not letting people down
Providing information	Not knowing whats going on
Womens role model	Jenny Shipley
Women centred perspective	Old boy network/male thing patriarchal
Constructive Womens way	Attitudes we accept from men but not from women.
Working with women	Hard on women
Flat structure	Hierarchy/multi layered
Negotiating	Power struggle/chatting up
Consensus	manipulation
Management	Misuse of position
Freedom	Status
Choice	Deep voice syndrome
Transitory	
Transferrable	
Pass power on	
Giving confidence	
Challenging	
Demanding	
Exciting	
Soften	
Common sense	
True Power	
True leadership	

As with the trait characteristics, there are two distinct groupings, one under the heading "Womens Way" and the other "not the womens' way. Unlike the traits, there are no features synonymous with both headings.

The features appearing in **bold print** are antonyms. Again those features that appear under the women's way are evaluated as positive; the others are evaluated negatively.

In the following extracts, Patricia discusses a woman who she described as fitting a "male model absolutely".

*The woman who had that position for a year was .. I guess I believe probably ah a **fairly male model** ... ah she had a go good a strong management background and was um into um was ah very committed to her career opportunities.*
(Patricia p.14)

*she is a very competent woman ... but um .. very strong ah was probably a bit p'raps a bit of a change agent in the ah process ah she didn't like the {person in charge} and he thought her a threat I think .. she ah she was a very strong woman and she did work in a **male model** absolutely um .. in a way and um .. until I guess I came along, because I worked in quite a different way ... ahhm and she'd never experienced working with women in a like a sort of consensus type group... it was really an excellent learning experience for her and she ah she did certainly soften over time .. she'll do very well*
(Patricia p.15)

Within these two accounts are constructions of the male model (not the women's way). She constructs an appropriate gendered role for women in power (consensus, soften), and an inappropriate gender role constructed as the male model. Patricia has constructed a version of the "male model" through a story of a woman whose "strength" got in the way of the appropriate "women's way". Her "learning experience" of the right way, "softening", means that she will do very well. Implicit in this construction is an evaluation that the male model is associated with strength and this is opposed to the way that women work in "consensus" to be successful.

The object of talk in this case, "not the women's way", is "formulated and constructed in the discourse in the course of doing evaluation" (Potter and Wetherell 1987, p.51).

Patricia also connects the "not the women's way" with family stress and loss of power for women. Also confirmed here is the inappropriateness of male power, as exemplified in the "old boy network" being adopted by a woman..

*we just don't have those women role models there ...
working the women's the constructive women's way
now and .. um we've got the Jenny Shipley's
the old boy network seems to have .. appeared again in
the male power thing .. (P.33)*

*I really do worry about where we're heading and the
stress on families in the social I just guess ah
the impact on society of what we're doing at the moment
its all very destructive and women .. are women are more
violated more abused in ah in this kind of
environment a stressed environment. (p.34).*

The next extract functions as a disclaimer of any association with features of a role constructed as not appropriate for women.

*I'm really concerned about .. you know I've said to
you before about the way . some women have gone on into
management and whats really happened .. is .. as though
they've suddenly adopted this ... almost ah almost
patriarchal attitude .. and they've adopted attitudes
that we accept from men but that we don't accept from
women. (Josephine p.3)*

The "attitude shift" occurs when women take up a management role and is constructed as "not the women's way". The attitudes are gender appropriate for males in these positions but not for females.

Elizabeth constructs a gender difference to justify her actions as part of her role -

My ah power .. ah its more as representing others and getting things for them I'm very comfortable with my sort of power because I feel its ah ... its getting things for people its giving ahhh its sharing and ah .. giving confidence. (Elizabeth p.5)

and

With some people, you have to use your power in such a way ahh .. that ah .. you've got to play all sorts of games .. whereas with others you can go um you can be quite straight .. and I much prefer this .. ah you can say well .. ah .. this is where I'm coming from and have it out in the open but a lot of people you know their power is sort of ... its almost corrupt really .. then you have to ah play all sorts of games with them...chat them up.... I suppose its saying a male and female thing... ah which I use at the end of the day (laughing) ... I play the games and they don't feel threatened by me ... I ah .. I don't like it but it gets me results. (Elizabeth p.6/7)

In this account, there is a gendered construction which is explicit in the acknowledgement that the power in her work role exists **only** when a gendered action (which she constructs as negative and game playing) is used to reduce threat and to get what she wants. The essential self is constructed as having little "power" except when it is enacting a gendered role. In this instance the enactment is sexual and is evaluated negatively as "not the women's way". Elizabeth's essential self is distanced from this role self, with the expressed preference to **be quite straight**. The function of talking about her preference is to keep the authenticity and integrity of her essential self.

The gendered role she takes up in this account, is one that she rejects for women (playing games, chatting up), but regards as necessary in order to do her job successfully (to have power). It is constructed as a feminine role that must be taken up within the context of the male model of power. In this construction Elizabeth differentiates quite clearly between the feminine role that is appropriate within the construction of the male model, and is "not the women's way" and the feminine role that is appropriate for the "women's way".

In the following extract, Claire also evaluates a gendered work role negatively. Elsewhere in her account, she has talked about the gender specificity of her work role, and how this has caused her conflict. In the following extract, she describes how she uses this gendered role.

Sometimes I get . quite . clear messages from him {her Manager} that he thinks I am . whinging, jumping up and down .. tantrumming demanding . stuff like that and .. in the last few months I've actually been starting to learn quite a lot .. about how to .. work him as it were, so that he doesn't think that. ... yeah its part of the process .. its a means to an end .. if I play the role of {her occupation} then ... yeah I get results ..it doesn't actually bother me too .. well not too much (Claire p. 19)

Claire uses gender to explain a conflict between a self who is unsuccessful in getting results, and the gendered work role behaviour which gets the results she wants - "the means to an end". As with Elizabeth, power is located in the feminine application of the male model, and is rejected as "not the women's way".

There is an inconsistency here with other constructions which use a discourse suggesting the self is impervious to change. Here however, Claire is citing a context where the role behaviour is successful. The above construction therefore provides a justification for acting in the context of the male model, in order to get results.

The women use a Role Discourse to construct gender appropriate features of power. Those features that are evaluated positively are appropriate for women. Those that are evaluated negatively are not. Implicit in some of these evaluations is the notion that women in the roles have little or no sense of power, unless they are enacting a negatively evaluated feminine role within the context of male power. This functions to maintain the integrity of the essential self.

3. Women, power and the essential self.

The women have generally reconstructed the word power, which is embedded within features of the work role. The features of enacting power are gendered as "the women's way" or "not the women's way". In this section, the women's responses to a question asking about their experience of authority or power are analysed.

I was concerned that my question may have prescribed the context of their responses, since most of the women located power within their work role, and not within the essential self. However, not all the women used the role discourse to construct power, and other less common locations are identified shortly.

i) Power in the Work Role

In the following extracts, power is constructed as embedded in the work role.

in a way um I see ah how do I see power ah its just being able to do things really ah .. ah be able to make decisions and ah ah have control of money and resources .. and I guess ahhh have power and control ah .. the job has that.. (Patricia p.23)

My ah power is .. is more as representing others and getting things for them... I'm, very comfortable with my sort of ah my sort of power because I feel its getting things for people its giving ahhh its sharing and ah .. giving confidence. (Elizabeth p. 5)

Yes, I've got um the position has some authority ... over people and parts of courses. (Nellie p.1)

In the following extracts, power is constructed as being within the role, and is rejected as belonging to the essential self. In the first extract this rejection is qualified by talk of a reluctant but infrequent use as part of the role.

I said before that I never wanted any power ... um ... I still don't um ... and I find that I actually ... there's only been once or twice when I've really had to put my foot down and say ah ... where I've had to use my position and say this is going to be done you know ... now that is that is power because they've had to turn round and do it.... (Jane p.4)

If I do have any power I feel .. yes .. I haven't really .. but yes I do ... but I'd feel it within the people. If I have any power that's the power of the team its very much a team thing and I don't think I have personally really any have any power ... (Julia p.1)

In the next two extracts, the women construct power as being within the work role, and it is evaluated as being conditionally desirable. The conditions are set (i) within a gendered discourse, for example "bossyness" has previously been cited as a trait not appropriate for women; and (ii) within a disclaimer; it is "horrible" to desire power, but acceptable to see how she would "manage".

I actually like ah like being in this position ah being in control ... being in charge Hope I don't get too bossy (laughter). (Bethney p.6)

I do want to be a manager at some stage ... but I'm not sure what type of organisation I'd like to manage but ... I'd just like some power (laughter) ... no that's horrible isn't it but I would like to have the opportunity to see how I would work... (Josephine p.5)

The next extract evaluates power negatively within the role such that it is important not to use it. It is appropriate only when constructed as the "women's way".

*its important to hold yourself in check on that ...
 {telling people how to do things rather than giving
 them choices}...ahh its important to let people make
 their choices ... ah not to exercise the power I've
 got. (Maggy p.3)*

ii) Power in a Cultural context

The following extract adds another dimension to those already discussed. When responding to a question about power, Kerri's answer situated power within a cultural context.

*I see myself in a position of responsibility that, if
 the power and authority that I have has been given to
 me .. ah by ah in a traditional way ... the
 responsibility that I have of that and I prefer ah not
 to call it power .. is that um I am responsible ah I'm
 a caretaker, I'm a guardian, and I guard that knowledge
 within me.... I pass it on (Kerri p.2)*

and later

*If I could look at it {power} ah in in a sense of being
 a guardian ... you know that that that to me is ah is an
 inner depth. It means to have knowledge to have um
 respect .. to have an awareness of other .. of other
 people .. yes. (Kerri p. 8)*

In this sense Kerri constructs the power as being a part of her culturally specific self. She constructs herself as the guardian of her cultural knowledge, and the caretaker of that knowledge.

It is possible therefore to see her account using yet another discourse to construct yet another version of the self, and that version is culturally specific.

Potter and Wetherell (1987) cite work by Rom Harre which would suggest that the self experience I may take for granted because of my culture, may be conceived of quite differently in other cultures. They point out that "different kinds of self experience become possible" and that in Maori culture, "a person becomes invested with a particular kind of power, mana, as a result of their birth circumstances" (p.105).

My construction of Kerri's text in the way I have described above may be shifting it from her cultural context. Again Potter and Wetherell (1987) caution that while an understanding of another culture may add to understanding of different sensational experience, "there is the risk that we are still dealing in idealizations" (p.105). My analysis may, therefore, be culturally inappropriate.

iii) Power and the Essential Self.

In the following accounts, the women construct a version of power which is "personal" and located with the essential self.

you realise that there are some things you can't influence and some things that you can .. um the other thing is that we ah we relate it to our self esteem so much and um its really really hard to um not to take it personally when your personal power isn't as effective as what you'd like it to be ..(Claire p. 14)

and

in in . my personal close relationships I definitely feel more powerful ... and I expect that when . I can't be as powerful as I'd like to be in those and .. then I actually put those aside ... relationships have to acknowledge my pow my own power now.... (Claire p.15)

In these extracts, the effectiveness of power is related to self esteem, and is constructed as part of her essential self. In this sense her power must be acknowledged within personal relationships, and is a fundamental part of her essential self.

If you look at power ah in terms of inner power I mean its having that strength, ah that inner strength uh and power I think in its most positive sense is its ah being enabled ah enabled and enabling (Patricia p.24)

Patricia constructs the notion of power in relation to the the essential self, and connects this with the gendered "way" of sharing and enabling, two of the characteristics she has identified elsewhere in her account, as appropriate for and belonging with women.

Kerri constructs power as personal as well as cultural.

I've put all these things down that power was .. intangible, you can't see it, its a feeling ... um its personal, its your own, its transitory ... you know here today and gone tomorrow ... its it is transferrable because you can give it to others and it has cultural implications for me .. in particular, it can .. be abused .. (Kerri p.15)

Kerri earlier constructed power using a cultural repertoire. In the above extract power is constructed as personal, as a feeling, as belonging with the holder, as part of the essential self.

There are two versions of power in the following accounts. First there is the construction of power or control within self - "being in control of oneself"; second is the construction of the self having power or control over children.

I've thought about .. I've thought about this , power is ah ... I have to go back to sort of what power is .. why I want ... its very important for me to have power over my own life.... I hate not being in control of my own situation and I like to make um ... and I've really only probably thought about it a lot since I've been a mother and um ... when like the children were babies and we went on journeys in this terrible weather and storms I always insisted on driving because I wanted to be .. I suppose ... in control....I had this really strong ah .. thing that I would always have to be ah in control in dangerous situations so it's very important to me to be in charge of my own sort of destiny.... I'd get absolutely thrown like .. you know ... if I've ever been admitted to hospital I can't stand the thing of not being in charge. (Elizabeth p.10/11)

and later

...even with bringing up children you've got to always go back and ah sort of .. what's motivating me to have this power over these people .. so I suppose if you've got power you've got to be very reflective all the time ah.. you've ah its worth examining what you're doing. (Elizabeth p.11)

Elizabeth constructs power in a personal sense, and uses motherhood to justify exercising control. The use of motherhood as an example of having control or power emphasises the specificity of gender and legitimises the use of power. The implication here is that the exercising of power has to be gender appropriate, that is, you cannot exercise power unless you are a man, or unless you are exercising it as a mother.

The role discourse has been used to construct the work place as the site of power, and gender has been used to evaluate features of the role as positive or negative.

Women and management roles are potentially dissonant. Management roles are associated with power and masculinity and are negatively evaluated. The women have reframed power (both the trait characteristics of a person in power, and the features associated with the role of power). Thus women, power, and management are constructed as being incongruent. They are negatively evaluated in relation to the characteristics required as appropriate for their gender. The only desirable direction for a women in a position of power, is the appropriate gendered way.

Some of the women, including Elizabeth, attribute an increased sense of self confidence to their work based role but not their essential self within the work-based role to a sense of power. As noted above, the power exists within the role. I will go on to look at this next.

4. The women, power, their work role and its effect on self

For most of my respondents, the role discourse was used to explain the origins of power in relation to the self. Within the descriptions of power, both trait and role discourses were used to construct power. In most cases, the role discourse was used to construct the women's relationship with power, that is, power came from the role rather than the self.

In the following extract Claire uses the role discourse to reconstruct her sense of self through work.

I'd like to know myself better yeah I'd like to accept myself better and be . a bit more at ease with myself and I'd like to be a bit more of a . flexible . broad ranging person in terms of .. what I do and how I do things .. and my experiences yeah .. I do feel relatively confident that .. those things will happen and I guess when I think about it and I haven't thought about this before but I guess this job is actually doing a lot .. to make me feel .. that that stuff is attainable reachable . it means that I can do that .. yeah ... yeah .. its challenging me and I really really am thriving on that yeah and in a lot of ways in the past I have shielded myself from challenges ...
(Claire p. 21)

She expresses the way she would like to be, and the role discourse is used to articulate the notion that changes to her essential self are possible.

In another sense this account is also justifying her work; it is "doing a lot to make me feel that stuff is attainable".

Given the conflict she has expressed elsewhere about her work and the gendered expectations others place on her within that role, the justification functions to account for her remaining with the conflict.

Other women use work to account for changes in self. The essential self is reconstructed in a role discourse.

I've gone on from there an it now my now in fact its got past like I say its got past . um pleasing my parents .. its proving to my parents ... an it .. an I've developed such a sense of myself that I keep thinking . well how far can I go ... because . you know 25 years ago I was considered to be a failure ... and so I I've I have a purpose in that I want to prove to myself that I can do it .. and so all the time I'm always striving .. now to myself personally I I guess all the time I push myself to see how far can I go . once I've got that far can I go the next step . so yeah I'm trying all the time to .. improve ... and last ye ah last year here was really really great it was great to achieve so much.. (Josephine P.19)

for years it mattered that other people didn't see that um .. I guess for years it was important to me how other people saw me . and . I was . invisible to other people ... but . I've acquired a lot more confidence . and . now I don't care if you just laugh at (laughter) ... if I ah if I appear invisible to other people .. well .. its OK (laughter) . (Bethney p.9)

Some women talk about their reconstructed self by comparing their work role with their gendered role as wife and mother.

this just complete . loss of . identity .. it was quite devastating. The link ah or the connection of meaning to the word housewife is very low and also because being such a distance from when I was a housewife ... um .. probably would have been 16 years or so .. before that I was home with children and a housewife . so I'd moved on and I was no longer that person at all ... (Bethney p. 15).

I mean you go from ... from work you've got ... you're a person .. you're a ... I'm not anybody's wife at work . I'm not anybody's mother at work . I'm me. It's a wonderful feeling when I go to Christchurch. I get on the plane and I've got my newspaper. ah ... and my briefcase and I'm me .. you know its wonderful.. and at home .. I'm I'm you know ... I'm everything I'm everything .. I'm somebody's wife somebody's mother..... But I.. but I .. at work .. and to walk in the door sometimes . and they are swing doors . and be Elizabeth again instead of Mum .. its just wonderful
 (Elizabeth p.13-14)

I actually got married .. an an and then I realised . that there was more to life than being a mother and a wife ...
 (Josephine.18)

In the reconstruction of the essential self, the work role has improved the sense of self in contrast to the gendered role of wife and mother. The gendered role of housewife is associated with a "loss of identity"; the work role is associated with "change". For another woman she associates her "personhood" ("me", "a person") with her work role, and her gender with the roles of wife and mother.

A point of interest here is that none of the women made a connection between their work role and their essential self *until we discussed power in the interview.* The above extracts repeat a pattern discussed earlier, where the women's gender was not associated with the essential self.

A non-gendered trait discourse was used to present this self as authentic and consistent. Gender was instead used in association with the role and learning discourses to talk about what was appropriate for women. That is, the role and learning discourses were used to construct a gendered position.

Now, when talking about their work role, they reconstruct this essential self that was articulated in the trait discourse. Further, the women dissociate their essential self from gender appropriate roles, constructing gender appropriate roles as damaging to their essential selves.

Role discourse is also used to account for changes in the essential selves in the following extracts.

it would be very hard to go back to what I did before cos I mean this is so exciting what I do even though I don't know whats happening from one minute to the next ... so you know ah there has been in the past a sense of satisfaction with what I've been able to achieve ah all sorts of things um .. the position has ah its given me a sense of freedom to find ah to do things well ... its ah I've developed some skills I didn't know I had..
(Patricia p.35)

My experience of work has contributed to how I (unintelligible) .. well I like to .. in working . I guess I like to feel .. I'm doing things well ... so through my job that is one way that I can be doing ah doing something worthwhile ... and I actually get paid for it (laughter) ...
(Julia p.18)

I go home feeling really good because I'm doing something worthwhile ... My job ah well I feel it gives me confidence and .. ah ... its yes its given me the opportunity to build up some skills.. and skills you see because I was paid ah are probably better recognised than skills that I would gain at home ... or in the community I mean so thats not because of my choice but ah thats because of the society we live inand the title I guess its your .. ah ... its the position its your position. (Julia p. 19).

The above women construct themselves as more worthwhile, confident, able, free and skilled, using the role discourse.

There are interesting contradictions in all these accounts. On the one hand the work role is evaluated positively through its effect on developing the essential self. The women associate this reconstruction with feelings of "confidence", "excitement", "satisfaction", and self worth.

On the other hand, the work role is, elsewhere, negatively evaluated as a site of power from which the women have distanced the essential self.

Another contradiction appears in this reconstruction where the essential self is being contrasted against the negatively evaluated gendered roles of mother, housewife, homemaker. However, gender was positively evaluated as "the women's way" when my respondents talked about power within the context of work.

Respondents also presented different constructions about the gendered roles of housewife and mother; one as negative and associated with a loss of identity or self esteem; elsewhere as confirmation of the broad ability of women generally.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to analyse the discourses used by women in accounting for their experiences within a work setting. Their constructions and experience of power, and how this relates to the sense of self has been explored throughout the analysis.

One clear outcome from the use of discourse analysis as the method of inquiry, is that the women produce many and varied constructions when talking about their experiences, and their sense of self. The self is constructed in several ways, and performs different purposes depending on context. For example, the women have used a trait discourse to construct an essential and authentic self, and conditioning and role discourses to construct gendered selves with behaviours and characteristics appropriate for women. At any given moment, there were a range of possible self constructions which the women drew on as explanatory devices to account for themselves and their association with power. This is not to say that the women are "dishonest" in their self presentation. Far from it.

"Rather, the casting and recasting of events or the creation of different versions is endemic in natural discourse. It is a pervasive and unavoidable feature of social life". (Marshall and Wetherell 1989, p.110).

When making general reference to themselves, the trait/type repertoire was used as a foundation for self definition.

It is constituted out of a discourse that they share and describes a consistent and authentic self. It functions to present them as being consistent regardless of how they might appear to others and it also allows them to evaluate themselves positively. This trait repertoire was presented as an aspect of personhood, and was non-gendered, in the sense that the women did not identify any of the characteristics as specifically feminine. Six of the women expressed concern that others could verify the authenticity of this non-gendered self.

When the women came to talk about the characteristics associated with positions of power, gender was used to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate traits associated with the use of power. This indicated a possible tension between their trait self, and the self associated mostly through their occupation, with the use of power. In 8 of the 10 interviews, power was constructed as being held within the occupational position, rather than with the trait self. While attempting to explain the self coherently, the women set their self constructions apart from power.

In chapter five, the analysis showed that when the women talked about power there was evidence of considerable discomfort with the word itself and it was redefined. Also, the traits identified with the use of power enabled the women to separate self from power. All but two constructed the holding of or use of power as external to their trait self.

The women construct power as if it is located either in their work position, or held by men. Underpinning their constructions of power are implications that, women aren't meant to have power, but if they do, the exercising of it must be in accordance with a gender appropriate way. The gender appropriate way for women to exercise power is as a mother or in the enactment of a feminine role under the male model.

I suggested in Chapter two, that as the women are positioned within a structural setting in which the dominant discourses are embedded, I expected them to construct themselves and their relationship with power in such a way so as not to contradict the "common sense" discourse. This discourse is based on gender representations that appeal to our common sense understanding of society, and argues that men hold the power and women are the subordinates (Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990). Generally this expectation has been confirmed. By locating power outside of the essential self, and by talking about power in a gender appropriate way, the women keep the trait self safe from contravening what is acceptable in terms of power and its use.

In some places there is a tension between the trait self and gender. The women experience themselves as gendered (as women); they also experience a self where gender is not relevant.

The women construct essential selves from a trait repertoire that is non-gendered. The configuration of gender, power, roles and self used by the women, allows them to protect this essential self from any accusation of gender violation. However a "common sense" discourse says women are gendered, and if power is to be enacted then that can only appropriately happen if the identified traits are enacted in the feminine way. In this way, the women comply with the "common sense" discourse.

The women struggle to find a way of talking about and explaining themselves. The struggle is a function of using two discourses to talk about themselves. One discourse provides a theory of self with particular authentic ungendered characteristics; the other discourse provides a theory of a gendered self which is enacted in roles. Only one discourse allows them to talk about gender and that discourse does not allow them to attribute power to their self. This gendered discourse distinguishes between the male model (referred to in the study as "not the women's way"), and the "women's way" of enacting power within a management position.

Underlying the women's accounts is an assumption that men get ahead using the male model, but that there will be strong criticism levelled at women who take up this approach.

The gendered discourse contains an underlying assumption that women and men are different; they may share some characteristics, but the way these are enacted ought to be expressly gendered.

Some of the women in this study produced constructions of power that were gender appropriate and consistent with their essential self. The various ways that they constructed the essential self as having power were differentiated from the kind of power that men have, and were not constructions of the kind of power associated with their work role.

These legitimate forms of feminine power were produced in one of four ways. Power could be used in personal relationships to ask for what they wanted. Power could be used as part of the gendered role of being a mother. Power could be used in the enactment of the feminine role under the male model. Finally, power could be used within a cultural context in the performance of a cultural duty. The implication here is that it is not appropriate for women to exercise power in terms of having authority.

The women also expressed concern or anxiety about exercising the authority they held because of their position, on the grounds that gender inappropriate action on their part may be sanctioned.

There is another conflict for approximately half of the women, and that is their construction of the competing demands of child-rearing, marital partnerships, family and their occupation. These women construct themselves as being more able to express the essential self through the public sphere of work, than through the private sphere of their home life. Their work site gives the most satisfaction for the essential self in this construction. However, there is a conflict because the essential self is not gendered and has been dissociated from power, while the role self ought to enact power in a gender appropriate way.

This conflict seems to emerge from the women distancing the essential self from the gendered characteristics associated with family, mother and feminine nurturance; they associate the work place with the development of the essential self and they also dissociate this self from any power involved at work; however, this essential self is fulfilled at work. There is conflict here because the essential self ought to be enacted in a gender appropriate way.

The conflict between these different constructions of self may inform the experience of vulnerability that the women report, and that I observed prior to and throughout the interview process. This vulnerability has been apparent in a number of ways.

Firstly, vulnerability was made explicit when women who initially expressed interest in the study later withdrew on learning of the topic. A number of reasons were advanced for this and included a concern they may be identified which may place their present job at risk.

Secondly, of those women who took part in the study, several asked for the tape to be turned off during parts of the interview. Generally this occurred when they expressed embarrassment at some comment they had made in relation to themselves or power. It could be exemplified in the following comment made by Elizabeth and cited in Chapter four

Its, its embarrassing, I mean .. and I mean we've all been brought up not to ever say anything nice about us, good about ourselves. (p.28)

For about half of the respondents comments of this kind were made in relation to their talk about self or power. It seemed to indicate they thought they may be breaching some convention by arrogating desirable qualities to themselves, and/or by talking about or claiming power. At times, some of the women requested a segment to be wiped from the tape or the tape to be turned off. This was often prefaced by a reference to their initial comment being "a hasty reaction" or "needing to think more carefully before answering that question".

Thirdly, the women who took part in the study expressed concern that their anonymity be absolutely confirmed. Also, I construed a general sense of tentativeness for all the women when we talked about self and issues of power. This was exemplified as follows.

First, the women in this study were articulate in their use of language, but when talking about power and self, their accounts were interspersed with pauses and hesitancy. All expressed some discomfort with the meanings associated with power, and defined it to fit a discourse appropriately gendered for women.

Second, some of my respondents constructed stories in which they portrayed womens' vulnerability. They criticised other women who had used the "male model" of power, and indicated that this breaching of the "womens way" has ramifications in terms of possible sanctions and becoming marginalised.

All of my respondents are in positions of legitimate power. They have talked about the consequences of using power in a gender inappropriate way. To do so contravenes the "common sense" discourse, and risks vulnerability to sanctions. The women constructed themselves as needing to act in accordance with the common sense discourse of gender. Not to do so is to anticipate the negative reactions, sanctions and marginalisation they have identified as happening to other women.

It is implicit within the women's accounts that they are aware they are explaining themselves in ways that are inconsistent. The sense of hesitancy and vulnerability seems to emerge from the realisation there is a conflict between the various constructions. However, these constructions are entirely appropriate in context, and meet the demand for a consistent sense of self.

The general impression of women's position is probably encapsulated in a comment by one of the respondents -

*...power is a really sort of a bad word ... its got
.. ahhh ... we're {women} not meant to admit we have
power or that we like to have power ... (Elizabeth p.2)*

The women have, by their constructions, marked the difference between their essential selves, the selves they construct as feminine, and the sites where power is located.

A number of areas that emerge from this study may provide the basis for future investigation. These include the question of how the different variations in accounting for self are related to the continuation of existing social relationships. Embedded in social relations is the question of gender, and this is connected to women's and men's relative position in the power hierarchy.

A second and important question to be investigated is the way womens' self accounting relates to and reproduces power relationships within the work place. This might lead to an understanding of the interventions, if any, which could be made to change future means in the manner in which women account for self.

APPENDIX I

21 June 1993

Karen Anderson
Polytechnic

Dear Karen

PROPOSED MA THESIS INTERVIEWS

I am happy to give formal approval for you to carry out your investigation of "women's experiences of authority etc" within the Polytechnic. The documentation submitted to me confirms that appropriate ethical guidelines will be applied and there is therefore no reason why you should not proceed with the study.

On a personal note, I found the title and its related justification very interesting. You could well identify helpful insights and future directions within the whole area of women's participation in management/authority structures as a result of this dissertation.

All the very best for the work ahead. I hope you receive ready co-operation from your selected respondents.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized name, possibly "J. J.", written over the typed name "Yours sincerely".

CEO

APPENDIX II

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACCOUNTS OF POWER AND
PRIVATE AND SOCIAL IDENTITIES

INFORMATION SHEET

What is this study about?

The aim of this study is to explore women's accounts of their power, and how this is related to their sense of themselves.

What would I have to do?

If you agree to take part, you will be interviewed in May this year. In the interview you will be invited to talk about your experience of power and how it is expressed, your ideas about power, and your sense of yourself in relation to power.

What are my rights?

If you take part in this study, you have the right to -

- * refuse to answer any question and/or to withdraw from the study at any time.
- * ask any further questions about the study that occur to you during your participation.
- * provide information on the understanding that it is completely confidential to the researcher. All records are identifiable only by a code, and are seen only by the researcher. It will not be possible to identify you in any reports that result from the study.
- * have access to your own data.
- * be given a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded.

If you wish to contact me at any time regarding the study please ring me at Home () or at work ().

Karen Anderson.

APPENDIX III

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACCOUNTS OF POWER AND
PRIVATE AND SOCIAL IDENTITIES

CONSENT FORM

I have read the information for this study and have had the details explained to me. My questions about the research have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, and to refuse to answer any particular questions. I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that it is completely confidential and will not be used for any purpose other than this research.

I agree to the researcher audiotaping the interviews with me and also that she may use brief direct quotations from the interview in her reports of the study provided these do not identify me in any way.

I wish to participate in this study under the conditions set out on the information sheet.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

Researcher:

APPENDIX IV

Interview guide.

The following questions were used as a guideline for the interviews. Alternative and/or follow-up questions or probes were used. Potter and Wetherell (1987) have suggested that

"the researcher should try to generate interpretative contexts in the interview in such a way that the connections between the interviewee's accounting practices and variations in functional context become clear" (p.164)

and that one way to do this is to

"tackle the same issue more than once in an interview, in the course of a number of different general topics." (p.164)

In other words, they are suggesting that rather than conduct an interview using a structure designed to gain consistency in responses, the interviewer looks for variation and inconsistency, and intervenes in such a way as to highlight this. Thus, the questions set out below act as a guideline only and the same issue may be tackled in different ways and in a different context depending on the responses of the respondents.

The Guideline Questions -

Do you see yourself as having a position of authority?
And can you tell me a little about it?

How do you see yourself in this position?

What is the experience of authority/power you hold and how is it manifest (i.e. is it over others/with others?)

In terms of your position (at work) and how you see yourself, how does this relate to your self outside work? (private self/social self?)

Do you experience any conflict amongst these?
Can you tell me how you experience this?

Can you tell me a little about your personal self?
How you see yourself.

Can you tell me how you define power/authority?

Are there different kinds of power?

APPENDIX IV . 2.

Can you tell me if you experience any conflict between what you believe about power/authority and your experience of it?

Do you experience any conflict between the different requirements of work/non-work?

Can you tell me if there are any times that there might be a conflict between what you are required to do because of your position, and what you would ordinarily choose to do?

Are there expectations that come with your position that differ with your personal expectations? What are they?

Can you tell me how you make decisions?

Do you see yourself as one self or as many different selves?

How do you feel about your sense of yourself?

How would you like to be seen by others?

What does it mean to you being a woman in terms of your work/your personal experience?

APPENDIX V

Transcription Notations.

The use of dots indicate number of seconds pause between words, or at the end of a phrase, or between the utterance of one person and another, e.g.

...to not let it just ah self destruct ... um .
so we felt ah .. that

or

Ans:lot of flak .. potentially .. for the hard decisions

Qn: Is that difficult when ...

Where a name or identifying word is deliberately omitted, clarifying information is given in brackets { }. e.g.

... positions that might have been a {respondents occupation} is in a position

or ...when it all gets too much for, ah, {husband} copes...."

Hesitations are shown as phonetically as possible, e.g.

...got a mind set there that ah .. that ...

or ...incredibly stressful um it would be

or ...Hmmm ... No ... Um . My family role is a

Unintelligible material is noted as such e.g.

...rather than the ah (unintelligible) though...

Laughter is indicated as such e.g.

...a bit thick or a bit optimistic (laughter) ...

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